

The Temporal Making of a Great Literary Corpus by a XX-Century Mystic: Statistics of Daily Words and Writing Time

Emilio Matricciani

Dipartimento di Elettronica, Informazione e Bioingegneria, Politecnico di Milano, Milan, Italy
Email: emilio.matricciani@polimi.it

How to cite this paper: Matricciani, E. (2022) The Temporal Making of a Great Literary Corpus by a XX-Century Mystic: Statistics of Daily Words and Writing Time. *Open Journal of Statistics*, 12, 155-167. <https://doi.org/10.4236/ojs.2022.122010>

Received: February 14, 2022

Accepted: March 12, 2022

Published: March 15, 2022

Copyright © 2022 by author(s) and Scientific Research Publishing Inc. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



Open Access

Abstract

Maria Valtorta (1897-1961, Italian mystic)—bedridden since 1934 because paralyzed—wrote in Italian 13,193 pages of 122 school notebooks concerning alleged mystical visions on Jesus' life, during World War II and few following years. The contents—about 2.64 million words—are now scattered in different books. She could write from 2 to 6 hours without pausing, with steady speed, and twice in the same day. She never made corrections and was very proficient in Italian. We have studied her writing activity concerning her alleged mystical experience with the main scope of establishing the time sequence of daily writing. This is possible because she diligently annotated the date of almost every text. We have reconstructed the time series of daily words and have converted them into time series of writing time, by assuming a realistic speed of 20 words per minute, a reliable average value of fast handwriting speed, applicable to Maria Valtorta. She wrote for 1340 days, about 3.67 years of equivalent contiguous writing time, mostly concentrated in the years 1943 to 1948. This study is a first approach in evaluating the effort done, in terms of writing time, by a mystic turned out to be a very effective literary author, whose texts are interesting to read per se, beyond any judgement—not of concern here—on her alleged visions.

Keywords

Literary Corpus, Daily Writing Time, Handwriting, Words, Maria Valtorta

1. A Great Literary Corpus

A rigorous and scientific analysis of the great literary corpus written by Maria Valtorta (1897-1961, an Italian mystic) on Jesus' life—narrated in her main work *Il Vangelo come mi è stato rivelato* (*The Gospel as Revealed to Me*), referred to

as the EMV in the following, published in 10 volumes [1], has strikingly evidenced the presence of many data concerning facts and events allegedly occurred 2000 years ago in Palestine, well beyond her knowledge, culture and skills [2]-[7]. She writes, in real time, on what she sees and hears during many mystical visions—as she claims—in a period lasting several years. She mentions cities, towns, villages, buildings and palaces, Roman roads, mountain tracks, river Jordan, ports of the Mediterranean, lakes (Tiberias, ancient Meron), creeks, mountains and hills, trees and flowers, fragrances, dresses, food, weather, sceneries and monuments of Palestine at Jesus' times, a geographical area that she never visited.

This large amount of data is known only to generations of archeologists, historians, Bible scholars, experts of astronomy, epigraphy, topography, geography, meteorology, whose research has taken them decades of studies and efforts. Therefore, it is surprising and unexplainable to find these data, with so many details, in her writings.

Maria Valtorta, bedridden since 1934 because paralyzed below the waist, writes on a small stand, sitting on her bed with shoulders supported by pillows in Viareggio (Tuscany), during World War II and the few following years. In Valtorta's house, there was a library with miscellaneous texts but it had been locked by Maria's mother in 1934 and remained so till her death on 4 October 1943. However, in this library, there were no books on Palestine that, just in case, Maria Valtorta could consult [8]. She had only a Bible and an Italian Dictionary. In spite of this complete lack of any data possibly available at her times, every time some of the data she reports have been checked [2]-[7], they are unexpectedly correct, sometimes even anticipating what scholars would find years later in her writings [5].

She wrote in Italian 13,193 pages of 122 school notebooks of her time [9], without making any correction, with a set of fountain pens always filled with ink because she did not know when the alleged visions would come. In these notebooks, there are not only the events now published in EMV, but also many other mystic writings, as she intercalated the pages describing the events on Jesus' life with many pages on various topics, including dictations and monologues addressed to herself by the alleged Jesus or by Jesus' mother Mary. All these texts are now scattered partly in EMV and partly in the following books: *I Quaderni del 1943* (Q43, *The Notebooks*. 1943) [10], *I Quaderni del 1944* (Q44, *The Notebooks*. 1944) [11], *I Quaderni del 1945-1950* (Q45-50, *The Notebooks*. 1945-1950) [12], *I quadernetti* (QN, *Small Notebooks*, actually being translated in English) [13], *Libro di Azariah* (AZ, *The Book of Azariah*) [14] and *Lezioni sull'epistola di Paolo ai Romani* (RM, *Lessons on the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans*) [15]. A summary of contents and comments on each book can be found in [16].

In *Azariah* [14], Maria Valtorta's guardian angel Azariah dictates her theological and spiritual comments on the readings of 58 holiday masses. In *Lezioni sull'epistola di Paolo ai Romani* [15], a Holy Author dictates her 48 lessons on

the *Epistle to the Romans*. In *I Quadernetti* there is a miscellany of several arguments, including the very interesting writing on the alleged three St. Peter's burial sites, which has led to his probable first burial site [5] and has inspired the search of the third site [17].

In the following we drop the qualifier “alleged”, although we always imply it whenever we refer to the characters encountered in her writings and to her claims of mystical experiences, because “visions” are, of course, beyond the domain of science—therefore outside our expertise—but what she writes is not, in the sense that we can check many facts and observations.

The distribution of all this literary corpus in different books is mostly due to indications given by Jesus himself or by other heavenly figures and to the choices of Emilio Pisani, whose family printery published her works since the years 1950's.

Marta Diciotti (1910-2001), caretaker and housekeeper of the Valtorta family since 24 May 1935 [18] and eyewitness of the writing activity—even at nights as she slept in the same bedroom—tells [18] (p. 307) that Maria Valtorta could write from 2 to 6 hours without pauses, with steady speed, and that this activity could be repeated in the same day, again up to 6 hours.

In this paper, we study the daily writing activity of Maria Valtorta, viewed as a literary author. She did not write only the texts now reported in the books listed above but also an Autobiography [19], just before Q43, many letters [20] [21] [22] and some other minor miscellaneous texts not yet published. Our study, however, refers only to the texts she wrote during her mystical experience; therefore, we consider only the books mentioned above which, in any case, make the largest part of her literary corpus.

Our main scope is to establish the time sequence of her daily writing – by considering the number of daily words, a parameter which can describe her effort and dedication, whatever is the origin and nature of her texts—consequently we reconstruct the temporal sequence of the texts now scattered in the mentioned books. This is possible because she diligently annotated the date of almost every writing (sometimes even the hour of the day), as her spiritual guide Father Migliorini told her to do. Therefore, we can reconstruct—as we do in this paper—the most reliable temporal sequence of her daily texts, even if they are now scattered in the books previously mentioned.

After this introductory section, in Section 2 we show and discuss the timeline of Maria Valtorta's writings in the years 1943 to 1954; in Section 3 we report descriptive statistics of daily words and time series of daily words and writing time; in Section 4 we conclude with some remarks.

2. Timeline of Writings

Figure 1 shows the timeline of the writings reported in the books mentioned in Section 1. They are made of approximately 2,640,000 words in total, distributed according to **Table 1**, in the original Italian texts, here always considered. Most of this great literary corpus is contained in the EMV.

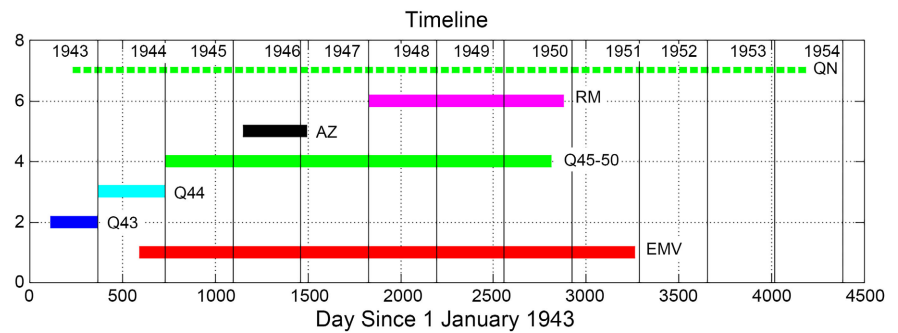


Figure 1. Timeline of writing the indicated books. EMV (red): *Il Vangelo come mi è stato rivelato*; Q43 (blue): *I Quaderni del 1943*; Q44 (cyan): *I Quaderni del 1944*; Q45-50 (green): *I Quaderni del 1945-1950*; QN (dashed green): *I Quadernetti* (the timeline is dashed to remind the reader that part of its text was not dated, therefore not considered in this study); AZ (black): *Il libro di Azaria*; RM (magenta): *Lezioni sull'epistola di Paolo ai Romani*. In total, the books contain approximately 2,640,000 words in the original Italian texts, distributed according to **Table 1**. In the years 1943-1951, Maria Valtorta wrote for 1340 days, about 3.67 years of equivalent contiguous writing time.

Table 1. Fraction (%) of total number of words contained in the indicated books. In QN we have analyzed only the writings that report a date, which makes most of it.

Book	EMV	Q43	Q44	Q45-50	QN	AZ	RM
Fraction	67.3	8.5	8.7	6.7	1.8	3.1	3.9

Even though Maria Valtorta never reports explicit dates concerning the events narrated in the EMV, her writings imply an accurate chronology, almost fully reconstructed, day by day, by an astronomical analysis based on her descriptions of night skies [2] [23] [24]. In writing the EMV she does not always follow the temporal order of the events narrated, but introduces several flash-forwards which later Jesus himself indicates her where they were supposed to be inserted.

It is interesting to notice that she received the visions on these events in a time lapse coinciding with Jesus' public life (3 years and 4 months), as **Figure 2** clearly shows for the events in which it is possible to date them in the EMV time.

If there were a perfect coincidence of the timing between Maria Valtorta (MV) days and EMV days, in the upper panel (**Figure 2(a)**) the data would be aligned along the 45°-line and in the lower panel of **Figure 2**, all segments would be parallel. We see that this tends to occur for most MV days and the flash-forward visions, occurred in 1944 and early 1945, are distinctly displaced from the 45°-line (**Figure 2(a)**) and the segments joining MV days to EMV days intersects with others (**Figure 2(b)**). Finally, notice that many flash-forwards refer to the last part of Jesus' life (the week of crucifixion, April 34 [2] [23] [24]).

In spite of this "multidimensional" and simultaneous writing on different topics, and even though there are several flash-forwards, nevertheless the EMV has a systematic and coherent structure from the first to the last page, and involves about 700 major and minor characters [25] [26].

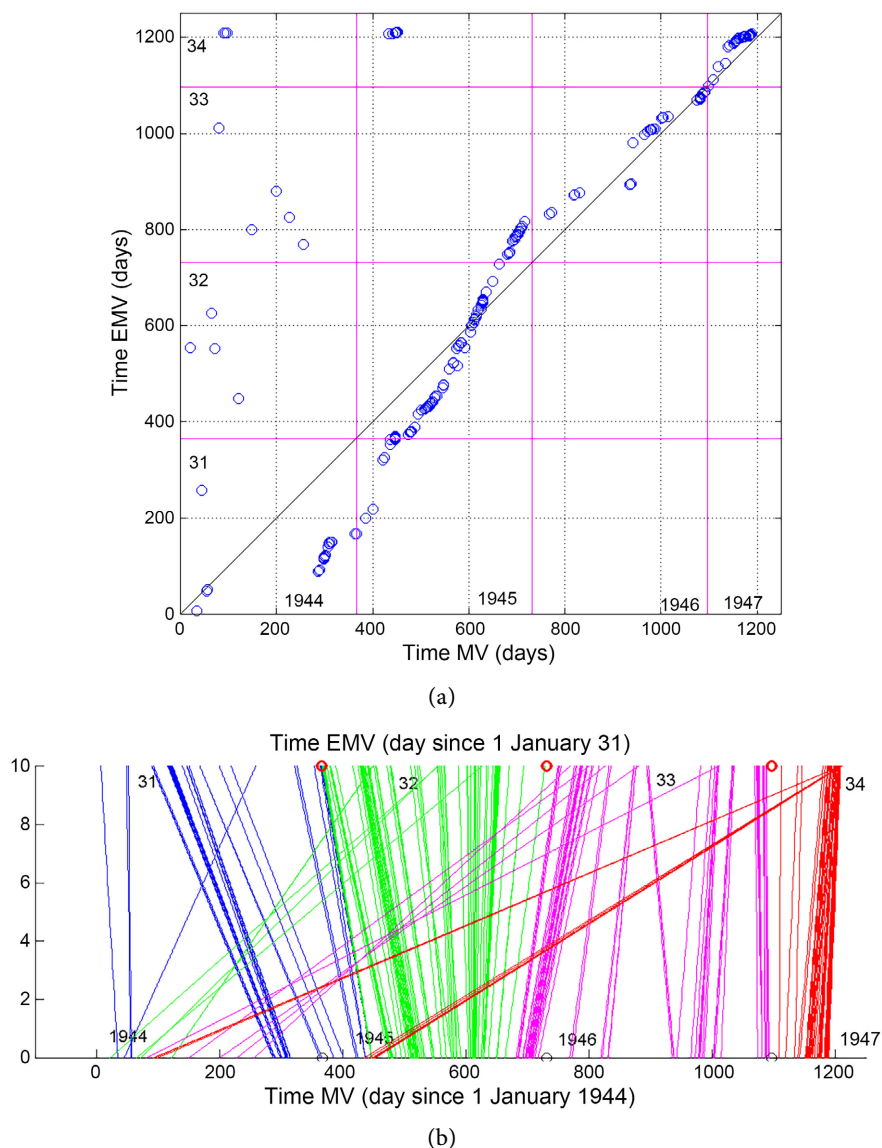


Figure 2. Upper panel (a): Scatter plot, and Lower panel (b): parallelism, between the timeline of days in which the events narrated in the EMV calendar (EMV days) occur—according to the chronology established in [2] [23] [24]—and the time line of the days in which Maria Valtorta writes them (MV days). In (a), upper panel, the 45°-line gives perfect coincidence between MV days and EMV days. Notice that the timeline regarding the writing of the EMV in **Figure 1** reaches the year 1951, in apparent contradiction with the actual year 1947. This difference occurs because the days reported in **Figure 1** contain all texts, therefore including events for which it was not possible to find a specific date, and also dictations and monologues which do not describe events of Jesus' public life. In (b), lower panel, the color distinguishes how the EMV days (upper timeline) for each year (from year 31 to year 34) are related to the MV days (lower timeline): 31 = blue; 32 = green; 33 = magenta; 34 = red. 1 January 1944 is aligned with 1 January 31. The flash-forward episodes concerning the year 34 are clearly evidenced. Notice the frequency of the events increases just before the week of crucifixion (23 April 34).

Figure 3 shows how the cumulative number of writing days is distributed in a year versus the day of the year, by ignoring, of course, the scattering of texts in

different books. The 45°-line is the upper bound to the curves because it corresponds to writing every day. This situation almost occurs in 1944, in 1945 and in 1943 after the starting day, because for these years the derivative of the curves is about 1 (*i.e.* 45° slope), therefore indicating an almost uniform probability density function (or histogram). **Table 2** reports the total for each year. In the all period the grand total is 1340 days, *i.e.* about 3.67 years of equivalent contiguous writing time.

Let us summarize the descriptive overall/total statistics of days and words written in the timeline shown in **Figure 1**, before passing, in Section 3, to a more detailed analysis of the daily writing and estimated writing time.

Figure 4 draws the total number of words written in the years 1943 to 1951 (**Table 3**), from which it clearly appears the most productive years 1944, 1945 and 1946. **Figure 5** draws the median (50% statistics), the average and the maximum values of annual words. **Figure 6** shows how the totals are built up during the writing days of **Figure 3**, again showing, of course, that 1945 was the most intense year. Let us turn now to the daily activity.

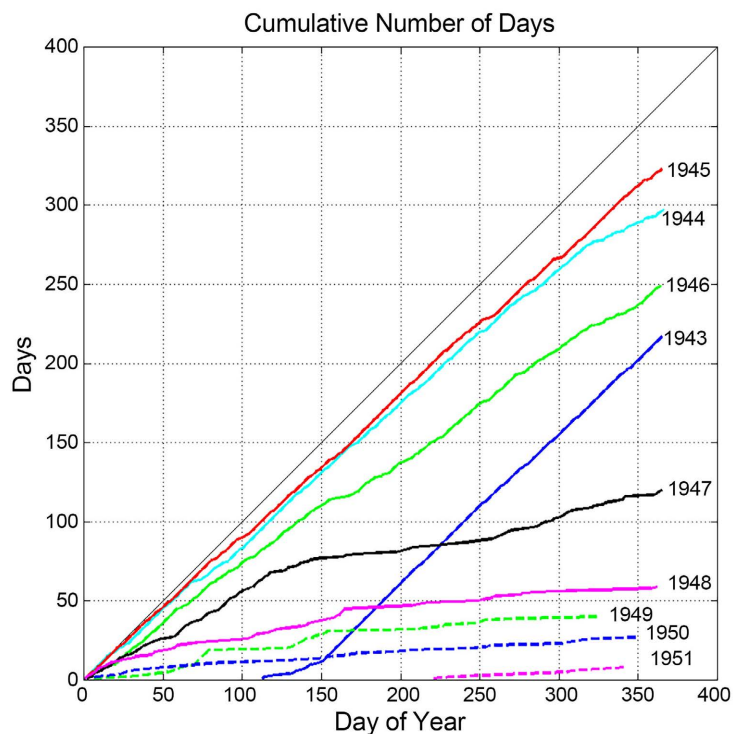


Figure 3. Cumulative number of writing days in the indicated year. In these years Maria Valtorta wrote all texts contained in the books in 1340 days, *i.e.* 3.67 years of equivalent contiguous writing time.

Table 2. Total number of writing days in the indicated years. All texts contained in books were written in 1340 days, *i.e.* 3.67 years of equivalent contiguous writing time.

Years	1943	1944	1945	1946	1947	1948	1949	1950	1951
Writing Days	217	297	323	249	120	59	40	27	8

Table 3. Total number of words (thousands) in the indicated years. The overall total is 2,639,550 words.

Years	1943	1944	1945	1946	1947	1948	1949	1950	1951
Words	224.48	493.96	835.53	632.34	289.63	80.82	30.15	33.98	18.67

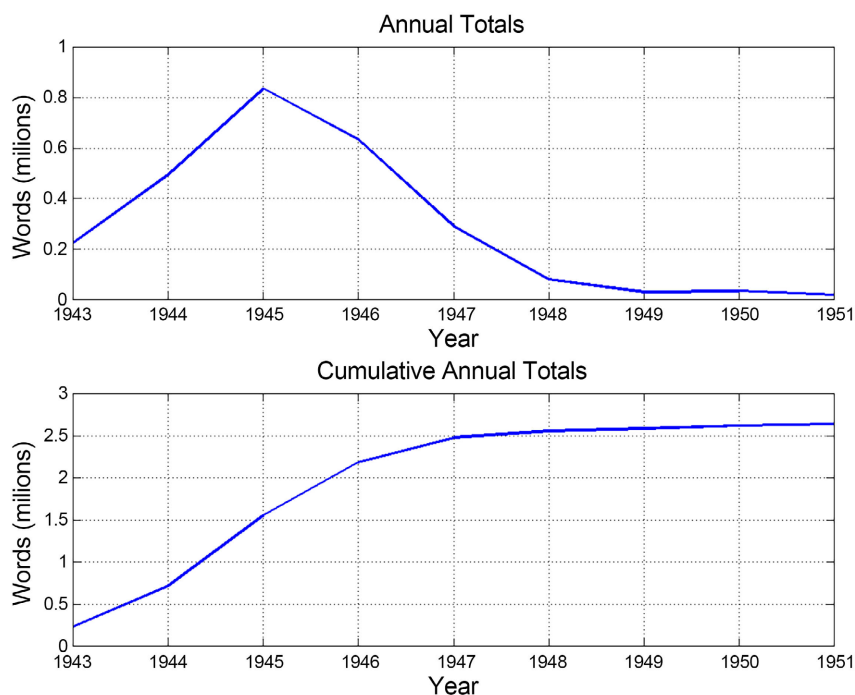


Figure 4. Upper panel: Total words written in the indicated year. Lower panel: Cumulative number of words in the indicated year. The grand total is approximately 2,640,000 words.

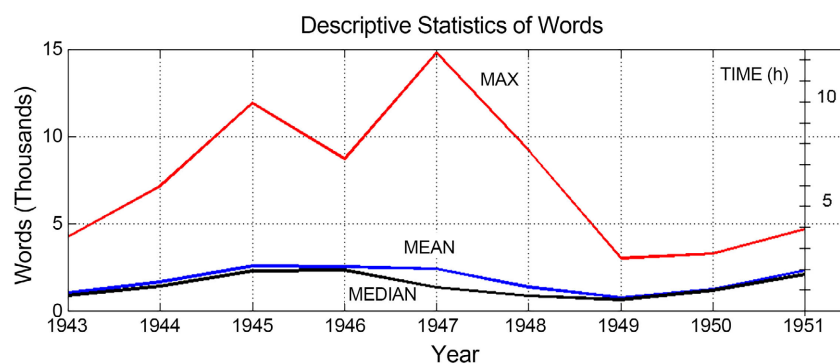


Figure 5. Median (black curve, 50% statistics), mean (blue curve) and the maximum (red curve) values of annual words in the indicated years. The ordinate time axis on the right assumes a 20 words per minute handwriting speed (see Section 3).

3. Daily Words and Writing Time

As we have recalled in Section 1, Maria Valtorta could write from 2 to 6 hours without pausing, with steady speed, and could repeat it on the same day. For this reason, she always had several fountain pens filled with ink, ready to be used,

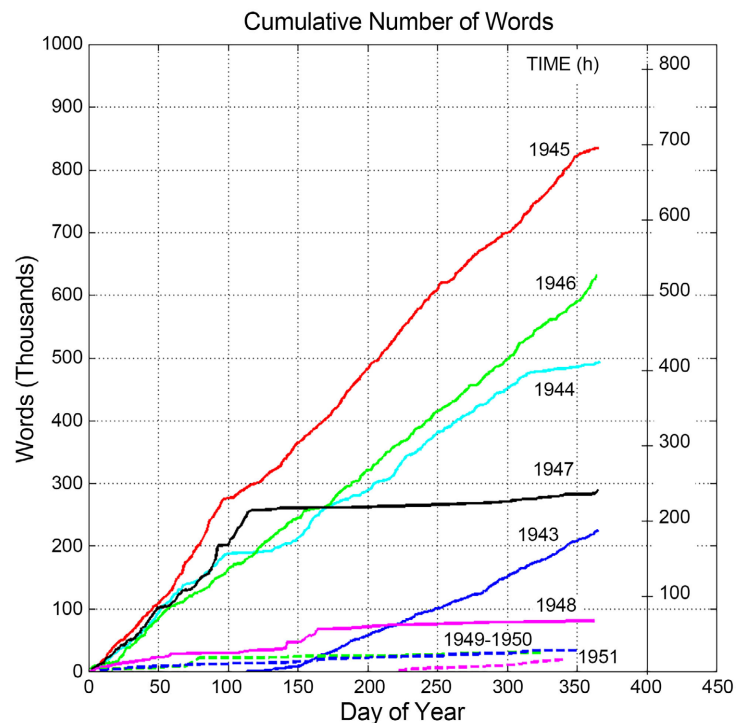


Figure 6. Cumulative number of words in the indicated year versus day of the year. The total number of words per year is drawn in **Figure 4**. The ordinate time axis on the right assumes a 20 words per minute handwriting speed (see Section 3).

and notebooks, or other pieces of paper, to write on. She never corrected her handwritings, was very proficient in Italian, well above the average. In school she could write eight different developments of the same theme simultaneously while her classmates could only write one [19], therefore giving solid foundation to Marta Diciotti's testimony [18].

Figures 7-9 show the time series of the daily words written in the years from 1943 to 1951. Periods of intense writing, in most cases done day after day without interruptions (see also **Figure 3**), were followed by periods of moderate or even no writing at all. These periods are, of course, due to what was happening during World War Two in Viareggio, and to private facts. For example, on 24 April 1944, because the Allies were bombarding Viareggio and the Gothic Line—the German defensive line in Central-Northern Italy—was very close, she had to move (day 115, 1944, **Figure 7**) to a small rural village in the hills near Lucca, where she stayed till December. In that April she experienced what she called “the night of the spirit” [11] (p. 268)—from 9 April to 12 May, with an interruption on 20 April—because she had no visions, and wrote only very short personal remarks, as the time series of 1944 clearly shows.

Another interesting day is 18 April 1947 (day 108, 1947, **Figure 8**) when she wrote, in a letter to Mother Teresa Maria, that she had given all herself to God, including her intellectual skills [21], anticipated by Jesus himself [12] (16 March 1947). Few days later, maybe not only by chance, her writing activity diminished

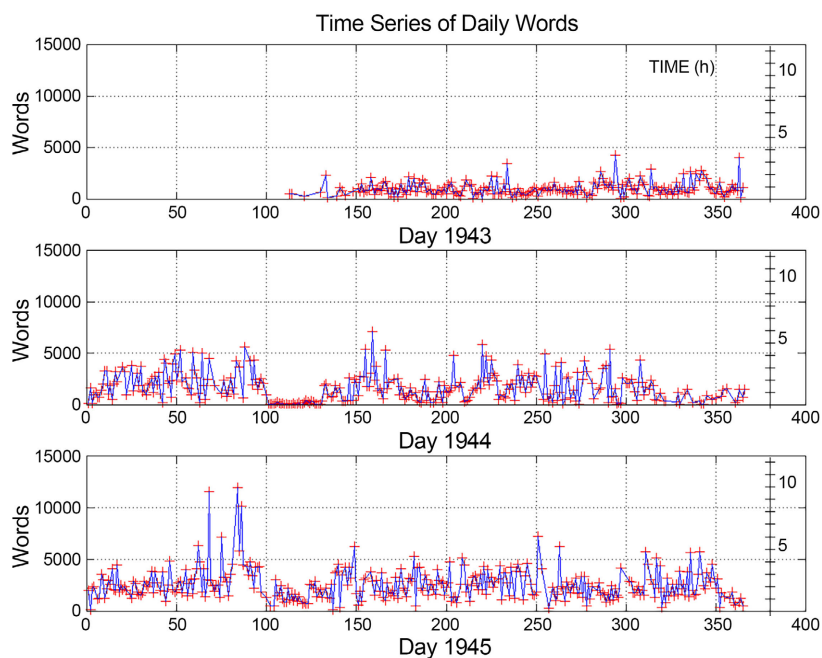


Figure 7. Time series of daily words. Upper panel: 1943; Middle panel: 1944; Lower panel: 1945. Crosses indicate the writing day. The ordinate time axis on the right assumes a 20 words per minute handwriting speed. In the year 1944, the interval from 9 April (day 99) till 12 May (day 132), with an interruption on 20 April (day 110), is referred by Maria Valtorta as “the night of the spirit” because she had no visions and only wrote short personal notes, as the time series clearly show.

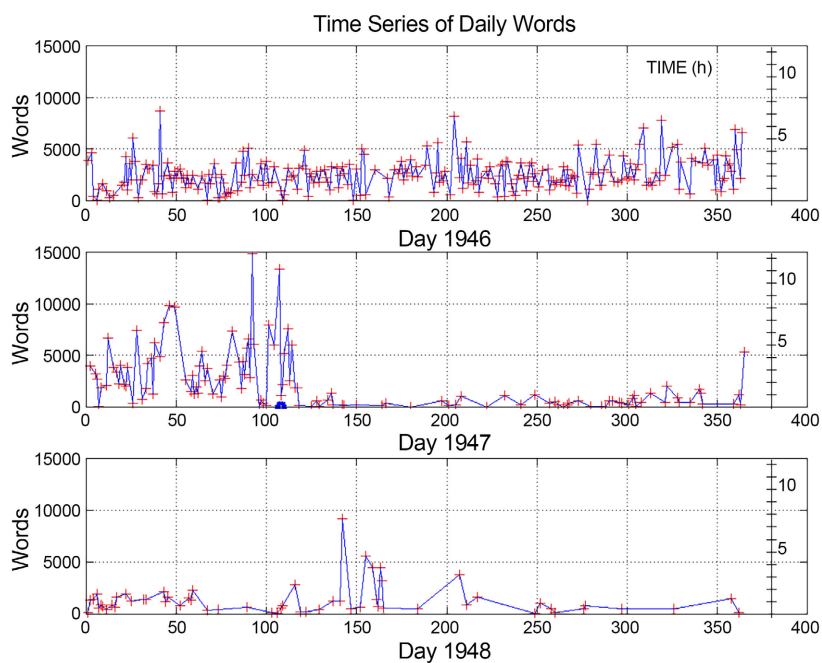


Figure 8. Time series of daily words. Upper panel: 1946; Middle panel: 1947; Lower panel: 1948. Crosses indicate the writing day. The ordinate time axis on the right assumes a 20 words per minute handwriting speed. The blue mark at day 108 in 1947 marks the date (18 April) when she wrote the letter to Mother Teresa Maria in which she offers all herself to God, including her intellectual skills.

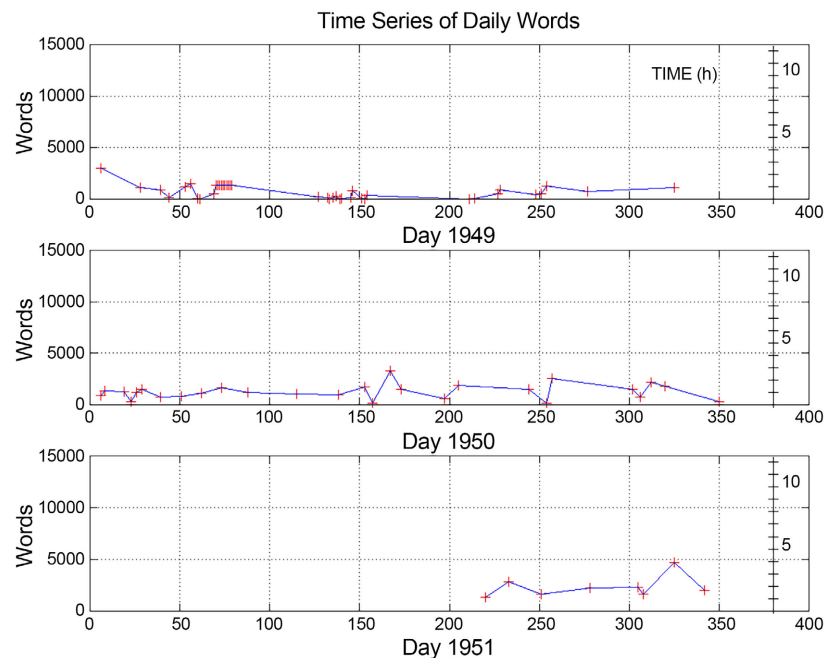


Figure 9. Time series of daily words. Upper panel: 1949; Middle panel: 1950; Lower panel: 1951. Crosses indicate the writing day. The ordinate time axis on the right assumes a 20 words per minute handwriting speed.

very much, as the time series of the year 1947 (**Figure 8**) clearly shows. In the last years of her life Maria Valtorta gradually cut herself off from reality becoming inactive and unable to communicate [27], till her death on 12 October 1961.

The time series of daily words can be converted, to a first approximation, to time series of writing time if we assume a steady handwriting speed, as it could be supposed regarding Maria Valtorta, according to Marta Diciotti's testimony recalled in Section 1. This rough conversion would allow us to estimate how many hours a day she spent writing, and therefore receiving—as she claims—visions.

Now, several studies have shown that fluent handwriting is associated with the generation of well-structured and imaginative texts—such as those written by Maria Valtorta—and that there is a strong link between developing fluency in handwriting and the ability to produce high quality written compositions [28], as Maria Valtorta did.

Now, by considering that: 1) Maria Valtorta was a fast writer; 2) she did not pause while writing; 3) she wrote without making any correction—as it can be seen in the notebooks—we assume an average speed of 20 words per minute, value largely mentioned in the literature as a reliable average value of fast handwriting speed (see the review in [29]). Therefore, we have reported in **Figures 5-9** an ordinate time axis labelled in hours on the right. We can see that the estimated writing time can reach the values mentioned by Marta Diciotti, 6 hours in the years 1944 to 1948, 12 hours in the year 1947. In other words, our estimates seem to be realistic, and, in any case, could be linearly scaled by varying the handwriting speed. In conclusion, in many days Maria Valtorta wrote for

many hours and in some days even twice such long writings.

4. Final Remarks

Maria Valtorta, bedridden since 1934 because paralyzed below the waist, wrote 13,193 pages in 122 school notebooks concerning alleged mystical visions, whose contents—about 2.64 million words—are now scattered in different books. She could write from 2 to 6 hours without pausing, with steady speed, and could do it twice in the same day. She never made corrections, was very proficient in Italian, well above the average.

We have studied her daily writing activity concerning only her alleged mystical experience—the largest part of her writings—with the main scope of establishing the time sequence of daily writing. This is possible because she diligently annotated the date of almost every writing; therefore, we have reconstructed the most reliable temporal sequence of daily texts and reported descriptive annual statistics, a direct and useful tool for assessing the main scope of the study.

By assuming a realistic handwriting speed, we have converted the time series of daily words into time series of writing time, by assuming a speed of 20 words per minute, a reliable average value of fast handwriting speed, applicable to Maria Valtorta. She wrote for 1340 days, about 3.67 years of equivalent contiguous writing time.

In conclusion, this paper should be considered as a first approach in evaluating the effort done, in terms of daily words and writing time, by a mystic turned out to be a very effective literary author, whose texts are interesting to read per se, beyond any judgement—not of concern here—on her alleged visions.

Acknowledgements

The Author wishes to thank Don Ernesto Zucchini, President of Fondazione Maria Valtorta onlus (<https://fondazionemariavaltorta.it/>), for his comments on the paper.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

References

- [1] Valtorta, M. (2001) Il Vangelo come mi è stato rivelato. Centro Editoriale Valtortiano, Isola del Liri.
- [2] Matricciani, E. and De Caro, L. (2017) Literary Fiction or Ancient Astronomical and Meteorological Observations in the Work of Maria Valtorta? *Religions*, **8**, Article No. 110. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel8060110>
- [3] Matricciani, E. and De Caro, L. (2018) A Mathematical Analysis of Maria Valtorta's Mystical Writings. *Religions*, **9**, Article No. 373.
- [4] Matricciani, E. and De Caro, L. (2020) Jesus Christ's Speeches in Maria Valtorta's Mystical Writings: Setting, Topics, Duration and Deep-Language Mathematical

- Analysis. *J*, **3**, 100-123. <https://doi.org/10.3390/j3010010>
- [5] De Caro, L., La Greca, F. and Matricciani, E. (2020) Saint Peter's First Burial Site According to Maria Valtorta's Mystical Writings, Checked against the Archeology of Rome in the I Century. *J*, **3**, 366-400. <https://doi.org/10.3390/j3040029>
- [6] La Greca, F. (2019) Gesù e il mondo greco-romano nell'Opera di Maria Valtorta. Centro Editoriale Valtortiano, Isola del Liri.
- [7] De Caro, L., La Greca, F. and Matricciani, E. (2021) Hidden and Coherent Chronology of Jesus' Life in the Literary Work of Maria Valtorta. *SCIREA Journal of Sociology*, **5**, 477-529. <https://doi.org/10.54647/sociology84718>
- [8] Valtorta, M. (2021) I miei libri, le mie letture. Centro Editoriale Valtortiano, Isola del Liri.
- [9] Pisani, E. (2010) Catalogo dei quaderni autografi di Maria Valtorta. Centro Editoriale Valtortiano, Isola del Liri.
- [10] Valtorta, M. (2006) I Quaderni del 1943. Centro Editoriale Valtortiano, Isola del Liri.
- [11] Valtorta, M. (2006). I Quaderni del 1944. Centro Editoriale Valtortiano, Isola del Liri.
- [12] Valtorta, M. (2006) I Quaderni del 1945-50. Centro Editoriale Valtortiano, Isola del Liri.
- [13] Valtorta, M. (2006) I Quadernetti. Centro Editoriale Valtortiano, Isola del Liri.
- [14] Valtorta, M. (2006) Il Libro di Azaria. Centro Editoriale Valtortiano, Isola del Liri.
- [15] Valtorta, M. (2006) Lezioni sull'Epistola di Paolo ai Romani. Centro Editoriale Valtortiano, Isola del Liri.
- [16] Zucchini, E. (2021) *La cattedrale di Maria Valtorta. Una guida all'Opera della grande mistica*. Fede e Cultura, Verona.
- [17] De Caro, L., La Greca, F. and Matricciani, E. (2021) The Search of St. Peter's Memory *ad catacumbas* in the Cemeterial Area *ad Duos Lauros* in Rome. *Heritage*, **4**, 479-506. <https://doi.org/10.3390/heritage4010029>
- [18] Centoni, A. (1987) Una vita con Maria Valtorta, Testimonianze di Marta Diciotti. Centro Editoriale Valtortiano, Isola del Liri.
- [19] Valtorta, M. (1997) Autobiografia. Centro Editoriale Valtortiano, Isola del Liri.
- [20] Valtorta, M. (2011) Lettere a Padre Migliorini. Centro Editoriale Valtortiano, Isola del Liri.
- [21] Valtorta, M. (2001) Lettere a Madre Teresa Maria. Centro Editoriale Valtortiano, Isola del Liri.
- [22] Valtorta, M. (2006) Lettere a Mons. Carinci. Centro Editoriale Valtortiano, Isola del Liri.
- [23] De Caro, L. (2017) I cieli raccontano. Vol. III, Centro Editoriale Valtortiano, Isola del Liri.
- [24] De Caro, L. (2019) I cieli raccontano. Vol. IV, Centro Editoriale Valtortiano, Isola del Liri.
- [25] Hopfen, H.J. (2003) Indice e carta della Palestina per "L'evangelo come mi è stato rivelato" di Maria Valtorta. Centro Editoriale Valtortiano, Isola del Liri.
- [26] Fréjavielle, E. (2020) Dizionario Valtortiano. Centro Editoriale Valtortiano, Isola del Liri.
- [27] Zucchini, E. (2019) Il cielo in una stanza. Vita di Maria Valtorta, Fede e Cultura,

Verona.

- [28] Connelly, V., Gee, D. and Walsh, E. (2007) A Comparison of Keyboarded and Handwritten Compositions and the Relationship with Transcription Speed. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, **77**, 479-492.
- [29] Warren, J. (2027) 25 Words per Minute—The Expected Undergraduate Writing Speed? *Journal of Neurodiversity in Higher Education*, No. 3, 5-21.