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Research Note: A Horoscope by André Breton

Nicholas Campion and John Frawley

Abstract. This research note considers a hand-drawn horoscope cast by André Breton, the founder of surrealism.

A catalogue produced by the Pompidou Centre in Paris in 1982, contained a horoscope cast by the surrealist writer and poet André Breton.¹ This is of considerable interest given Breton's status both as the founder of surrealism and as a student and practitioner of astrology.² The horoscope was captioned 'Horoscope de Paul Eluard dresse par André Breton, vers 1938'. There is no reference to the chart in the catalogue and no source is given. The catalogue also reproduces Eluard's hand-prints, but neither is anything is written about them.

There is a short biography of Eluard in the introduction to the English language translation of his collection *Love, Poetry*.³ Eluard was among the 'foremost and earliest' of those of Breton's friends who styled themselves "'specialists in revolt" [and] whose purpose was to extend the fundamental liberties available to the man and women of their time'.⁴ Stuart Kendall notes that Eluard's collections, *Capital of Pain* (1926) and *Love, Poetry* (1929), coincided with significant moments in the evolution of surrealism. Little of his poetry touches on celestial themes. A rare example is from *Love, Poetry*:

We are grateful to Bernadette Brady for her comments on Breton's horoscope for Eluard.

¹ *Eluard et ses amis peintres* (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1982), p. 9.

² Nicholas Campion, 'Surrealist Cosmology: André Breton and Astrology', *Culture and Cosmos*, Vol. 6 no 2 (Autumn/Winter 2002), pp. 45–56.

³ Stuart Kendall, 'Introduction: All the Names of the World', in Paul Eluard, *Love, Poetry* (Boston, MA: Black Widow Press, 2007), pp. 1–16.

⁴ Kendall, 'Introduction', p. 4.

Dawn I love you I have
 the whole night in my veins
 All night I watched you
 I have everything to divine⁵

Eluard features in the painting, 'Les Surrealistes' by Valentine Hugo, which is in a private collection: its current location is unknown but it was reproduced in the same volume as Eluard's chart.

Breton gave Eluard's birth data as 1 am, 14 December 1895, Saint-Denis in Paris. Breton's hand-drawn horoscope is given below together a recalculated version using Solar Fire. Breton's positions accord well with the computerised version. There are a number of notable features of this chart. First, it has degrees marked at which major aspects are formed to selected planets, suggesting a quick visual guide to identify transiting or progressed aspects. Second, the house meanings are included, suggesting that the chart is for instructional purposes, perhaps for Eluard. Third, the positions of the Ascendant and Midheaven are reversed from normal custom, perhaps suggesting a surrealist desire to challenge accepted conventions. However, alternatively, the reversal of the angular cusps may be a mistake, the marking of degrees may be student notes, and the insertion of house meanings may be for Breton's own benefit as a beginner. The problem with this theory is that, by his own account, Breton learnt 'the basics' of astrology in 1927, eleven years before he cast Eluard's chart.⁶ Ultimately little can be said about the chart except that it exists as a rare perhaps unique, astrological artifact produced by one of the twentieth century's most influential artists.

Fig. 1. Eluard's horoscope as drawn by Breton

⁵ Eluard, *Love, Poetry*, XX, 1 1–3, p. 61.

⁶ Campion, 'Surrealist Cosmology', p. 53.

Paul Eluard





'Les Surréalistes' by Valentine Hugo © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2013.
Eluard is at the top left.