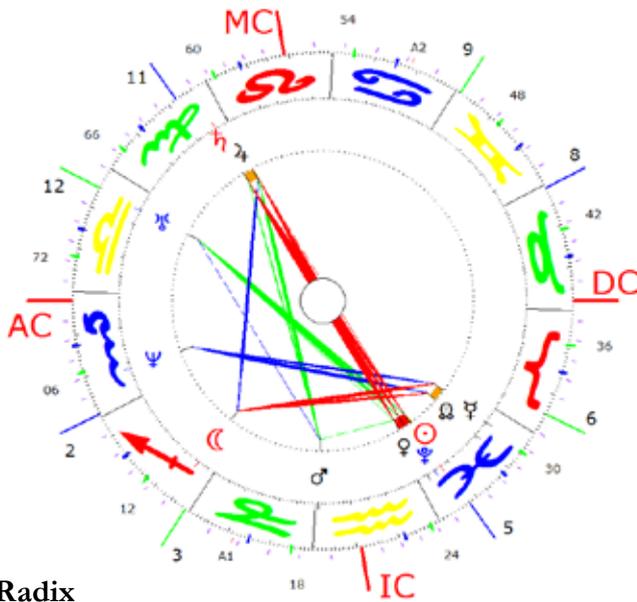




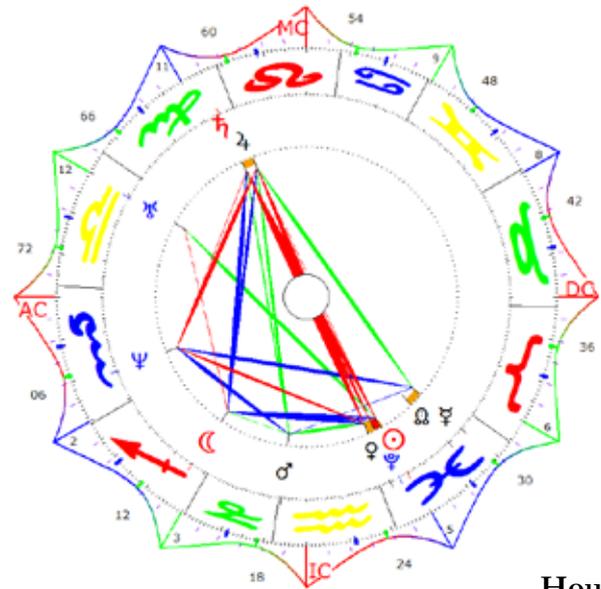
Victor Hugo Poet, Peer, Exile Par Excellence

by Wanda Smit

Wanda continues her series of 'biographies penned by the planets', taking a biographical look at the chart of Victor Hugo.



Radix



House

Victor Hugo - 26.02.1802, 22:30, Besançon, France

Victor Hugo's chart image resembles a boat firmly anchored in the collective sphere where most of Hugo's planets reside. Its two sails with Jupiter conjunct Saturn and Uranus at the top are what propelled Hugo forward. 'He was the one who forever moved on, striding ahead.' At the end of his life, admirers would fondly call him The Old Man of the Sea.

Consciousness

The chart is made up of linears and triangles, underpinning Hugo's constant doing and thinking. It lies in the Fixed Cross suggesting a drive to maintain security. As a child already during a Scorpionic phase that led to the loss of his father – to another woman and another country – and of the family's financial security, Hugo knew poverty. Throughout his life, he kept strict accounts of his own expenditure and demanded the same of his wife and his mistress.

Hugo's main area of engagement was in the second quadrant, that of instinct, which includes family, making an impression on the social scene and delivering service to others. Family was all important to him: he wrote many odes to his wife, Adele, and his four children, and later in life, to his grandchildren. (He was in fact the first poet who made the Child a subject of literature.) He



was an excellent paterfamilias, aided and abetted by his Mars in an idealistic 4th house, but where he shone most brilliantly, was in the literary salons of Paris and the political podiums from which he fought for universal suffrage.

In the radix, Hugo's centre is exposed to intrusion from the sixth to the 11th houses. Fortunately, in the house chart – and thus how he experienced reality – his core is protected by a long green aspect

linking his Mercury and Jupiter. From the outside, he looked green, like the thinker and dreamer he was. The overabundance of green aspects is reflected in Hugo's 'unusual superfluity of cerebral activity' as one critic put it. But on the inside, he was fired up by the augmented inner tension of powerful oppositions on the relationship axis.

Great Inner Tension

The three oppositions running through Hugo's core most likely underlay what his biographer, Andre Maurois, said of him:

He was a mass of contrasts. The dualism within himself of mother-father, Christianity-Voltaire (and his deism), beauty-cruelty, joys-nightmares, and angel-faun...

His Sun is in the 5th house of socialising, creativity and children, and in all three cases, he shone blindingly bright. According to his contemporary, Emile Deschamps: "Victor Hugo turns out odes and children without pausing." This was also due to his excessive Cardinal - and carnal - drive. Writes Maurois:

The dionysiac virility, which might have imperilled his mental balance, he expanded in bouts of triumphant sensuality, in walking; in riding, sea bathing and nocturnal expeditions.

Physically he had a strong presence – his Sun is conjunct earth-quaking Pluto – especially when his grandiloquence took over. With Libra as his rising sign, he charmed guests at fashionable literary salons, as well as monarchists, and later, republicans. His creativity manifested itself in Romantic poetry which was then as fashionable as pop songs are today.

His Sun is directly opposed by Saturn/Jupiter in the 11th house of ideals and like minded people. And indeed, he was criticised by several other poets and writers for being too excessive, particularly emotionally. The leading critic at the time, Saint-Beuve, wrote to Hugo – as if restrictive Saturn were speaking to expansive Jupiter:

My criticisms all come back to (...) a weakness in your talent (...) – excess; forcefulness carried to extremes.

Understandably so, for Hugo's Sun is in sensitive Pisces and his strongest ego planet is the Sagittarian Moon in expansive emotional communication. Furthermore, his emotional temperament is a tidal wave of 47 by sign to 11 by house: he would always be swept along by the deep currents running in him. It was from the undertow of his inner ocean that he drew his greatest inspirations.

His Moon underlay his success as the leading Romantic poet in France. Even when he was starting his 50-year long affair with Juliette Drouet, he wrote passionate letters to his wife who was having a liaison with the literary critic Saint-Beuve. Later, his addresses at political rallies were often seen as too poetic. On a mundane level, all the water in Hugo is what led to his great love of the ocean and particularly of Jersey and Guernsey. With his Sun and Pluto, both just over one degree from the 5th house low-point, he aptly referred to himself as a dreamer:

This somnambulism is human; a certain tendency of the personality, momentarily, or partially irrational is not rare occurrence. (...) but such venturing on the borders of darkness is not without danger.

Where his also creative brother, Eugene, lost his mind – as Hugo's daughter would do decades later – Hugo sublimated his chimeras in poetry. His acute awareness of dark depths is reflected in all the dungeons, tombs and people buried alive or squatting in low, dark cells in his writings.

In spite of his social and political success, he was a private person. After all, Uranus, his creative intelligence, is in the hidden world of the 12th house. The machinations

of politics drained his energy which he preferred to apply creatively.

Linked to Uranus are Mars and Venus in a Search Figure. And indeed, Hugo had to have a woman in his life, be it in the bedroom next door, on another floor of the apartment, or in another house, to be able to delve into the hidden world of his creativity. This quest only ended a few years before his death at age 83, although doctors had begged him after a stroke at age 70 to renounce all pleasures of the flesh.

His Mars in the 4th house of home and family is also linked to Saturn and Venus in an Irritation Triangle. (As much as he needed women, they also caused some irritation.) His mother, as symbolised by Saturn, was indeed the Great Teacher in Hugo's life. After a few years in a gloomy school in Spain, with a sinister monk as teacher and a hunchback as dormitory supervisor, Hugo's education was completely free of the constraints of conventional schooling. His mother introduced him to writers such as Rousseau and Voltaire when he was only 8. He could then already translate Tacitus from Latin into French. He also taught himself to write poetry by reading it aloud to improve his metre and rhyme.

Saturn is of course also a strict disciplinarian. One of Hugo's biographers (who had had a relationship with Hugo's mother) described her as "An austere and reserved tenderness, a regular and insistent discipline, little familiarity, no mysticism, logical and instructive conversation at a serious level well above that of childhood – such were the main characteristics of mother-love which was deep, devoted and vigilant." (An excellent description of Saturn.) Hugo's mother was an unflinching supporter of his ambition to become a writer.

Representing the Sun to Hugo as a child, his father Leopold shared the passions of the Revolution and was a fierce republican, eventually becoming a general in the army of Joseph Bonaparte in Spain. He was also creative, but his glory on the battlefield was greater than that in his writing.

The Sun is however opposed by Saturn and this was reflected in the tension between Hugo's father and mother when the former went off to Spain with a mistress whom he later married. Hugo and his brothers were all for their mother, against their father.

With his Mars in the 4th house of home and family, Hugo was a powerful paterfamilias to his wife and 4 children, all of whom he would outlive. He was happiest at home with the family, especially when his AP was traversing this house. "I stay at home, where I am happy. I dandle my daughter, and have as a companion the angel who is my wife," he wrote in his journal.

But the Mars in Hugo did not only yearn for the Great Teacher, he was also aware of Venus. He fell in love in Spain for the first time at the age of 9 – during a Venus square – with an Andalusian 14-year old, Pepita.

It was there that I saw for the first time, gleaming in the darkest corner of my being, that indescribable light which is the divine breaking of the dawn of love.

His high innate mutability – 67 by sign, 33 by house – enabled his awareness to grow constantly. He also moved often, living at various addresses in Paris as his family grew, then in Belgium at the beginning of his exile and finally in Jersey and Guernsey for 20 years. It was in Guernsey, far from the madding crowd, that he wrote most prolifically. With his Sun so near a low-point, he needed to spend most of his time on his own – hence his insistence on family and mistresses not crowding his private space.

Shifts in Consciousness

In both the Radix and House Chart, there is an overabundance of green, awareness-creating aspects. And indeed, his awareness grew in leaps and bounds with every change in his life: from a love of nature in childhood, to horrific impressions in Italy – at age 5 – of bleeding, raw gibbets of human flesh hanging in trees; to awe-inspiring cathedrals in Spain at the age of 9; to great French philosophers and the greatest poet at the time, Chateaubriand; to inspiring literary salons and the peaks of creativity; to political intrigues in Paris and finally, to Jersey and Guernsey where he adored the constant movement of the waves.

In his mid teens, when his consciousness was focused on the third house of communication, he started creating poems, aspiring to be as great as Chateaubriand, the leading poet at the time. At age 15, he entered a poem in the Academie Francaise's poetry competition and was awarded an honourable mention. Two years later, he won first prize, the Golden Lily, proving to be, according to members of the Academie des Jeux Floraux who had read the poem, "a riddle for which only the Muses hold the key." They now called him "the sublime child", a label that Hugo wore with pride. This sublime child was born at the first crossing of the Radix and Nodal charts. It was the beginning of his lifelong vocation as a master of words, which would undergo another major shift at the second crossing.

At age 15, he launched together with his two brothers a literary magazine for which he contributed, over 16 months, 112 articles and 27 poems. Saint-Beuve believed Hugo had the power to give everyday events a dramatic intensity. "His every experience burned in the volcanic heat of his passions." What an apt description for Hugo's Sun conjunct Pluto!

In his late teens, he fell in love with Adele Foucher whom he had known since childhood and whose parents were against his being seen with her and thus creating gossip. Determined, Hugo pursued Adele, writing countless love letters, and eventually married her at age 20, just as his AP conjoined Mars and soon after his mother had died (1821). In a letter to Adele, at age 19, he was already aware that "love, for the world at large,

is nothing but a carnal appetite." He wanted his soul to love, not his body. We shall see how, once he was exposed to salons and theatres where beautiful women abounded, he couldn't live up to this high-minded ideal of love. He needed his women in his quest for creativity.

When his AP was traversing the fourth house of home and family, he excelled in his role as husband. Saint-Beuve described Hugo's *Odes et Ballades* thus:

If one imagines, as intensely as one can, all that love contains of purity and chastity within the bonds of marriage, all that God can find most sacred in the unions of two souls; if, in short, one sets oneself dreaming of ecstatic pleasure swept heavenwards upon the wings of prayer, it will be as nothing to what Monsieur Hugo has realized and perfected... (p119)

He was greatly honoured when the title Chevalier for the Legion d'Honneur was bestowed on him at age 23. It was the beginning of his imposing activities on the upcoming social scene. But then, with three planets in the 5th house – Venus, Pluto and the Sun – Hugo was bound to be a force to be reckoned with socially. Not only was he the leading Romantic poet, he also established *La Muse Francaise*, a literary magazine, together with other poets, writers and the curator of the library, Charles Nodier. A leading debate was the difference between Classicism and Romanticism.

Hugo organised expeditions for writers and painters which inevitably ended up at restaurants where he read from his recently published poetry collection, *Les Orientales*. One of the guests commented: "Not a single weak line. He fairly bludgeons one." At age 30, Hugo was at the first pinnacle of his success: *Les Orientales* had created a small fortune for him, his mastery of language and rhythm was unsurpassed and he was the Master to all the young men of the rising generation, such as the symbolist poet Baudelaire who said of him: "Never was royalty more legitimate, more natural, more wholeheartedly acclaimed."

In his late twenties, he started writing for the theatre. He was so involved in the staging of the melodrama *Hernani* that he didn't realise that Saint-Beuve was having a relationship with his wife who found Hugo a tyrannical master and too demanding sexually. He was devastated at having lost the trust and closeness of his wife and his best friend who said to him:

...when you are in the grip of passion, you... see in the objects on which you gaze, the colour only that you give to them and make of them the embodiment of phantoms which are of your own creating.

Neither Saint-Beuve nor Adele could bear Hugo's strong projections. An abyss suddenly loomed. When in 1830 his Age Point was at the low-point in the fifth house in 1826, he found himself in a place of "monastic calm, suited to a poet, hidden away at the far end of a shady avenue." He now wrote the melancholic *Les Feuilles d'Automne*. "Where is happiness?" one poem asked. He found refuge in his writing and spent the next year

on *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* in which the main characters assumed the primitive grandeur of epic myths as if he were drawing them from his own dark depths. Ananke (fatality) was the main theme. Saint-Beuve saw in Hugo “a sort of deep depression in his resignation, which seems to yield the fight to Destiny.”

More losses were to follow. Due to his pride and arrogance as *The Writer*, Hugo alienated many former friends. He now publicly stated what he had written privately in his diary: “My ambition is to be Chateaubriand or nothing else.”

In his early thirties, when his AP was in the 6th house of service to others, he wrote more for theatre as melodramas were more lucrative than novels. *La Roi s’amuse* was however banned as it made fun of the monarchy. According to the minister, several passages constituted an outrage on public manners. This was the beginning of Hugo’s problems with the powers that be. It was at the theatre that he met the love of his life, the actress Juliette Drouet. His Venus was once again fired up by a square.

Juliette had no income, couldn’t make it as an actress and depended on rich protectors. Hugo’s jealous Moon in Scorpio was aghast at this arrangement. All he could do was turn Juliette into his secretary. She would make copies of his writings for the rest of her life. Although he provided for her and her daughter financially, she had to live on an extremely tight budget and provide daily proof of her expenditure. She was also not allowed to go out alone. She loved him so intensely that she put up with this arrangement for many years.

In 1833 Hugo rented a large apartment in Place Royale. The Venus in him turned this into a royal apartment with his collection of bric-a-brac, red damask in the rooms, Gothic and Renaissance furniture and Venetian chandeliers. But although the rooms were of baronial splendour, the apartment was in a working class area. It heralded the beginning of Hugo’s engagement with the poor.

His North Node was now pointing him in the direction of his soul’s journey in his lifetime: service to others. He started questioning his literary success. Was he doing anything for the poor working class? Literary fame was not all he wanted. He wanted to be a sociological writer. Of course, he was also aspiring to a political career. This happened at the time his consciousness came across Mercury and the essence of his communications. (Also when, in the House Chart, Mercury in the 5th house was forming a quincunx with Jupiter in the 11th.)

During the low point in the 7th house of close personal relationships, Hugo experienced such a deep depression that another writer, Paul Claudel, said: ‘...it was as though Victor Hugo could not fight free from his struggle with ghosts.’ He also lost friends. The German writer, Heinrich Heine, maintained “almost all his old friends have abandoned him (...) it is his egotism that has affronted them.”

He also ‘lost’ his beloved daughter, Leopoldine, who married and moved to Le Havre. At the same time, Hugo’s play *Les Burgraves* was a flop. He now stopped writing for the stage. He tried to get away from his losses by going with Juliette to Spain, that country which had inspired him so greatly as a child, but to no avail.

Death was in my heart (...) everything for me was gloomy and funereal. I felt that the island was a vast coffin set upon the sea with the moon as its candle...

Hugo had already been elected to the august Academie Francaise. The next step to fulfil his ambition would be a peerage which he got in 1845. He now saw himself as a future statesman. He was flying too high “soaring in the great spaces of the eternal, but a blast of wind broke both his wings.”

When Hugo’s AP entered the 8th house of death and rebirth, he suffered major losses. His beloved daughter Leopoldine and her husband drowned when their boat capsized during a violent storm. He was devastated and tried to drown his sorrows with a succession of lovers (of whom Juliette didn’t know.) From 1847 to 1850 he was prey to a craving for fresh meat, be they debutantes, adventuresses, chambermaids or courtesans. Nothing relieved his misery. Perhaps his meditating on life after death and developing a religious philosophy, which included the occult, made Scorpio’s sting more bearable. But it was the riots of the February Revolution in 1848 which dragged him back into life: to the birth of him as politician.

Hugo felt strongly that France wasn’t ready for a republic. Rather, he favoured a democratic monarchy in which universal suffrage would uplift the poor. But when the freedom of the press was limited, he founded a periodical *L’Evenement* which soon took up an anti-presidential position. His authority in the chamber was weakened and Hugo realised that he was not a man of politics, “but a free man.” Freedom was what had always driven him. Once he’d made a political move from the monarchists to the republicans, he – rather than the king – became the favourite of the people.

In his relationships, it was also time to pay his dues. Always sensual, he’d had a relationship with another mistress, Leonie d’Aunet, for years. When Leonie sent all the letters he’d written to her to Juliette, Juliette wanted to sever the bonds of their decade long relationship. Hugo had to choose between the two. Juliette won. The emotional turmoil he went through with his mistresses happened when his Scorpionic moon was directly opposed by his AP.

By 1851, his anti-government stance had landed him in grave danger. His two sons had already been imprisoned for their articles in *L’Evenement*. Juliette found hiding places for Hugo till he, under a false name and passport, could flee to Brussels. But even here, he and other French exiles were too outspoken:

“What! Because we’ve had a Napoleon the Great, we now have a Napoleon the Little?”

At the time of the second crossing point in 1853, Hugo's life changed dramatically. He was no longer part of the salons or the political upheavals in Paris. He was finally free from all the turmoil. Over the next decade, he would create his best works.

He and Juliette left Brussels for Jersey where his family joined him. A lover of the ocean, he was happy on Jersey Island, but once again because of his strong political views was expelled. After a horrific hanging which turned into a drawn-out torture, Hugo wrote a letter of protest to Lord Palmerston, mentioning his first encounter with him:

What most struck me was the exquisite way in which your cravat was arranged. I was told you were famous for your tying of knots. I realize now that you are skilled also in trying knots for other people...

The Hugos had to leave Jersey and in 1856 went to Guernsey. All these new vistas opened up for Hugo when his consciousness was traversing the 9th house of expanded horizons and travel. He had reached the peak he'd always aimed for – at a time when his AP was right on the MC, the highest point in a chart.

Not having published anything in France for 10 years, Hugo would now create at a dizzying speed. First came *Les Contemplations* considered, at the time, the most magnificent words ever written in French. This was followed by *La Légende des Siècles*, a history of mankind over the centuries. According to Mauras, "His vision is that of a demiurge existing outside time and space."

Then came *Les Misérables* in 1861. All three were masterpieces, highly acclaimed in France, even by Hugo's enemies. This was followed by *William Shakespeare* which addresses the question of genius. When his AP was moving through the 10th house, Hugo was undeniably an authority in French literature. A contemporary said of Hugo's language:

By comparison, other men merely stammer. He is a mountain, a sea...

In 1865 and 1867 – with his AP now in the 11th house – Hugo was experiencing the exact opposite of his life at the salons. His AP first conjoined Jupiter, then Saturn, those two planets directly opposed by Venus, Pluto and the Sun. He now assumed Jupiterian qualities:

I am accused of being arrogant. That is perfectly true: my arrogance is the source of my strength.

The mansion he had bought in Guernsey with the fortune he'd received for *Les Contemplations* and *Les Misérables*, both extremely popular in France despite him not being there, was perched on top of a rock and had breathtaking views of the Channel Islands, as if Olympus, one of his characters created in his own image, were finally on Mount Olympus. It was called Hauteville (Highville) House, an apt description for the lofty heights Hugo had achieved. "It gave upon the sky and on immensity," he wrote. It seems that he had fulfilled his dream: to become Chateaubriand. He was also reaching for spiritual heights,

meditating on Life and Death and the freedom of the soul which is, he believed, what implies its immortality.

As much as Hugo was inspired by his exile, his family missed Paris, and by 1867, had all returned there. Hugo remained with Juliette (and a few chambermaids). He would only return when liberty returned to France. He loved solitude, because it set him free.

Solitude provides...a divine bewilderment. It is the smoke of the burning bush.

Although he was not in France, he remained the people's hero. During the Exposition Universelle which showcased the best of everything in France, his play *Hernani* was staged to overpowering acclaim.

A few years after the death of his wife in 1867, Hugo returned to France where a frenzied crowd at the station welcomed back their hero. His sons had founded a journal, *Le Rappel*, to attack the Second Empire. It was a great success. The Emperor capitulated and the 4th Republic was proclaimed. But Hugo didn't want to get involved in politics.

My fault is that I always tell the truth, and what can be more unwelcome than that?

Back in Paris, he pursued women again. His relationship with 18-year old Marie Mercier inspired more poetry. "But he was not just the poet of mists and clouds and sea, but also the poet of the poor." said she.

The low point at the end of 1871 pre-empted great losses for Hugo: his daughter was admitted to an asylum and one of his sons died. Once again, his sensuality helped him through the depression. But by 1872, he longed to get away from it all and returned to Guernsey with Juliette. He immediately started work on *Quatre-vingt Treize*, considered by some to be his best work. He took yet another lover much to Juliette's distress.

In 1873, his last son died. The paterfamilias now only had two grand-children for whom he would write *The Art of Being a Grandfather* in 1879. In 1874 he returned to France. Then in 1875, he experienced a sudden failure of memory and a light stroke. His 80th birthday was celebrated as a National Festival with a procession of six-hundred thousand admirers.

Juliette died in 1883 after 50 years as Hugo's big love. He went into mourning. On May 22nd, 1885, his last words were: "I see a black light." The nation rendered to this poet the same honours they'd normally reserve for a sovereign: two million Frenchmen followed the hearse to the Pantheon.

Baudelaire described Hugo as "one of those rare spirits sent by Heaven into this world." And Paul Valery, also a symbolist poet, said: "He was the very embodiment of power." Hugo had finally realised the vision he had described in his journal: "When I was small, I had before my eyes the spectacle of someone who was great."

All quotes from the biography Victor Hugo by André Maurois

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