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# Postcards and Psychograms: The Science of Handwriting Analysis

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There are many ways in which people test personality. They may take a personality quiz online or ask their friends about their personalities or they can take a psychological test known as a psychogram. One such psychogram is handwriting analysis or graphology. Handwriting analysis can be used to look at personality traits or it can be used to determine emotions that a person is feeling when they are writing things like a postcard or a letter. This essay will look at the history of handwriting analysis and then will analyze four postcards from the 1920's using Paul D. Hugon's handwriting analysis test.

According to the British Institute of Graphologists, handwriting analysis or graphology started in seventeenth century. People believed that if you studied the handwriting of someone you could determine certain traits that they possessed and analyze these traits. Today this analysis has been used all around the world and is used in fields such as psychology and forensic science. You can determine certain traits that people have by looking at the way the write certain letters, like the letter *T* or the letter *e*. Other traits can apparently be determined in the way that a word is written. For as long as graphology or handwriting analysis has been around some people have considered it a pseudoscience whereas other believe in it and believe it is scientific way to prove someone's personality traits.

There are many ways that one can go about doing graphology. You could do a test online, and there are phone apps you can get; you could go to a professional or you could purchase a booklet with a test in it. One of these booklets that, sadly, cannot be purchased anymore is Paul D. Hugon's *Psychograms* test booklet (Image 6). This was a book that you were able to buy and had sheets that you could tear out and use to determine information about people's handwriting. Paul D. Hugon was born in France in 1882 and came to the United States around 1914. Not much is known about his life, but it is known that he lived in Los Angeles and in the 1920's he was selling the psychograms test to do handwriting analysis. He died in 1958 in California.

Thanks to the Drs. Nicholas and Dorothy Cumming Center for the History of Psychology, Hugon's *Psychograms* test has been saved and it will be used to do the analysis of the postcards. In this paper we are not trying to test the validity of

the method, but to simply try it out and see what happens. All of the postcards that have been analyzed in this project are from the same time period of the test and there will be four that will be analyzed here. The postcards are from the David P. Campbell postcard collection at the Drs. Nicholas and Dorothy Cummings Center for the History of Psychology.

SUPPLEMENTARY CHARACTER CHART	
<p><b>A</b>FTER you have made the simple and interesting tests provided for in Hugon's Psychograms, you may wish to know a little more of the art of Graphology. There are several hundred signs known to graphologists, and there are a few experts who can give an accurate diagnosis even of diseases and physical infirmities, as well as of mental states.</p> <p>The following chart gives the character first. But do not jump at conclusions. Until you have achieved great proficiency in this art, give the benefit of the doubt to the person whose handwriting you are reading: mistakes will often be due to your own incomplete observations.</p>	
CHARACTER	HANDWRITING INDICATION
Mental (intellectual) temperament	Generally small writing, rapid, often with uneven alignment.
Social (commercial) temperament	Round hand; rather large pleasing curves.
Motive (executive) temperament	Heavy movement from left to right; heavy pressure on t-bars.
Esthetic Taste	Beautiful curves.
Literary Taste	Many letters, especially capital letters, like printing.
Poetic Taste	Wide margins on both sides of the page.
Linguistic Taste	Many ligatures (linkings of letters and words).
Musical Taste	Curved base-line of letters.
Aggressiveness	Forward and upward strokes.
Defensiveness	Leftward and downward strokes.
Skilfulness (mental)	High upper stroke of small p's.
Inventiveness	Unusually clever linkings and forms.
Domineering, Despotism	High flying, heavy t-bars (above the stem).
Obstinacy	Heavy downward strokes, extending below the line.
Quarrelsomeness	Many sharp angles in the writing, especially at the base-line of letters.
Bad temper	Angular writing; sharply pointed t-bars, flying to the right of the stem; heavy pressure.
Hot-head (with kind heart)	Sharply flying t-bars to right of stem, in a writing with curved base-lines.
Commercial skill	Complicated lassoes under or about the signature.
Spirituality	Upward-ending small d's without a return stroke.
Altruism, Benevolence	Capital letters linked to the small letters without raising the pen, in a round-base writing, especially with a firm hand.
Caution	Dashes used in place of periods. Period after the signature.
Love of the spectacular	High and large rounded upper curves to capital P, R, G, S etc. (the "Proscenium arch").
Thrift	Steady margin; even alignment; fairly wide writing with curtailed final strokes; initial coils or hooks on some capital letters.
Extravagance	Margin getting wider as it goes down; wide, high writing; much extended final strokes of letters.
Conceit, Vanity	Foot of capital letters raised above the line, as on a pedestal; signature underscored with wavy forward stroke or with stairway strokes.
Sensuality	Very heavy downstrokes in a writing which has also some very fine cross strokes; muddy, clogged loops of e's and l's.
Heart disease	Sudden interruption of the line, especially in the upper loop of a letter, as if the pen had been lifted off the paper.
Abdominal diseases	Crippled lower loops of g's and y's.

Image 1: Psychogram analysis page

Link to the finding aid:

<http://cdm15960.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/p15960coll4/id/8210/rec/2>

## Postcards and Analysis

The first postcard that will be analyzed was sent in 1928 from Massachusetts. The transcription of the message on the back of the postcard (Image 2) says “Well here we are 'At the Rude Bridge that arched the Flood.' We visited the Wayside Inn and on our way to Lexington and Boston.” The postcard was probably sent to a family member or friend, but unfortunately this will probably never be known.



Image 2: New England Postcard

By using Paul D. Hugon's psychograms analysis as outlined in Image 1, above, there are a few things that stand out in the person's handwriting and these things can indicate the type of personality that they had. The first thing that stood out is the “round hand, rather large pleasing curves” that are displayed in their handwriting. This can indicate that this person has a “social (commercial)

temperament.” The second thing that is noticeable about the handwriting is the “many ligatures (linkings of letter and words)” present in the postcard. This could indicate that this person has a linguistic taste. The last personality trait that can be seen is altruism or benevolence, which is present in the way that this person has their capital letter linked to their lowercase letters without raising the pen in a round base writing especially with a firm hand.

By reading the inscription on the postcard we cannot confirm or deny this writer’s personality traits. Hopefully some time in the future we may be able to, but as of right now it is impossible to know from just the message alone. The image on the front of the postcard cannot give us any indication either.

The second postcard was also sent in 1928 and it was sent from München. The picture on the front depicts a mountain trail and it is mentioned in the postcard. The postcard was sent to an aunt and the message on the postcard say “Dear aunt Zoe and family I am sending this to Ava for I haven’t your address and I thought the children will be there the dots represent trails made in the snow up here 1/8 mile high. Not bad for a morning climb. Love Ralph and Mildred.”

According to the psychogram test there are four personality traits that can be observed on this postcard. The first thing is that the author has linguistic taste. Hugon’s booklet says that this personality trait can be seen in the many ligature present in the writing or the many times when the letters are linked. Secondly, it can be seen in this postcard that the author has musical tastes. This can be seen in the curved base-lines of the letters. The third thing that booklet tells us is that the author has sensuality, which can be seen in the muddy or clogged pores of the letters *E* and *L*. Finally, the test can apparently show us that the author could have heart disease. This can be seen in the way that the line abruptly stops like the pen is being lifted from the paper and can especially be seen in the upper loops of letters.

Analysis of this postcard was a fun to do, and it was interesting to see what the test could come up with. I do not know if this person suffers from heart disease or not, but it is probably doubtful due to the fact that they were climbing mountains and seemed to be having a good time doing it. With sensuality, it may be possible that the author was felling very sensual when being on a mountain especially with how the phrased the last line of the postcard saying that it was “not bad for a morning climb.” As with the other postcard the other two traits are impossible to know unless we can find living relatives someday.



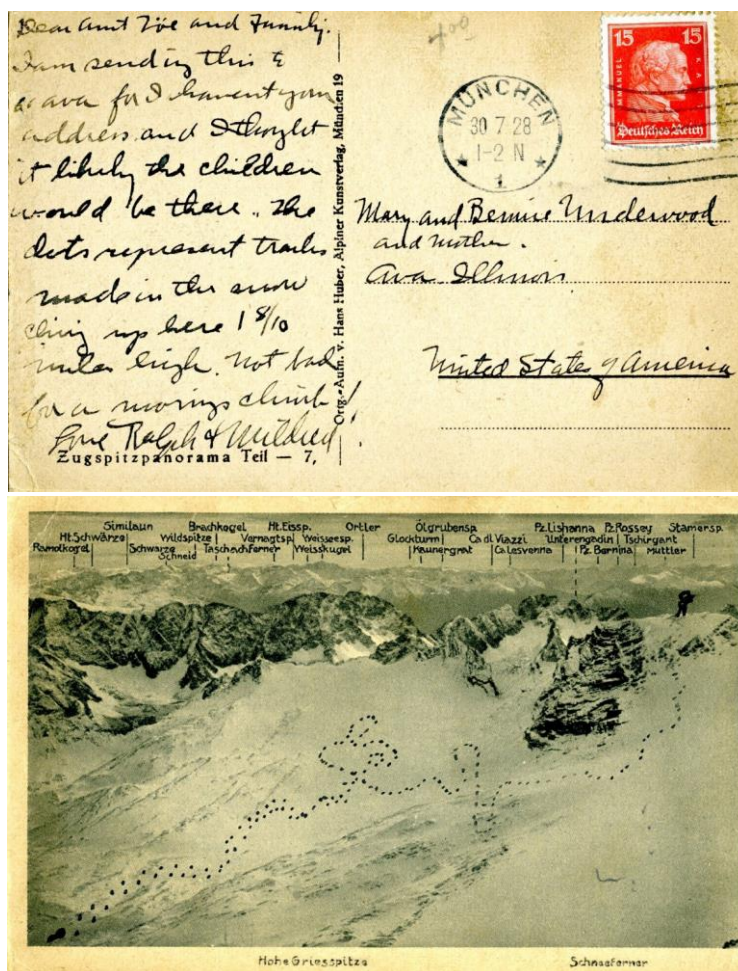


Image 3: German postcard

The third postcard that will be analyzed was sent in the 1920's from Brussels. The message on the postcard says "do I or do I not dare to explore this card and Boston air – a famous fountain in this famous city but should he not step behind the fence? Also, he is made of iron and can not move away. No must follow his example!! Yours RH."

There are a couple of interesting personality traits seen in the handwriting on this postcard. The first trait is "Mental (intellectual) temperament." This is shown in the small rapid handwriting that is seen in the postcard. The second trait that can be seen is aggressiveness. This can be seen in the forward and upward strokes of the writing. The third trait that can be seen is that the author has a hot head with a kind heart. This can be seen in the sharply flying T-bars to the right of the stem, in a writing with curved base lines. The final trait that can be seen is that

the author has abdominal disease. This can be seen in the crippled lower loops of the g's and y's.

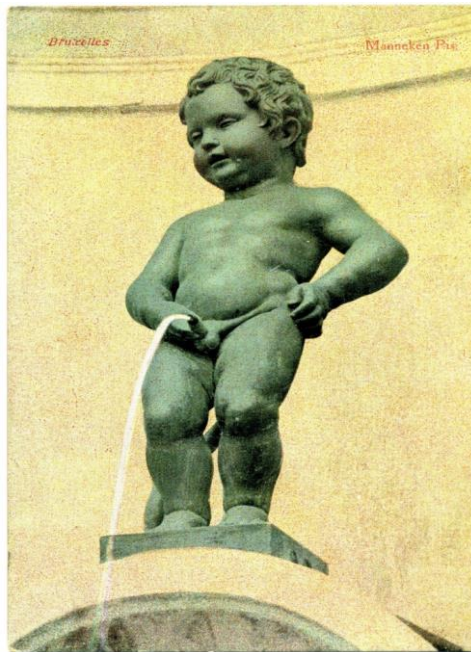
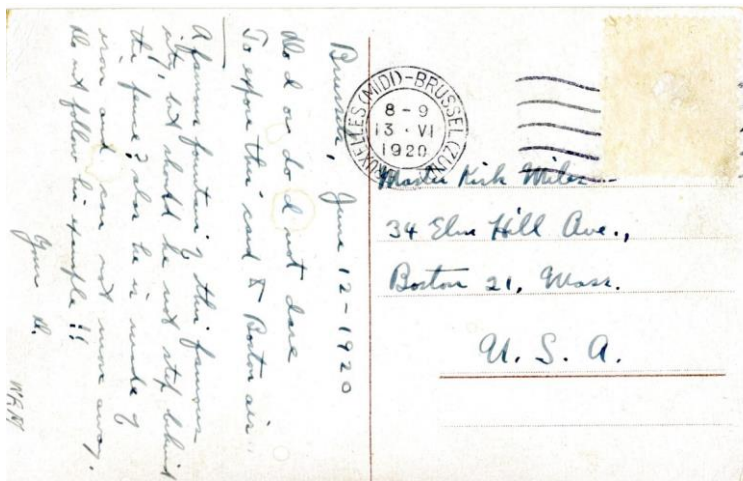


Image 4: Brussels Postcard

I thought that this one was particularly interesting (and maybe my favorite one). I think that the intellectual temperament can be seen in the way that the postcard is written. It is very cleverly written and interesting to read. I'm not entirely sure if I can see the aggressiveness or the hot head. Maybe a kind heart though with the way that he describes the statue. Unfortunately, it is not known

whether the author had abdominal disease, but it would be interesting to know if they did if we ever find any more history on them.

The last postcard that will be analyzed was sent in 1921, from Michigan. The message written on this postcard is “Dear ones all: just think its Wednesday and not even a card from you this week are you all sick or what is the matter? We are all well only I’ve had an awful headache all day- think it’s a little better since dinner tho. Mr. B’s folks invited us to go out to their farm home with them last night, so my evening was gone when we got home but I’ll try to write a letter tonight. Guess that deal I wrote you about is O.K. will write more letter. If nothing happens the S. Haven trip is a go too. Hope you are all well and will write to you soon. Love and kisses to all Alice.”

The first personality trait that can be seen in the handwriting is that the writer has linguistic taste. This can be seen in the linking of the letters and the words. Personality trait number two that has been revealed in this analysis is sensuality. According to the booklet this trait can be seen in the muddy or clogged loops of the letters *E* and *L*. The third trait that can be seen is that the author possesses obstinacy (this is another word for stubbornness). This is shown in the heavy downward strokes of some of the letters. The last trait that has been found is that the author is showing caution. This can be seen where dashes are used instead of using periods.

In this example it is difficult to show linguistic taste or sensuality, but we do have some evidence for the other personality traits being there. Obstinacy or stubbornness can be seen in how the author is writing to her family and is stubborn about the fact that the family should be writing to them more often. Analysis shows the writer being cautious by using the dashes to ask a question about whether their family is sick or not. The author is trying not to upset their family because they want them to write, but at the same time is upset with them for not writing, so they are being cautious.





Image 5: Michigan Postcard

Even though graphology and handwriting analysis is considered by some people as a pseudoscience, a few of the personality traits that the test claimed people had showed through the content of their postcards. Other traits could not be gained just from analyzing the handwriting on these postcards though. We need more information about this person to determine certain traits. All though I am not quite sure that graphology really works this was an interesting and fun final

project to do. I was able to glimpse into some of the lives of people who lived long ago and see what they might have been like during their lives.

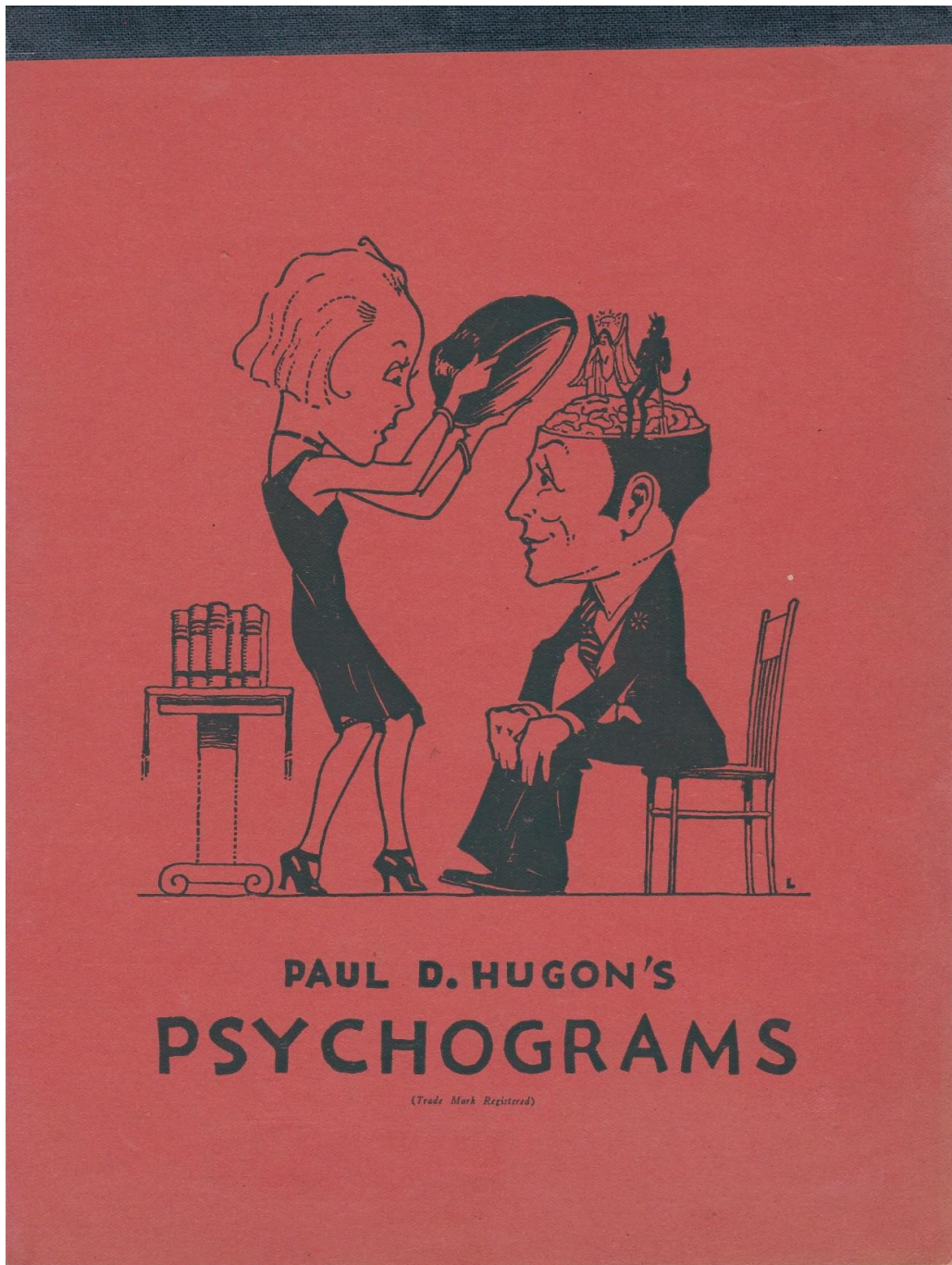


Image 6: Paul D. Hugon's *Psychograms*

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