



Saturn – A New Look at an Old Devil

Liz Greene

(San Francisco, USA: Red Wheeler/Weiser, LLC, 2011 [1990] [1976])

The book opens with a quote from Alice Bailey's *Esoteric Astrology*, which sets the tone for what follows. The key idea here is that there is more to Saturn than many of us learned during the early part of our astrological education and, contrary to what some believe, his influence is more than one of bringing disaster. Perhaps more significant, is the notion that Saturn is also the God of opportunity.

Personally, I have never related Saturn to 'disaster' but certainly to 'restriction'. However, similar to the function (or benefit) of the square aspect, I tend to consider Saturn within the context of opportunity. A Square might be described as holding a degree of tension or friction which, if we act upon, is an opportunity. Consider for a moment Newton's first law, the *Law of Inertia*, which states that nothing will change without some degree of force or friction. What Greene seems to emphasize for us is that we need to consider Saturn from the perspective of what we can learn or gain from challenging experiences.

The forward by Robert Hand is, I think, particularly useful although I'm not sure I agree with his, and Greene's, view that the emphasis in interpretation of Saturn should be on the House instead of the Sign.¹ I have found both to be equally relevant.

As the planet most related to restricting freedom and fixing destiny, many astrologers still refer to Saturn as the God of Karma. Hand states the importance of the book as a 20th century contribution towards developing the idea that astrology is not a map of one's fixed destiny, but a potential map of the unfolding of the authentic higher self. Some influence from Rudyhar is evident.

Greene picks this up in the Introduction. She states that 'In many instances Saturn seems to correspond with painful circumstances which appear not to be connected with any weakness or flaw on the part of the person himself but which merely "happen", thereby earning the planet the title, "Lord of Karma".² However, she draws upon ancient teachings that tell us Saturn 'is the Dweller at the Threshold, the keeper of the keys to the gate and that it is through him alone that we may achieve eventual freedom through self-understanding.'³ She goes on to say that 'whether we use psychological or esoteric terminology, the basic fact remains the same: human beings do not earn free will except through self-discovery, and they do not attempt self-discovery until things become so painful that they have no other choice.'⁴ One does not need to be restricted within the realm of astrology to pick up on this idea. In the 1980's, Tony Robbins, harkening back to Freud's pain-pleasure principle, based much of his "Personal Power" program on the premise that people will do far more to avoid pain than to gain pleasure.

¹ Liz Greene, Saturn, p.6

² Liz Greene, Saturn, p. 11.

³ Liz Greene, Saturn, p. 11.

⁴ Liz Greene, Saturn, p. 11.



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Greene puts forward the idea that ‘frustrating experiences...connected with Saturn are...necessary as they are educational in a practical as well as a psychological sense.’⁵ When faced with a difficult situation, one might ask ‘what can I learn from this experience?’, or to quote Tony Robbins’ Personal Power Program from the 1980s, ‘*what could be great about this?*’

Most of the book is somewhat ‘cookbook-like’, though it is presented in a slightly more creative way by grouping the first 4 Chapters (about Signs and Houses) by element. Greene starts with Water (Chapter 1) and ends with Fire (Chapter 4), which I thought a bit strange and for a Capricorn Moon it seems out of order. I also question the conflation of Sign and House which has the potential to misdirect readers, especially those new to Astrology. There doesn’t seem to be enough expressed latitude for nuanced interpretation, perhaps indicative of a more archaic approach to the horoscope than recent texts and teaching would suggest.

The Chapters ‘*Aspects in the Birth Chart*’ and ‘*In Synastry*’ are, perhaps, the most beneficial parts of the book. With respect to aspects, Greene stresses that the nature of an aspect does not alter the intrinsic energy of the planets involved but, rather, ‘it is the contact itself which is important.’ It indicates something about the ease (or difficulty) with which their contact ‘is integrated into the whole of the psyche.’⁶ She goes further to discuss the difference between Saturn in contact with personal and social planets versus the outer planets. The latter, she suggests, indicates a ‘capacity for creative expression and self-understanding’ and, in both cases there is both a ‘transforming quality as well as a destructive one.’⁷ In Roman mythology, Saturn is related to Janus, the god of gates, doors and transitions. Just as Janus has two faces, there is a dual nature to Saturn, a key factor to keep in mind when considering astrological placements. This plays out within the context of relationships as well as the individual chart for which Greene offers examples of Saturn contacts and aspects which are quite illustrative.

Overall, the book is worth reading. Greene’s style is clear, and she uses psychological references and her own observations to effectively get across the key ideas. However, I would not rely on this text as the final word on Saturn. There is no need to feel restricted...explore other options as well as this one.

It is worth ending with some meaningful comments from Greene herself. ‘There is no fast and easy method of making a friend of Saturn.’⁸ However, through persistence and wisdom it is possible to appreciate the lessons and the sense of humour Saturn seems to have, ‘when we have become subtle enough to understand his irony.’⁹

⁵ Liz Greene, Saturn, p. 11.

⁶ Liz Greene, Saturn, p. 93.

⁷ Liz Greene, Saturn, p. 146.

⁸ Liz Greene, Saturn, p. 14.

⁹ Liz Greene, Saturn, p. 14.