

BARBIE'S WOMEN – A PLAY IN FOUR PARTS



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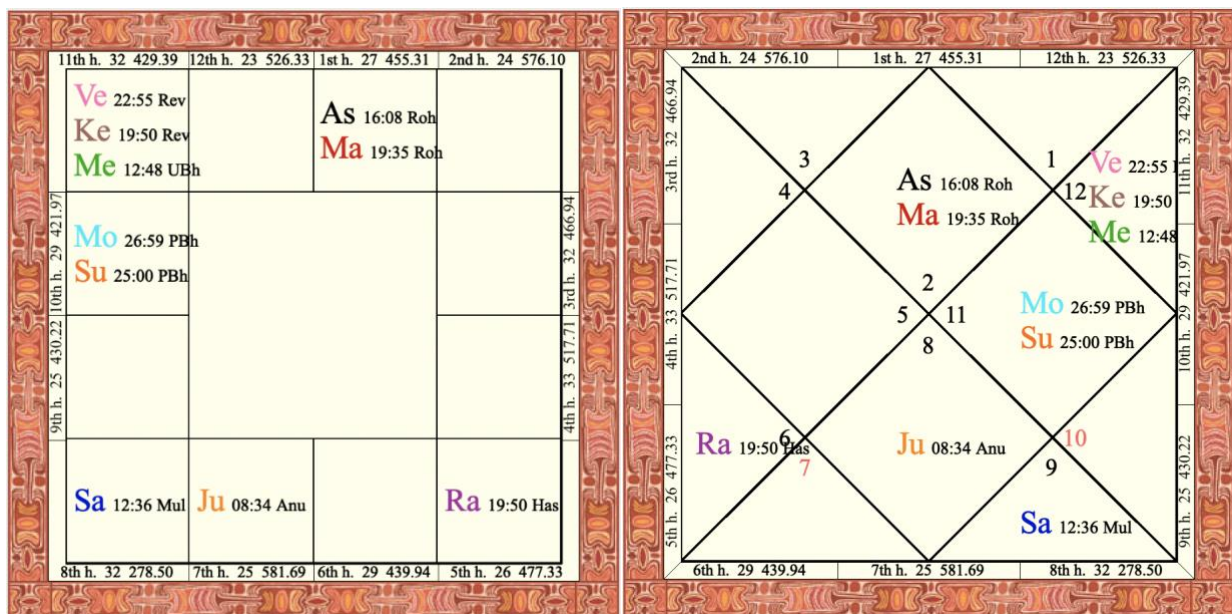
This article first appeared in the September 2023 issue of AstroLogic online magazine and is shared here courtesy of editor Victoria Belue.

Here is some light-hearted fun from the recent hit movie *Barbie*. The recent smash hit movie has provoked memories and discussions across genders and generations. Oddly enough, Barbie the doll has a birth chart! In Vedic Astrology we call this a Muhurta – a time chosen for the beginning of an event, a company, or a marriage. Then we will move on to the birth chart of Barbie's creator, Ruth Handler, who is seen briefly in idealized form in two scenes in the move. And representing the third generation, writer-director Greta Gertwig and producer-star Margot Robbie. Be advised, there are no birth times in the public record for Handler and Gertwig, so I have made my best guess. And of course, it seems unlikely that the "birth time" of Barbie's debut was chosen with Vedic astrology in mind. This month I will not go into as much depth on the four charts but hit the highlights of what we see in the way of beauty, ambition, and talent in the arts.

ACT I: BARBIE'S BIRTH CHART



Monday, March 9, 1959, at 10:00 am, Manhattan, New York, at a trade show. AA data from Astrodatbank.



Barbie has Taurus Lagna, at 16 degrees 08 minutes – right in the middle of the sign, which makes it extra powerful. Taurus is a Venus-ruled sign and likes wealth and sensual enjoyment. Its ruling

planet (Lagna Lord) is Venus, which is in the 11th house which we associate with financial gains, social groups, and enjoyments. Venus is in its most favored (exalted) sign Pisces, and we can agree Barbie became a huge money-maker and a must-have doll for generations of girls. In addition, the Handlers and the Mattel Corporation made sure she had accessories – clothes, furniture, cars, and all sorts of other items to purchase. Creator Ruth Handler envisioned Barbie as a doll which would allow little girls to imagine their teenaged or grownup selves.

In a really great birth chart, we see additional strengths – in this case, Venus in Pisces has Mercury alongside it. Ketu, known as the South Node, is between them and adds to the creative possibilities. Jupiter makes a trine aspect from Scorpio in the 7th house. The sign ruler of Pisces is Jupiter, so there is an additional connection. When I see that powerful Jupiter in the house of the partner, of course we have to think of the Ken doll, so artfully recreated in the movie – the supportive partner in the background. Those three planets work together to create a combination called the Saraswati Yoga – talent in the arts. And indeed, Barbie has had a myriad of talents, from fashion model to astronaut!

But there is more to Barbie than the beauty and talent. Mars is parked right next to the Lagna in Taurus – Barbie is driven, is competitive, and energetic. Nothing stands in her way if she wants it. Jupiter, being opposite Mars, gives her the ability to pull off great things, but at times she gets more than she bargained for! Mars is also the sign lord for Jupiter in her Scorpio 7th house of partnerships, so despite her apparent self-absorption, being in relationship IS important for her!

Then we see the prominent Sun and Moon in her 10th house of career in Aquarius, just a few hours past the New Moon. The focus here is on fame, position, and career, and the Moon hides behind the Sun. Unlike the other role model dolls of her time, Barbie does not have babies, and her mother is in the background. In our time, it is customary to see talented women evolve from fashion model or actress to producer, director or executive, but at the time she was created, her “mother”, Ruth Handler, did not even think to have her name mixed into the Mattel company name. This “birth chart” for Barbie makes clear that in Barbie’s world, that would change!

Another way we see the hidden power of the Moon in this chart is that the Lagna and Mars are in the Nakshatra (the lunar asterism) of Rohini, the brightest and most beautiful of the 27 Nakshatras. The ruling planet of Rohini is the Moon, so both Mars and the Lagna have their Nakshatra ruler right in the 10th house of career and fame.

Of course, not all is sunny and perfect, even in Barbie’s world, as we find out in the movie. In Barbie’s chart, we see it with Saturn. Saturn is tucked away in the 8th house of secrets, debts, and obligations to others. Saturn has extra power as it is the sign ruler for the Sun and Moon in Aquarius. In the movie, Barbie eventually finds out about the corporate world of men in suits and the “real” world in which the gender roles are reversed from her doll world. Her spiritual mother, Ruth Handler, helps her navigate this. But Saturn, with its aspects, adds some melancholy and irritation with authority to matters of the 10th house – career – as well as to matters of the 5th house – arts, games, speculation, and children. Over the generations, lots of women have criticized the impossible standard of body image the doll created for girls, and yet... Barbie managed to infect many girls (and a few boys) with the vision to see themselves become their dreams.

Rahu, the North Node, is in the 5th house in Virgo, and adds relentless desire and ambition. Barbie's relentless ambition as a doll was to create a new world of play, and in the movie to have the courage to enter the "real" world with all its imperfections. And finally, we might add, Barbie really launched the mass marketing of plastic toys and made a marker in the Anthropocene – the time when mass quantities of plastic entered the environment.

The timing of Barbie's "birth" in the Vimshottari Dasha system was in Jupiter Mahadasha/Venus Bukhti. This was a very favorable time to be born for someone whose chart is dominated by these two benefic, well-placed planets. *Barbie* the movie debuted July 21, 2023, when Barbie the doll was in her Venus Mahadasha/Saturn Bukhti. She is in her prime in her long Venus Mahadasha due to the great condition of Venus in her birth chart. It was daring to take on the thornier issues raised by 8th house Saturn, but every great movie needs a conflict to drive the story, and now is her time. As Barbie's next Mahadashas are the Sun, Moon, and Mars, all in good condition in her chart, I predict that Barbie as a cultural entity will endure.

Now we will meet the women behind Barbie the doll and *Barbie* the movie.

ACT 2: RUTH HANDLER, THE CREATOR OF BARBIE



Ruth Handler was born the youngest of 10 children of Polish Jewish immigrants who had arrived in American in 1907 and 1908 with 6 of their children. At age 6 months, her mother became ill, and she went to live with her childless aunt and uncle, who owned a drug store/soda fountain, and there she thrived, enjoying the role of an active participant in the business. She preferred work to play and grew up assuming that women worked outside the home. At age 16, in 1932, she fell in love with a poor art student named Izzy Handler, and her family did their best to put off or discourage a marriage. She did complete two years at the University of Denver, and then on a summer trip to Hollywood, she landed a job in a studio. In 1938, Ruth and Izzy married and moved to California, where she encouraged her husband to use his middle name, Elliot. She encouraged and supported her husband in his study at the Art Center College of Design, while they both worked.

Elliot created designs for Lucite accessories, and Ruth did the marketing. This little business located in their garage grew, while Ruth had her daughter Barbara in 1941 and son Ken in 1944.

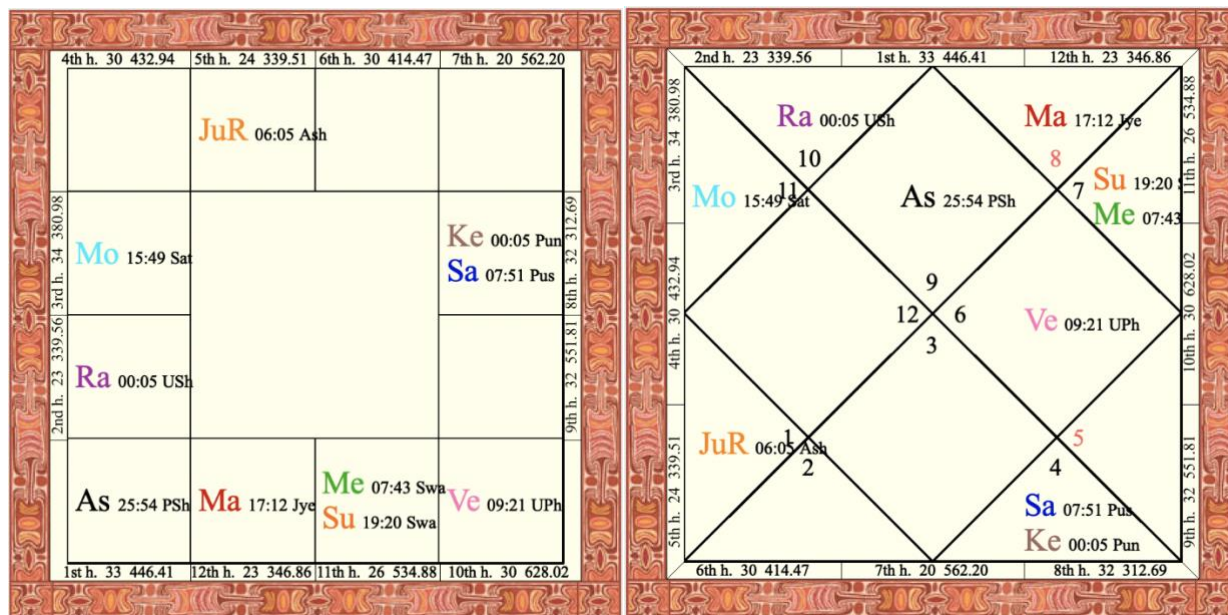
During the War Years, they had to switch from plastics to producing wooden picture frames. They and their partner Harold “Matt” Matson (in charge of production) coined the name Matt-el from the first names of the two men. In the 1950’s they began making plastic toys and found a winner in a plastic ukulele in 1957 and a plastic toy gun in 1958. They decided to become a sponsor of Disney’s television show, the Mickey Mouse Club.

In 1956, Handler and her daughter Barbara (15 years old) saw some fashion dolls on display in Switzerland in six different ski outfits. Ruth had had a similar idea a few years earlier, and now she decided to go ahead with a child’s doll with an adult’s body and multiple outfits. The idea of the doll having breasts bothered many people, but after three years of preparation, Barbie the doll made her debut, and the world of girls’ dolls and toys was never the same.

Ruth herself suffered a severe setback in 1970 when she lost a breast to cancer, and her business interests began to suffer. These were difficult years for her and her husband, as they lost control of Mattel and were accused of financial fraud. In 1973, they were investigated by the SEC and were fined, and in 1975, she was forced out of the business.

Ruth went on to a second chapter in her business life, as she searched for an adequate breast prosthesis. Eventually she designed her own, and started a new company, Nearly Me, to market breast prostheses and compatible bras to women in the same situation. She was recognized by first lady Betty Ford, who went public on her own mastectomy, and received numerous awards as well as achieving business success. She and her husband had a life-long marriage, and she died of complications of colon cancer surgery on April 27, 2002.

RUTH HANDLER’S BIRTH CHART



Saturday, November 4, 1916, Denver, Colorado. Time unknown (X). I have chosen a speculative birth time of 11:45 am, with Lagna Sagittarius, 25 degrees 54 minutes. Since few have heard of her until the movie, here is a short bio extracted from the Jewish Women’s Archive.

I chose Sagittarius Lagna not just because she had the optimistic, adventurous, and energetic qualities of that sign, but also because, as a Vedic Astrologer, I look at where all the other signs and planets end up in the houses. I look for the best fit, just as in a jigsaw puzzle.

In this chart, Jupiter, the ruling planet of the Sagittarius Lagna, is very well placed in the 5th house of children, play, arts, and risk-taking. Ruth excelled in all three in an energetic, daring way one might expect with Jupiter in Aries in that house. She combined motherhood with her family business enterprises and excelled in marketing. While her husband executed the designs, she was the one with the vision of who and what Barbie should be. The astrologer in me notes that Jupiter makes a one-way trine special aspect back to the Lagna, which is a very favorable condition for success. One of the other meanings of a positive condition of the 5th house is punya karma, positive past life karma, which translates into luck and opportunity. As the child of Jewish immigrants, she won the lottery of being born in America, and further luck of receiving a great childhood and opportunity for education. She was able to raise her own children in a time of post-war prosperity, optimism, and open opportunities for Jews in America.

Jupiter benefits from being opposite the Sun and Mercury in Libra in the 11th house of the chart, which is all about financial gains, social connection, and enjoyments. The three planets feed each other's energies and interact with other parts of the chart in a number of ways.

The other very prominent planet in this chart is Venus, located in Virgo all alone in the 10th house of career and fame. Venus is not in its own sign, but it makes a very tight connection with Mercury in Libra in the 11th house, and in turn Mercury's sign lord is Venus – a Parivartana Yoga which gives these two benefic planets the chance to “change places.” Venus channels the arts and design of Libra, and Mercury the detail-oriented business planner into both career and profits.

Not all is wonderful in this chart, though. First, we see that the Lagna is “flanked” by two malefics Mars in Scorpio in the 12th house, and Rahu in Capricorn in the 2nd house. To me, this is a metaphor for the shadow of the Holocaust and for the ambition of Rahu to conquer poverty and make money. At the end of her life, she suffered colon cancer, a condition associated with Scorpio, and Mars is in that sign. The 12th house as one of the Dussthana or difficult houses is invoked by this final illness.

Another challenging aspect of this chart is the Saturn and Ketu in the 8th house in Cancer. We all have to have these malefic planets somewhere, but we can see the picture of the hardships in her life. First, her own mother became ill when she was an infant and she was raised by others. Note that the Moon is the ruler of this 8th house and is itself in the 3rd house (the 8th house from the 8th house). The Moon is in Aquarius and thus the Moon and Saturn are in mutual rulership, Parivartana Yoga. The positive in her early life was the rearing by relatives. But in her 50's, when in her Ketu Mahadasha, she suffered from breast cancer and mastectomy (Ketu often brings losses, and Cancer is the signifier of the breasts. The 8th house has a connection with chronic illness). Another meaning of the 8th house is joint finances and debt – she had the financial scandal and losses in the business. And then she went on to make a second career out of her quest to sell high quality breast prostheses to breast cancer survivors.

Another feature of Saturn in this chart, is that just like Barbie the doll, Saturn makes a special one-

way aspect onto the 10th house of career and fame. She was willing to assert herself and place herself in the role of bucking authority – of being a full business partner and creating her vision.

In Ruth's Dashas, she was born in Rahu, and became aware early of adult roles in her aunt and uncle's shop. She grew up and married in the very favorable Jupiter period. The Saturn Mahadasha, from 1938 to 1957, were more challenging, but she navigated the years of World War II and the Holocaust (8th house?), childbearing (Saturn makes one way aspect to favorable 5th house) and creating a profitable business with her husband (one way aspect to favorable 10th house as well as full aspect to Rahu in the 2nd house of money).

Mercury Dasha activated her 11th house of profits, 5th house of entrepreneurship, 10th house of fame, and 7th house of partner. Barbie's debut was in her Mercury/Mercury period. Her health and financial setbacks from 1970-1975 were related to the years when Saturn transited her difficult 8th house. She remade her personal and business life with her prosthetic business in her Ketu Dasha (1974-1981). And then she had a long last act in a 20-year Venus Dasha from 1981-2001, in which she received acclaim for her work and engaged in philanthropy.

ACT 3: GRETA GERWIG, *BARBIE'S* WRITER, AND DIRECTOR

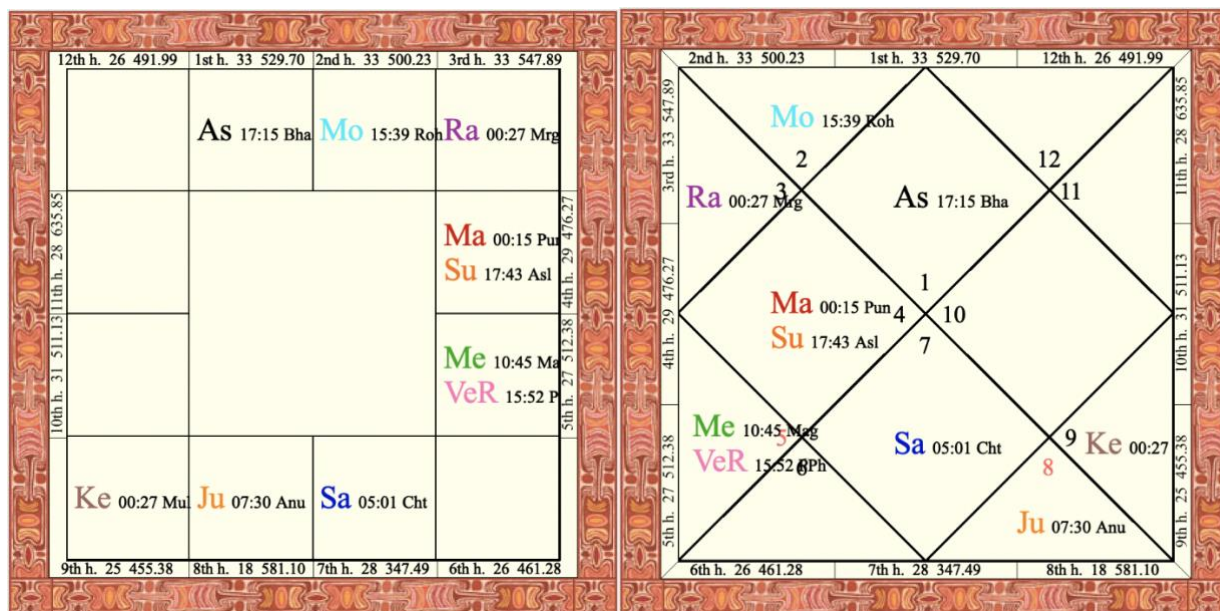


Greta Gerwig represents a different generation of girls who played with Barbie the doll and personifies the cultural earthquake in feminine roles in American society. Born in California of a liberal, middle-class family, she publicly mentions her upbringing as a Unitarian-Universalist. From her earliest years, she would have seen women and LGBTQ persons in roles of ministry and the pulpit and would have been exposed to a wide variety of theologies. Her mother worked as an OB-GYN nurse in her childhood. The dramatic contrast to the gender roles that her mother's generation would have seen on television and in daily life from the 1950's cannot be overestimated. Yet at this time, Barbie herself got a makeover, in response to feminist criticism, and dark-skinned Barbies and Barbies as doctors, astronauts, and businesswomen began to appear. Barbie's props made all sort of career roles seem open to play for girls, but still retained the anatomically impossible figure.

Gerwig shares only a limited amount of personal information with the public, but she describes herself as "an intense child," who had an interest in dance and competitive fencing. She attended the noted arts college Barnard in New York City, hoping for a major in musical theater, but settled for a degree in English and Philosophy. She appeared in some minor roles while in college and graduated in 2006, but two years later, she described herself as depressed about her prospects. She persisted, going back to acting classes in 2008.

Her breakthrough year was 2010, when she starred in Noah Baumbach's *Greenberg* with Ben Stiller, which received critical acclaim. Gerwig and Baumbach began a long-term partner relationship in 2011, and they went on to collaborate in a number of other films. In 2017, she shifted her focus to directing, in the film *Lady Bird*, a box office and critical success. She went on to write and direct the film *Little Women*, which appeared in 2019, a film which specifically addressed the role of Louisa May Alcott and her writing in the changing landscape of the 19th century women's rights movement. In between giving birth to her two sons with Brumbach in March 2019 and February 2023, she co-wrote and directed the *Barbie* movie.

GRETA GERWIG'S BIRTH CHART



Thursday, August 4, 1983, Sacramento, CA, time unknown. I have guessed at 5:00 pm, Scorpio Lagna.

I considered Scorpio Lagna the most likely, based on her description of being “an intense child,” her interest in both writing and directing, and the fact that she loves to be in charge of what is on the stage or camera. If she was indeed born in the late afternoon, she would have Jupiter in the Lagna, which would fit with the generally positive personality, talent, and academic success. Scorpio would fit with her interest in taking on complex takes on topics related to girls and women as seen in her films.

The Moon is in its best sign, exalted in Taurus. It would be in the 7th house of partnerships, and she indeed has a professional as well as a domestic partnership with the older Greenberg. The Moon and Venus, sitting opposite each other on the horizons, mutually support each other.

Venus and Mercury join up in Leo in the 10th house of fame and career. She does not just want to be the actress, but also the director. Thus, with Scorpio rising, she has all the benefic planets in angles of the chart – sunrise, noon, and sunset. This is a powerful Saraswati Yoga, a combination of talent in arts.

She has her Sun and Mars in Cancer in her 9th house, with a positive trine aspect from Jupiter. She has a very intuitive and emotional nature as we find in water signs, and this is reinforced with the exalted Moon in Taurus which is the sign lord for Sun and Mars. She has been able to take advantage of education, travel, and mentors.

Saturn is exalted in Libra but hidden away in the 12th house – she says she writes her films based on her own experiences, and that then they take on a life of their own. Saturn’s sign ruler is Venus in the 10th house in Leo, so the transformation of personal drama to the stage makes sense.

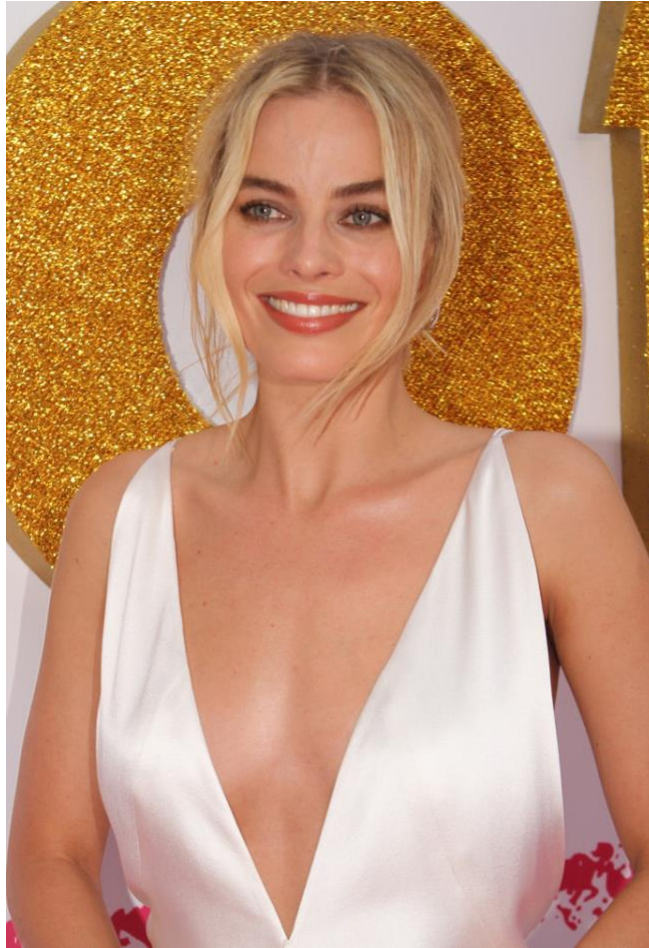
Ketu is in Sagittarius in the 2nd house, and there is a sense of the possibility of drama and out-of-the-box speech and words. Rahu is in the 8th house and in Gemini, and its lord is Mercury in the 10th house of career. All of the planets except the Moon lie on one side of the axis of these two markers of the Eclipse cycle, called Kala Sarpa Yoga. She has this potential of talent to tap into collective emotions and portray them in film. It remains to be seen whether these two will cause trouble for her at some time in life – after all she is just approaching her prime years.

Based on this birth time, she was born into Mars Mahadasha, which would have allowed her ample self-expression as it is her Lagna lord, located in a favorable 9th house with the Sun. Her growing up years from age 6 to 24 were in Rahu Mahadasha, and activated all the planets Rahu interacts with, whether through rulership or aspect. As this was her 8th house, I suspect a precocious child who was indeed, as she described, intense, and that she faced the prospect that she might not make a career of her calling.

Then, the Mahadashas, the great page-turner of history, opened a new chapter for her in 2007. Jupiter Mahadasha has her with the Great Benefic in her Lagna, granting her wishes. She went back to acting classes and began to get cast in parts. Her partnership with Baumbach clearly played a role, first with getting her some high-profile roles, and later in their professional and personal relationship. By the end of her Jupiter Mahadasha this summer, *Barbie* was ready for release.

What might be coming in her Saturn Mahadasha? Saturn is in the 12th house and rules the 3rd and 4th house, and generally life gets more challenging anyway in Saturn period. But Saturn is exalted, and has some hidden strengths, and she has the fame and finances to see her through the years of motherhood. The Mercury Mahadasha to follow promises more productive years later.

ACT 4: PRODUCER MARGOT ROBBIE PLAYS BARBIE



Monday, July 2, 1990, 07:40, Dalby, Australia. A data from Astrodatatabank based on published statements by her.

Margo Robbie is only a few years younger than Gerwig and is also on the career path of moving beyond acting into producing films. In a past issue of *Astrologic*, I examined another Australian actor/director/producer, Cate Blanchett. This generation of women is actively changing the culture of the male domination and female exploitation in the film business, and we are now reaping the results. The film greets Marilyn Monroe, Olivia DeHavilland, and Claudette Colbert would be pleased with them!

Margo was born in Australia, one of four siblings. Her father was wealthy, but the marriage broke up, and she had a modest upbringing in a very small farm community in Queensland. An energetic child, she excelled in trapeze and studied drama in high school while holding three jobs: bartending, cleaning houses, and working at a sandwich shop.

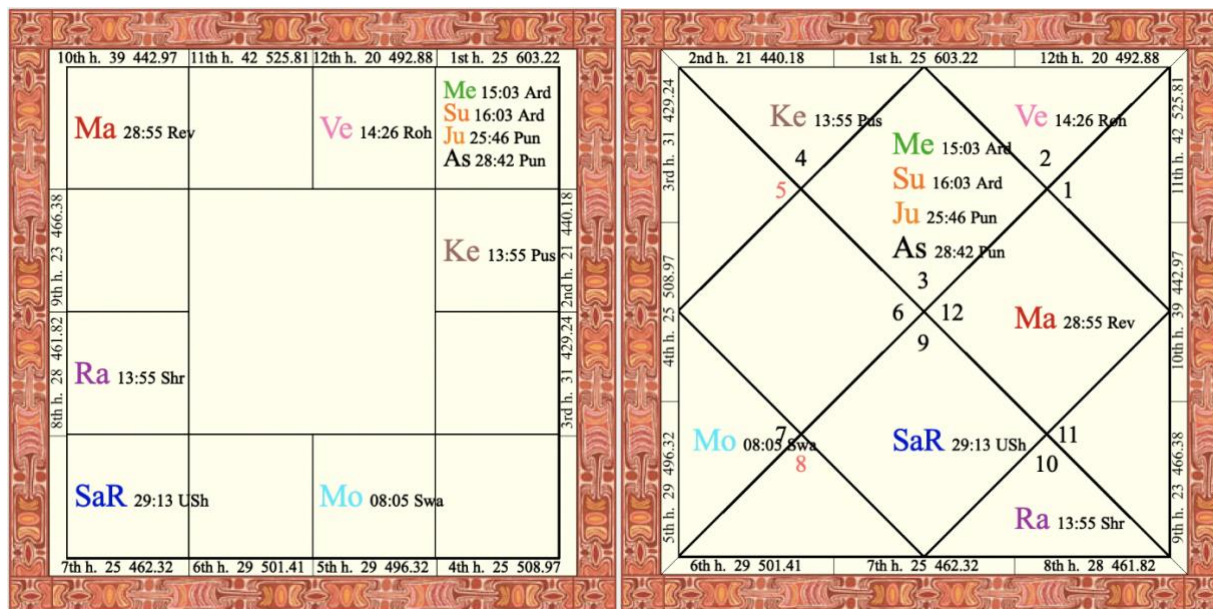
After graduation from high school, she moved to Melbourne, where she got her first role in June 2008 as a guest character on a television soap opera but was soon added to the regular cast. In 2011, she moved to the United States and appeared in a period drama series, *Pan Am*. Her

breakthrough came in 2013 as a co-star with Leonardo DiCaprio in *The Wolf of Wall Street*. A critic described her thus: “Robbie is funny, hard and kills every scene she’s in.”

In 2014, Robbie and her future husband Tom Ackerley and two other friends started their own production company, LuckyChap Entertainment. Robbie and Ackerley married in 2016. Since then, she has appeared in numerous roles, including Harley Quinn in the live-action version of the DC Comics *Suicide Squad*, as ice skater Tonya Harding in *I, Tonya*. She hosted a season of the TV comedy show *Saturday Night Live*, in which she portrayed a parody of Ivanka Trump. In 2018, she co-starred with Saoirse Ronan as Queen Elizabeth in *Mary, Queen of Scots*.

In 2019, she conceived the idea for the *Barbie* movie, bought the rights from Mattel, and hired Gerwig as writer and director. When another star turned down the role of Barbie, she took on the role herself! To date, it is a box office phenomenon, and has also won her critical acclaim. What will we see in her chart?

MARGOT ROBBIE’S BIRTH CHART



Monday, July 2, 1990, 07:40, Dalby, Australia. A data from Astrodatbank based on published statements by her.

Margo was born near sunrise and has a power-packed Gemini Lagna. The Sun is rising in Gemini, and Mercury is in the Lagna, in its own sign. Benefic Jupiter is also there. This is an embarrassment of riches, and the intermediate student will find the subtleties of a Vargottama Lagna and the directional strength of Mercury and Jupiter on the eastern horizon. The only detractor is that Jupiter and Mercury lie so close to the Sun, their light is obscured (combust). Yet this is a glorious Lagna of someone who must shine, and who craves to be noticed through their mental brilliance.

Mars sits in her 10th house of Pisces, the house of career and fame. Clearly, she had tremendous drive, energy, and competitiveness. The lord of the 10th house is Jupiter, which is in the Lagna, and Mars also makes a one-way aspect to the Lagna. Mars also is Vargottama and benefits from

directional strength at the noon point. So, she wants to be famous and in charge, but also on stage through her own efforts.

The Moon is in the favorable 5th house in Libra and receives a favorable aspect from Jupiter. She thrives in the world of the arts and sports and taking advantage of playful yet ironically complex female roles. She is in her mid-30's, childbearing and motherhood may be in her future.

Saturn is in the 7th house Sagittarius, where it is also Vargottama and gains directional strength and is stronger as well due to being retrograde. It benefits from having a full opposite aspect from its sign lord Jupiter in the Lagna as well as from Mercury and the Sun. Saturn is at its best here as a stable but creative partner and balance for her airy Gemini energy.

Again, she has a Saraswati Yoga involving Jupiter, Mercury, and the bright Moon. But she also has the very powerful Saturn in the 7th house and Mars in the 10th. There are quite a few Raja Yoga combinations in this chart, which I will leave for Jyotish students to find. Suffice it to say, these are the mark of someone who rises in life – in her case, from farm village to world stage!

There is nothing at all weak about this chart, although there are a few more ordinary planets. Rahu and Ketu are not front and center in the chart, being in the 2nd and 8th houses. Venus is in the unfavorable 12th house of retreat and loss, but even then, it is in its own sign and Vargottama. I would venture that the private Margot Robbie needs her quiet, private time to recharge.

Robbie's Mahadashas tell an interesting story: her Libra Moon is in the Nakshatra Swati, which is star lying far north of the ecliptic, and is one who can bring in an out-of-the-box perspective into life. She began life in Rahu Dasha, and thus had some challenges. But the gift of Rahu is taking on the characteristics of the planets it is connected with. As Rahu is in Shravana, one of these avenues was through the Nakshatra ruler, the Moon itself. She made the most of every opportunity for sport, skill, and theater, and was ready to launch herself at the end of the Rahu period.

Jupiter Mahadasha, from age 16 (2008) to 32 (2022) was her breakthrough time, as she has Jupiter in that amazing lineup in her Lagna. By the end of this period, she was prominent on the world stage and creating her own block-buster movie. Her marriage in 2016 was in the Jupiter/Venus Bukhti. The preparations for the *Barbie* movie took place in 2019-2022.

She is now in the Saturn Mahadasha. One might expect more responsibilities – children? Saturn is the sign lord of her 8th and 9th houses, and she may have issues with marriage, joint ventures, chronic health concerns, or responsibilities for parents. Yet just like Gerwig, she can look forward to a spectacular Mercury Mahadasha to follow at age 51 to 68 years. I believe we will see a lot more creative work from Robbie.