



ALMA MATER STUDIORUM
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**CORSO DI LAUREA IN
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GODSPOUSING E CHANNELING NEL CONTESTO DI COMUNITÀ NEOPAGANE

Tesi di laurea in Storia delle Religioni

Relatore

Prof. Francesca Sbardella

Presentata da

Francesca Monteverdi

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1. Il godspousing e il channeling

Questo testo tratta delle pratiche di channeling e godspousing nel contesto di comunità spirituali formatesi online, i cui membri praticano principalmente forme di paganesimo e demonolatria. Essi si definiscono practitioner ovvero ‘praticanti’ sottintendendo la loro pratica spirituale. Pur non essendoci l’intenzione da parte dei praticanti di tenerlo segreto, è raro sentire parlare di godspousing o di channeling in testi accademici e in generale in contesti al di fuori delle comunità. Le comunità in questione si definiscono pagane, spirituali o praticanti di stregoneria. Sono gruppi di persone politeiste che credono nell’esistenza simultanea di molteplici pantheon e divinità ma che ne venerano solo alcune - di solito quelle a cui si sentono più affini o con le caratteristiche e i poteri che ritengono più utili per loro. In queste comunità si venera la divinità dandole offerte che possono essere oggetti materiali come cibo, bevande, fiori o incenso oppure gesti come una danza, una poesia o una lettura dei tarocchi. Oltre alla venerazione di una o più divinità la loro pratica spirituale include diversi tipi di divinazione (i più diffusi sono i tarocchi) e fare incantesimi.

La prima volta che sentii parlare di una di queste pratiche stavo guardando il video di una ragazza americana che spiegava come Ade, il suo godspouse, le era stato vicino in momenti difficili e l’aiutava nella sua pratica pagana. Il godspousing (quindi avere un godspouse, ed essere godspoused) è la relazione fra una persona e un’entità trascendente che può essere prettamente devozionale o anche romantica. Solitamente l’entità a cui si è godspoused è una divinità, ma non è sempre così: mi è capitato per esempio di conoscere una ragazza che aveva come godspouse quello che lei definiva lo spirito di un uomo con cui aveva avuto una relazione in una vita passata. Il godspousing è un legame considerato intimo che viene stabilito solo dopo un periodo di tempo in cui il praticante e l’entità comunicano e si conoscono, di solito lavorando insieme. Il termine ‘lavorare insieme’ in queste comunità comunica un coinvolgimento diretto dell’entità nelle attività spirituali dell’individuo: per esempio se un praticante dovesse fare un incantesimo d’amore potrebbe chiedere attraverso la divinazione ad Afrodite di aiutarlo rendendolo più efficace ed in cambio farle un’offerta.

Il nome channeling viene dalla parola inglese channel che in italiano significa ‘canale’, consisterebbe infatti nell’incanalare un’entità permettendole di comunicare direttamente con e attraverso noi e di parlare o agire con il nostro corpo. La parola channeling viene usato anche in altri contesti spirituali, principalmente quello New Age. In questo caso l’individuo fa channeling per entrare in contatto con entità che differiscono da quelle solitamente venerate nelle comunità di cui tratta questo testo (queste sono principalmente divinità appartenenti al pantheon ellenico, nordico ed egizio oppure demoni). Sul blog *Leggi della Magia* di Lianka Trozzi, dove parla delle «Leggi Universali» e di altri contenuti spirituali, leggiamo una descrizione del channeling nel contesto New Age.

I canalizzatori o channeler spesso dialogano con “guide spirituali”, o Maestri di vario tipo (Ascesi, Stellari, Animali, Divini) questi spiriti amichevoli danno loro conoscenza e li aiutano.

Per questo canalizzare è un potente mezzo di sviluppo spirituale e di trasformazione. Mentre canalizzi costruisci un ponte verso i regni superiori, chiaramente l’Infinito è infinito e per questo, soprattutto all’inizio, una mappa per orientarsi può essere utile alla tua pratica di connessione e alla tua evoluzione.

Infatti la canalizzazione è una forma naturale di comunicazione tra umani e Creature di Luce, Angeli, Arcangeli, Spiriti della Natura e Maestri di vario tipo.

Anche Amy Sikarskie nella descrizione del suo libro *La Grande Guida al Channeling: Tecniche pratiche per comunicare con i propri spiriti guida* (2022), spiega la pratica da questo punto di vista: «Il channeling (canalizzazione) è la capacità di comunicare con angeli, maestri asceti ed esseri dei regni spirituali».

Il channeling viene considerata una pratica impegnativa e nonostante ci siano persone a cui è capitato di fare channeling senza previa preparazione, altre tentano per molto tempo prima di avere successo. Viene utilizzato per scopi comunicativi ma ha anche il vantaggio di far sentire il praticante più vicino emotivamente e spiritualmente ad un’entità, e quindi alla sua pratica spirituale.

1.2 Le comunità spirituali online

Queste forme di channeling e godspousing vengono discusse online su piattaforme social aperte o chiuse al pubblico: i praticanti parlano pubblicamente della loro esperienza e delle loro credenze con video o post principalmente su Tiktok ma anche su Instagram e Youtube, oppure ne discutono in privato su gruppi a cui si può richiedere l’accesso dando alcune informazioni personali (di solito l’età e il tipo di pratica che si osserva o a cui si è interessati).

E’ in questi gruppi che i praticanti di godspousing e channeling si sentono abbastanza a loro agio da parlare liberamente senza temere che qualcuno li definisca pazzi o metta in discussione la validità della loro esperienza spirituale, qui si scambiano informazioni e consigli per migliorare le proprie pratiche ma anche sostegno morale per problemi che non hanno a che fare con la sfera spirituale. Di solito sono costituiti da un centinaio di membri, la comunità a cui appartengono gli individui intervistati e in cui ho svolto parte della mia ricerca si trova sulla piattaforma Discord e ne ha centocinquantotto. Il gruppo è aperto a «witches, pagans and spiritualists», ma non è necessario essere già un praticante per entrare. Alcuni membri di questo e altri gruppi simili sono persone senza esperienza ma interessate ad imparare e ad essere guidate da persone più esperte. Alla mia domanda «How would you define your practice?» queste sono state le risposte:

«Listening to my soul instead of my ears.»¹”

«Chaos¹ eclectic demonolatry»

¹ Con caotica si intende una pratica spirituale che sfrutta l’energia del caos.

«Eclectic polytheist and mostly solitary»

«I would define my practice as eclectic. I focus mainly on divination, deity work (currently only with the Hellenic pantheon), and spells; I'm always seeking to learn and explore more paths that are open to me. My practice revolves around growth, healing, and communication for and with others.»

«Chaos Deity Work»

«Chaos and Hellenic with a bit of Kemetic. I also include dragons.»

«Eclectic»

Le pratiche dei membri si basano sulla mitologia ma sono anche fortemente influenzate dall'esperienza e dai consigli di altri praticanti. Questo riguarda in primis gli altri membri della loro comunità online, dove vengono scambiati incantesimi, vendute sessioni con mentori (di solito i fondatori del gruppo o comunque praticanti esperti), libri in pdf e in generale condivise informazioni chiave su come la pratica funzioni. Inoltre possono attingere anche da post pubblici online (che siano video, articoli, blog eccetera) di persone con una spiritualità simile alla loro, i quali a volte vengono condivisi nei gruppi per essere discussi, invalidati o consigliati come una buona risorsa.

I gruppi sono costituiti da diverse chat (nel caso di Discord vengono chiamate anche 'canali') ognuna con un tema, in modo che i membri possano confrontarsi su un argomento (ad esempio la divinazione) nell'apposita chat mantenendo così l'ordine e la funzionalità tecnica del gruppo. Questa divisione per argomenti è costante in tutti i gruppi così come gli argomenti stessi. Nella comunità su Discord sopraccitata il primo canale che si vede appena entrati nel gruppo si chiama «read here first» e stabilisce delle regole base.

- 1) This is a 16+ server. If anyone is caught lying about their age, it is an immediate ban. This includes taking the adult role² if you are a minor. We want to keep this server a safe space for everyone!
- 2) The introductions channel is mandatory to enter the server. Failure to fill out an intro in 24 hours will result in being kicked from the server.
- 3) This server is meant to be inclusive, meaning we don't judge other practices, faiths, etc. Any intolerant language of any sort is not allowed.
- 4) No politics. This just isn't the place for that.

² Uno dei canali del server è chiamato 'roles' ovvero 'ruoli', qui i membri del gruppo possono assegnarsi determinate caratteristiche che saranno visibili agli altri membri. Possono indicare i loro pronomi, se sono minori d'età o maggiorenni, se è possibile mandargli messaggi in privato (quindi non nel server), se offrono letture dei tarocchi o divinazione di altro tipo e se hanno materiale didattico da condividere.

- 5) Respect others' boundaries. Anyone found breaking this rule will be penalized accordingly³.
- 6) No pirating material, including resources.
- 7) This is not a role-play server. It is a community for witches, pagans, and other spiritualists.
- 8) No exposing private readings⁴ in the server unless all parties involved have consented.
- 9) If you are trading readings in the # divination-den channel, be sure to hold up your end of the bargain! Failure to do so will result in "divination detention," where you'll be barred from asking or giving readings on the server.
- 10) No unsolicited readings
- 11) Please refrain from talking negatively about deities/entities (pop-culture or otherwise).
- 12) No channeling in the server chats as it can be confusing/ uncomfortable for others present. You may practice in vc, in events we may have, or through private messages, but please make sure you have consent from every party involved, including the deity or being.
- 13) If you do not have a question or a problem that you need help with, please refrain from using the "open a ticket" button. People abusing the ticket system will be penalized.
- 14) For #tea-room and # mental-health please be mindful of triggers and use censoring when necessary!
- 15) For any concerns or questions, do not hesitate to open a ticket in #ticket-booth and the next available staff member will help you with your request. All concerns brought to the team will be taken seriously and your name will be kept anonymous.
- 16) Keep promotions in the # promotions channel to 1 promotion per week per user, just to avoid clutter and to give others a chance to promote their services.

Come accennato prima in queste comunità non si discute solo di argomenti spirituali e quindi sono presenti anche chat per parlare di cultura popolare, ricette, moda e altro. Di seguito elenco le chat del gruppo, aggiungendovi la descrizione data dal fondatore nel canale “*map*” ‘mappa’ dove possibile. Le parole non numerate indicano una sezione del server, quelle numerate i canali nella suddetta sezione.

Welcome

³ Questa regola fa riferimento ad esempio ai membri del gruppo che mandano messaggi in privato ad altri nonostante questi abbiano indicato che sono disponibili solo a chattare nel server.

⁴ Per ‘letture’ si intendono le letture dei tarocchi ma è anche usato come termine generale per indicare qualsiasi forma di divinazione.

1. Read here first
2. Introductions
3. Roles
4. Map
5. Announcements
6. Meet the staff
7. Welcome⁵
8. Ticket booth

Adults only.

1. Adults only
- 18+ only.**
2. Adults only vc⁶

Common area

1. General chat
Talk about anything and everything!
2. Game room
Share your streams and games here!
3. Meme boat
Have fun!
4. Out of context quotes
Just quotes, no context.
5. Pets and plants
Send pics.
6. Promotions
Promote your shop, server, etc!
7. Suggestions
What would you like to see from the channel?
8. Tea room⁷
Where you can vent, rant, etc. Please remember to use the appropriate trigger warnings and censoring.

⁵ Un bot dà il benvenuto ad ogni membro che si unisce al server.

⁶ Vc sta per 'voice chat' ovvero chat vocale.

⁷ Fa riferimento allo slang 'tea' che sta per gossip.

9. Witchy gen
Gen chat for the craft!

10. Common area vc

11. Game room vc

Classroom

1. Astrology numerology
For birth charts, angel numbers and more!

2. Beginner friendly
We were all beginners once, let's help each other out!

3. Christian witches
Angels, christian\catholic figures, and more!

4. Crystals chat

5. Deity work
From worship to godspouses, let's talk about it!

6. Demologia
Let's talk working with demons!

7. Devotional work
For everyone who is godspoused, a Priest, Oracle etc.
Or anyone interested in learning more about it!

8. Divination room
Learn tarot, runes, and other forms of divination.

9. Dragon magic
For anyone working with dragons, wyvern, wyrms, etc!

10. Dream work
Lucid dreaming, meditation, and everything in between.

11. Energy work
Reiki, shielding, auras, and other energy and
astral⁸ workers!

12. Fate and folklore

⁸ Il piano astrale è, secondo diverse correnti religiose e spirituali, un luogo metafisico in cui l'essere umano può viaggiare con il proprio corpo astrale. Nella concezione di piano astrale che concerne questo testo, in questo luogo possono viaggiare sia esseri umani che altre entità (ad esempio le divinità) con cui è possibile interagire.

13. Hearthcraft
Green witches⁹, hedge witches¹⁰, and everything
in between.
14. Pop culture magic¹¹
From shifting to pop culture deities, let's talk about it!
15. Shadow work¹²
For prompt and tips on shadow work!
16. Spellwork
Share your spella and ask questions on how to craft them
here!
17. Spirit guides
Because we all have them!
18. Traditional practices
Ancestor work, folk, indigenous, native practices as well
as traditional ways of worship.

Divination den

1. Requests
2. Offers
3. Trades
4. Interpretations
5. Divination reviews

Grimoire

1. Resources

⁹ Si definiscono streghe verdi le persone che utilizzano elementi naturali come le erbe ed i fiori nella propria pratica spirituale.

¹⁰ Hedge Witch indica solitamente un praticante solitario.

¹¹ La credenza alla base della pop culture magic è che figure della cultura popolare (in particolare personaggi di film, libri e serie tv) diventino entità spirituali indipendenti (da alcuni definite come egregore) quando le persone concentrano le loro energie su di loro, pensandole come entità già esistenti o con l'intenzione di renderle tali. Lo shifting è legato alla pop culture magic e sarebbe la pratica di spostare la nostra coscienza da questo corpo ad un altro esistente in un universo diverso dal nostro, si basa sulla credenza che esistano infinite versioni di ognuno di noi che vivono in infiniti universi (ci si riferisce a questo come la teoria del multiverso). Le persone che fanno shifting vengono chiamate 'shifters' e stabiliscono termini molto specifici sulla realtà in cui vogliono andare, appunto perché il fenomeno si fonda sulla credenza che ne esistano infinite. Tutti gli shifters di cui sono venuta a conoscenza durante la mia ricerca 'shiftano' in universi legati a film, libri o serie tv.

¹² Mi è stato spiegato che lo shadow work prende spunto dalla teoria degli archetipi di Carl Jung e consiste nel concentrarsi sul nostro shadow self ovvero le parti della nostra psiche che rimangono nascoste (come traumi o risentimenti), spesso scrivendo in un diario o nel caso degli spiritualisti utilizzando i tarocchi per essere più coscienti e compassionevoli verso ogni parte di sé.

For and websites/books you want to share! Do not pirate anything. Piracy includes and copy of the source not distributed by the original creator. You can share pictures of a few pages of a book that you have, but do not upload the whole thing.

2. Spells rituals recipes

Lo fi vibes

1. Arts and crafts
2. Boutique
3. Chronic illness
4. Comfort stuffs
5. Fandom tower
6. Mental health
7. Photo Booth
8. Self care
9. Sorting hat
10. Writers corner
11. Council Services¹³

Un ulteriore elemento che aiuta a mantenere l'ordine nei gruppi oltre alla distinzione delle chat per argomento sono gli admin, ovvero membri che hanno il compito di monitorare le discussioni eliminando messaggi offensivi, di controllare che nelle chat si parli solo degli argomenti a cui sono adibite e in generale di essere punti di riferimento per la comunità. Gli admin di solito sono praticanti abbastanza esperti, ma vengono scelti anche per la loro disponibilità di tempo libero e non solo per il livello della loro pratica. Gli admin vengono scelti dai fondatori del gruppo, che sono percepiti come autorevoli (soprattutto se praticano da molti anni) dagli altri membri del gruppo. Nonostante ci sia una varietà di pratiche (seppur limitate a forme di paganesimo, demonolatria e spiritualismo) e di credenze (che solitamente sono concesse a meno che vadano ad invalidare quelle di un altro membro) le opinioni dei fondatori del gruppo sono spesso considerate le più attendibili. Essi organizzano eventi in cui una o più persone (di solito appartenenti al 'consiglio') fanno channeling durante una videochiamata, incanalando una divinità che risponde alle domande scritte del resto del gruppo che può solo commentare e non appare nella chiamata. Spesso offrono anche servizi a pagamento che consistono in una o più forme di divinazione, negozi di incantesimi o di oggetti inerenti alla spiritualità e videochiamate dove fanno da mentore, indicati nella sezione 'servizi del consiglio'.

La comunicazione con gli admin e i fondatori è diretta, ma tutti gli utenti possono indicare se sono

¹³ Per 'consiglio' si intende lo staff che comprende i fondatori e gli admin, qui si possono trovare i servizi da loro offerti, di solito divinazione o lezioni come mentori.

disponibili a ricevere messaggi privati o meno. Questo e altri strumenti comunicativi servono a rendere a proprio agio tutti i membri, che così non possono ricevere messaggi indesiderati. Si devono censurare messaggi che potrebbero urtare la sensibilità altrui e indicarli con ‘TW’ (acronimo di ‘trigger warning’) e anche se è a discrezione del singolo utente decidere cosa potrebbe essere un trigger o meno, temi comunemente considerati tali sono la violenza (emotiva o fisica, verso se stessi o altri) e disturbi alimentari o discussione di calorie e restrizioni dietetiche. Anche se non è obbligatorio molti membri usano indicatori di tono alla fine di un messaggio, ritenuti utili soprattutto per le persone nello spettro autistico. E’ diffuso l’uso di acronimi (ad esempio PCE per ‘pop culture entity’ ovvero entità della cultura popolare) e di slang comuni nella cosiddetta Generazione Z. Al di fuori dei gruppi chiusi i praticanti di queste comunità comunicano nei commenti di post pubblici (che siano foto, video o contenuti scritti) dove si discute di contenuti affini alla loro pratica - molto spesso hanno loro stessi profili dove parlano della propria spiritualità che vengono condivisi nei gruppi, quindi i membri si seguono a vicenda su altre piattaforme social.

1.3 Il legame fra godspousing, channeling e le comunità online

Oltre a costituire comunità di praticanti solidali fra di loro e con interessi simili, i gruppi online sono anche una fonte preziosa di informazioni - in particolare per quanto riguarda i fenomeni di godspousing e channeling. Infatti al di fuori dei gruppi il materiale utile riguardante godspousing e channeling è scarso.

Per quanto riguarda il godspousing non sembra ci siano fonti bibliografiche che ne parlino, ma si trovano alcune pagine web dove godspouses discutono della propria esperienza e la offrono come risorsa per imparare cosa sia il godspousing e come funzioni. In queste pagine quando si argomenta il perché sia una pratica valida vengono citate la mitologia e alcune pratiche spirituali ritenute simili. Sono presenti anche siti web che raccontano del godspousing con scopi parodistici.

La situazione cambia con il channeling. Essendo una pratica utilizzata in molteplici contesti e pratiche ci sono diversi libri che parlano di incanalare entità soprannaturali, ad esempio il sopracitato *La Grande Guida al Channeling: Tecniche pratiche per comunicare con i propri spiriti guida* di Amy Sikarskie. Va specificato che gli spiriti guida citati in questo e altri libri di channeling sono presenti anche nella spiritualità dei gruppi di cui parla questo testo, ma che in quest’ultimi le entità con cui si fa channeling sono per lo più le divinità con cui si lavora. In ogni caso il materiale bibliografico su questa pratica non aderisce (almeno non del tutto) alle credenze delle comunità in questione: è rivolto a spiritualisti interessati ad entità come «Ascesi, Stellari, Animali, Divini» (Trozzi 2021: 1) appartenenti allo spiritualismo New Age e non a quelle appartenenti ai pantheon ellenico, egizio o nordico. Quindi anche se parti di questo materiale potrebbero risultare utili per i membri dei gruppi (per esempio come funzioni il channeling, al di là dell’entità che si incanala) non è stato scritto per la loro pratica specifica. Inoltre gli autori di questi libri, nonostante questi abbiano degli elementi comuni, hanno credenze individuali che li differenziano e i contenuti risultano variabili fra un libro e l’altro.

La comunità spirituale invece è un luogo dove tutti i membri condividono pratiche e credenze base, e le informazioni e le risorse condivise sono quindi coerenti per tutti. Sanno che per dubbi o

bisogno di materiale basta scrivere nel canale 'resources' dove qualcuno risponderà (di solito anche abbastanza velocemente) fornendo ciò di cui si ha bisogno, e che chiunque sia questa persona il loro materiale sarà direttamente applicabile alla loro pratica. Per questo cercare risorse nei gruppi online è preferibile che cercarle sul web, dove bisogna spendere tempo ed energie per trovare fra le scarse informazioni accessibili quelle che siano coerenti con le proprie credenze. Inoltre i membri del gruppo più esperti agiscono spesso come una sorta di insegnante, educando chi chiede consiglio su diversi argomenti nelle apposite chat che sono raggruppate nella sezione chiamata 'aula', appunto, o facendo direttamente da mentore in privato.

Il fatto che nella comunità ci si conosca abbastanza bene significa anche che i praticanti sono più a loro agio parlando di argomenti sensibili e facendo domande di ogni tipo, senza temere che la propria esperienza venga screditata. Molto spesso per questo timore le loro pratiche spirituali non sono condivise con persone al di fuori del gruppo, che quindi diventa un elemento chiave nella vita spirituale dell'individuo.

2. Godspousing

2.1 Che cos'è il godspousing?

Il godspousing è diffuso tra diverse realtà spirituali e consiste in un legame fra un individuo e un'entità (solitamente questa è una divinità) che può essere esclusivamente devozionale ma è spesso anche romantico. Viene considerato un legame intimo e speciale: il praticante che diventa godspoused viene percepito come più legato e vicino all'entità in questione rispetto a chi semplicemente la venera o lavora con essa. Per diventare godspoused infatti, bisogna in un certo senso essere scelti: nonostante il praticante possa farsi avanti per primo ed esprimere interesse nell'approfondire il proprio legame con un'entità, nelle relazioni che ho potuto approfondire all'interno del gruppo studiato è stata sempre quest'ultima ad esprimersi per prima, di solito attraverso dei segni e in seguito con altri mezzi di divinazione. In ogni caso è necessario il consenso di entrambe le parti perché ci sia un godspousing, l'entità e il praticante quindi devono approvarsi a vicenda, generalmente dopo una previa conoscenza e aver instaurato un rapporto stretto. Questo legame può essere di natura prettamente devozionale ma è spesso romantico e sessuale. I praticanti godspoused che ho intervistato, i cui nomi sono abbreviati in K e B, hanno descritto la loro esperienza e il concetto di godspousing nei seguenti modi:

F: With which deity are you godspoused?

K: Lucifer.

F: How is he physically and personality wise?

K: He has pink eyes, fair skin, very much like a pretty boy. Personality wise enthusiastic, very gentle and loving.

F: How would you define your practice or religion?

K: I wouldn't say it's a religion, I'd say it's a path. Specifically demonolatry.

F: How and when did you discover godspousing?

K: I think I was in a discord server for two years and it popped up, I got curious and talked about it with a friend. I was introduced to it by someone that had some experience with it.

F: So you already knew that person?

K: I already knew them from the server.

F: Were you already interested in these kind of topics?

K: No it just came up, I didn't know it was even possible.

F: How would you define godspousing?

K: A romantic relationship but with a deity. So having a romantic relationship but one partner is not physically tangible.

F: What does godspousing mean to you?

K: The same as I said

F: Do you think there are differences between godspousing and a romantic relationship between humans?

K: I think that the sort of things you do to show love are different. In a human relationship it's more material focused ("Oh I can buy you something"), with godspousing it's more like... I can make this thing happen for you or if you do this I can help you along the way. It's more of an energy I think.

F: How is it different from a romantic relationship between humans?

K: Yeah I think so, in godspousing you're talking to someone who's a lot older, you don't really know how long they've been there...there is more respect when talking to them. You won't say some things that you'd say in a toxic human relationship. Cause it's a deity.

F: Would you say there's a difference in the power dynamics?

K: Yes, you know less than them and you shouldn't be pressing, like you can't say "I'm definitely right".

F: With which deity are you godspoused?

B: Somnus and Eros

F: How would you describe them? Both personality wise and their physical form.

B: Somnus is really interesting because he's a bit...he comes across as like kinda rude or sarcastic but it's just being more placid or sustained, like you don't hear from him a lot. If I have another deity in my space he will go a little quiet but it's not because...like it's because he's trying to like...he's like "oh there's someone else here you guys can hang out". But he's a bit...yeah...I guess he's a bit gentle with things, and quiet. But he definitely can be...he likes to mess around sometimes and be a tease. It totally depends on the place, scenario, circumstance. I mean he helped me a lot with getting on track with seeing someone about my anxiety so...definitely like a very comforting deity in my practice. And if I had to describe him...I see him with pretty long hair dark eyes and like...a strong nose. You know, some people have a really prominent nose.

F: How would you define godspousing to someone that has no idea what it is?

B: It's...I mean...well I guess it depends on the type of connection but it's usually something that intertwines in your daily life. I think some people would say their practices...they have to like, accommodate their deities and team but I do think it's more of...you don't accommodate them, they become a part of your life. You're not necessarily going out of your way to invest in someone that enjoys spending time with you in your life, it just comes naturally and it works around your schedule.

F: How would you describe your godspousing, what does godspousing mean to you?

B: I mean, mine is more of a romantic one. I don't know, I mean I pray to him every single day, I do stuff every single day and it's like...yeah (ride).

F: Do you think there's a difference between godspousing and human romantic relationships? If the godspousing is romantic.

B: I would say yes because it's not necessarily literally physical, like a person is a person that you can touch. It's funny, maybe you could describe it more as a long distance relationship.

F: Is there a difference between how a godspoused and a human couple interact or

communicate?

B: For sure, I mean, I would say...with...I think it's easier to have communication problems with people and there are also mundane things that are important to us that aren't as important to them.

F: Do you think there's a difference in power dynamics between godspoused and human couples?

B: I'm not really good with asking...I don't really ask Somnus that much, I feel bad when I ask for things and I said...one time I was like...“Do you do things that I don't ask for?” And he was like, “If I didn't I wouldn't be doing anything for you, like of course I do things you don't ask for, that's a silly question”.

F: Are there differences in how you communicate? Whether you use tarot or something else.

B: This one that we're talking about is a deity of sleep so a lot of dreams and clairs and tarot, yeah.

Per spiegare e normalizzare il godspousing i praticanti spesso lo comparano al monachesimo e cercano di storicizzarlo con esempi di pratiche simili nella mitologia, nella storia o in credenze popolari di diverse culture. Ciò è emerso anche nell'intervista fatta a B, che parlando di una conversazione con un'amica racconta:

[...]I let her read through my book of shadows and she found my vows¹⁴ and I totally forgot they were in there and I freaked out cause I thought she would...but she was like “This is so cute” and I was like “Some people think it's weird” and she was like “I don't think it's weird there are nuns”. And I was like, “That makes me feel so much better”.

In questo modo legano una tradizione al fenomeno, possibilmente legittimandolo. Un esempio estensivo di questo si trova in un testo intitolato *When They come courting: Spirit marriage and related relationships, Spirit Marriage and Godspousery in Lore, History, and Contemporary Practice* di Fjotr Lokakvan, utilizzato per una presentazione alla conferenza Many Gods West nel 2017. Fjotr Lokakvan è una godspouse, con le sue parole si definisce «a godspouse and a spirit spouse; I have several non-corporeal spouses, with my most significant marriage being with Loki». (Lokakvan 2017: 1)

In questo documento parla della sua esperienza spirituale personale e dà la sua opinione intervenendo in un dibattito sul godspousing cercando di storicizzare il fenomeno attraverso diverse fonti. Adotterò la struttura del testo, che affronta una tradizione o pratica spirituale per volta.

Per quanto riguarda la tradizione ellenica vengono citate diverse divinità che nella mitologia sono indicate come aventi relazioni amorose e/o sessuali con umani (nello specifico Zeus, Afrodite, Dioniso, Poseidone, Apollo, Ermes, Selene e Eos), come fonte viene indicato il progetto Theoi. Sull'omonimo sito web il progetto Theoi si descrive come «(...) a site exploring Greek mythology

¹⁴ si riferisce ai voti del godspousing

and the gods in classical literature and art. The aim of the project is to provide a comprehensive, free reference guide to the gods (theoi), spirits (daimones), fabulous creatures (theres) and heroes of ancient Greek mythology and religion» e le fonti che cita a sua volta sono principalmente testi greci e romani. Ad esempio, per quanto riguarda Zeus si fa riferimento all'Odissea (Omero, ottavo secolo avanti Cristo), le Dionisiache (Nonno di Panopoli, quinto secolo avanti Cristo), le Metamorfosi (Ovidio, ottavo secolo dopo Cristo) e molte altre opere.

Parlando del paganesimo celtico Fjotr Lokakvan menziona tre divinità che, come quelle greche soprammenzionate, si racconta abbiano avuto relazioni con umani. La prima è il dio Manannan mac Lir che in diversi miti ha relazioni con umani e che appare anche in una credenza popolare mannese secondo cui il dio visita la loro celebrazione di mezza estate sotto forma di airone per cercare donne da corteggiare. In questo caso si cita l'articolo *Ritual within Gaelic Polytheism* di Treasa Ní Chonchobhair e Annie Loughlin pubblicato sul sito web Gaol Naofa (pagina dell'omonima organizzazione). La seconda divinità è la dea Fand che nel ciclo epico Ciclo dell'Ulster (in particolare si cita *The Sick-bed of Cuchulainn, and the Only Jealousy of Emer*, traduzione di Eugene O'Curry) ha una relazione con l'eroe semidio Cu Chulainn il cui padre secondo il mito The Birth of Cu Chulainn sarebbe il dio Lugh, il quale a sua volta sarebbe sposato con due donne umane, figlie del re di Britannia (da *part 5 of the Metrical Dindshenchas* sul sito web CELT: Corpus of Electronic Texts).

Riguardo la mitologia norrena l'autore del testo parla di un lignaggio nobile scandinavo chiamato Ynglings che sarebbe discendente dal dio Yngi-Freyr (si cita l'articolo *Legendary Ynglings: Descendants Of The Norse Gods And Oldest Scandinavian King Dynasty* dal sito Ancient Pages) e di episodi contenuti nella raccolta di poemi Edda poetica: la poesia *Rigsthula* in cui il dio Rig giace con tre donne diverse generando tre classi di uomini (schiavi, contadini liberi, nobili) e il poema *Harbarthsljoth* in cui Odino si vanta di aver sedotto molte donne. In aggiunta menziona una dea chiamata Þorgerðr Hölgabrúðr che sarebbe la sposa divina di uno o più re (la fonte citata è la pagina *Þorgerðr Hölgabrúðr and Irpa* sul sito web Wikipedia) e una storia risalente al quattordicesimo secolo in cui un uomo chiamato Gunnar incontra una sacerdotessa del dio Freyr che viene chiamata la sposa del dio (la fonte è di nuovo una pagina web Wikipedia, *Ögmundar þáttur Dytts*).

Menziona poi due credenze popolari, la storia in cui un uomo ruba la pelle ad una selkie, la quale lo sposa prima di riuscire a recuperare la sua pelle e tornare in acqua, e la storia medievale in cui il poeta scozzese Thomas the Rhymer viene rapito dalla regina di Elphame e la sposa. Si cita anche *The Secret Commonwealth of Elves Fauns and Fairies* del reverendo Robert Kirk in cui viene indicato che le fate seducano gli uomini.

Segue il libro *Cunning Folk and Familiar Spirits* di Emma Wilby che parla di relazioni fra umani ed esseri soprannaturali documentati durante processi alle streghe nel tardo milleseicento in Inghilterra e Scozia, fra cui quella fra Andro Man e la regina di Elphame, e ne viene riportato uno stralcio in modo particolarmente interessante. Cito direttamente dal testo di Fjotr Lokakvan che a sua volta cita Emma Wilby.

One of the points Wilby makes throughout her book is that many of the experiences reported by people on trial are very similar to what is reported by spiritual practitioners in a variety of animistic or polytheistic traditions, including the sexual or marital relationships. One of the other similarities she describes is the familiarity that can exist between the human and their spirits:

"Although early modern encounter-narratives indicate that the interactions between popular magical practitioners and their familiars could range between the extremes of 'coercion' and 'devotion', they also suggest that on a day-to-day level these relationships were defined by high levels of intimacy: frequent, neighbourly exchanges which could range from the simple giving of comfort to the intensity of a sexual encounter. These intimacies, which have in the past been viewed with condescension and bemusement by some historians, take on an altogether new significance if we view them as indicative of the profound closeness which can develop between a mystical adept and their envisioned guide.

"In religious traditions throughout the world, interaction with sacred beings is characterized by varying degrees of both familiarity and reverence." (Lokakvan 2017: 6)

Il libro che viene utilizzato come fonte seguente è *Introduction to Shamanism* del professore e folclorista Thomas A. DuBois, nello specifico il capitolo sugli sposi spirituali (spiriti che ricoprono il ruolo di marito o moglie) e l'esempio di Saora, in India. C'è un aspetto sia sessuale che romantico e spirituale in questa unione, infatti lo spirito cerca di convincere la donna ad accettare sia un matrimonio sia una vita professorale come praticante spirituale sotto la sua guida. Se la donna rifiuta lo spirito le può causare incubi, malattie, sofferenza emotiva e anche minacciarla. È curioso che nonostante questo il matrimonio sembri integrarsi positivamente nella vita della donna «Despite the rough start there could be to the relationship, apparently women with two husbands could not easily say whether they preferred the human or the spirit» (Lokakvan 2017: 6).

Si passa poi alla tradizione Baule, nella Costa d'Avorio, dove appaiono di nuovo degli *spirit spouse*, sposi spirituali. La fonte citata dall'autore non è reperibile, tuttavia ho trovato informazioni sul fenomeno in una tesi di laurea dell'Università del Tennessee scritta da Nancy Johnson, *Tradition and Commodity: The Transition of Baule and Senufo Artistry in Cote d'Ivoire*, e nel libro *Female and Male in West Africa* a cura di Christine Oppong.

When misfortune arises in a Baule community, it is often difficult to pinpoint the exact instigating spirit. However, if the particular problem arises in the area of sexual matters, the difficulty is most likely with one's spirit spouse. The Baule believe that before birth into the physical realm, every person had a spouse in the spirit world. These beings are fickle and easily provoked to jealousy. The source of their jealousy is usually one's spouse in the physical world. Because a typical Baule cannot communicate directly with the spirit, a diviner is called upon to question the invisible realm and determine the problem. If the spirit spouse is positively identified as the source of misfortune, the most likely prescription given by a diviner is to have a sculpture made in the image of one's otherworldly mate or blolo blaibian. In representing these beings within the medium of wood, the carver only chooses forms that represent the most physically appealing attributes. (Johnson 2002: 4)

Seguono informazioni riguardanti la pratica vudù haitiana che risalgono a due fonti, entrambi blog: HoodooQ di Pauline sulla piattaforma Blogspot e Rock of Eye di Oungan Bonkira Bon sulla piattaforma Tumblr. Il tema è lo stesso, ovvero il maryaj lwa, un altro tipo di «spirit marriage» (Pauline 2011: 1; Lokakvan 2017: 7). L'uomo o donna vengono scelti da uno spirito (Iwa), di solito quello principale nella loro pratica spirituale. Non è chiaro se la persona possa rifiutare di sposarsi con lo spirito. Dopo essere stato scelto deve organizzare una cerimonia pubblica e costosa che include la partecipazione di un prèt savann e in seguito indossare gli anelli di entrambi (il suo e quello dello spirito), avere un letto separato esclusivamente per dormire con lo spirito un giorno a settimana e avere un altare con offerte regolari per lui. Il partner umano sarà favorito dall'Iwa e avvantaggiato rispetto alle altre persone che lavorano con lo spirito ma non sono sposate con lui. Questi tipi di spiriti sono poligami non solo con gli umani ma anche fra di loro, e questo porta a problemi di gelosia che in alcuni casi spingono l'umano a sposarsi con più spiriti per placarli. Si passa poi all'induismo, le fonti utilizzate sono la pagina *Meera* di Wikipedia e un testo sul blog *Beloved in Light* della piattaforma Blogpost chiamato *PBP: G is for "godspousery"* in cui l'argomento del godspousing viene trattato in generale. Viene detto che nell'induismo ci sono diversi tipi di relazioni devozionali possibili fra umano e divinità fra cui l'amore coniugale e viene citata la poetessa e mistica Sant Meerabai che scriveva di Kirshna come di suo marito ed era determinata a concentrare la sua vita sulla sua devozione per lui.

La prossima tradizione utilizzata per storicizzare il godspousing è più estensiva e si collega alla citazione di B riportata in precedenza. Si tratta infatti della comparazione del godspousing a fenomeni cristiani, in particolare alle suore o le «brides/spouses of christ» (Lokakvan 2017: 7). Le informazioni che seguono sono accreditate ad una tesi di laurea dell'Università del Nord Carolina Chaper Hill intitolata *Marrying Jesus: Brides and the Bridegroom in Medieval Women's Religious Literature* e ad una pagina web che riporta le parole di Ida Craddock, di cui parleremo in seguito, intitolata *Heavenly bridegrooms*. Inizialmente si dice che il termine "brides of christ" include anche persone (in particolare suore) che non hanno esperienze mistiche o una relazione effettivamente romantica con Dio. Ma alcune suore, donne laiche (anche sposate o vedove) e uomini hanno raccontato di avere esperienze mistiche e amorose. Cito direttamente dal testo per mostrare il punto di vista del praticante godspoused rispetto alla tesi e al fenomeno.

There is quite a lot written on this topic, including a really great dissertation called "Marrying Jesus: brides and the Bridegroom in medieval women's religious literature," you can find it online, and if you are at all interested in this topic, I highly recommend it. There are also a number of really interesting sections that discuss how mysticism caused problems within convents and between individuals and church hierarchy, which I think is worth reading for similarities with mysticism in current polytheistic communities.

Something interesting she reports is that "As the number of Christ's brides increased in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, women who claimed this special relationship were less likely to be automatically recognized as holy" (Gregory iii) and goes on to say "the number and nature of brides of Christ in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries contributed to growing doubts about women's religious writing and creativity, resulting in the introduction of a new model for

female sanctity that de-emphasized mystical experience and the bridal relationship in favor of virtuous actions." (iv).

Or, to put a modern spin on it, when becoming a bride of Christ started to be perceived as "trendy," it became treated as less legitimate than when it was the sole purview of people who had dedicated themselves to a religious life separated from normal society.

I found a lot of these women's experiences really relatable, particularly in how the intensity of the experience and emotions impacted their lives and how overwhelmed they felt by some of their visions and experiences. Some of them were mistreated pretty harshly for being women involved in mystical practices that the authorities were uncomfortable with. In some places, women's mystical writing was forbidden, and mystical practices were sometimes considered subversive and disruptive to established hierarchies. (Lokakvan 2017: 8)

Sempre in ambito cristiano si parla del beato Bernardo Francisco de Hoyos y Seña, un gesuita spagnolo vissuto nel diciottesimo secolo. Iniziò i suoi studi in un istituto gesuita a dieci anni, prese i voti a diciassette ed ebbe diverse esperienze mistiche. In particolare descrive un legame molto stretto e possibilmente romantico con Gesù. Dall'articolo *Bernardo De Hoyos: Mystical Same-sex Marriage with Jesus* di Cherry Kitteredge sul sito Q Spirit viene citato un estratto che a sua volta è citato dal libro *The Visions of Bernard Francis De Hoyos S.J.* di Henri Bechard in cui Bernardo Francisco De Hoyos parla della sua relazione mistica:

Always holding my right hand, the Lord had me occupy the empty throne; then He fitted on my finger a gold ring.... 'May this ring be an earnest of our love. You are Mine, and I am yours. You may call yourself and sign Bernardo de Jesus, thus, as I said to my spouse, Santa Teresa, you are Bernardo de Jesus and I am Jesus de Bernardo. My honor is yours; your honor is Mine. Consider My glory that of your Spouse; I will consider yours, that of My spouse. All Mine is yours, and all yours is Mine. What I am by nature you share by grace. You and I are one! (Bechard 1959)

La descrizione scritta dalla fondatrice del progetto (Cherry Kittredge) circa il sito Q Spirit è la seguente:

Q Spirit promotes LGBTQ spirituality with saints, history, art and books. The website fosters religious and artistic freedom by teaching love for all people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. It expands the meaning of holiness for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning (LGBTQ) people of faith and allies.

Viene accreditata come fonte anche la pagina omonima al beato sul sito CatholicSaints.Info. Dopo Bernardo Francisco de Hoyos Lokakvan passa alla biografia di Ida Craddock. Craddock è una donna americana vissuta nel diciannovesimo secolo impegnata nell'educazione sessuale; pensava che la coppia sposata controllando i propri impulsi sessuali potesse avere esperienze mistiche e addirittura arrivare all'unione con il divino. Nei suoi scritti dice di conoscere

questa unione bene perché sposata con uno spirito. Non fu mai sposata con un uomo. A causa delle sue idee che inviava per iscritto o comunicava a voce di persona fu arrestata in diverse occasioni e processata due volte per lo stesso presunto crimine. Si uccise pur di non andare in un penitenziario federale e Lokakvan scrive che fu considerata un martire dai «freethinkers» (Lokakyan 2017: 9) spiritualisti e medici del tempo, e che molti invece la vedevano come pazza. La sua stessa madre cercò di mandare Ida in un manicomio, ma lei scappò in Inghilterra dove fece ricerca sulla storia della religione e della sessualità e scrisse il suo libro, *Heavenly Bridegrooms* (1917). Da quest'opera Lokakyan cita:

It has been my high privilege to have some practical experience as the earthly wife of an angel from the unseen world. In the interests of psychical research, I have tried to explore this pathway of communication with the spiritual universe, and, so far as lay in my power, to make a sort of rough guidebook of the route. For not all wives of heavenly bridegrooms travel the same path at first. There are roads running into this one from every religion and folklore under the sun, since the pathway of marital relations on the Borderland was once, and still is, as I hope to show, one of the main thoroughfares connecting our world with the world beyond the grave. This thoroughfare, along part of which I hope to conduct the reader in imagination, is marked with signposts, many crumbling under the religious storms of centuries, others preserved as sacred trellises upon which to train a rank growth of flourishing superstition, and still others fresh with modern paint and gilding. (Lokakvan 2017: 9)

2.2 Come si diventa godspouse

Tutti i praticanti di godspousing con cui ho interagito sono stati introdotti a questo fenomeno attraverso il web, nello specifico i social media. Infatti come è stato indicato in precedenza le informazioni riguardanti questo fenomeno sono limitate e provenienti per la maggior parte da individui che condividono la loro esperienza in prima persona. Questo è vero anche per gli individui che ho intervistato.

F: How and when did you discover godspousing?

K: I think I was in a discord server for two years and it popped up, I got curious and talked about it with a friend. I was introduced to it by someone that had some experience with it.

F: So you already knew that person?

K: I already knew them from the server.

F: Were you already interested in these kind of topics?

K: No it just came up, I didn't know it was even possible.

F: When and how did you find out about the concept of godspousing?

B: Maybe like two years ago? It's so funny. Two years ago I think on Tumblr? Like I

was making a post and I saw that and I thought...oh! Interesting! It didn't cross my mind for sometime after that.

F: So basically you were introduced by the internet?

B: Yes.

F: It wasn't a practitioner?

B: No.

F: Where you already interested in similar practices?

B: No it just came up.

Il percorso verso il godspousing inizia con l'individuo e l'entità che si conoscono, i due comunicano e spesso collaborano a livello spirituale (di solito il praticante fa un'offerta e l'entità ricambia aiutando durante un incantesimo). Questo periodo di conoscenza ha durata variabile, ad un certo punto uno dei due esprime un interesse verso il godspousing.

F: When did the godspousing start?

K: One and a half years ago.

F: When the godspousing started how long had you known him for?

K: I had known them eight months before.

F: How did the godspousing start?

K: It was like a month or so of intense conversations every day, which...I don't think you do that with others on your team, right? And there was a lot of affection and one day I just asked if they were interested in it.

F: So you knew he wanted that kind of relationship with you because of these conversations?

K: Yeah.

F: In addition to that did they send signs, or were there other types of communications besides talking to him? Like tarot, divination by other people eccetera.

K: My own communication and channeling by somebody else that I know. Generally there were signs for sure.

F: Do you have examples of signs you remember?

K: Not really, but I can remember some conversations. Before the whole thing became godspousing I remember he was saying "I'm not a friend" (while channeling) and he was saying that he wanted to make it a thing. He knew that I was on board but he wanted to be the one to pursue me. And generally he was working up to a grand gesture. And then I had really good thing happening in my mind and he was showing me a gesture by doing a lot of good stuff for me in my life.

F: Where were you when he told you about it?

K: I was at home in my own privacy. In my bedroom.

F: How did you feel?

K: I felt happy.

F: When did your godspousing start?

B: I have the date (cerca sul telefono) so September thirteenth two thousand twenty-two.

F: How long did you know the deity before the godspousal started? Or before the relationship became romantic

B: I don't have my journal...I would say probably about a year. Time passes faster than you think it will. (ride)

F: How did the godspousing start?

B: I had come out of one that didn't work out with a previous deity and I was questioning kinda like my connections with everyone on my team...and so it had a slow slow start because I was insecure in a lot of things and it was just something where like...every night he kinda...I mean we talked about "How was your day, how did you feel about this thing that happened in your day?". We kinda tried to work through anything that upset me in that time and eventually it came up like "Why are you doing all this", you know?

F: How did you know that the deity wanted that kind of relationship with you?

B: Mmmh...he told me and then I was like, "What if I'm wrong?" and then I had dreams about it.

F: So the communication (when he told you about the godspousal) did not happen through tarot or other objects like that?

B: I don't know how to explain what it's like to know that there's things out there... cause when I try to explain it to someone I sound like a crazy person.

F: Where you in a meaningful place when that conversation happened?

B: I was in my bedroom.

F: How did that first conversation make you feel?

B: I was worried because of the prior connection I had come out of, there was a lot of unresolved ...a bit like upset feelings, I don't want the same thing to happen and so I was like "I need more time" (ride).

Secondo il consenso generale dei praticanti che ho conosciuto, perché un praticante diventi godspoused deve necessariamente essere adulto. Questo è il requisito fondamentale, seguito dal fatto che sia in grado di comunicare adeguatamente con l'entità, altrimenti appare ovvio che non ci sarebbero nemmeno le basi per iniziare una conoscenza a livello prettamente spirituale. Tuttavia non serve che i godspouse siano praticanti esperti o di lunga data ed essendo il godspousing una relazione con un'entità non corporea secondo i praticanti intervistati l'attrazione fisica non è importante o necessaria ma viene sottoposta a quella platonica.

F: Are there requisites or necessary qualities that the practitioner needs to have?

K: I don't think so, but I think it's more important to be able to really communicate with them, otherwise if you can't you're always going to someone to ask them to tell the deity that you're in love with them and stuff. Then I don't think it's good cause you don't know what the deity is trying to tell, what they need and what you need.

F: Is there a minimum or maximum age?

K: You definitely have to be of age.

K: Are there other physical requirements?

K: I wouldn't say so.

F: Would you say the person needs to be an experienced practitioner?

K: Yes and I think the second requirement is making sure the deity likes you as well.

F: So the deity has to like the person, do they have to like them both personality wise and physically?

K: In my own experience it doesn't matter what you look like physically because at the end of the day deities in their natural form are just energy. So I think they see us the same way, it doesn't matter what you look like, they like you because of other reasons that aren't your physical self.

F: In your opinion are there requirements for people to become godspoused?

B: I think you just really need to be prepared for what you're getting into, I guess some people don't take it seriously enough and some people take it seriously and it's all gonna be on a case to case basis. But I think some people should give it more time than some have been giving it.

F: Do you mean time while considering it?

B: Honestly I think that figuring things out after a year is a good amount of time. Some people are like "No it has to be five years" and I'm like (fa smorfia) I mean at that point it's just the natural next step.

F: Are there spiritual requirements? Like being experienced.

B: I think you definitely should have experience with some kind of divination and clairs just for good communication, but that could be built up. Cause you don't wanna misinterpret things which can happen in the begging of your practice.

F: Do you think there needs to be physical requirements-

B: -Like age?

F: Yes, that, but also physical attraction...does the deity have to be attracted to your physical form?

B: I mean they're not in the relationship for your physical body, they're in it for you and you're more than your physical body...so (ride). It's like you're more than the sum of your parts.

F: How about age?

B: I definitely think you should be at least eighteen.

A questo punto può verificarsi un'ulteriore fase di stallo che può essere vista come una sorta di corteggiamento: l'entità e il praticante continuano a conoscersi, a comunicare, in alcuni casi si scambiano doni (i doni possono essere di diverso tipo, ad esempio offerte o favori) e possono ponderare l'idea dell'unione fino ad una data prestabilita in cui i due celebrano il godspousing (la fase di corteggiamento non è necessaria ma frequente). L'unione che segna l'inizio ufficiale del godspousing può essere celebrata con una cerimonia oppure essere molto semplice, è necessaria solo la presenza di entrambi i partner.

F: How did the courting phase play out?

K: It was that whole eight months, it was very flirty and there were many

conversations where they showed me who they really are.

F: Did he give you gifts?

K: Yes, his gifts were the good things he made happen for me. And I don't know if they are gifts exactly but I gave him offerings.

F: What kind of offerings?

K: Normal offerings like blood

F: Where did the courting play out?

K: My bedroom

F: How did the union or wedding play out?

K: There was no wedding but I know some people have one.

F: Was there a courting phase between him saying he was interested and getting godspoused?

B: So like, how all the courting situations have worked with me is when it is offered or the conversation happens we talk about what that entails and then you set a far off date that has a meaning, and that is the time to kind of figure things out and make the decision. When the day comes up you make it concrete but before that it's just an idea.

F: So in the waiting period is there an exchanging of gifts or other things pertinent to a more traditional courting phase?

B: I have no idea (ride) I mean I can be like "Can we go on a date tonight?" and we can go on a tea party kind of situation. For some reason I find diners really comforting and one time we had a dream scenario hanging out at the diner and one of the other deities was the waiter and he was like "Yeah, I wanna be invited".

F: So there were some dates in the courting period.

B: Yeah, we even picked out the outfit together for that date.

F: Did you meet in meaningful or special places?

B: Mostly dreams. I'm a college student, my life revolves around my room. Maybe I'll go on walks.

F: Was there a ceremony?

B: So it was a school day that day, I had an exam, did it, went back to my room, did my hair and makeup, took out a fancy tea pot and tea cup, made some tea and put out some offerings and I can't light candles cause I live in a dorm! I had written out something I was gonna say and kinda got something in return and yeah, that was it.

F: Was it just you and him?

B: I like invited a bunch of deities (ride) and a lot more showed up than what I thought. But I invited anyone who is associated with him, familial relationships eccetera. And Juno. Because she's the goddess of marriage.

F: Where there any objects involved?

B: I have a deck of cards dedicated to him and a ring that I wear on my right hand just cause I don't wanna talk to people about him.

F: Did you use the deck during the wedding ceremony?

B: Yeah.

2.3 Cosa significa essere godspouse

Dopo l'ufficializzazione del godspousing praticante ed entità continuano a comunicare (di solito giornalmente), a passare del tempo insieme (di solito in luoghi privati come la camera da letto o luoghi spirituali come il piano astrale, ma anche in pubblico) e a collaborare spiritualmente. I metodi di comunicazione cambiano da individuo a individuo e sono legati anche all'entità e ai suoi connotati (per esempio il praticante godspoused alla divinità Somuns nell'intervista dice di comunicare ed incontrarlo attraverso i sogni, essendo Somnus legato al sonno e ai sogni). Il sostegno offerto dal godspouse non è solo di tipo spirituale ma è presente anche in altri ambiti della vita dell'individuo. Trovo particolarmente significativo il ruolo emotivo che l'entità può occupare nella vita del praticante con cui condivide il godspousing: essa mi è stata descritta più volte come fonte di conforto, sostegno e amore in situazioni al di fuori dalla pratica spirituale e ha quindi il potenziale di diventare parte integrante della vita del praticante, della sua vita emotiva in particolare. Può diventare fonte di attenzioni quando ce n'è più bisogno. L'entità godspoused ha con il praticante una relazione specialmente intima su più livelli, differenziandola da tutti gli altri tipi di relazioni che il praticante ha con il resto dello spirit team¹⁵.

F: How would you describe your relationship with the deity now, and how did it change?

K: I think he is more likely to be on my side of things even if I'm wrong and in general just...we softened towards each other. At the begging of the godspousal you say "You have all the power to do all these things, why don't you use it" and now you just don't ask questions like that.

F: How do you communicate with the deity?

K: At first I used clairs and now I mostly use pendulum. Because now I have more deities to communicate with and it's more difficult.

F: So before you had fewer deities on your spirit team¹⁶?

K: Yes for sure, he was the only one that stepped forward first.

F: Do you use special objects to communicate?

K: Pendulum.

F: Where do you communicate?

K: My bedroom.

F: How often do you communicate?

K: We commune less often now but it's just because of life. I'd say we talk to each other weekly for an hour.

F: Do you meet in particular places?

K: My bedroom.

F: In what sense do you communicate?

K: I am in my physical body and he is there spiritually.

¹⁵ con team si intende il team spirituale, ovvero il gruppo di entità spirituali che aiutano il praticante.

¹⁶ con team si intende il team spirituale, ovvero il gruppo di entità spirituali che aiutano il praticante.

F: What do you usually do together?

K: I put on a show and we chill together besides having conversations.

F: Does he give you gifts?

K: Yes absolutely, I still give him offerings.

F: Does he support you emotionally?

K: Yes it's both ways, he makes me feel better when I have issues. And with the issues I caused.

F: Does he support you in other ways?

K: Yes, he helps with my other relationships. One time I was almost kicked out of my house and I feel like he made it go away and brought everyone together.

F: How would you say the relationship has evolved through time?

B: So I used to work with Hypnos, then I accepted a working relationship with Zeus and Hypnos was upset at me for accepting it and was like "What about your feelings on such and such", and I was like "Well I was wrong" and so my relationship with Hypnos ended when I started with Zeus, he was not very happy. But I struggled with sleep issues my whole life, I have bad anxiety and wake up in the middle of the night a lot and I have pretty vivid dreams and so I was kinda post that. I was suffering not being able to sleep and when I was sleeping having awful dreams and never feeling well rested and it really sucked and so one of my deities was like...I know this can be scary for you right now, but I can ask someone else to get involved if you're okay with that. And I was like "Eh you know what, f*** it let's go, anything helps". And the thing is, I used to have a really bad sleeping schedule in high school and that is part of what contributed to this. Like, I would only get three hours of sleep, I went to a private high school and was trying to manage a four point o gpa. But that first night...oh and another thing is that I had someone casting hexes on me too, so it was like not a great time for me and he was kinda there...the first night I was like "I've worked with too many deities" and he was like "Well I don't wanna work with you anyways" (ride) and then he was like ...so there was this dreams that I had that was like...you know when you feel something tangibly in your dream? So I was awake in my bed but I was asleep and the walls in my room were like tv static and there were figures moving and they were all like trying to grab me and my hair and I was freaking out and crying. And he showed up and put a hand over my dream body and he was like "I'm really sorry but we just have to wait it out, be quiet. They can't see you so if you don't make any noise you should be okay.". And then the next day he was like "You reevaluated things" and I was like "What do you mean?" and he was like "I know you said you don't wanna work with anyone" and I was like "You know what, sure" and he was like "That was fast". And following that he said "You might have a weird dream tonight cause I have a test for you, but after that you should be in the clear" and it was like a hopes and dreams kinda thing, you know when you see abstract art or a collage? It wasn't scary. Following that...I love scary movies, I've watched a lot of scary movies with him and mmmh he would like, make fun of others to make me feel better - you know when you're mad at someone? And yeah

we talked about my feelings a lot and sometimes he would make me a little upset because he'd push me to talk about my feeling but it needed to be done. And um...no the dress I picked out...I was like wearing the dress...like I had a dream the week before and I was on a beach waiting in the water and I was like freaking out looking for something in the water so I'm like holding the dress up, it was not like...the actual dress didn't have a zipper but in the dream it had a zipper and I was like holding it up cause it wouldn't stay on. And I was searching the water for something, like you know when you feel like you should be doing something and I was like "Where is it?"? And then he just kinda like zipped up the dress and was like "You're looking for a key but the key is you, there's nothing to find" and then I was like freaking out about the dress and he was like "I know you're worried about this dress but I wouldn't care if you were wearing sweatpants, I think you look beautiful".

F: Has the relationship evolved romantically from when you got godspoused to now?

B: Mmm when we first started out...so like...he would limit his time with me if that makes sense, so the entire bad connection that I fell out with I spent like twenty four seven with that entity and so like, sometimes I would like fall into like...random like...another thing is that I've had bad friends in the past who thought they owned my time and so sometimes I get anxiety attacks if I spent a lot of time with someone and so... so what he'd do he'd be like "I'm leaving now, I'll see you at like eight pm, before bed or ten pm" and I'd be like "Do you have to?" and he was like "I don't wanna go and I know a part of you doesn't want me to go but this is for the best" and then we kinda just like slowly increased that. And so like anything like intimate moments, if you get what I mean, that didn't happen for a couple of months at least before like...I'm a very slow person with those things.

F: Do you have a preferred method to communicate with him?

B: The thing about dreams is sometimes he's cheeky and I don't remember them so sometimes he's like "Yeah, I told you" and I'm like "I don't remember" and he's like "Yeah okay" (ride) another thing it's like...one thing I asked was that if I had a bad dream to not remember it and so like sometimes I don't remember stuff and I don't ask. A lot of dreams. But also like...the thing about tarot is I'm better at doing readings for other people than for myself if that makes sense so like when I read for myself I'm like "Oh what does this mean?" but if I'm reading for another person I'm like "Oh I can put this in context for you!". And so like uh my readings for myself... I do them and try to approach myself as if I'm reading for somebody else and I'll like write something up but...sometimes I just pull up a free write and then it just kinda happens umh, I find that free writing and clairs are a easier way to communicate with my team at least. But I do have cards dedicated to them.

F: Can you explain what free writing is?

B: You sit there and you don't think and you write or type depending on what you're using and whatever comes up is the message and ummh I'm a creative writer, I write a lot and so it's really easy for me to sit down and let that happen. And for example when I write my own stuff I can tell that it's me and when I just let it happen I can tell that it's not my own.

F: How often do you two communicate?

B: Everyday (ride). Before stuff it would be like a short moment before bed and a quick talk in the night and he'd send me off to dreams...like a check up (ride).

F: Are there places where you often meet or hang out?

B: Mmm mostly just...I mean wherever I am works out if I wanted to talk but one thing is he doesn't like my work place, he's like "Your work is boring, I'm sorry" he's like "You could hang out with Mercury". Because Mercury is like the god of love and trading commerce so he doesn't care about my job being boring, he doesn't mind so he's like "If you're having a bad day and you really need me to come I'll come but I don't wanna hang out while you're doing that for five hours". I do accounting, I'm an accounting major so like, it was funny, I was about to talk about my class and he was like "If you wanna talk about tax liability you can talk to anyone but me" so I ended up talking to Zeus about it.

F: Do you meet only in the physical world in your physical form or spiritually?

B. Definitely spiritually.

F: Is there stuff you usually do when together?

B: Mmmh we like...you know in movies when they say "We like long walks on the beach"...we do long walks on the beach, I like scary movies so one time I dreamed I was in a scary movie but I was fine. Scary dreams are just kinda like a part of anyone's life so I have learned to manage or exit a dream. [...]

F: Do you exchange gifts of any kind?

B: I do creative readings and devote stuff to him. I write poetry pieces or I'll like include references in my work. I make tea a lot, so tea is one of my favorite ones ummh...I do have caffeinated or not caffeinated depending on time fo day, I have rocks, so many rocks, like normal rocks from outside, they're not fancy crystals. And they are part of my warding. It's funny: one of the other deities one time was like "Can I ask why your defenses are built like a tank?" and I was like "Look, I have a lot of ex friends who practice". One of my deities took weeks working me up to hexes cause I was scared to do hexes. Also...I wear pins, like metal pins. I have pins dedicated to deities. I don't have an altar space right now but I'll have one in the future so I have a lot of things I can wear or consume.

F: Does he support you emotionally?

B: For sure! I mean like if I'm upset for something sometimes I freeze up like, physically I'm fine but spiritually my deities would try to talk to me and I'd be panicked and cut off any communication. I get in that headspace. When that happens I kinda just have to wait it out and he'll wait it out with me. It's kinda like going non verbal. It will happen if I'm overwhelmed or if I've been having a hard time with something and dealing with it and afterwards we'd talk about stuff. I'm a big academic, I'm in a honor society and in the top ten percent of my program but I used to study way more and I used to use it as a kinda like way to ignore everything in my life and so he sets cut off times with me.

Il godspousing è una relazione aperta, questo vuol dire che entrambi i partner se lo desiderano possono avere relazioni con altri, che siano di tipo romantico, devozionale o sessuale. Tutte le

divinità godspoused menzionate nel gruppo a cui appartengono gli intervistati hanno più di un godspouse. È presente tuttavia un membro godspoused con un'entità descrittami come uno spirito (non una divinità) e in questo caso il praticante è il suo unico partner.

F: Do you have rules in your godspousing?

K: No actually, it's pretty open.

F: Can you have relationships with others?

K: Yes, both humans and entities.

F: Both physical and emotional?

K: Yes.

F: Can the deity have other relationships?

K: Yes a hundred percent.

F: Do you have boundaries or rules in your godspousing?

B: I have pet names we stay away from cause of like previous...I don't like being called that. I've set up expectations and things like "I'm a high priestess" "I teach"...I don't teach, I'm like a trophy wife, we're just a romantic relationship. But mmmh aside...like...the closest the teaching goes is my friends asking me help with tarot. One of those thing is like...I had one of my freak outs last night and he was like "You know you can ask for me anytime" and I was like...the problem when that happens is that I can't ask for anybody because I don't know how to and freak out. So it's one of those things...I do work with other deities and usually I'm hanging out with someone most of the time but who it is varies. The people most prominent in my practice though are Somnus and Eros. I do work with Hestia and cook a lot.

F: Can you have relationships with other entities?

B: Yes.

F: Romantic?

B: Yes.

F: With humans?

B: Yes, I can but haven't yet just because I have really high standards and a lot of people who have liked me were not great.

F: Can these relationships be both emotional and physical?

B: Yes. I am on the ace spectrum but I am really not interested in having sex. Other intimacies I don't mind, obviously I prefer emotional intimacy first.

F: Can the deity have other relationships?

B: Yes, for sure.

Il godspousing nasce come un'unione eterna che si protrae anche dopo la morte del praticante. Tuttavia, se uno dei due partner lo desidera è possibile mettervi fine. Non è chiaro come si proceda per terminare il godspousing e nel caso sia l'umano a volerne uscire la cosa sembra essere più complicata a causa della disparità di potere fra lui e l'entità, in generale viene percepito come un periodo e un processo delicato. I motivi della fine possono essere molteplici, nonostante il ruolo significativo che l'entità può ricoprire nel godspousing influenzando positivamente la vita spirituale

e non del praticante è anche possibile che questa influenza sia negativa, che la relazione venga percepita come tossica. È questo il caso di una persona intervistata che ha messo fine ad un godspousing per poi iniziare una relazione con altre divinità (la relazione attuale viene invece descritta come positiva).

F: Can godspousing end?

K: Yes a hundred percent. But if it ends it usually doesn't end well for the practitioner.

F: Can both partners end the godspousal?

K: Both can end it. But I think if the practitioner ends it it usually doesn't end well because you made a promise.

F: So the practitioner can break it off but the deity depending on the reason might react badly.

K: Yes.

F: Can a godspousal end?

B: People will have a lot of different answers and it depends, because people take different vows and have different situations and like...it's not the same. We're talking about godspousal on a broad spectrum cause there are different pantheons and deities even from different social attachments. I did have one that ended and it didn't work for very long and the reason was cause like I...I didn't know what I was signing up for. It was kinda both of our faults. In that scenario what happened was actually that mmmh it was when I started to realize mmmh...we had like fights near the end and one of the deities I was close with was like "Yeah we..."... he basically made a joke "He's like your guard dog" and he was like "Don't call me that" and he was like "It's true though, you will push people out and not let them know" and I was like "Oh that makes me uncomfortable". And so we fought a lot over that and like, ultimately it took like...then we came to terms where we said "Ok this isn't working out" and I did have to do stuff to end it to cut our ties and destroy some of our stuff. But yeah that was sometime ago. I actually had some other deities get involved because they were like "This is how this is going to work" and I was told what I needed to do to end things and it's gonna suck in the beginning cause you're used to being around him but that's what's better for both of you. But yeah that's my experience with that.

F: Do you think both parties could end the godspousal?

B: Yes. Well in my experience it kinda just happened, I didn't know it was happening and he made his vows first, it happened very fast and that's why I think that courtship period is very important.

F: How do you think a deity would react...like if you end the godspousal be prepared?

B: Well at first he was like...I was like "What's going with us isn't working out" and I pushed him out, but then he was like "You can't just do that" and so that's why I had to get other deities involved cause I can't hold my own against him so I was like "This is really upsetting for me to be going through and I feel like I'm not in the

wrong” so I did have other people who had my back in that sense. But no, a lot of time has passed since then and we have talked it out and gone through “Forgive you” and “Apologize”. But it was one of those things where...he knew it would come to an end at some point but it was one of those things where you know something is going to end but you don't wanna let it end so things get messy. That's exactly what happened. One thing I literally never connected the dots on was...so one time I used to like vaguely...there's talking to deities and then there's worshipping them and sometimes one pops in and you just say hi. And I remember one time Eros popped up to say hi and he got so angry.

Il godspousing è una presenza significativa nella vita dell'individuo e può influenzare sia la sua vita all'infuori della spiritualità (come fonte di positività, supporto, attenzioni o al contrario di negatività) sia quest'ultima, essendovi strettamente legato. Avere una relazione così stretta con un'entità con dei poteri (che spesso è proprio una divinità presente nella tradizione e pratica spirituale) rappresenta una sorta di vantaggio. Significa avere una fonte di potere a disposizione, non un aiuto arbitrario, ma comunque un'autorità a cui rivolgersi che può essere emotivamente motivato a supportare il partner. Come tutte le entità in questa pratica, quella godspoused può intercedere durante incantesimi o dare consigli che vengono comunicati attraverso la divinazione. Tuttavia i praticanti godspoused non vengono automaticamente percepiti come più potenti solo per la loro unione ma semplicemente più vicini alla divinità (nella vasta maggioranza dei casi in cui l'entità godspoused sia una divinità). Questa vicinanza potrebbe risultare problematica nelle interazioni e nei rapporti con altri nel caso in cui il godspousing non sia percepito positivamente da qualcuno o abbia causato difficoltà relazionali in precedenza.

F: Does godspousing affect your life outside the spiritual practice?

K: No I don't think so because it's like with other relationships, they don't affect other things. But I think for some people it could be more strict.

F: How does it affect the spiritual practice?

K: I think it makes it easier because you know that help is literally there and you don't have to go around asking for it.

F: Do people in your life know you are godspoused?

K: Yes.

F: Do people online know you are a godspouse?

K: Yes.

F: Does godspousing influence your life outside of your religious practice?

B: I don't know how to answer this, I feel like we've talked about it (ride). I mean there's the dreams and...I mean, he's a source of inspiration for me. I do accounting but I also have a lot of creative hobbies and I love to create and express myself. I find that most of my deities like being involved in my pieces and that's something they bring into my life, that they bring around. I have this friend that I introduced to the craft and I joked and said “I feel like I have indoctrinated you” and she said “It's funny you do all these things that seem normal to people but now I know that all of them are spiritual” and I was like “Yeah they are a part of my everyday life but I

have to make it palatable to other people” but also like...for example she was like “Some people just think you really like the sky but no it’s more than that”. She was like “It’s just really interesting” and it’s nice having her as a friend cause I let her read through my book of shadows and she found my vows and I totally forgot they were in there and I freaked out cause I thought she would...but she was like “This is so cute” and I was like “Some people think it’s weird” and she was like “I don’t think it’s weird there are nuns”. And I was like, that makes me feel so much better.

F: How does-

B: -Wait can I add another offering? I play music and make playlists and play the flute for people.

F: How does godspousing influence your religious practice?

B: Well if I wanted to enter into something else serious...they get a say in it. There has to be some filtration if that makes sense. And for example like, I felt really bad to ask the other deity present to leave cause I had plans with him and they were like “Why would you feel bad for asking me to leave when you guys have a serious relationship and plans. I don't understand.”. As long as you’re vocal about things they will work out.

F: Do people in your life know you’re a godspouse?

B: Some of them.

F: Do some people online know you are a godspouse?

B: Yes.

3. Channeling

3.1 Che cos'è il channeling?

Essenzialmente il channeling consiste nell'incanalare un'entità attraverso il proprio corpo (da qui il nome). E' presente in diverse pratiche spirituali contemporanee e presenta similitudini importanti con fenomeni antichi. La pratica di channeling che riguarda la comunità da me intervistata è caratterizzata dal fatto che le entità canalizzate sono divinità, si può canalizzare solo una divinità alla volta, essa può parlare attraverso il corpo del praticante ma egli è comunque responsabile e ha controllo sopra le proprie azioni (nonostante alcuni riportano di non essere coscienti nel momento del channeling, mentre altri possono addirittura parlare alternandosi con la divinità). L'assenza di consapevolezza durante il channeling è un elemento condiviso con la descrizione del fenomeno della possessione all'interno del libro *The Golden Bough: a study of magic and religion* di James Frazer (1958), secondo cui la possessione coincide con il momento in cui uno spirito entra in una persona e «the person's own personality lies in abeyance during the episode, and all utterances are accepted as the voice of the god or spirit»(Frazer 1958:108).

Il channeling è inoltre ritenuta una pratica avanzata che solitamente richiede tempo e allenamento, al punto che alcuni individui dopo svariati tentativi si ritengono incapaci di farla. Intervistando un channeler (praticante di channeling, 'incanalatore') mi è stata fornita la seguente definizione:

F:How would you define channeling?

A: I would describe it as taking on the characteristics, traits, tone of voice that aren't yours and like they come out of nowhere. It's difficult to explain but you know it's not you and that's it. When it comes and you do it and you have whatever deity channeled through you it's just a different sensation. In my case it's burning heat because again... demons.

F:What is channeling to you?

A:For me in my practice it's very much an exercise of trust, to go to the point where I am comfortable with what's happening. I don't use it much in my practice but occasionally it happens, for example when I read tarot. When I give tarot reading from Lilith specifically she channels through me and you always notice because I don't act like her at all.

Una definizione del channeling che presenta similarità importanti con quella fornita da A. è contenuta nel libro *Channeling: Investigations on receiving information from paranormal source*

(1988) del Dottor Jon Klimo, professore associato di psicologia all'American Schools of Professional Psychology (ASPP) dell'Argosy University in California. Klimo scrive:

Channeling is the communication of information to or through a physically embodied human being from a source that is said to exist on some other level or dimension of reality than the physical as we know it, and that is not from the normal mind (or self) of the channel. Although the human mind might be considered nonphysical, I want to rule out by my definition not only communication from one's own normal mind as source, but communication from fellow physically embodied minds. (Klimo 1988:16) [...]

Although, as we shall see, channeling has been around since the beginning of recorded history, it is enjoying a remarkable resurgence today. (Klimo 1988:17)

Un altro elemento particolarmente interessante del libro, che coincide con la pratica dei membri della comunità spirituale online, è l'automatic writing come forma di channeling. L'automatic writing (anche chiamato free writing) è già stato citato nell'intervista di B. mentre spiegava come comunica con il suo godspouse.

F: Do you have a preferred method to communicate with him?

B: [...] But also like...the thing about tarot is I'm better at doing readings for other people than for myself if that makes sense so like when I read for myself I'm like "Oh what does this mean?" but if I'm reading for another person I'm like "Oh I can put this in context for you!". And so like uh my readings for myself...I do them and try to approach myself as if I'm reading for somebody else and I'll like write something up but...sometimes I just pull up a free write and then it just kinda happens umh, I find that free writing and clairs are a easier way to communicate with my team at least. But I do have cards dedicated to them.

F: Can you explain what free writing is?

B: You sit there and you don't think and you write or type depending on what you're using and whatever comes up is the message and umm I'm a creative writer, I write a lot and so it's really easy for me to sit down and let that happen. And for example when I write my own stuff I can tell that it's me and when I just let it happen I can tell that it's not my own.

Klimo scrive che l'automatic writing è classificato sia come channeling in trance totale che in trance parziale e che per le sue particolari proprietà dissociative merita la sua categoria a sé stante. Il canale è solitamente sveglio e cosciente ma completamente separato da qualsiasi senso di controllo della scrittura. Ci sono centinaia di istanze pubblicate di questo tipo di channeling. Che sia in parte o totalmente in trance lo scrittore automatico sembra avere il braccio e la mano completamente controllati da un altro. Alcuni usano il termine amanuense per descrivere un canale di questo tipo, nel senso di una persona a cui viene dettato cosa scrivere. La caratteristica principale

di questo fenomeno è che è un automatismo, ovvero l'attività motoria coinvolta nello scrivere accade automaticamente e inconsciamente, senza nessun controllo intenzionale da parte del canale. Nonostante lo scrittore automatico sia inconscio rispetto alle attività di parte del suo corpo, la sua mente è allerta e libera. L'autore include la testimonianza di una persona che descrive la propria esperienza durante l'automatic writing:

I remember the first day, standing at the piano, pen in hand, arm free so that it could be moved easily, waiting expectantly. I didn't have to wait more than a moment before the fingers that held the pen began to tingle... The pen moved, first in circles, then in interlocking ovals along the paper, like those we used to form as children in penmanship class ... I had to develop the inner freedom to let the pen move freely, not to hold back out of fear or timidity, but rather go with it in spirit and let the communication happen through me ... At first the pen moved slowly but firmly, and then, little by little, the pace picked up and I found my hand writing sentences. At this time the words and sentences were all run together. The free, rounded movement seemed to be the essential element. I never knew what had been written until after the pen stopped moving and I was able to read it, separating each word with a short vertical line. (Klimo 1988:196)

Nel libro vengono menzionate altre tecniche di comunicazione utilizzate anche dai praticanti della comunità online come l'uso del pendolo e i clairs. Troviamo anche un capitolo dedicato a diverse forme di channeling che Klimo individua in diverse aree geografiche e periodi storici ('channeling as a historical phenomenon'). In particolare si nominano l'antico Egitto, la Cina (i "wu", figure comparabili a degli sciamani tacciabili dalla dinastia Shang in poi, incanalavano spiriti che parlavano attraverso le loro bocche), il Giappone (viene descritto un episodio nell'ottavo secolo a.C. in cui lo spirito della dea del sole entra nelle persone e le utilizza per mediare informazioni), l'India (episodi nella "early Indian history" in cui semidei si incanalano in corpi umani), l'antica Grecia (gli oracoli) e il cristianesimo. Il paragrafo riguardante il cristianesimo la figura di Gesù e il channeling è particolarmente originale e possibilmente problematico per quanto riguarda il concetto di trinità e di channeler. L'autore definisce il channeling come una comunicazione fra umano e spirituale, portando alla possibile inclusione di tantissimi fenomeni religiosi e storici in questa categoria. L'opinione di Klimo è chiara in questo paragrafo:

One of the chief assumptions of this book is that channeling includes most major recorded spiritual communication between physical and nonphysical beings. The earlier prophets and later saints of the world's religious traditions may have been channels of extraordinary spiritual import.

Oltre a ciò ho individuato diverse descrizioni di fenomeni comparabili al channeling praticati in gruppi spirituali nativi nel libro *Ecstatic religion, an anthropological study of spirit possession and shamanism* di I. M. Lewis (1971). In questi casi ci si riferisce alla persona che comunica con lo spirito come sciamano. Il primo caso riguarda la Guiana britannica: i suoi abitanti credono che durante la trance, indotta dalla masticazione di tabacco, lo spirito dello sciamano diventi molto piccolo e leggero e che sia in grado di staccarsi dal suo corpo e viaggiare con l'ausilio di una scala

nel mondo degli spiriti. Nello stesso momento il suo corpo, che rimane come un contenitore vuoto, è riempito da vari spiriti della foresta e sono questi che posseggono il suo corpo e ci parlano attraverso. Tuttavia per complicare le cose gli Akawaio (popolazione nativa del Brasile, Guiana e Venezuela) credono anche che il corpo dello sciamano potrebbe essere occupato allo stesso tempo sia dal suo spirito che da altri (Lewis 1971:47).

La seconda popolazione citata è quella dei somali musulmani del nord-est Africa, dove la possessione è percepita come l'entrata di uno spirito, senza nessuna dottrina che include l'assenza dell'anima della persona che lo riceve. Si crede anzi che l'anima lasci il corpo solo nel momento della morte. E anche quando un individuo starebbe possedendo un altro (quindi l'ente che possiede è in un certo senso l'emanazione di una persona vivente) questo non è visto come uno spostamento di nessuna delle anime delle due persone coinvolte (Lewis 1971:48).

Si parla poi della popolazione Tungus, la cui parola per sciamano (pronunciata saman) significa letteralmente eccitato, mosso o alzato (questo incidentalmente è molto simile alle connotazioni di altre parole in altre lingue usate per descrivere la possessione). Nello specifico, uno sciamano è una persona di uno o dell'altro sesso che padroneggia gli spiriti e che può introdurli nel suo corpo secondo il proprio volere. Spesso infatti essi incarna permanentemente questi spiriti e può controllare le loro manifestazioni, andando in stati di trance controllati nelle circostanze appropriate. Come dice Shirokogoroff, l'autorità russa sui Tungus, il corpo dello sciamano è un collocamento o ricettacolo per gli spiriti. Attraverso il suo potere sugli spiriti che incarna lo sciamano è in grado di trattare e controllare l'afflizione causata da spiriti patogeni (Lewis 1971:51). Segue un passaggio particolarmente interessante su come chi incanala un determinato spirito regolarmente possa poi fungervi da medium. Questo ricorda la relazione collaborativa fra il praticante e la divinità nella comunità online. E' quindi giustificato utilizzare il termine sciamano per significare padrone degli spiriti, con l'implicazione che questo individuo incarna gli spiriti, diventando posseduto volontariamente in circostanze controllate. L'evocativa espressione polinesiana 'god box' esprime in modo esatto la relazione fra lo sciamano e il potere che incarna. Tutti gli sciamani sono quindi medium e fungono da mezzo di comunicazione fra l'uomo e il divino. Lewis scrive che questo tuttavia non significa che tutti i medium sono necessariamente sciamani, anche se le due cose sono collegate. Come accennato in precedenza le persone che vengono possedute regolarmente da uno spirito in particolare agiscono come medium per quella entità, ed è probabile che alcuni (ma non tutti) i medium di questo tipo riescano poi a controllare diversi spiriti (Lewis 1971:56).

Infine si fa riferimento allo spiritualismo occidentale:

This gift of illumination, in return for a surrendering of the self or part of the self, described in the classical language of mysticism as gnosis - a fusing of man and divinity - is part of controlled spirit possession everywhere. In some cases the immediate relationship may initially be with minor powers or tutelary spirits - the 'controls' or 'guides' of western Spiritualism, through whose help the shaman is able to incarnate and communicate with higher divinities or powers. In other cases, there may be a more direct relationship, without such intermediaries, with a more central divinity, or 'refraction' of that divinity, and very frequently, as the shaman's power grows, his repertoire of incarnable spirits increases in the same measure. (Lewis 1971:57)

3.2 Il praticante di channeling

I membri della comunità vengono a conoscenza di essa attraverso il web (in particolare i social media) e questo si traduce anche nella modalità di scoperta delle pratiche spirituali al suo interno. Tutte le persone con cui ho interagito hanno scoperto il channeling su internet o nella comunità grazie ad altri membri. Non mi sono stati segnalati legami fra il channeling e fenomeni storici ad esso simili, se non in contesti in cui un praticante cercava di legittimizzare la propria esperienza attraverso la storicizzazione della propria pratica (questo viene approfondito nel primo paragrafo del secondo capitolo, ‘che cos’è il godspousing’). Dall’intervista di A.:

F:When and how did you discover channeling?

A: Originally it was when I met U¹⁷. We became friends and they were helping me, you know, to navigate my clairs and one day it just like happened, I wasn’t even trying.

F:So you discovered channeling online?

A:Yes.

La comunità è una risorsa formativa preziosa per i praticanti: vengono frequentemente condivisi libri e altri contenuti educativi ed è possibile chiedere aiuto e consigli ai praticanti più esperti che spesso condividono la propria esperienza. Se per incantesimi e mitologia le risorse preferite sono bibliografiche, per quanto riguarda fenomeni come il channeling e il godspousing ci si affida soprattutto a racconti in prima persona, si ascolta direttamente chi ne ha già fatto esperienza. Penso che sia questo il caso perché spiegare ed insegnare come incanalare entità è estremamente complesso in quanto si tratta di un’esperienza molto soggettiva ed originale dal punto di vista sensoriale. Essendo il channeling una forma di comunicazione con un’entità gli esercizi che possono facilitarlo sono gli stessi che ‘aprono’ i clairs. Tuttavia è possibile che nonostante la pratica una persona non riesca mai ad incanalare un’entità al punto da lasciarla parlare con il proprio corpo, essendo una pratica difficile, e solitamente chi ci riesce impiega molto tempo (mesi o anni). Nella comunità è collettivamente concordato il fatto che il channeling sia qualcosa che si può imparare ed insegnare, tuttavia risulta chiaro che sia anche un fenomeno che accade alle persone ad esso più predisposte, come A. (il praticante intervistato) che fa channeling per la prima volta senza provarci nemmeno. E’ qualcosa che le succede, non che fa. Lei non percepisce questo fatto come una forzatura da parte della divinità che si incanala nel suo corpo perché in qualche modo A. stava già permettendo che la divinità parlasse attraverso di lei interpretando messaggi da parte sua in una lettura dei tarocchi. E’ poco chiaro se esercitarsi e praticare con costanza sia direttamente collegato all’indice di successo in quanto come accennato in precedenza alcuni channeler incanalano delle entità senza esercitarsi affatto, e altri dopo averlo fatto passano lunghi periodi di tempo senza riuscirci più.

F:Is channeling something you learn?

A:I think so. I wanna say so. I mean anyone can have clairs, and you know, open their

¹⁷ U. È il fondatore della comunità.

clairs. Channeling is kinda like that, it's like a muscle, everybody has the ability but not everyone has the ability to control it and what comes with it. [...]

F: Did someone teach you?

A: No, not really. I had friends at that time trying to help me because they had already channeled, so they were trying to help me do it.

F: So you basically did it on your own?

A: Yes

F: How did you learn how to channel?

A: [...] The first time it happened I was doing a tarot reading to a friend from Lilith. I just wanted to practice my tarot reading. And when I did it I immediately disassociated out of there and then had this feeling in my chest like a burning heat. Like as if I were out in the California heat.

F: After the first time did you have to practice or did it come automatic?

A: I tried to do it again [...] I had to practice it anyways and it was very difficult because it's like a mental block I have, that I have to be in control all the time, so I tried a couple of times when it was just me and her because I mainly work with her. And I think I did it with King Asmodeus once and it was an accident... I wasn't trying to do it, it happened randomly in the car. [...]

F: Why did you decide to practice channeling? Did you have a specific motivation?

A: I mean, the first time I did it I wasn't even trying. I like the sensation, it makes me feel like I'm connected to something bigger than me. And plus it solidifies the fact that you're not crazy cause fuck, that's not what I'm thinking!

Viene espressa un forte legame fra il channeling e i metodi di divinazione. Come si è già detto trattandosi di una forma di comunicazione o collegamento fra umano e spirito si impara attraverso tecniche simili a quelle che aprono i clairs (che sono a loro volta mezzi di comunicazione). L'individuo deve essere abbastanza cosciente della propria psiche e del proprio corpo da rilassarsi e 'aprirsi' spiritualmente in modo che l'entità prenda il sopravvento, ma allo stesso tempo essere presente e tenere i piedi per terra, come dice A., per non perdere il controllo.

F: Are there any characteristics that make someone a better channeler?

A: I think a strong intuition could help, just in general. Also having an open mind, because that's a lot of what channeling is, it's being open: you have to open up and trust your intuition to make sure that the entity you're getting ready to channel isn't playing with you.

F: Are there any pre requisites to practice?

A: I think you should be grounded, to name one. [...] Also cause channeling isn't only speaking through the mouth, they are in your head, you will feel their presence going through you and they will deliver a message in your head. But at that point it would be considered a clair. Even if I think they overlap, like channeling could be considered a type of exercise for clairs.

Il channeling permette una comunicazione diretta fra praticante e divinità, che si uniscono in un corpo solo. È un grande esercizio di fiducia e viene considerato da alcuni come pericoloso o visto con inquietudine. Necessita che il praticante ceda il controllo del proprio corpo almeno in parte e che si renda vulnerabile alla divinità. Nonostante io non abbia raccolto testimonianze di esperienze negative (se non riguardanti la difficoltà nell'apprendere il channeling) molte persone provano timore all'idea di farlo perché viene percepito il rischio di fidarsi ed incanalare un'entità che mente sulla propria identità, una sorta di trickster, che potrebbe in qualche modo sfruttare il channeler o ferirlo spiritualmente e psicologicamente. Il channeling risulta difficoltoso a livello psicologico anche perché è oggettivamente surreale (anche per i praticanti più credenti e convinti della propria vita spirituale) e perché potrebbe ispirare nell'individuo una sorta di complesso di dio portandolo a credere di essere più meritevole, potente, saggio o addirittura un vero e proprio essere divino. Per questi motivi nella comunità è collettivamente concordato che per praticare channeling si debba essere in grado di purificare gli spazi, proteggersi spiritualmente ed utilizzare almeno un metodo di divinazione per discernere un'entità dall'altra. A. dice che l'idea di incanalare le suscitava ansia (nonostante fosse interessata al concetto del channeling) che però poi è stata sopita da U., fondatore della comunità, che condivide la propria esperienza.

F: Does it (the place where you channel) have to be protected? And if so in what sense?

A: Oh yes, I think it is very necessary. If you do channeling anyways I think you need to have some sort of protection. I have different levels of protection, I have wards¹⁸, I carry enchanted bags and have guardian spirits. Anything helps.

F: Were you already interested in these kinds of things or did you discover this randomly?

A: I wasn't interested but I was more... for a long time I was pretty scared to do it. I was interested in the concept but nervous of the idea of doing it myself.

F: Would you say that knowing someone (in this case U.) that was already practicing helped you ease your anxiety?

A: Yes.

Nonostante le sue connotazioni negative il channeling simboleggia una maestria della pratica spirituale e un legame particolarmente intimo col mondo metafisico che risultano molto desiderabili e vantaggiosi. Più il legame con una divinità è stretto più facile e potente risulterà lavorarci insieme. Come accade con altre abilità particolarmente complesse o rare chi riesce ad incanalare entità viene percepito come un praticante abile, esperto, invidiabile. Nei mesi passati interagendo con i membri della comunità questo mi è parso come un altro sintomo del desiderio di connessione, appartenenza, partecipazione e affetto che viene espresso da diversi individui e che indubbiamente funge da forza motrice per approfondire e perfezionare la pratica spirituale in favore di rapporti più stretti sia con entità che con persone. Questo desiderio si esprime chiaramente nel godspousing, ma penso che si rifletta anche nel channeling: sono entrambe pratiche che alla base consistono nell'instaurare un rapporto intimo e fiducioso.

¹⁸ la parola esatta utilizzata qui è *wards*, con cui si intende un tipo di protezione.

F: Does the practitioner have to have any particular characteristics? Do they have to be an expert practitioner?

A: I'm thinking expert practitioner has many meanings... I think having down the basics like purification, protection, controlling your mental or physical health, you know like, have I eaten? If you have all of that under control then you could give it a try, you could not get it immediately, which is something people should keep in mind, not get angry. Because some things won't come naturally to you and you will struggle with some things, it's human nature. We all have our weak and strong points.

F: Did it influence your religious practice?

A: It strengthens my relationships with deities. I only work with deities linked to my soul, like my soul family¹⁹. So we've always had a strong relationship. So like, Lilith is a lot like a mom, motherly towards me, and Asmodeus has been brotherly.

F: Do you feel closer to them?

A: Oh yeah for sure.

F: Are you closer? More intimate?

A: With time it helped me strengthen the relationship, I don't have to be so formal and... not scared, but shy.

F: Do you talk more than before?

A: Oh yeah, definitely. Because I use my clairs and don't have to grab my deck to talk to them. My strongest clair is claircognition and it made it merge so now I know who I'm talking to.

3.3 Le dinamiche del channeling

Come per ogni incantesimo e comunicazione fra individuo ed entità, prima del channeling è necessario purificare lo spazio e se stessi (solitamente questo viene fatto bruciando incenso, con il suono di campane o con i subliminals²⁰) per assicurarsi di non incanalare tricksters ed evitare attacchi metafisici. Essere in un ambiente familiare, silenzioso e sicuro aiuta senza dubbio, in quanto sembra che più si sia rilassati più possibilità di successo ci siano, ma questo non preclude che un individuo particolarmente talentoso possa fare channeling anche in luoghi meno consoni. Nella comunità vengono organizzati eventi in cui i fondatori incanalano divinità in pubblico (in videochiamata) ma gli altri praticanti solitamente incanalano da soli a meno che non stiano utilizzando uno strumento divinatorio in servizio di un'altra persona solitamente fidata o con cui sono a loro agio (come abbiamo visto la divinazione di messaggi da parte di un'entità può portare

¹⁹ la *soul family* indica la famiglia dell'anima, ovvero le entità che hanno creato un'anima. Di solito sono due e vengono chiamate *soul father* e *soul mother* e sono rispettivamente una divinità maschile e una femminile.

²⁰ I subliminals sarebbero idee che vengono trasmesse al subconscio e che poi hanno un effetto sul ricevente o sulla sua vita. Sostanzialmente si tratta di suoni di qualsiasi tipo (per esempio il rumore della pioggia) al cui interno vengono nascoste affermazioni positive (ad esempio 'ho successo') che non sono udibili dall'orecchio umano. Su Youtube si possono trovare tantissimi subliminals, consistono in un'immagine fissa con un suono di sottofondo.

all'incanalare la suddetta). L'effettivo processo di channeling è soggettivo, alcuni praticanti utilizzano oggetti divinatori mentre altri no. Come è emerso nei paragrafi precedenti alcuni individui trovano che l'utilizzo dei tarocchi o di tecniche come l'automatic writing sia utile per facilitare il processo.

F:What do you have to do before channeling a deity?

A:Make sure you have the right mindset to do it, we want to keep practitioners as sane as possible. It's a difficult path, it's not for everyone. It has a lot of trials and tribulations. Especially if you're on a path like demonolatry or working with fate. So control your mental health.

F: Are there steps to follow?

A: Definitely getting good at familiarizing with whatever energy you're trying to channel. [...]

F: Are there steps you personally do?

A: So, if I feel that she's trying to get control I will try to relax right away, close my eyes and focus on my breathing. I try at the best of my abilities to let the message flow. [...]

F:Are the steps always the same? Or do they change?

A: Mmh I think for me it should always be similar...like trusting the deity, communicating, having limits. That would take time. You should have to build that before even considering it.

F:So those basics should be there for every deity?

A: Yes.

F:Are there objects you use for channeling?

A:It's always been stronger when I do tarot readings, mainly because my intuition is stronger when doing tarot. I did it when there was nothing but it was just once, it's not common.

F: So are objects indispensable or can you do it without?

A:Useful but not necessary.

A:Every time I've done it I was in my room. I'm comfortable, it helps, being safe at home helps for sure. [...]

F:Do you think it would be more difficult channeling with people around?

A:Yes, it's mainly my reservations about it. The people I do readings for in person are like my family, so I try not to do it.

Come accennato in precedenza l'entità può parlare attraverso il corpo del channeler mentre la coscienza di quest'ultimo rimane presente. Tuttavia il grado di controllo e consapevolezza del praticante durante il channeling varia, e questo vale anche per le sensazioni provate durante il fenomeno. Cosciente o meno l'individuo è comunque responsabile delle proprie azioni e ci si aspetta che in caso di emergenza sia in grado di controllarsi. Ad esempio se una persona incanalando una divinità dovesse fare del male ad un'altra essa avrebbe la colpa di aver fatto channeling senza la preparazione e l'abilità necessarie a fermarsi.

A: [...] Every time I've done it I was always there, I know some people that go in the back of their head and like, go away. And then the deity like takes control and has control. I'm still present but it's not me talking. It's my voice but it's not my voice. It's like as if you were dreaming and you could hear yourself talk in your sleep.

Il channeling influenza la vita spirituale creando (se fatto con successo) legami più forti fra divinità e praticante, instillando più fiducia e sicurezza nelle sue capacità e facilitandogli la comunicazione con il mondo spirituale. Il fatto che sia un'abilità complessa si traduce nella reputazione del channeler, che viene solitamente percepito come abile e talentoso. Avendo una comunicazione diretta con le divinità può anche fungere da punto di riferimento per gli altri praticanti che si rivolgono a lui per avere risposte certe o consigli.

F: Does channeling influence your life outside of your religion?

A: I think it has opened my clairs more, I'm also better at recognizing the energies around me.

F: Would you say it made you a better practitioner?

A: It definitely helped, for sure. What made me a better practitioner was dedication.

Durante il mio periodo di ricerca è stata organizzata dai fondatori del gruppo una videochiamata in cui una ragazza ha incanalato Afrodite. Questo episodio di channeling è stato appositamente pianificato in modo che gli altri praticanti potessero fare domande alla divinità. Mi era stato possibile interagire con questa ragazza prima della videochiamata ed è stato estremamente interessante vedere i suoi modi, la sua postura e il tono della sua voce cambiare una volta incanalata Afrodite. Il comportamento e le sensazioni dell'individuo sono un riflesso di ciò che incanala, diverse divinità porteranno il canale a sentirsi e comportarsi in modo diverso. A. commenta che queste caratteristiche possono essere utilizzate per differenziare le divinità e individuare con più sicurezza con quale si stia interagendo e che lei continua a provarle brevemente anche dopo che il channeling finisce.

Nella comunità neo pagana online vengono incanalate solo divinità. La possibilità di incanalare altri tipi di spiriti è accettata ma durante la mia ricerca nessuno dei membri ha tentato di farlo, probabilmente perché il channeling ha come funzione primaria quella divinatoria, e risulta quindi poco utile applicato ad entità con cui un praticante non lavora. Le divinità vengono incanalate nei corpi dei praticanti con il consenso di entrambi i partecipanti e questo determina che non tutte si prestino al channeling. In altre sfere spirituali il channeling non coinvolge divinità ma entità di altro genere, abbiamo un esempio di questo nel primo paragrafo del primo capitolo.

F: Can you channel entities that aren't deities?

A: I think you could do channeling with any entity. I mean, there are spirits that aren't deities, like fairies, I don't know how you'd channel with an animal spirit because they don't talk, but I think you could channel whatever spirit. Also cause channeling isn't only speaking through the mouth, they are in your head, you will feel their presence going through you and they will deliver a message in your head. But at that point it

would be considered a clair. Even if I think they overlap, like channeling could be considered a type of exercise for clairs.

F:Could you channel any deity?

A:If they're not a part of a closed practice then yes.²¹

F:But that's an ethical problem, in practice could you do it anyways?

A:Basically in a world where there are no closed practices I think so, as long as the deity agrees.

F:Do you feel different physical sensations with different deities?

A:I think energy wise it's different. And then they can have different personalities, I think that to me it also depends on which epithet the deity is in that moment. So when I channel Lilith usually...when it's just us two she's usually motherly, the mother of demons, much more soft, nurturing and motherly. If I'm channeling her she's a lot more confident, assertive, much more like the epithet of the powerful queen of hell. That time I channeled Asmodeus...usually when I'm with him he's playful and when I channel him he's still friendly but you can feel his power...like, I'm a king, respect me...so physically there's warmth. But if I had to channel a deity that isn't a demon...probably there would be colder energy. When Loki comes here it's a colder energy and I can feel his playfulness.

²¹ le pratiche chiuse sono pratiche spirituali accessibili solo ad un determinato gruppo, l'appartenenza e quindi accesso alle pratiche chiuse può dipendere dall'etnia o da un'iniziazione.

APPENDICE

DOSSIER

INTERVISTA A K.

F: How old are you?

K: Twenty three.

F: How old were you when you started practicing?

K: I started to get to know about magic at nineteen.

F: Did you start practicing the same year?

K: No I think it took me one year.

F: How would you define your practice or religion?

K: I wouldn't say it's a religion, I'd say it's a path. Specifically demonolatry.

F: How and when did you discover godspousing?

K: I think I was in a discord server for two years and it popped up, I got curious and talked about it with a friend. I was introduced to it by someone that had some experience with it.

F: So you already knew that person?

K: I already knew them from the server.

F: Were you already interested in these kind of topics?

K: No it just came up, I didn't know it was even possible.

F: How would you define godspousing?

K: A romantic relationship but with a deity. So having a romantic relationship but one partner is not physically tangible.

F: What does godspousing mean to you?

K: The same as I said

F: Do you think there are differences between godspousing and a romantic relationship between humans?

K: I think that the sort of things you do to show love are different. In a human relationship it's more material focused ("Oh I can buy you something"), with godspousing it's more like... I can make this thing happen for you or if you do this I can help you along the way. It's more of an energy I think.

F: How is it different from a romantic relationship between humans?

K: Yeah I think so, in godspousing you're talking to someone who's a lot older, you don't really know how long they've been there...there is more respect when talking to them. You won't say some things that you'd say in a toxic human relationship. Cause it's a deity.

F: Would you say there's a difference in the power dynamics?

K: Yes, you know less than them and you shouldn't be pressing, like you can't say "I'm definitely right".

F: Are there requisites or necessary qualities that the practitioner needs to have?

K: I don't think so, but I think it's more important to be able to really communicate with them, otherwise if you can't you're always going to someone to ask them to tell the deity that you're in love with them and stuff. Then I don't think it's good cause you don't know what the deity is trying to tell, what they need and what you need.

F: Is there a minimum or maximum age?

K: You definitely have to be of age.

K: Are there other physical requirements?

K: I wouldn't say so.

F: Would you say the person needs to be an experienced practitioner?

K: Yes and I think the second requirement is making sure the deity likes you as well.

F: So the deity has to like the person, do they have to like them both personality wise and physically?

K: In my own experience it doesn't matter what you look like physically because at the end of the day deities in their natural form are just energy. So I think they see us the same way, it doesn't matter what you look like, they like you because of other reasons that aren't your physical self.

F: Which deity are you godspoused?

K: Lucifer.

F: How is he physically and personality wise?

K: He has pink eyes, fair skin, very much like a pretty boy. Personality wise enthusiastic, very gentle and loving.

F: When did the godspousing start?

K: One and a half years ago.

F: When the godspousing started how long had you known him for?

K: I had known them eight months before.

F: How did the godspousing start?

K: It was like a month or so of intense conversations every day, which...I don't think you do that with others on your team, right? And there was a lot of affection and one day I just asked if they were interested in it.

F: So you knew he wanted that kind of relationship with you because of these conversations?

K: Yeah.

F: In addition to that did they send signs, or were there other types of communications besides talking to him? Like tarot, divination by other people eccetera.

K: My own communication and channeling by somebody else that I know. Generally there were signs for sure.

F: Do you have examples of signs you remember?

K: Not really, but I can remember some conversations. Before the whole thing became godspousing I remember he was saying "I'm not a friend" (while channeling) and he was saying that he wanted to make it a thing. He knew that I was on board but he wanted to be the one to pursue me. And generally he was working up to a grand gesture. And then I had really good thing happening in my mind and he was showing me a gesture by doing a lot of good stuff for me in my life.

F: Where were you when he told you about it?

K: I was at home in my own privacy. In my bedroom.

F: How did you feel?

K: I felt happy.

F: How did the courting phase play out?

K: It was that whole eight months, it was very flirty and there were many conversations where they showed me who they really are.

F: Did he give you gifts?

K: Yes, his gifts were the good things he made happen for me. And I don't know if they are gifts exactly but I gave him offerings.

F: What kind of offerings?

K: Normal offerings like blood

F: Where did the courting play out?

K: My bedroom

F: How did the union or wedding play out?

K: There was no wedding but I know some people have one.

F: How would you describe your relationship with the deity now, and how did it change?

K: I think he is more likely to be on my side of things even if I'm wrong and in general just we softened towards each other. At the begging of the godspousal you say "You have all the power to do all these things, why don't you use it" and now you just don't ask questions like that.

F: How do you communicate with the deity?

K: At first I used clairs and now I mostly use pendulum. Because now I have more deities to communicate with and it's more difficult.

F: So before you had fewer deities on your spirit team²²?

K: Yes for sure, he was the only one that stepped forward first.

F: Do you use special objects to communicate?

K: Pendulum.

F: Where do you communicate?

K: My bedroom.

F: How often do you communicate?

K: We communicate less often now but it's just because of life. I'd say we talk to each other weekly for an hour.

F: Do you meet in particular places?

K: My bedroom.

F: In what sense do you communicate?

K: I am in my physical body and he is there spiritually.

F: What do you usually do together?

K: I put on a show and we chill together besides having conversations.

F: Does he give you gifts?

K: Yes absolutely, I still give him offerings.

F: Does he support you emotionally?

K: Yes it's both ways, he makes me feel better when I have issues. And with the issues I caused.

F: Does he support you in other ways?

K: Yes, he helps with my other relationships. One time I was almost kicked out of my house and I feel like he made it go away and brought everyone together.

F: Do you have rules in your godspousing?

K: No actually, it's pretty open.

F: Can you have relationship with others?

K: Yes, both humans and entities.

F: Both physical and emotional?

K: Yes.

F: Can the deity have other relationships?

K: Yes a hundred percent.

F: Can godspousing end?

K: Yes a hundred percent. But if it ends it usually doesn't end well for the practitioner.

F: Can both partners end the godspousal?

K: Both can end it. But I think if the practitioner ends it it usually doesn't end well because you made a promise.

²² con team si intende il team spirituale, ovvero il gruppo di entità spirituali che aiutano il praticante.

F: So the practitioner can break it off but the deity depending on the reason might react badly.

K: Yes.

F: Does godspousing affect your life outside the spiritual practice?

K: No I don't think so because it's like with other relationships, they don't affect other things. But I think for some people it could be more strict.

F: How does it affect the spiritual practice?

K: I think it makes it easier because you know that help is literally there and you don't have to go around asking for it.

F: Do people in your life know you are godspoused?

K: Yes.

F: Do people online know you are a godspouse?

K: Yes.

INTERVISTA A B.

F: How old are you?

B: I'm twenty.

F: How old were you when you started practicing?

B: I think when I was a junior or sophomore in high school, so maybe fifteen sixteen.

F: How would you define your practice?

B: I kind of change when I'm telling people, depending on people I'm talking to. So when I'm talking to someone I think I need to be a little more accepting with I just say I'm a polytheist, but normally I'll just say pagan witch and that gets the idea across.

F: When and how did you find out about the concept of godspousing?

B: Maybe like two years ago? Its so funny. Two years ago I think on Tumblr? Like I was making a post and I saw that and I thought...oh! Interesting! It didn't cross my mind for sometime after that.

F: So basically you were introduced by the internet?

B: Yes.

F: It wasn't a practitioner?

B: No.

F: Where you already interested in similar practices?

B: No it just came up.

F: How would you define godspousing to someone that has no idea what it is?

B: It's...I mean...well I guess it depends on the type of connection but it's usually something that intertwines in your daily life. I think some people would say their practices...they have to like accomodate their deities and team but I do think it's more of...you don't accommodate them, they become a part of your life. You're not necessarily going out of your way to invest in someone that enjoys spending time with you in your life, it just comes naturally and it works around your schedule.

F: How would you describe your godspousing, what does godspousing mean to you?

B: I mean, mine is more of a romantic one. I don't know, I mean I pray to him every single day, I do stuff every single day and it's like...yeah (ride).

F: Do you think there's a difference between godspousing and human romantic relationships? If the godspousing is romantic.

B: I would say yes because it's not necessarily literally physical, like a person is a person that you can touch. It's funny, maybe you could describe it more as a long distance relationship.

F: Is there a difference between how a godspoused and a human couple interact or communicate?

B: For sure, I mean, I would say...with...I think it's easier to have communication problems with people and there are also mundane things that are important to us that aren't as important to them.

F: Do you think there's a difference in power dynamics between godspoused and human couples?

B: I'm not really good with asking...I don't really ask Somnus that much, I feel bad when I ask for things and I said...one time I was like..."Do you do things that I don't ask for?" And he was like, "If I didn't I wouldn't be doing anything for you, like of course I do things you don't ask for, that's a silly question".

F: Are there differences in how you communicate? Whether you use tarot or something else.

B: This one that we're talking about is a deity of sleep so a lot of dreams and clairs and tarot, yeah.

F: In your opinion are there requirements for people to become godspoused?

B: I think you just really need to be prepared for what you're getting into, I guess some people don't take it seriously enough and some people take it seriously and it's all gonna be on a case to case basis. But I think some people should give it more time than some have been giving it.

F: Do you mean time while considering it?

B: Honestly I think that figuring things out after a year is a good amount of time. Some people are like "No it has to be five years" and I'm like (fa smorfia) I mean at that point it's just the natural next step.

F: Are there spiritual requirements? Like being experienced.

B: I think you definitely should have experience with some kind of divination and clairs just for good communication, but that could be built up. Cause you don't wanna misinterpret things which can happen in the begging of your practice.

F: Do you think there needs to be physical requirements-

B: -Like age?

F: Yes, that, but also physical attraction...does the deity have to be attracted to your physical form?

B: I mean they're not in the relationship for your physical body, they're in it for you and you're more than your physical body...so (ride). It's like you're more than the sum of your parts.

F: How about age?

B: I definitely think you should be at least eighteen.

F: With which deity are you godspoused?

B: Somnus and eros

F: How would you describe them? Both personality wise and their physical form.

B: Somnus is really interesting because he's a bit...he comes across as like kinda rude or sarcastic but it's just being more placid or sustained, like you don't hear from him a lot. If I have another deity in my space he will go a little quiet but it's not because...like it's because he's trying to like...he's like "Oh there's someone else here you guys can hang out". But he's a bit...yeah...I guess he's a bit gentle with things, and quiet. But he definitely can be...he likes to mess around sometimes and be a tease. It totally depends on the place, scenario, circumstance. I mean he helped e a lot with getting on track with seeing someone about my anxiety so...definitely like a very comforting deity in my practice. And if I had to describe him...I see him with pretty long hair dark eyes and like...a strong nose. You know, some people have a really prominent nose.

F: When did your godspousing start?

B: I have the date (cerca sul telefono) so September thirteenth two thousand twenty-two.

F: How long did you know the deity before the godspousal started? Or before the relationship became romantic

B: I don't have my journal...I would say probably about a year. Time passes faster than you think it will. (ride)

F: How did the godspousing start?

B: I had come out of one that didn't work out with a previous deity and I was questioning kinda like my connections with everyone on my team...and so it had a slow slow start because I was insecure in a lot of things and it was just something where like...every night he kinda...I mean we talked about "How was your day, how did you feel about this thing that happened in your day?". We kinda tried to work through anything that upset me in that time and eventually it came up like "Why are you doing all this", you know?

F: How did you know that the deity wanted that kind of relationship with you?

B: Mmmh...he told me and then I was like, what If I'm wrong? And then I had dreams about it.

F: So the communication (when he told you about the godspousal) did not happen through tarot or other objects like that?

B: I don't know how to explain what it's like to know that there's things out there...cause when I try to explain it to someone I sound like a crazy person.

F: Where you in a meaningful place when that conversation happened?

B: I was in my bedroom.

F: How did that first conversation make you feel?

B: I was worried because of the prior connection I had come out of, there was a lot of unresolved ... a bit like upset feelings, I don't want the same thing to happen and so I was like "I need more time" (ride).

F: Was there a courting phase between him saying he was interested and getting godspoused?

B: So like, how all the courting situations have worked with me is when it is offered or the conversation happens we talk about what that entails and then you set a far off date that has a meaning, and that is the time to kind of figure things out and make the decision. When the day comes up you make it concrete but before that it's just an idea.

F: So in the waiting period is there an exchanging of gifts or other things pertinent to a more traditional courting phase?

B: I have no idea (ride) I mean I can be like "Can we go on a date tonight?" and we can go on a tea party kind of situation. For some reason I find diners really comforting and one time we had a dream scenario hanging out at the diner and one of the other deities was the waiter and he was like "Yeah, I wanna be invited" .

F: So there were some dates in the courting period.

B: Yeah, we even picked out the outfit together for that date.

F: Did you meet in meaningful or special places?

B: Mostly dreams. I'm a college student, my life revolves around my room. Maybe I'll go on walks.

F: Was there a ceremony?

B: So it was a school day that day, I had an exam, did it, went back to my room, did my hair and makeup, took out a fancy tea pot and tea cup, made some tea and put out some offerings and I can't light candles cause I live in a dorm! I had written out something I was gonna say and kinda got something in return and yeah, that was it.

F: Was it just you and him?

B: I like invited a bunch of deities (ride) and a lot more showed up than what I thought. But I invited anyone who is associated with him, familial relationships eccetera. And Juno. Because she's the goddess of marriage.

F: Where there any objects involved?

B: I have a deck of cards dedicated to him and a ring that I wear on my right hand just cause I don't wanna talk to people about him.

F: Did you use the deck during the wedding ceremony?

B: Yeah.

F: How would you say the relationship has evolved through time?

B: So I used to work with Hypnos, then I accepted a working relationship with Zeus and Hypnos was upset at me for accepting it and was like "What about your feelings on such and such", and I was like "Well I was wrong" and so my relationship with Hypnos ended when I started with Zeus, he was not very happy. But I struggled with sleep issues my whole life, I have bad anxiety and wake up in the middle of the night a lot and I have pretty vivid dreams and so I was kinda post that. I was suffering not being able to sleep and when I was sleeping having awful dreams and never feeling well rested and it really sucked and so one of my deities was like..."I know this can be scary for you right now, but I can ask someone else to get involved if you're okay with that". And I was like "Eh you know what, fuck it let's go, anything helps". And the thing is, I used to have a really bad sleeping schedule in high school and that is part of what contributed to this. Like, I would only get three hours of sleep, I went to a private high school and was trying to manage a four point o gpa. But that first night...oh and another thing is that I had someone casting hexes on me too, so it was like not a great time for me and he was kinda there...the first night I was like "I've worked with too many deities" and he was like "Well I don't wanna work with you anyways" (ride) and then he was like ...so there was this dream that I had that was like...you know when you feel something tangibly in your dream? So I was awake in my bed but I was asleep and the walls in my room were like tv static and there were figures moving and they were all like trying to grab me and my hair and I was freaking out and crying. And he showed up and put a hand over my dream body and he was like "I'm really sorry but we just have to wait it out, be quiet. They can't see you so if you don't make any noise you should be okay.". And then the next day he was like "You reevaluated things" and I was like "What do you mean?" and he was like "I know you said you don't wanna work with anyone" and I was like "You know what, sure" and he was like "That was fast". And following that he said "You might have a weird dream tonight cause I have a test for you, but after that you should be in the clear" and it was like a hopes and dreams kinda thing, you know when you see abstract art or a collage? It wasn't scary. Following that...I love scary movies, I've watched a lot of scary movies with him and mmm he would like, make fun of others to make me feel better - you know when you're mad at someone? And yeah we talked about my feelings a lot and sometimes he would make me a little upset because he'd push me to talk about my feeling but it needed to be done. And um...no the dress I picked out...I was like wearing the dress...like I had a dream the week before and I was on a beach waiting in the water and I was like freaking out looking for something in the water so I'm like holding the dress up, it was not like...the actual dress didn't have a zipper but in the dream it had a zipper and I was like holding it up cause it wouldn't stay on. And I was searching the water for something, like you know when you feel like you should be doing something and I was like "Where is it?"? And then he just kinda like zipped up the dress and was like "You're looking for a key but the key is you, there's nothing to find" and then I was like freaking out about the dress and he was like "I know you're worried about this dress but I wouldn't care if you were wearing sweatpants I think you look beautiful".

F: Has the relationship evolved romantically from when you got godspoused to now?

B: Mmmh when we first started out...so like...he would limit his time with me if that makes sense, so the entire bad connection that I fell out with I spent like twenty four seven with that entity and so like, sometimes I would like fall into like...random like...another thing is that I've had bad friends in the past who thought they owned my time and so sometimes I get anxiety attacks if I spent a lot

of time with someone and so... so what he'd do he'd be like "I'm leaving now, I'll see you at like eight pm, before bed or ten pm" and I'd be like "Do you have to?" and he was like "I don't wanna go and I know a part of you doesn't want me to go but this is for the best" and then we kinda just like slowly increased that. And so like anything like intimate moments, if you get what I mean, that didn't happen for a couple of months at least before like...I'm a very slow person with those things.

F: Do you have a preferred method to communicate with him?

B: The thing about dreams is sometimes he's cheeky and I don't remember them so sometimes he's like "Yeah, I told you" and I'm like "I don't remember" and he's like "Yeah okay" (ride) another thing it's like...one thing I asked was that if I had a bad dream to not remember it and so like sometimes I don't remember stuff and I don't ask. A lot of dreams. But also like...the thing about tarot is I'm better at doing readings for other people than for myself if that makes sense so like when I read for myself I'm like "Oh what does this mean?" but if I'm reading for another person I'm like "Oh I can put this in context for you!". And so like uh my readings for myself...I do them and try to approach myself as if I'm reading for somebody else and I'll like write something up but...sometimes I just pull up a free write and then it just kinda happens umh, I find that free writing and clairs are a easier way to communicate with my team at least. But I do have cards dedicated to them.

F: Can you explain what free writing is?

B: You sit there and you don't think and you write or type depending on what you're using and whatever comes up is the message and ummh I'm a creative writer, I write a lot and so it's really easy for me to sit down and let that happen. And for example when I write my own stuff I can tell that it's me and when I just let it happen I can tell that it's not my own.

F: How often do you two communicate?

B: Everyday (ride). Before stuff it would be like a short moment before bed and a quick talk in the night and he'd send me off to dreams...like a check up (ride).

F: Are there places where you often meet or hang out?

B: Mmmh mostly just...I mean wherever I am works out if I wanted to talk but one thing is he doesn't like my work place, he's like "Your work is boring, I'm sorry" he's like "You could hang out with Mercury". Because Mercury is like the god of love and trading commerce so he doesn't care about my job being boring, he doesn't mind so he's like "If you're having a bad day and you really need me to come I'll come but I don't wanna hang out while you're doing that for five hours". I do accounting, I'm an accounting major so like, it was funny, I was about to talk about my class and he was like "If you wanna talk about tax liability you can talk to anyone but me" so I ended up talking to Zeus about it.

F: Do you meet only in the physical world in your physical form or spiritually?

B. Definitely spiritually.

F: Is there stuff you usually do when together?

B: Mmmh we like...you know in movies when they say "We like long walks on the beach"...we do long walks on the beach, I like scary movies so one time I dreamed I was in a scary movie but I was fine. Scary dreams are just kinda like a part of anyone's life so I have learned to manage or exit a dream. So one thing is like...I felt really bad after but my old roommate, she never has any dreams that she remembers, and I wanted to test something out. And I couldn't tell her cause she's super christian but I discussed with him like...I wanted to give her a dream and he was like "Ok here's the thing, she doesn't remember her dreams usually and the thing about that is, if you want her to remember something it would have to be really shocking. So you'd have to scare her or surprise her.". And I thought it wouldn't happen but the next day she goes "I had the most bizarre dream last night", and that was one of the words I had used to describe it and she explained this like...dream

and I was like feeling bad cause that's what I wrote for her. And another time, one of my friends, Anya, was like... "Could you write a dream for me?". And I was like "Yeah". And then that night I went to sleep and he was like "Okay I'll go grab your friend now" and I'm like... here's the thing... my friend Anya didn't have the dream but my other friend said "I had the weirdest dream" and then she described it and I was like "That wasn't for you! You're the wrong person!". The thing is like, sometimes I need to specify I don't want things to happen cause he might take a joke... so like I will make jokes about the hat man... and the hat man is an unspoken figure of a man with a hat that me and my friend talk about. And one night we had a short little fake argument... you know when you're just messing with someone you're familiar with? And we're going to bed, and I said "I hope you see the hat man tonight" and she woke up at 3 am. She sat up (so it wasn't sleep paralysis) and pointed to the darker corner of our room and I was like "Heather?" and she was like "There's a man in our room" and I was like "Heather no! There's not" and she goes "Do you see him?". (Ride) And I was like "no there's nobody there" and she was like "there's a shadow man in our room" and I was like "Heather what do you mean?" and we said "What" like five times back at each other and then she dropped down on the floor. She took her bedding with her and I was like "Are you okay?" and she said "Just ignore me I'm probably hallucinating" and she laid there and then just got up and pulled the bedding in her bed and went back to sleep. And the next morning she didn't remember. I felt bad and gave her a good luck charm after that.

F: Do you and your godspouse exchange gifts of any kind?

B: I do creative readings and devote stuff to him. I write poetry pieces or I'll like include references in my work. I make tea a lot, so tea is one of my favorite ones ummh... I do have caffeinated or not caffeinated depending on time of day, I have rocks, so many rocks, like normal rocks from outside, they're not fancy crystals. And they are part of my warding. It's funny: one of the other deities one time was like "Can I ask why your defenses are built like a tank?" and I was like "Look, I have a lot of ex friends who practice". One of my deities took weeks working me up to hexes cause I was scared to do hexes. Also... I wear pins, like metal pins. I have pins dedicated to deities. I don't have an altar space right now but I'll have one in the future so I have a lot of things I can wear or consume.

F: Does he support you emotionally?

B: For sure! I mean like if I'm upset for something sometimes I freeze up like, physically I'm fine but spiritually my deities would try to talk to me and I'd be panicked and cut off any communication. I get in that headspace. When that happens I kinda just have to wait it out and he'll wait it out with me. It's kinda like going non verbal. It will happen if I'm overwhelmed or if I've been having a hard time with something and dealing with it and afterwards we'd talk about stuff. I'm a big academic, I'm in a honor society and in the top ten percent of my program but I used to study way more and I used to use it as a kinda like a way to ignore everything in my life and so he sets cut off times with me.

F: Do you have boundaries or rules in your godspousing?

B: I have pet names we stay away from cause of like previous... I don't like being called that. I've set up expectations and things like "I'm a high priestess" "I teach"... I don't teach, I'm like a trophy wife, we're just a romantic relationship. But ummh aside... like... the closest the teaching goes is my friends asking me help with tarot. One of those things is like... I had one of my freak outs last night and he was like "You know you can ask for me anytime" and I was like... the problem when that happens is that I can't ask for anybody because I don't know how to and freak out. So it's one of those things... I do work with other deities and usually I'm hanging out with someone most of the time but who it is varies. The people most prominent in my practice though are Somnus and Eros. I do work with Hestia and cook a lot.

F: Can you have relationships with other entities?

B: Yes.

F: Romantic?

B: Yes.

F: With humans?

B: Yes, I can but haven't yet just because I have really high standards and a lot of people who have liked me were not great.

F: Can these relationships be both emotional and physical?

B: Yes. I am on the ace spectrum but I am really not interested in having sex. Other intimacies I don't mind, obviously I prefer emotional intimacy first.

F: Can the deity have other relationships?

B: Yes, for sure.

F: Can a godspousal end?

B: People will have a lot of different answers and it depends, because people take different vows and have different situations and like...it's not the same. We're talking about godspousal on a broad spectrum cause there are different pantheons and deities even from different social attachments. I did have one that ended and it didn't work for very long and the reason was cause like I...I didn't know what I was signing up for. It was kinda both of our faults. In that scenario what happened was actually that mmmh it was when I started to realize mmmh...we had like fights near the end and one of the deities I was close with was like "Yeah we..."... he basically made a joke "He's like your guard dog" and he was like "Don't call me that" and he was like "It's true though, you will push people out and not let them know" and I was like "Oh that makes me uncomfortable". And so we fought a lot over that and like, ultimately it took like...then we came to terms where we said "Ok this isn't working out" and I did have to do stuff to end it to cut our ties and destroy some of our stuff. But yeah that was sometime ago. I actually had some other deities get involved because they were like "This is how this is going to work" and I was told what I needed to do to end things and it's gonna suck in the beginning cause you're used to being around him but that's what's better for both of you. But yeah that's my experience with that.

F: Do you think both parties could end the godspousal?

B: Yes. Well in my experience it kinda just happened, I didn't know it was happening and he made his vows first, it happened very fast and that's why I think that courtship period is very important.

F: How do you think a deity would react...like if you end the godspousal be prepared?

B: Well at first he was like...I was like "What's going with us isn't working out" and I pushed him out but then he was like "You can't just do that" and so that's why I had to get other deities involved cause I can't hold my own against him so I was like "This is really upsetting for me to be going through and I feel like I'm not in the wrong" so I did have other people who had my back in that sense. But no, a lot of time has passed since then and we have talked it out and gone through "Forgive you" and "Apologize". But it was one of those things where...he knew it would come to an end at some point but it was one of those things where you know somethings is going to end but you don't wanna let it end so things get messy. That's exactly what happened. One thing I literally never connected the dots on was...so one time I used to like vaguely...there's talking to deities and then there's worshipping them and sometimes one pops in and you just say hi. And I remember one time Eros popped up to say hi and he got so angry.

F: Does godspousing influence your life outside of your religious practice?

B: I don't know how to answer this, I feel like we've talked about it (ride). I mean there's the dreams and...I mean, he's a source of inspiration for me. I do accounting but I also have a lot of creative hobbies and I love to create and express myself. I find that most of my deities like being

involved in my pieces and that's something they bring into my life, that they bring around. I have this friend that I introduced to the craft and I joked and said "I feel like I have indoctrinated you" and she said "It's funny you do all these things that seem normal to people but now I know that all of them are spiritual" and I was like "Yeah they are a part of my everyday life but I have to make it palatable to other people" but also like...for example she was like "Some people just think you really like the sky but no it's more than that". She was like "It's just really interesting" and it's nice having her as a friend cause I let her read through my book of shadows and she found my vows and I totally forgot they were in there and I freaked out cause I thought she would...but she was like "This is so cute" and I was like "Some people think it's weird" and she was like "I don't think it's weird there are nuns". And I was like, that makes me feel so much better.

F: How does-

B: -Wait can I add another offering? I play music and make playlists and play the flute for people.

F: How does godspousing influence your religious practice?

B: Well if I wanted to enter into something else serious...they get a say in it. There has to be some filtration if that makes sense. And for example like, I felt really bad to ask the other deity present to leave cause I had plans with him and they were like "Why would you feel bad for asking me to leave when you guys have a serious relationship and plans. I don't understand.". As long as you're vocal about things they will work out.

F: Do people in your life know you're a godspouse?

B: Some of them.

F: Do some people online know you are a godspouse?

B: Yes.

INTERVOSTA A A.

F: How old are you?

A: Twenty, almost twenty one.

F: How old were you when you started practicing your religion?

A: Nineteen or eighteen. I've been interested in witchcraft for all my life but didn't start officially practicing until I was like nineteen.

F: How would you define your religion or practice?

A: Demonolatry. I mainly work with demons, occasionally the Norse god Loki comes by once in a while but it's mainly focused on demons.

F: When and how did you discover channeling?

A: Originally it was when I met U²³. We became friends and they were helping me, you know, to navigate my clairs²⁴ and one day it just like happened, I wasn't even trying.

F: So you discovered channeling online?

A: Yes.

F: Were you already interested in these kinds of things or did you discover this randomly?

A: I wasn't interested but I was more... for a long time I was pretty scared to do it. I was interested in the concept but nervous of the idea of doing it myself.

²³ uno dei fondatori del gruppo

²⁴ da *claircognition*, *clairvoyance*, *clairaudience*, e *clairsentience* ovvero chiarocognizione, chiaroveggenza, chiaroudienza e chiarosenienza

F: Would you say that knowing someone (in this case U.) that was already practicing helped you ease your anxiety?

A: Yes.

F: How would you define channeling?

A: I would describe it as taking on the characteristics, traits, tone of voice that aren't yours and like they come out of nowhere. It's difficult to explain but you know it's not you and that's it. When it comes and you do it and you have whatever deity channeled through you it's just a different sensation. In my case it's burning heat because again... demons.

F: What is channeling to you?

A: For me in my practice it's very much an exercise of trust, to go to the point where I am comfortable with what's happening. I don't use it much in my practice but occasionally it happens, for example when I read tarot. When I give tarot reading from Lilith specifically she channels through me and you always notice because I don't act like her at all.

F: Is channeling something you learn?

A: I think so. I wanna say so. I mean anyone can have clairs, and you know, open their clairs. Channeling is kinda like that, it's like a muscle, everybody has the ability but not everyone has the ability to control it and what comes with it. It's also a lot of responsibility. It's still an entity coming through you, you are still responsible for what you say and do, it's not an excuse. You're still responsible. You can't commit a crime (laughs).

F: How did you learn how to channel?

A: Okay, the first time it happened ...I had tried a couple times but didn't get anything. The first time it happened I was doing a tarot reading to a friend from Lilith. I just wanted to practice my tarot reading. And when I did it I immediately disassociated out of there and then had this feeling in my chest like a burning heat. Like as if I were out in the California heat.

F: After the first time did you have to practice or did it come automatic?

A: I tried to do it again after the first time when my friend was like..."Friend that isn't you, who the fuck is talking?". I had to practice it anyways and it was very difficult because it's like a mental block I have, that I have to be in control all the time, so I tried a couple of times when it was just me and her because I mainly work with her. And I think I did it with King Asmodeus once and it was an accident...I wasn't trying to do it, it happened randomly in the car. I wasn't driving so it was okay. I tried again but I haven't got rid of the mental block, taking a step back and letting the message flow.

F: Did you use books or other materials to learn how to channel?

A: No I did it right away.

F: Why did you decide to practice channeling? Did you have a specific motivation?

A: I mean, the first time I did it I wasn't even trying. I like the sensation, it makes me feel like I'm connected to something bigger than me. And plus it solidifies the fact that you're not crazy cause fuck, that's not what I'm thinking!

F: Are there any pre requisites to practice?

A: I think you should be grounded, to name one. I won't say mentally sane because that has bad implications but they have to be grounded and remember that they are still human, always will be human. You live a human life, you're not a god. Especially in my practice, in demonolatry, there are a lot of people that turn crazy, because it's heavy. You have to take your time, stay grounded, because that's how you ruin your life.

F: Does the practitioner have to have any particular characteristics? Do they have to be an expert practitioner?

A: I'm thinking expert practitioner has many meanings... I think having down the basics like purification, protection, controlling your mental or physical health, you know like, have I eaten? If you have all of that under control then you could give it a try, you could not get it immediately, which is something people should keep in mind, not get angry. Because some things won't come naturally to you and you will struggle with some things, it's human nature. We all have our weak and strong points.

F: Are there any characteristics that make someone a better channeler?

A: I think a strong intuition could help, just in general. Also having an open mind, because that's a lot of what channeling is, it's being open: you have to open up and trust your intuition to make sure that the entity you're getting ready to channel isn't playing with you.

F: Did someone teach you?

A: No, not really. I had friends at that time trying to help me because they had already channeled, so they were trying to help me do it.

F: So you basically did it on your own?

A: Yes

F: So basically you practiced and tried to do it, and trying many times you eventually succeeded?

A: I haven't tried in a long time cause I took a break. But if I'm doing a tarot reading it would be easier than trying.

F: Did you do any exercises to learn?

A: Techniques to be in touch with reality, breathing exercises and trying to keep my intuition open. I discovered that a lot of meditation can be useful, especially because in the moment you could feel scared so you have to relax and try not to push out the entity. You have to stay grounded and relax because at the beginning it can be a scary feeling. If you meditate I think you have a better chance at making it happen.

F: Did you use objects or instruments to learn?

A: Mainly my tarot deck. Every time I do a reading through that deck I feel Lilith channel.

F: How long did it take before you could do it?

A: I think a couple months. I also think it's funny cause at the time one of my friends was also trying to learn how to channel and I got it right away, and they were like "How the fuck did you do it?".

F: How did you feel when you did it?

A: It was cool, it was confirmation that I'm not crazy. After it happened I was sweating, there was a very hot energy. I felt euphoric and also terrified that it had happened. Like what do I do with this information.

F: What do you have to do before channeling a deity?

A: Make sure you have the right mindset to do it, we want to keep practitioners as sane as possible. It's a difficult path, it's not for everyone. It has a lot of trials and tribulations. Especially if you're on a path like demonolatry or working with fate. So control your mental health.

F: Are there steps to follow?

A: Definitely getting good at familiarizing with whatever energy you're trying to channel. I had worked with Lilith for a while before, I was familiar with her energy, there was a level of trust. We trust each other, if I say I'm gonna do something for her I will, if she says she'll do something for me she will. There's trust there. And also making sure you can identify the energy.

F: Are there steps you personally do?

A: So, if I feel that she's trying to get control I will try to relax right away, close my eyes and focus on my breathing. I try at the best of my abilities to let the message flow. Every time I've done I was always there, I know some people that go in the back of their head and like, go away. And then the

deity like takes control and has control. I'm still present but it's not me talking. It's my voice but its not my voice. It's like as off you were dreaming and you could hear yourself talk in your sleep.

F: Are the steps always the same? Or do they change?

A: Mmh I think for me it should always be similar...like trusting the deity, communicating, having limits. That would take time. You should have to build that before even considering it.

F: So those basics should be there for every deity?

A: Yes.

F: Are there objects you use for channeling?

A: It's always been stronger when I do tarot readings, mainly because my intuition is stronger when doing tarot. I did it when there was nothing but it was just once, it's not common.

F: So are objects indispensable or can you do it without?

A: Useful but not necessary.

F: Are the objects guarded by something?

A: Actually they are on my altar in a specific bag. I keep selenite on the deck to keep it cleansed and every time I mix the cards I knock on the deck anyways.

F: Where do you usually channel?

A: Every time I've done it i was in my room. I'm comfortable, it helps, being safe at home helps for sure.

F: Where could you do it? Are there places where you can't?

A: I don't know, I haven't tested it to that degree but I assume that whatever place where I'm not comfortable, in a new place or with new people, because I'd be worried and hyper vigilant of what's happening around me.

F: Does it have to be a quiet place?

A: Not necessarily, I'm used to background noise so it doesn't bother me but I guess it'd be useful to get in a calm head space, that's more or less what I've found necessary for channeling.

F: Does it have to be protected? And if so in what sense?

A: Oh yes, I think it is very necessary. If you do channeling anyways I think you need to have some sort of protection. I have different levels of protection, I have wards²⁵, I carry enchanted bags and have guardian spirits. Anything helps.

F: Can you do channeling with other people present?

A Probably just by myself. I don't know, I don't think I'd channel in front of a group of people. Although it happened once, when I was doing a tarot reading. But I would be more at ease if I was alone in a room.

F: What's difference?

A: It's a lot more forced if there are people in the room. Because I don't necessarily want...

F: Do you think it would be more difficult channeling with people around?

A: Yes, it's mainly my reservations about it. The people I do readings for in person are like my family, so I try not to do it.

F: Do you have to use different objects?

A: I only use tarot. I'm also thinking, my connection to that deck...I'm very connected to that deck, it was my first.

F: What do you feel before channeling?

A: To me it depends, because every spirit has its own energy or...with demons you can feel their energy come, it's a strong presence and a warm energy. With Lilith her energy is warm like fire, like

²⁵ la parola esatta utilizzata qui è *wards*, con cui si intende un tipo di protezione.

being in front of a bonfire. When I do channeling I feel so assertive, I feel so confident in myself, an energy like I could command the world and take what I want. Honestly it's great.

F: How do you physically feel before channeling?

A: I have the feeling like...not of terror but of something looming. Not in a scary way but like as if someone was looming over you.

F: What happens during the channeling?

A: Usually I take on their traits or characteristics. I take on the traits of what I channel. If I channeled Lucifer I'd be more...he's friendlier, very calm. Especially with new beginners. His energy is more like sunlight, it's like standing in the sun.

F: Can you as an individual talk while channeling?

A: Yes, you notice when it's me talking cause I'm a lot calmer, I stumble on my words, I'm more lively and airy. So there's a big difference when someone else is talking. So I can talk as myself but sometimes it gets mixed up. Because I don't disappear, I don't go to the back of my mind, I stay side by side.

F: Can you move your body while channeling?

A: Yes I can.

F: So basically they take control and talk through you?

A: Yes.

F: What do you feel physically and psychologically during this?

A: Fatigue. Sometimes their energy lingers a bit. So I could have an increase of confidence and be more assertive for a while and then eventually it dissolves and I go back to my base level emotionally. But it makes me extremely tired. Many of the deities that I tend to channel are more heavy than a greek deity. I discovered that the older the entity the more energy they suck out of you.

F: Does the warm sensation linger or does it go right away?

A: It goes away but if the entity stays close I feel it. But it's lighter, not as intense.

F: Are you calmer or more agitated?

A: I think I get an adrenaline rush...like "I did it!".

F: Usually how often do you channel?

A: Once I tried to practice every two weeks, more or less, since it's tiring for me and sometimes... I've never been consistent with that but now basically I don't practice anymore. I'm not actively practicing anymore now.

F: Did your practice change through time?

A: The first time it was impulsive, I didn't really feel it until it was already happening but now I can feel when it's about to happen. When I'm like...I want to give this message.

F: Is it easier or more difficult now?

A: In another sense it's easier, now like it just happens you know...in another sense I haven't gotten over the block of letting them talk, I interrupt them and...you know.

F: Why?

A: It doesn't bother me. There isn't like an intense joy it's just a thing that happens and I'm used to it. I'm happy after it happened because I did it again. I like that it builds trust in the relationship...I mean, you can have my body to talk and move, there's a lot of trust.

F: Did you lose interest with time?

A: I definitely lost interest, it's not like I actively practice. It's not the centre of my practice, which in this moment is making sure I'm protected and stuff.

F: What's the difference between your channeling now and when you first started?

A: At first it was sudden, now I know when it's coming.

F: Is there a difference between the objects you used then and the ones you use now?

A: I still use tarot when I channel, it's very useful.

F: Is there a difference between the places where you used to practice at the beginning and now?

A: No.

F: Does channeling influence your life outside of your religion?

A: I think it opened my clairs more, I'm also better at recognizing the energies around me.

F: Would you say it made you a better practitioner?

A: It definitely helped, for sure. What made me a better practitioner was dedication.

F: Do people in your life know about you channeling?

A: I talked about it occasionally. My mom...she doesn't understand she thinks it's a bit satanic... she's not wrong (ride).

F: Do people online know you channel?

A: Yes my friends know.

F: Did you influence your religious practice?

A: It strengthens my relationships with deities. I only work with deities linked to my soul, like my soul family²⁶. So we've always had a strong relationship. So like, Lilith is a lot like a mom, motherly towards me, and Asmodeus has been brotherly.

F: Do you feel closer to them?

A: Oh yeah for sure.

F: Are you closer? More intimate?

A: With time it helped me strengthen the relationship, I don't have to be so formal and...not scared, but shy.

F: Do you talk more than before?

A: Oh yeah, definitely. Because I use my clairs and don't have to grab my deck to talk to them My strongest clair is claircognition and I made it merge so now I know who I'm talking to.

F: Can you channel entities that aren't deities?

A: I think you could do channeling with any entity. I mean, there are spirits that aren't deities, like fairies,. I don't know how you'd channel with an animal spirit because they don't talk, but I think you could channel whatever spirit. Also cause channeling isn't only speaking through the mouth, they are in your head, you will feel their presence going through you and they will deliver a message in your head. But at that point it would be considered a claim. Even if I think they overlap, like channeling could be considered a type of exercise for clairs.

F: Could you channel any deity?

A: If they're not a part of a closed practice then yes.²⁷

F: But that's an ethical problem, in practice could you do it anyways?

A: Basically in a world where there are no closed practices I think so, as long as the deity agrees.

F: How do you figure out which deity you're channeling?

A: It's a lot easier because of the warm energy, but it's also pattern recognition, I just know. At first it was difficult understanding the difference between Lilith's energy and Amsodeus's because they have similar energies, but now I can determine which is which. I get confused sometimes.

Definitely using intuition. Sometimes it's a bit of an elimination process.

F: Are there some deities you can't channel? If so, why?

²⁶ la soul family indica la famiglia dell'anima, ovvero le entità che hanno creato un'anima. Di solito sono due e vengono chiamate soul father e soul mother e sono rispettivamente una divinità maschile e una femminile.

²⁷ le pratiche chiuse sono pratiche spirituali accessibili solo ad un determinato gruppo, l'appartenenza e quindi accesso alle pratiche chiuse può dipendere dall'etnia o da un'iniziazione.

A: I don't know because I've only tried with two. I'd like to try with two other deities that I work with semi-regularly.

F: Do you feel different physical sensations with different deities?

A: I think energy wise it's different. And then they can have different personalities, I think that to me it also depends on which epithet the deity is in that moment. So when I channel Lilith usually... when it's just us two she's usually motherly, the mother of demons, much more soft, nurturing and motherly. If I'm channeling her she's a lot more confident, assertive, much more like the epithet of the powerful queen of hell. That time I channeled Asmodeus... usually when I'm with him he's playful and when I channel him he's still friendly but you can feel his power... like, "I'm a king, respect me"... so physically there's warmth. But if I had to channel a deity that isn't a demon... probably there would be colder energy. When Loki comes here it's a colder energy and I can feel his playfulness.

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