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# Ancient Necromantic Rituals in Contemporary Celestial Magic

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**Jane Burton**

[Selene the Moon cries:] 'How many times ... have you [the witch Medea] disorbed me with your incantations, making the night moonless so that you might practise your beloved witchcraft undisturbed'. Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica* 4.55.<sup>1</sup>

Baying [of Hounds] loud as that which rings at the grim gate of Dis [Haides] or from Hecate's escort [of black hounds] to the world above. Valerius Flaccus, *Argonautica* 6.110.<sup>2</sup>

**Abstract:** This paper explores how witches and spiritual mediums both focus on solar and lunar events as important times for their magical rituals, and also the importance they place upon zodiacal influences. Additionally, it will investigate if blood, either the practitioners own or symbolic, is utilised in basic magical rituals for necromantic purposes such as spirit divination. Necromantic rituals from Ancient Greek magical texts were compared with contemporary rituals employed by the informants, using primary and secondary sources. This is an ethnographic report of participant observation of spiritual mediums and witches living in the Valencia region of Spain. It was conducted over a one-year period of fieldwork study. Data was collected by way of a questionnaire and in a series of interviews with spiritual mediums and witches who practice spirit invocation for divinatory purposes.

## Introduction

Pagans observe and celebrate the eight Sabbats of the 'Wheel of the Year' but there are indications that other celestial events are just as important. Nicholas Campion writes that a pagan astrology 'deals with magical ritual, intended to heal the self, or the community, through the use of astrological

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<sup>1</sup> Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica*, 4.55, available at <https://frankzumbach.wordpress.com/2013/11/17/hecate-ii-via-theoi-greek-mythology/> [accessed 11 November 2016].

<sup>2</sup> Valerius Flaccus, *Argonautica*, 6.110, available at <https://frankzumbach.wordpress.com/2013/11/17/hecate-ii-via-theoi-greek-mythology/> [accessed 11 November 2016].

principles, calendar festivals, and auspicious timings.’ Campion indicates that generally, pagan cosmology tends to be concerned less with which zodiac sign the Moon resides in at a given moment of magic ritual, but focuses more ‘with “drawing down the moon” the invocation of benign lunar power.’<sup>3</sup> However, astrological tradition also suggests that when the Moon is in specific zodiac sign, its energies can be utilized in a certain ways, as a guide to action.

In 1959 Gerald Gardner, the founder of modern witchcraft, wrote a source book, *The Meaning of Witchcraft*, for witches from a witch’s viewpoint. After being misquoted by reporters claiming ‘that he’d [Gardner] admitted, too, that some witches find great power in new spilled blood’, he reiterated in this text that witches did not use blood in their rites.<sup>4</sup> Gardner wrote, ‘to clear up any possible misunderstanding, now or in the future, I will say it yet again; witches do not use the blood of sacrificed animals, birds, or any other living things in their rites’.<sup>5</sup> However, Gardner did go on to say that ‘blood was sometimes used in ceremonial magic, but this is a different thing from witch rites’.<sup>6</sup>

In this study my informants are of Northern European and Spanish nationalities, are predominantly female, and are all living in the Valencia region of Spain. They consist of one small group of spiritual mediums and two small groups of witches; all three groups practice either magic and/or spiritual divination on a regular basis. The focus of this investigation is to explore the significance of celestial influences and the use of blood within their rituals for spirit divination.

### **Witches and Witchcraft**

Gardner, along with fellow witch and co-founder of Gardnerian Wicca Doreen Valiente, was instrumental in bringing the contemporary pagan religion of Wicca to the attention of the general public. He was to write about Wicca’s rituals and beliefs – and the reasons behind them – and to

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<sup>3</sup> Nicholas Campion, *Astrology and Cosmology in the World’s Religions* (New York and London: New York University Press: 2012), p. 198.

<sup>4</sup> Gerald Gardner, *The Meaning of Witchcraft* (England: IHO Books 2000), p. 226.

<sup>5</sup> Gardner, *The Meaning of Witchcraft*, p. 227.

<sup>6</sup> Gardner, *The Meaning of Witchcraft*, p. 227. See also Ronald Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), especially pp. 241–71.

emphasise how these rituals and beliefs were harmless. Although there were some secrets, he insisted that he mustn't reveal these to the world.<sup>7</sup>

The term 'witch' for the purpose of this research is defined in the context described by Crowley along with Valiente's discussion of practitioners of magic. When trying to define the word 'witch', High Priestess Vivien Crowley suggests, 'Witches practice what is known as *the Craft*, a tradition of wisdom and ancient lore'.<sup>8</sup> And when discussing practitioners of magic, Doreen Valiente states,

There is nothing really supernatural or supernormal, in the strict sense of these words. All is part of nature; but much of the realm of nature is 'occult', that is, hidden. The occultist, therefore, is one who ventures into these hidden realms in search of their secrets. He is not some wild eyed crank who goes around dressed in eccentric clothes in order to attract attention to himself.<sup>9</sup>

Wiccan witches adopted the eight Sabbats., the significant points in the solar year on which witches celebrate and connect with natural, psychic, solar, lunar and planetary tides and cycles.<sup>10</sup> One way in which they connect with nature and celestial bodies in their celebrations is in the energy-raising ritual of the 'cone of power'.<sup>11</sup> This is a ritual that the research subjects I investigated practised during the Sabbats and at other key celestial times when performing their magical divination. The ritual of the 'cone of power' involves forming a circle around lighted candles or fire. The participants dance around the circle until they feel that they have raised enough energy from the Moon. They then form a line with linked hands and rush towards the fire shouting the thing they desire most. This movement is repeated until they are exhausted, when they believe they have sent the spell to its destination.<sup>12</sup> With this in mind it can be considered that the witch and psychic medium may be one and the same,

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<sup>7</sup> Gerald Gardner, *Witchcraft Today* (1954; New York: Citadel Press, 1970, 2004), p. 13.

<sup>8</sup> Vivianne Crowley, *Wicca* (London: Thorsons, 1996), p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> Doreen Valiente, Forward to *Natural Magic* (1975; Sevenoaks: Robert Hale Limited, 2007), p. 7.

<sup>10</sup> Janet Farrar and Stewart Farrar, *The Witches' Bible, The Complete Witches' Handbook* (1981; London: Robert Hale Limited, 1984), p. 13.

<sup>11</sup> Doreen Valiente, *The Rebirth of Witchcraft* (Custer, WA: Phoenix Publishing, 1989), p. 45.

<sup>12</sup> Valiente, *The Rebirth of Witchcraft*, p. 45.

as it has been suggested that they harness the influences of the universe to connect with the dead in the spirit world.<sup>13</sup>

### **Necromancy**

There have been recent scholarly debates surrounding the history of necromancy in antiquity. Sarah Iles Johnston argues that the ancient Greeks and Romans almost always favoured a consultation with their chosen deities rather than communication with the dead and hardly ever, if at all, performed the art of necromancy.<sup>14</sup> Daniel Ogden maintains there is enough evidence to suggest that the ancient Greeks practiced necromancy, although possibly not altogether approved of by ancient Greek society. He states,

The Greeks in general probably felt that one could not do much serious or lasting harm by the practice of necromancy proper other than to one-self. In certain modes and contexts, the ghosts may find the process undesirable and uncomfortable, but there is a limit to the damage one could do to those already dead.<sup>15</sup>

Within the *Greek Magical Papyri*, there is a specific spell for invoking the dead, simply titled the 'Eighth Book of Moses'.<sup>16</sup> In this ancient magical text it is suggested that necromancy was best performed at night, and also when the moon is full or at significant astrologically influenced times.<sup>17</sup>

Furthermore, the ancient Greek Homeric hymns, *The Odyssey* and *The Iliad*, mention the invocation of the dead and of the gods for the sole purpose of attaining knowledge of the future.<sup>18</sup> An example of this comes from *The Odyssey*, in which Odysseus made his journey to the underworld

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<sup>13</sup> David Gordon Wilson, *Redefining Shamanisms: Spiritualist Mediums and other Traditional Shamans as Apprenticeship Outcomes* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013), p. 30.

<sup>14</sup> Sarah Iles Johnston, *Ancient Greek Divination, Blackwell Ancient Religions* (Malden, MA, and Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008), p. 97.

<sup>15</sup> Daniel Ogden, *Greek and Roman Necromancy* (Princeton, NJ, and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), p. 267.

<sup>16</sup> Hans Dieter Betz, ed., *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation including the Demotic Spells*, Vol. 1, second edition (1986; Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), PGM XIII.1–343.

<sup>17</sup> Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri*, PGM XIII.1–343.

<sup>18</sup> Homer, *The Iliad*, trans. George Chapman (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Classics, 2003); and Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. E. V. Rieu (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1951).

in order to consult the ghost of the Theban prophet Tiresias.<sup>19</sup> Odysseus dug a ceremonial ditch as a method of entering and exiting Hades. Milk, honey, wine, or possibly the blood of a ram was offered as a libation to the ghosts. When other ghosts appeared, the urge to drink the blood was strong, wanting to taste life once more; however, Odysseus managed to restrain them with his sword. As soon as Tiresias appeared, Odysseus put away his sword and the seer he invoked delivered the prophecy; after the prophecy was delivered the restrained ghosts were allowed to drink the blood.<sup>20</sup>

Ogden defines necromancy as a way to gain information from the dead by invoking its spirit for the purpose of divination.<sup>21</sup> As Ogden records, the main features of necromantic rituals are that rituals take place at night and outdoors; are centred around a pit or a fire; libations of wine, water, honey, or oil are offered to the ghost/spirit; a sacrifice (usually a black sheep) is burnt as an offering; blood from the sacrificial animal is also offered to the ghost as a drink to restore them with the life force in order to aid communication with the living; prayers or incantations are said to aid their transition into this world from the spirit world; and, lastly, a sword is kept to hand to restrain the spirit (it is believed that ghosts are frightened by the bronze and iron of the sword).<sup>22</sup>

Whilst discussing magical rituals Campion proposed that, ‘the basis of magic, including astral magic, is therefore that by uttering or writing a word, one actively invokes the thing that the word represents’.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, the ritual is not necessarily designed to invoke a human form, deity, demon or spirit for magical purposes. Thus, spiritual divination used by the members of the three study groups is defined as calling upon spirits for the purpose of foretelling the future, similar to Campion and Ogden’s suggestions.

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<sup>19</sup> Homer, *Odyssey*, 10.488, 11.13–149 (extracts). Cited from Daniel Ogden, *Magic, Witchcraft and Ghosts in the Greek and Roman Worlds: A Sourcebook* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 179–182, source number 144.

<sup>20</sup> Georg Luck, trans., *Arcana Mundi: Magic and the Occult in the Greek and Roman Worlds: A Collection of Ancient Texts* (1985; Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press, 2006), p. 223.

<sup>21</sup> Ogden, *Greek and Roman Necromancy*, pp. xviii, xxii.

<sup>22</sup> Ogden, *Magic, Witchcraft and Ghosts*, p. 179.

<sup>23</sup> Campion, *Astrology and Cosmology In The World’s Religions*, p. 93.

### Literature Review

Arthur Edward Waite makes references to rituals using blood in conjunction with lunar and planetary cycles in his interpretation of various ancient and medieval magical rituals translated in *The Book of Ceremonial Magic*.<sup>24</sup> This nineteenth century text was republished in 1972 for the contemporary student of the occult. After explaining the table for planetary hours, Waite writes that the hours of Saturn and Mars – when they are in conjunction with the Moon – are best for preparation of rituals; he also suggests ‘the hours of Saturn Mars and Venus are good for communication with spirits’ and ‘the hour of Saturn is best for invoking souls in hell’.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, Waite is suggesting that the employment of celestial timings, using specific planetary aspects, are the most favourable time to perform magical rituals to give the spell the added powerful essence it needs to fulfil the desired outcome.<sup>26</sup>

In 1989, seventeen years after the republication of Waite’s translation, Melita Denning and Osbourne Phillips, former Grand Masters of the Aurum Solis, wrote about the invocation of the powers of the planets in planetary magic. Denning and Phillips devote a chapter to planetary days and hours and their attributions to contemporary magical rituals.<sup>27</sup> According to Denning and Phillips, the workings of Planetary Magick are begun during a planetary hour dedicated to the celestial body which is the subject of the working, and for full efficacy, on the day of the week the celestial body rules.<sup>28</sup> They believe that Planetary Magick not only harnesses the energies of the sun and the moon, but also the other five luminaries in our solar system and the archetypes associated with them, to empower rituals. When discussing ancient necromancy and divination through spirit or deity, Waite suggested that recently necromantic rituals had been adapted and become less barbaric thanks to Eliphas Levi and Pierre Christian; Waite emphasised the powerful link blood had with this type of magic. He claimed that blood was thought to be the ‘medium of

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<sup>24</sup> A. E. Waite, *The Book of Ceremonial Magic* (Eastford, CT: Martino Publishing, 2011), pp. 304–333.

<sup>25</sup> A. E. Waite, *The Book of Black Magic* (1972; San Francisco, CA: Red Wheel/Weiser, 2008), p. 147.

<sup>26</sup> Waite, *The Book of Black Magic*, pp. 145–148.

<sup>27</sup> M. Denning and O. Phillips, *The Magical Philosophy Book IV. Planetary Magick. Invoking and Directing the Powers of the Planets* (1989; Woodbury, MN: Llewellyn Publications, 2011), pp. 105–115.

<sup>28</sup> Denning and Phillips, *The Magical Philosophy Book IV. Planetary Magick*, p. 107.

physical life' and necessary in this type of ritual, suggesting that blood could be considered as a powerful tool with which to boost the power of the spell.<sup>29</sup>

More recently Occult author Seth (a pseudonym) explained that blood in itself held no power; however, in blood magic the practitioner draws on the energy found so abundant in blood that the sorcerer can unlock the energies within.<sup>30</sup> As recently as 2011, contemporary necromancer Sorceress Cagliastro argued that divination is often considered the main reason for communicating with the dead, and that blood is the bait to help call on the spirit you wish to communicate with.<sup>31</sup> She also outlined the different types of blood, or Sacred Elixir as she refers to it, and how the different types can be used for magic along with their specific attributes to the ritual.<sup>32</sup> This notion supports my research of contemporary practitioners of magic and spirit divination who utilise ancient practices employing blood in some of their magical rituals, especially when calling upon spirits. Therefore, contemporary practitioners of magical rituals do consider employing astrological influences and blood, which they feel could give efficacy to their ritual.

The significant ethnographic works of Tanya Lurhmann, Susan Greenwood and Jeanne Favret-Saada have been taken into consideration when conducting this research, as they are regarded as some of the most influential academics of contemporary pagan studies.<sup>33</sup> They are identified by their use of a reflexive attitude towards their research subjects when involved in fieldwork over several years. In the mid 1980s Tanya Lurhmann focused her research on a small group of Wiccan witches living in London, England, immersing herself into their secret world to understand why they are drawn to witchcraft and its practices. Susan Greenwood conducted an ethnographic study of contemporary pagan and ceremonial groups that practiced magic in London during the 1990s. She

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<sup>29</sup> Waite, *The Book of Ceremonial Magic*, pp. 323–324.

<sup>30</sup> Seth, *Blood Magick* (Lincoln, NE: iUniverse Inc., 2003), p. 7.

<sup>31</sup> Sorceress Cagliastro, *Blood Sorcery Bible. Volume 1: Rituals in Necromancy. A Treatment On The Science Of Blood & Magnetism As They Pertain To Blood Sorcery And Necromancy* (Tempe, AZ: The Original Falcon Press, 2011), p. 122.

<sup>32</sup> Cagliastro, *Blood Sorcery Bible*, pp. 53–77.

<sup>33</sup> T. M. Lurhmann, *Persuasions of the Witch's Craft: Ritual Magic in Contemporary England* (London: Picador, 1994); Susan Greenwood, *Magic, Witchcraft and the Otherworld: An Anthropology* (Oxford: Berg, 2000); Jeanne Favret-Saada, *Deadly Words: Witchcraft in the Bocage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).



too shifted between the worlds of academia and a small pagan witch community, employing an insider/outsider perspective in her study. Greenwood investigated how Pagans connected with the ‘otherworld’ and examined issues of identity, gender and morality amongst them. Favret-Saada focused on the region of the Bocage in France for her study. She encountered different types of practitioners of magic and recalls how she encountered professional magicians, or un-witchers, who undo the curse of the witch. The witch can cast a spell and bring misfortune onto the bewitched with a thought, a word or a look.<sup>34</sup> Favret-Saada says ‘Now, witchcraft is spoken words; but these spoken words are power, and not knowledge or information.’<sup>35</sup> The un-witcher uses the power of the word to undo the misfortune, but it is difficult for the un-witcher to pass on the knowledge of witchcraft to the ethnographer just for the sake of knowing; to the un-witcher the word is capable of cursing or curing, it is formidable.<sup>36</sup>

### **Methodology**

Greenwood, Favret-Saada and Lurhmann adopted an insider’s perspective for their studies. Greenwood claimed that ‘if an anthropologist wants to examine magic then he or she must directly experience the otherworld’, thus demonstrating the need to immerse oneself fully into the world of the research subject in order to win trust and gain a greater understanding.<sup>37</sup> Lurhmann read magic books, took workshops to learn magical exercises, and studied Tarot in order to become more like her research subjects. She stated, ‘Very early on in the study I realized that the new subjective experience involved in learning to practice magic was crucial to an individual’s decision to become further involved’.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, Favret-Saada argued that ‘there is no room for uninvolved observers’ in this type of research whilst investigating witchcraft beliefs in Normandy’s Bocage.<sup>39</sup> She felt as though she could not understand the phenomenon until she fully submerged herself in its practices.<sup>40</sup> However, Tamzin Powell embarked upon her own MPhil thesis investigating the pagans and witches of the Wye Valley and Forest of Dean and their folklore as a native, and I found

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<sup>34</sup> Favret-Saada, *Deadly Words*, p. 3–12.

<sup>35</sup> Favret-Saada, *Deadly Words*, p. 9.

<sup>36</sup> Favret-Saada, *Deadly Words*, p. 9.

<sup>37</sup> Greenwood, *Magic, Witchcraft and the Otherworld*, p. 12.

<sup>38</sup> Lurhmann, *Persuasions of the Witch’s Craft*, p. 18.

<sup>39</sup> Favret-Saada, *Deadly Words*, p. 10.

<sup>40</sup> Favret-Saada, *Deadly Words*, pp. 10–12.

myself in the same position.<sup>41</sup> Powell is a High Priestess of the coven she researched, making her an established member of the group.<sup>42</sup> I have been a practicing witch for over fifteen years and a friend and acquaintance of all the members of the three study groups for nearly eight years. I have also been practicing witchcraft with one of the group of witches on a regular basis for the past six years. As an astrologer I appeared on a local radio station in this area of Spain presenting weekly horoscopes to the listeners. I also wrote horoscopes and articles for a number of magazines in the region. I am known on a personal and professional level by most of the members of the groups. Powell too had gained the trust of her informants, as she was already one of them. Unlike Greenwood and Lurhmann, neither Powell nor I had to learn magic from books or attend workshops in order to become an insider and become like our research subject at the start of our study, we were already entrenched in our insiderness.

Ethnographic research relies on some type of social interaction or participant observation with the chosen group of people. Davies claims that participant observation is more than a unitary research method, in that it employs various methods to gather data.<sup>43</sup> For this reason participant observation has played an important part in this study to date. One advantage of my long-standing relationship with the spiritual mediums group and the two groups of witches was that it appeared to help the respondents feel more comfortable with giving up information for this study. The interviewees' willingness to share their experiences with me was due to this relationship. Another advantage was that I found myself in a good position to interpret survey responses and interviews, thanks to the familiarity and trust between the study group and me.

As a result of talking to a small focus group of six people, I designed a questionnaire in order to ascertain whether any celestial factors influenced their magic or spirit divination. The research was also intended to look for any connection between their magic or spirit divination rituals and ancient necromantic rituals employing blood. The survey data was collected at meetings of spiritual groups on the Costa Blanca, Spain, which consisted

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<sup>41</sup> Tamzin Powell, 'Between The Severn And The Wye: A Contemporary Reflexive Ethnography Of Rural Pagans; the Folklore, Otherworld and the Continuity of Cunning-Folk and Witches in the Wye Valley and the Forest of Dean' (MPhil, University of Wales Trinity Saint David, 2014).

<sup>42</sup> Powell, 'Between The Severn And The Wye', p. 5.

<sup>43</sup> C. A. Davies, *Reflexive Ethnography: A Guide to Researching Selves and Others* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 67.

of one group of spiritual mediums and two groups of witches who also utilised mediumship within their ‘magical’ practices.

The spiritual mediums were chosen as a distribution point for a short questionnaire, as it was believed there would be a large number of people within this group who had an interest, some knowledge and varying degrees of experience with using magic, spirit divination and astrology. The intention of the study and what is meant by celestial influences and necromancy was explained to the group before the questionnaire was given to them. I explained celestial influences from moon phases and planetary positions in the sky to planetary aspects usually attributed to astrology, for example, a new moon in Leo or a full moon in Pisces. Necromancy was defined simply as a form of magic involving communication with the deceased for divination.

The questionnaire was distributed to approximately sixty attendees, thirty-seven of whom completed the survey. The respondents answered questions ranging from the practice of magical rituals to their general involvement in spirit divination and any attitudes to celestial influences. To complement the survey data, personal interviews were conducted. The interviewees in this study are referred to by fictional names only. These interviews expanded upon areas of interest that were seemingly limited by the questionnaire in order to enrich the data already discovered.<sup>44</sup>

In the same way that Powell discusses her remaining a native after her study was completed, I am and hope to continue to involve myself in spirit divination with some members of this group of witches, both academically and personally, which can only enhance the study.<sup>45</sup> John McLeod suggests that the qualitative method of research can take months, if not years, to come to a ‘satisfactory end point’ with a ‘convincing conceptualisation’ of the researcher’s material.<sup>46</sup>

I began this study as a deep insider, being a witch of a similar age to some in the study groups; I live as a non-native in the Valencia region of Spain, as do most of the research study subjects. Most members of the spiritual mediums group, having frequented their regular weekly meetings over the past eight years, know me; I have also occasionally spoken on

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<sup>44</sup> Judith Bell, *Doing Your Research Project*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition (London: Open University Press, 2005,) p. 157.

<sup>45</sup> Powell, ‘Between The Severn And The Wye’, p. 83.

<sup>46</sup> John McLeod, *Qualitative Research in Counselling and Psychotherapy* (London: Sage Publications, 2001), p. 135.

esoteric subjects for them at their request. As a researcher, I neither carried a notebook nor recorded conversations; any notes were written in private.

### **My account of the 24<sup>th</sup> of May 2013**

As my research methodology involved participant observation, I participated in the creation of a magic circle for spirit divination with a small group of witches. One such occasion was when the full moon was in Scorpio on 24 October 2013.

On 24 of May 2013, when the full moon was in Scorpio, Luna, Lily, Paulo and I went up to the Cap de San Antoni, Costa Blanca Spain, to perform magic. I drove up to the lighthouse at around 8:30pm with Lily after picking her up, arriving a little early to find Luna and Paulo waiting for me. We walked along the dirt track from the car park into the grounds of the lighthouse. From there we descended a little way alongside the cliff face to a secluded and sheltered spot. We have used this place, a favourite of ours, to perform our magic for the past five years. We chose this position as it is a beautiful setting with a stunning view. It is sheltered from visitors to the lighthouse, making it a favourite haunt for lovers in the evenings. The view over the sea and of the expanse of sky is inspiring.

Luna laid out her altar cloth and we placed our items on the cloth: a cauldron, a charcoal burner, an athame, a ritual knife used in modern witchcraft, a chalice and a bottle of wine. As a form of libation, we also took a large, white candle for Hecate and some almonds and roses. We placed a candle in each of the four corners to represent the guardians of the watchtowers. We sometimes place additional coloured candles in certain places to correspond with the elements; for example, to represent water we would place a blue candle, to represent earth it would be brown or green. However, due to the uncharacteristically cold and windy weather we chose not to do this during this ritual. After placing the candles in the four corners, we lit them along with incense sticks. We were now ready to call on the guardians of the watchtowers, either for protection or to give energy to our magic. If we required protection, we asked the guardians to stand facing outwards from our circle to watch over us, protecting us from negative entities or energies. If we required help to energise our magic, we asked them to stand facing inwards into our circle. Paulo is usually the one who calls in the guardians.

We all faced east and chanted:

Hail Guardian of the Watchtower East  
Powers of Air  
As you carry the seeds of the plants across the land  
As you bring the moisture of the storms to the shore  
Join us, in all your gentle and powerful ways  
We bless the elements of Air  
And call upon you to gather here with us.

We all faced west and chanted:

Hail Guardian of the Watchtower of the West  
Powers of Water  
Water, soft and yielding, formless and flowing  
You are the blood coursing through our veins  
We bless the elements of Water  
And call upon you to gather here with us.

We all faced south and chanted:

Hail Guardian of the Watchtower of the South  
Powers of Fire and Feeling  
Flaming One  
Apollo, Bright Warrior  
Wild courage  
Lion strength  
We bless the elements of fire  
And call upon you to gather here with us.

We all faced north and chanted:

Hail Guardian of the Watchtower of the North  
Powers of Mother and Earth  
Changeless power of unending change  
In steadfastness and strength  
We bless the element of Earth  
And call upon you to gather here with us.

Then Luna took over and opened the circle, calling on Hecate to stand by us and aid us in our magic.

We cast this circle with a white light to you Hecate asking you to stand by us and to add power to our magic on this full moon in Scorpio. Hecate we welcome you to our circle – so mote it be.

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All the time whilst this invocation was happening, Lily, Paulo, Luna and I visualised the guardians sending us energy with Hecate standing by. We raised the energy by meditating and rubbing our hands together. We then took it in turns to light our own small candles, which had been inscribed with our desire, using the flame from the main large white candle that we had dedicated to Hecate. My candle is always inscribed with sigils. I like to code my requests using these sigil symbols instead of writing them in full. Sigil magic is often associated with and used in chaos magic. We burnt our mixtures of incense we had made up and energised beforehand and passed the spell written in dragon's blood, a resin or powder extract from a variety of plants, on paper through the scented smoke. This paper can sometimes be marked with menstrual blood if desired. Whilst suffumigating our desires we recited the words; 'through scent smoke and magic candle fire I send the universe my desire'. Lighting the paper with our candles, we then let it burn in the cauldron and contemplated, waiting for our answers.

We gave our offering of nuts and wine, enjoying them too. We did not, however, discuss what we had just asked for, for fear of it not working. The spell casting is never discussed, but we did exchange stories of past successes and formulas that have worked, for future references which are passed around the group if and when needed.

We then asked Paulo to reverse the order of the calling of the guardians of the watchtowers, adding thanks for their protection or energy. We then let Luna close the circle, giving thanks to Hecate, and with these final words from us all,

As above so below our magic is done strong good and true so mote be.

We spend a good 20 minutes contemplating the stunning view of the full moon over the Mediterranean Sea and expressing our feeling about the ritual just performed. Lily and Luna explain how they felt the power and energy so much stronger this time than they have of late. They both felt that lately there has been a lull in the energy in their magic. Paulo and myself have had the complete opposite experience – we felt the energy has been strong for sometime and hoped that it continued for us both. We then packed up our belongings and headed into the old town for tapas and a few cold beers, spending the evening drinking, eating, socialising and planning for the next time we will meet up at the lighthouse for magic. We all agreed to meet for the next one, the new moon in Gemini on the 8<sup>th</sup> of June 2013, as we discussed how Hecate is the female counterpart of Hermes, the

guardian of the gateway to the underworld, and Hermes is the Greek counterpart of Mercury and Mercury is the ruler of Gemini. It was agreed that this date would be an excellent time for communication with spirit and Hecate for our magic.

### **Survey Results**

#### *Questionnaire & Discussion*

Below are the questions on the questionnaire put to the spiritual mediums.

Q1. When performing spirit divination/magic do you place any importance on celestial or astrological aspects, i.e., the moon phases and position of the planets?

Q2. Do you have a ritual you perform before during and after your spiritual divination/magic i.e., food or drink offerings, the lighting of specific candles or giving thanks to your chosen spirit or deity?

Q3. Some people offer a sacrifice of some kind; something of theirs they value to give up as a sacrifice to their chosen spirit or deity?

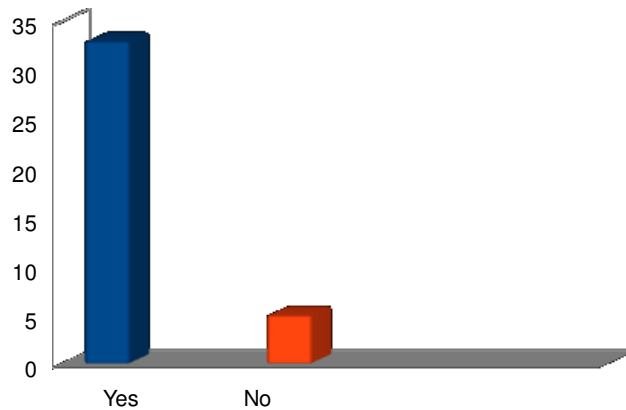
Q4. Do you or did you feel that your menstrual cycle had any significance on your sensitivity in your spirit divination/magic?

Q5. Have you either used your menstrual blood, blood from another part of yourself, i.e., finger, from somewhere else such as animal blood or imitation blood such as red ink?

*Question 1. When performing spirit divination/magic do you place any importance on celestial or astrological aspects, i.e., the moon phases and position of the planets?*

Of the thirty-seven respondents who completed the short survey, thirty-three answered 'Yes' when asked if they placed any emphasis on celestial movements when performing their magic or spirit divination. The main celestial body with which they felt a connection was the moon and its different phases. All thirty-three who answered 'Yes' felt that the energies within and around them were much stronger and more powerful during a full or new moon than at any another time of the moon's cycle. Six of the thirty-seven respondents said they noted which zodiac sign the full moon was in at the time of their magic, using that influence or energy for their divination. Interestingly, three of the four surveyed who said they did not place any emphasis on celestial movements indicated that they will now take more note of planetary activity whilst performing magic or spirit divination to 'test the energy' and see if it has any bearing on their performance. I have to point out here that my question has clearly influenced and possibly changed the future behaviour of the three

respondents. Regardless of what a researcher does to ensure he or she does not influence the study there will always be some aspects that have not been taken into account. In this instance it shows that reflexivity does have its limits. However, according to Hertz, having limits is not of great importance because reflexivity is 'ubiquitous'.<sup>47</sup> Although my question did make three of them rethink their own thought patterns when it comes to their spiritual divination and celestial influences we cannot be sure that they will take notice of such influences next time they perform their magic.



**Fig. 1:** Question 1 graph.

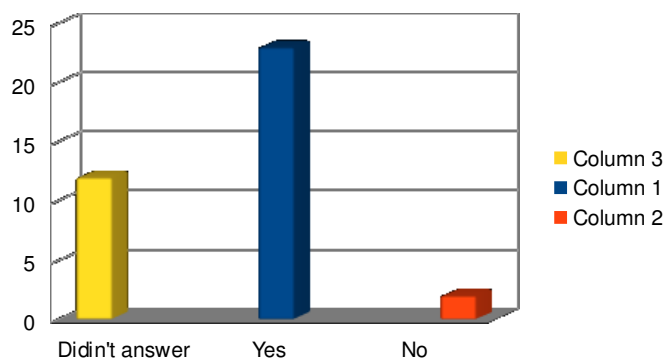
*Question 2. Do you have a ritual you perform before, during and after your spiritual divination/magic, i.e., food or drink offerings, the lighting of specific candles or giving thanks to your chosen spirit or deity?*

Of the thirty-seven respondents only two said that they did not perform rituals of any sort before calling on spirits for divination purposes. Twenty-three respondents had their own rituals consisting of protection, burning candles and incense, using crystals and also giving offerings to appease their chosen spirit or deity. The rituals they perform show a similarity, albeit a vague one, with necromantic rituals. However, twelve who performed spirit divination and magic employed rituals that showed a very strong correlation with necromantic rituals that involved the offering of food and wine.

<sup>47</sup> Rosanna Hertz, ed., *Reflexivity and Voice* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1997), p. viii.



Considering that this study is examining possible connections between spirit divination and ancient necromantic rituals, the question of a sacrifice was put to the respondents. It was explained that the sacrifice could be something personal to be given up as an offering. Of the thirty-seven, only twelve respondents answered 'Yes', signifying that they offer up a sacrifice of some kind.



**Fig. 2:**

Question 2 graph.

*Question 3. Some people offer a sacrifice of some kind; something of theirs they value to give up as a sacrifice to their chosen spirit or deity?*

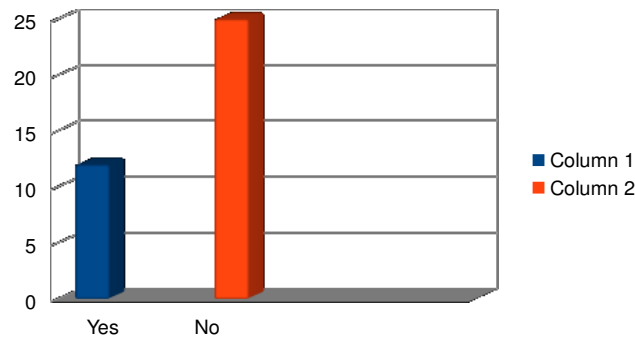
The final two survey questions were added due to a suggestion mentioned in the initial focus group, that menstrual cycles and menstrual blood are very significant in magic or spirit divination rituals. Some even noted that when they performed whilst menstruating they felt more powerful; others noted that their menstrual cycle coincided with different moon phases. This was significant to them as they felt it affected the energies in their magic. The blood aspect was offered up not only as a sacrifice similar to that in necromantic rituals but also as the ultimate, life-giving force. In ancient necromantic rituals blood is offered to the spirit in order to give the spirit a 'taste' of life.

*Question 4. Do you or did you feel that your menstrual cycle had any significance on your sensitivity in your spirit divination/magic?*

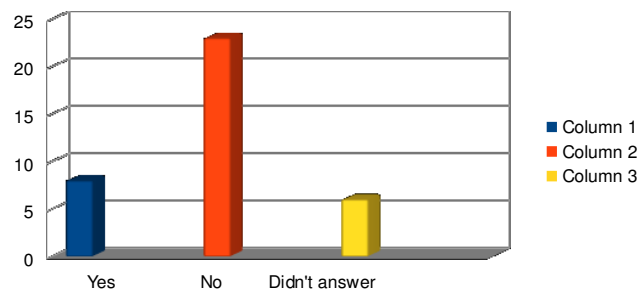
Of the thirty-seven respondents, eight answered with 'Yes' that their menstrual cycle had any impact on their sensitivity. It has to be taken into consideration that of the thirty-seven surveyed four were males and

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nineteen were over the age of 60 and therefore, possibly past menopause, although this cannot be verified.



**Fig. 3:** Question 3 graph.



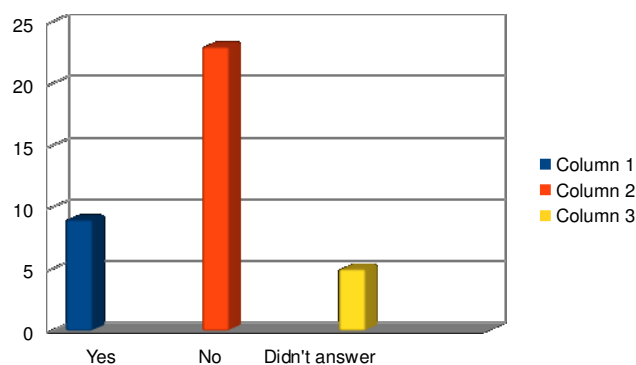
**Fig. 4:** Question 4 graph.

*Question 5. Have you either used your menstrual blood, blood from another part of yourself, i.e., finger, from somewhere else such as animal blood or imitation blood such as red ink?*

Notably, three of the thirty-seven surveyed who answered 'No' said that if they had thought about it, they would have used their menstrual blood in their magic had they not reached menopause. They felt using their own blood might have had a powerful influence on their spiritual and 'magical' work, although they had no experience of it. Of the four male respondents three answered 'No' to the question of using menstrual blood in their

magic; however one did state that he had used blood from his finger for his magic or spirit divination.

The survey results do suggest that there is a connection with necromantic rituals and celestial influences within their spirit divination and magic. In retrospect, this short questionnaire was limited. This is a typical finding in this kind of research, which is why semi-structured interviews with eight willing respondents of the survey were conducted. The interviews discussed the use of rituals, celestial influences and blood rituals within their magic and the connection with ancient necromantic rituals in much more detail.



**Fig. 4:** Question 5 graph.

I am aware that I influenced the behaviour of my sample, when I gave them the questionnaire, precisely because of the nature of the questions; some now are more aware, both of the Moon's zodiacal sign of the power of their menstrual cycle and will be more so the next time they perform their magic.

## **Interviews and Discussion**

### *Celestial Influences*

All eight of the interviewees were in agreement that the full moon was a significant time for their spirit divination or magic. Luna, a witch who practices spirit divination, says,

When the moon is full and, to me, at its most powerful I reflect this in my casting. I also cast my circle smaller when the moon is full because I like to

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cone a stronger, more powerful energy. I have stood outside many times barefoot and drawn down the full moon's energy before I begin.

Luna suggests she likes to 'cone the power of the moon', a ritual performed by many witches who, in some form, follow the Wiccan path.<sup>48</sup>

The extant evidence from the *The Greek Magical Papyri* suggests that astrology plays an important role in necromancy. 'Libra: perform invocation... spell of release... necromancy'.<sup>49</sup> There are also instructions as to which astrological sign holds host to the most preferential time for certain rituals to attain a specific outcome.

Orbit of the Moon: Moon / in Virgo: anything is rendered obtainable. In Libra: necromancy. In Scorpio: anything inflicting evil. In Sagittarius: an invocation or incantations / to the sun and moon. In Capricorn: say whatever you wish for best results. In Aquarius: for a love charm. Pisces: for foreknowledge. In Aries: fire divination or love charm. In Taurus: incantation to a lamp. Gemini: spell for winning favour. In Cancer: phylacteries. Leo: rings or binding spells.<sup>50</sup>

Quite limited in detail, this text still indicates that favourable times to perform magic using astrological timings were used. The ancient Greeks and Romans believed festivals of the dead to be excellent times to perform necromancy. The main festivals considered as auspicious times for rituals are the thrice-yearly opening of the 'mundus', the hole in the underworld from which spirits of the dead could emerge: the Anthesteria and Genesia were held in Athens and the Parentalia and the Lemuria were held in Rome.<sup>51</sup>

The interviewees were in agreement on the significance of the full moon; also that on certain Sabbats, such as Halloween and the winter and summer solstices, the energy is stronger than at any other times in the calendar. Luna explained that she always acknowledges Halloween, a festival to celebrate and remember the dead, as a time for magic and connecting with the spirit world:

<sup>48</sup> Gerald Gardner, 'Drawing Down the Moon', in *The Gardnerian Book of Shadows*, available at <http://www.sacred-texts.com/pag/gbos/gbos01.htm> [accessed 2 February 2015].

<sup>49</sup> Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri*, PGM III.275–818.

<sup>50</sup> Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri*, PGM VII.284–999.

<sup>51</sup> W. Warde Fowler, 'Mundus Patet', available at [http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Journals/JRS/2/Mundus\\*.html](http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Journals/JRS/2/Mundus*.html) [accessed 26 March 2014]; Ogden, *Greek and Roman Necromancy*, pp. 167–168.

I make much more of a deal of Halloween. It is the start of the Witch's year, and the night where the veil between the living and dead is at its thinnest point. I feel empowered doing magic on this night! I have meditated on Halloween purposefully to connect with my spirit guide, and have asked for their help in performing magic.

For Saoirse, in her magic or divination, the planetary hours play a big part in the planning of 'magical' rituals. Saoirse claims,

I'd say the moon phases and planetary hours have more of an effect on my magic making it stronger.

Lily, an artist, witch and spiritual medium who is influenced by Waite's literature, goes further when discussing celestial influences on her magic; here, she explains

The day of the week is important as different Gods and planets rule certain days. Say, for example, I wanted guidance on my career, I would chose a green candle as that symbolises money for me and I'd choose a Thursday as this is ruled by Jupiter the planet of abundance. For love I would use pink or red and choose a Friday as this day is ruled by the planet Venus symbolising love and passion. I do take notice of planetary activities more and more and how it affects my spirit magic.

Here she suggests that she takes note of astrological meanings for each day before embarking on her magic. For Lily, the day determines what kind of magic and which spirit she will call upon for divination purposes.

According to Waite, favourable timings for spirit divination using astrological events were in the planetary hours of Saturn and Venus.<sup>52</sup> Whereas in more recent times instructions for invoking spirits using planetary magic and archetypes can be found in literature about planetary magic by David Rankin and Sorita d'Este and Denning and Phillips.<sup>53</sup> Planetary hours use the so-called Chaldean system to divide diurnal time. A different planet rules each planetary hour of each planetary day. The planet that rules the first hour of the day is also the ruler of the whole day

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<sup>52</sup> Waite, *The Book of Black Magic*, p. 147.

<sup>53</sup> Denning and Phillips, *The Magical Philosophy Book IV. Planetary Magick*; David Rankine and Sorita d'Este, *Practical Planetary Magick. Working Magick of the Classical Planets in the Western Mystery Tradition* (London: Avalonia, 2007), pp. 76–93.

and gives that day its name. Therefore the first hour of Sunday is ruled by the Sun, the first hour of Monday is ruled by the Moon and so on.<sup>54</sup>

#### *Libations and Locations*

All of the interviewees had a ritual they enacted every time they commenced their magic for spiritual divination; Luna, Saoirse, Lily and Rosa all followed a similar path. The process they all employed was very similar to that of necromancy. They all said, weather permitting, they preferred to be outdoors with their magic rather than being confined indoors as they felt it was more powerful under the energy of the moon and stars. Ancient necromantic rituals have been described as being typically carried out in caves, by marshes or lakes and in dense forests. It was also commonly practised on battlefields, at graves, or in tombs as these were considered to be gateways to the Underworld and these were the places most abundant in ghosts.<sup>55</sup> The ritual ideally begins at midnight and continues until daybreak, because it is believed that the ghosts must return to the underworld when the process is over and the prophecy delivered. Furthermore, for the best results this ritual should be performed on a full moon.<sup>56</sup> There are typical tomb-side libations or offerings to pacify and appease the dead, usually consisting of honey-milk, wine, water and sometimes olive oil with a sprinkle of barley. Author and healing practitioner Christopher Penczak discusses the need for appeasing potentially disruptive spirits he calls 'outdwellers' during a necromantic ritual. 'Outdwellers' he says are unwanted spirits that can make the ritual area quite hostile.<sup>57</sup> American witch Christian Day writes about these types of libations or offerings and how they can be used to appease the spirit invoked. In one incantation he commands 'Let these offerings appease you, spirit of [name of spirit here]! Come forth and provide the answers I seek!'<sup>58</sup> When questioned about offerings Rosa explained,

At certain phases of the moon, but most certainly the when the moon is full I put out some honey and garlic and an apple.

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<sup>54</sup> Waite, *The Book of Black Magic*, pp. 146–147.

<sup>55</sup> Ogden, *Greek and Roman Necromancy*, pp. 3, 25.

<sup>56</sup> Ogden, *Greek and Roman Necromancy*, pp. 166–168.

<sup>57</sup> Christopher Penczak, *The Mighty Dead. Communing with the Ancestors of Witchcraft* (Salem, NH: Copper Cauldron Publishing, 2013), p. 100.

<sup>58</sup> Christian Day, *The Witches Book of the Dead* (San Francisco, CA: Red Wheel/Weiser, 2011), p. 120.

Luna and Saoirse also said they have offered food and drink. In describing her particular offering to Hecate, her chosen goddess for spirit divination magic, Saoirse declared,

I will offer a raw egg and almonds, but only to Hecate, the egg signifying a new life, the almonds because they are plentiful. I don't drink during magic work but I will have coffee and biscuit after, to show appreciation. To indicate the magic bit is over, I eat and drink after I have closed the circle.

Luna goes into great detail about her libations to her chosen spirit for her divination magic:

The raw egg is a symbol of fertility, womanhood and growth. It is also a representative of the goddess to me so I use a raw egg as an offering to the goddess when I am working outdoors. It's also for me away of saying thank you! I suppose I feel it's giving something back to the earth to crack a raw egg around the root of a tree etc. Nuts, especially almonds, which are related to Hecate who is the goddess I always call on. Sometimes I use a branch from an almond tree as well. Coins, silver coins were told to me by Saoirse to be good to leave as an offering, and we have left them in an almond tree before up at the lighthouse when going up there to work together.

### *Sacrifice*

Usually a black sheep or cow was offered to the underworld in the form of a sacrifice. The throat of the animal was cut, the blood was drained into the pit for the ghosts to drink from, and afterwards the carcass was burnt whole. This was said to aid the ghost's communication with the living.<sup>59</sup>

Interviewee Lily has an interesting opinion on sacrifice within the bounds of magic:

I do find that if something is sacrificed, an animal, the actual act of killing creates certain energy. I don't have the words for what that energy is. But it can enhance spiritual 'magical and ritual work. Ok, I am not one for sacrificing. Sacrificing living creatures is not for me as I am a little bit squeamish. I do, however sacrifice blood. That is my only sacrifice.

In necromancy the sacrificed animal is burnt whole, but in other ancient Greek sacrifices the carcass was distributed amongst those present with a view to the animal being eaten; sometimes a portion of the carcass was left

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<sup>59</sup> Ogden, *Magic, Witchcraft and Ghosts in the Greek and Roman World*, p. 179.

on the altar for the Gods.<sup>60</sup> Whilst none of the interviewees actually sacrificed living creatures, one of the interviewees did offer a sacrifice of her own in the form of menstrual blood. Saoirse explained,

I use my menstrual blood 98% of the time, only if I don't have any do I not call on Hecate, she is the Queen of witches, therefore is top cat, why go lower. When I call on anyone else it is for something very specific, they are called to help me, in Hecate's name. The blood is connected to Hecate obviously and I don't offer it to anyone else. When I call on others, Hecate is involved first so the blood is for her.

Lily on the other hand had a different use for her sacrifice of menstrual blood. She continues:

I generally use it in my painting and my magic. I think it is a very powerful thing and a very magical thing in itself. Certainly whether I am painting/channelling, I find the act of using it enhances my magic. I used it for invoking the goddess Aphrodite when I painted her and other Goddesses for inspiration.

She continues to expand on her use of her menstrual blood within her magic:

Part of it is that it's easier than cutting yourself and more natural. I used the blood to connect with the goddess I am working on to evoke that specific Goddess for inspiration. For my pendulum work blood is my obvious sacrifice if I don't have menstrual blood my magic fluid available I will cut myself although I'd prefer not to. I use the blood to make my mark on the paper, I prefer to use my pure fresh blood as it's easier to use, it's much more potent, it's the first blood on the first day and it's the most painful. So it's more meaningful.

It is noteworthy that this study showed that menstrual blood, in particular, was used as a sacrifice and offering to a chosen spirit or deity as opposed to blood from a small cut to the finger, for example. Luna describes the use of blood in her magic:

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<sup>60</sup> Christopher A. Faraone and F. S. Naiden, eds., *Greek and Roman Animal Sacrifice: Ancient Victims, Modern Observers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 65.



My menstrual cycle affects my magical ability, it makes me feel much more attuned to the moon and the planet, therefore I use my menstrual blood in my spells. It's part of me so why not!

Furthermore, blood was used in a sacrificial way in that it was offered as a part of oneself to a chosen spirit or deity and as the ultimate life force energy to aid communication with spirit. Both contemporary necromancers, Day and Cagliastro, discuss the use of blood in their spirit divination. Day uses the blood from a prick to his finger, Cagliastro mentions blood harvested from three different body parts/areas for invoking ancestors, menstrual blood being one of them.<sup>61</sup>

#### *Hecate the Guardian of the Gateway*

The main Goddess that witches call upon for spirit divination and magic is Hecate. This connects spirit divination to necromancy and celestial magic, yet again. Hecate is mentioned numerous times within the *Greek Magical Papyri*, for example, in spell casting for necromantic purposes or calling on her to aid communication with the dead in order to perform magic.<sup>62</sup> According to Sara Iles Johnson, Hecate's role is to guide disembodied souls back to Hades and the underworld, a role similar to that of Hermes who guided dead souls on their journey to the underworld and who was guardian of the gateway.<sup>63</sup> Hecate is also likened to the moon in the *Chaldean Oracles*, fragments of Hellenistic texts from the second century CE.<sup>64</sup> When asked about Hecate and her importance to her magic Saoirse responds,

I call on Hecate whenever I'm doing anything magical or spiritual. I cast my circle then ask Hecate to stand with me, to protect me and strengthen my magic. Doing Tarot cards, I call on Hecate and after that, I call on any spirit guides I may have to aid my work, but it's always Hecate first.

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<sup>61</sup> Day, *The Witches Book of the Dead*, p. 120; Cagliastro, *Blood Sorcery Bible*, p. 55.

<sup>62</sup> Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri*, PGM IV2708–84, PGM IV.2785–2890.

<sup>63</sup> Sara Iles Johnson, *Hekate Soteira* (Atlanta, GA: Scholar Press, 1990), pp. 26, 31, 146, 147; Jacob Rabinowitz, *The Rotting Goddess, The Origin of the Witch in Classical Antiquity* (New York: Autonomedia, 1998), pp. 22–39.

<sup>64</sup> Ruth Majercik, trans., *The Chaldean Oracles: Text, Translation, and Commentary By Julianus the Theurgist* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1989), pp. 163, 180.

Jacob Rabinowitz discusses Hecate's role as the Guardian of the Gateway for the dead and as a 'bridge between both realms'. Rabinowitz examines numerous ancient texts to clearly establish Hecate's role as the keeper of the keys that open the door between realms and as the intermediary between the worlds of dead and the living.<sup>65</sup> Lily recalls a celebration to honour Hecate with menstrual blood:

In the autumn time there is a celebration when you meditate, draw down the power of the moon and literally paint yourself with your menstrual blood. You then lay on the earth; this is how my friends from Safron's coven celebrate each year.

Lily's friend Safron is part of another local coven which follows the Witches of Avalon School of witchcraft. Safron travelled from her home in Spain to Glastonbury, England, in 2009 to learn from the Priestess of Avalon known as Kathy Jones.<sup>66</sup> The date for this particular ritual that many of the witches encountered perform is 16 November, a day to celebrate and honour the triple-headed goddess Hecate. Gillian Macdonald discusses myths, taboos and the use of blood in tribal rituals. She devotes a chapter to menstrual blood, detailing one particle ritual she uses to invoke the energies of the Goddess Hecate using food libations and menstrual blood.<sup>67</sup>

#### *Protection*

There are prayers to release the ghosts of the dead who, in ancient necromantic rituals, must be managed with a sword, as the dead are believed to be frightened of bronze and iron.<sup>68</sup> Only Luna and Anna used a sword of some kind in their 'magical' rituals for spirit divination. Day says he employs a bronze dagger in his necromantic ritual to form a circle to protect him from evil.<sup>69</sup> Luna used an athame for protection and for opening and closing her circle. An athame is a ceremonial knife used in magical rituals. Luna says she feels safe with the athame asserting,

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<sup>65</sup> Rabinowitz, *The Rotting Goddess*, pp. 24, 25.

<sup>66</sup> Glastonbury Goddess Temple, available at <http://www.goddess temple.co.uk> [accessed 22 June 2013].

<sup>67</sup> Gillian Macdonald. *Blood Mysteries* (Somerset: Green Magic Publishing, 2013), pp. 30–34.

<sup>68</sup> Ogden. *Magic Witchcraft and Ghosts in the Greek and Roman World*, p. 179.

<sup>69</sup> Day, *The Witches Book of the Dead*, p. 119.

Never ever would I open a circle in the first place if I didn't have my athame with me, it stays on my lap or close by me the whole time the magic is being performed.

She also goes into more detail about casting her circle just before calling on spirit for divination work:

When I open my circle with prayers of protection I imagine a blue light coming out the end of my athame and completely surrounding me, then I feel safe within my 'bubble' to work. I have more or less always done this, but didn't realize how important it was until I was working with someone else and was probably complacent about this ritual. I know for a fact that something dark entered my space, and stayed in the house. It was very frightening and affected other members of the family. I had to do a lot of demanding it left and lighting candles everywhere before I felt it calm down and will never really know if it ever left that house as we moved out soon after. I have always taken my protection ritual to be very important after that. I also tend to ask the four corners to stand guard and offer protection now as opposed to asking them to lend strength to my magic.

Although a carcass is not burned, a form of symbolism of burning to appease a chosen spirit and for protection is apparent during the ritual. All interviewees seemed to burn incense and candles mindfully chosen for the purpose of the and the spirit they wish to call on. Artist Lily uses smudge sticks and Palo sticks, amongst other things, for her protection whilst painting. Before she channels the influences of the goddess she will cleanse and protect her ritual space with the smudge and Palo sticks, then call upon her chosen goddess and paint her image. A Palo Stick, or 'Holy Stick', is a natural wood infused with incense, used for centuries by the indigenous people of South America as a spiritual remedy for purifying and cleansing, as well as to get rid of evil spirits and misfortune. Here Lily clarifies how she feels she protects herself with Palo and incense sticks:

I am using something to control the energy that I am calling upon in some way with protection from my Palo and incense sticks, light, bubbles and my positivity.

Luna conveys how she lights something for her chosen spirit:

I always have a white candle lit for my chosen deity. I also burn my paper with my desires written on in dragon's blood or my menstrual blood;

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whichever is readily available at the time of my magic. Once the circle is closed I sometimes throw the ashes into the air.

Additionally, Rosa and Saoirse indicated they also throw the ashes into the wind when they have finished their magic.

### **Conclusion**

There is an indication from the questionnaire replies and the interviews that my informants placed an emphasis upon celestial timings and positions according with their knowledge of astrology. Many of the survey respondents were much more aware of celestial influences within their magic although some only focused on lunar phases and lunar influences. Additionally there is evidence of ancient necromantic rituals employed within the researched groups and their contemporary magic and spirit divination practices, in particular the use of blood within their magical rituals when invoking spirit for divination, contradicting Gerald Gardner's statement that blood is never used in rituals by witches.

The interviewees were a little more knowledgeable of astrology, more so than those surveyed with the questionnaire. The interviewees, who also answered the questionnaire, seemed to place more importance on planetary positioning and the influences this bestowed upon their 'magical' practices. Whilst they do perform their magic outdoors, some of the time there was no emphasis upon this, or the location, being of importance. They offer libations of raw egg, nuts, honey and wine in order to appease and give thanks to a spirit or Hecate, their chosen goddess, when performing spirit divination. It has been shown that they also offer some kind of sacrifice, preferably their menstrual blood as they feel it is the ultimate life force and much more potent than the blood from a self-inflicted cut. Although they do not have a fire, they do have a representation of this with the candles and incense sticks that they burn during their rituals, the ashes of which are then scattered into the wind at the end of their rituals. They also offer up prayers of protection, invocation and thanks during their magic. It became apparent that whilst this study evolved, the respondents of this group were not aware that they followed any kind of ancient necromantic ritual whilst performing their spirit divination; they said 'they just did it intuitively', claiming to have no knowledge of necromancy before the study began although classical text and references are readily available to them.

My data was gathered from one study and will therefore be more or less applicable to all spiritual mediums and witches. Nonetheless, this pilot study based on this small group of people has proved extremely interesting,

giving an insight to their spiritual divination and magical practices and their correlation with celestial bodies and necromantic rituals of ancient times.