

MAGICAL IDENTITIES : ALTERNATIVE WITCHCRAFT  
SPIRITUALITIES THROUGH THE LENS OF TURKISH YOUTH

by

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THE LENS OF TURKISH YOUTH

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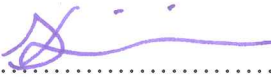
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## ABSTRACT

### MAGICAL IDENTITIES: ALTERNATIVE WITCHCRAFT SPIRITUALITIES THROUGH THE LENS OF TURKISH YOUTH

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**Keywords** :Witchcraft, New Religious Movements, Youth, Turkey,Spirituality, Identity Creation, Authenticity, Subjectivity,Media, Anxiety

This thesis explores the creation of youth subjectivities in Turkey within the framework of alternative witchcraft spiritualities. I focused on the self-representations and narratives of young people who practice alternative witchcraft spiritualities to investigate their understandings of religiosity, spirituality, and current societal conditions that make them gravitate towards alternative witchcraft spiritualities; based on local situations and social conditions in the global postmodern era. With the advent of new technologies and influence of media representations, witchcraft spiritualities and practices started to become rather widespread and popular from the 1990s onwards across the globe, and since globalization paved the way for cultural interactions, Turkish youth also started to be interested in alternative witchcraft spiritualities. I discuss throughout the thesis how young people in Turkey develop non-mainstream subjectivities within the contemporary societal environment of Turkey to find meanings and cope with existential anxieties stemming from the question of identity. I argue that the process of Turkish youth identity creation upon alternative witchcraft spiritualities is being shaped within a cultural environment which oscillates between traditional Islamic conservatism and contemporary postmodernity and secularism. Moreover, since postmodernity turn the concepts upside-down and demolishes consistency, some young people who become confused because of the contradictory characteristics of contemporary society gravitate towards alternative witchcraft spiritualities for the sake of self-empowerment and to find answers for identity questions.

## ÖZET

### SİHİRLİ KİMLİKLER : TÜRKİYE GENÇLİĞİNİN GÖZÜNDEN ALTERNATİF BÜYÜ TİNSELLİKLERİ

Özgün Çalık

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Anahtar Kelimeler: Büyü, Yeni Dini Hareketler, Gençlik, Türkiye, Tinsellik, Kimlik Yaratımı, Özgünlük, Öznellik, Medya, Kaygı

Bu tez Türkiye’de gençlik öznelliğinin yaratımının alternatif büyü tinsellikleri çerçevesinde inceler. Gençlerin dinsellik, tinsellik ve onları küresel postmodern dönemde yerel konumlara ve sosyal durumlara göre temellenmiş alternatif büyü tinselliklerine doğru yönlendiren toplumsal koşulları anlamlandırmalarını araştırmak için, alternative büyü tinselliklerini pratik eden gençlerin öztemsellerine ve anlatılarına odaklandım. Yeni teknolojilerin gelişmesi ve medya temsillerinin etkisiyle, büyü tinsellikleri ve pratikleri 1990’lardan günümüze dünya ölçeğinde yaygın ve popüler olmaya başladı; ayrıca küreselleşmenin kültürel etkileşimlere yol açmasından dolayı, Türkiye gençliği de alternatif büyü tinsellikleri ile ilgilenmeye başladı. Tez boyunca, Türkiye’deki gençlerin anlam bulmak ve kimlik sorunundan doğan varoluşsal kaygılarla mücadele edebilmek için, Türkiye’nin çağdaş toplumsal çevresinde, ana akım olmayan öznelliklerini nasıl geliştirdiklerini tartıştım. Tezde, Türkiyeli gençliğin alternatif büyü tinsellikleri üzerinde gelişen kimlik yaratım sürecinin geleneksel İslami muhafazakarlık ve çağdaş postmodernizm ve sekülerlik arasında salınan kültürel bir çevre içinde şekillendiğini savunuyorum. Dahası postmodernizm kavranları alt üst ettiği ve sürekliliği parçaladığından, çağdaş toplumun çelişkili özelliklerinden kafası karışan bazı gençlerin öz-güçlendirme ve kimlik sorularına cevaplar bulmak için alternatif büyü tinselliklerine yönlendiğini savundum.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1 : INTRODUCTION .....	1
Witchcraft, Postmodernity and Globalization.....	1
Some Explanational Concepts .....	9
Methodology .....	14
CHAPTER 2 : AUTHENTICITY CLAIM OF WITCHCRAFT	
PRACTITIONERS.....	17
Dissemination of Witchcraft Through New Technologies .....	33
CHAPTER 3 : THE EFFECT OF MEDIA ON WITCHCRAFT SUBJECTIVITIES... 45	
The Empowering Characteristics of Spellbooks .....	46
Commodification of Witchcraft.....	53
The Concept of Self-Awarness and its Relationship with Spellbooks .....	56
Gendered Characteristics of Contemporary Media Representations .....	58
The Effect of Negative Media Representations on Youth Identity .....	62
Counter-cultural? .....	65
Wish of ‘Feeling Special’ .....	66
The Politicization of Spiritual Beliefs.....	68
The Effect of Fantasy Literature Upon Youth Spiritual Identity .....	71
Witchcraft Spirituality as an Answer to the Question of Self-Identity .....	74
CHAPTER 4 : CONCLUSION .....	80
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	89

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

### **Witchcraft, Postmodernity and Globalization**

This thesis is about Turkish youth's identity construction through the practice of witchcraft in the contemporary era. Throughout the study, I am going to scrutinize alternative and, in some cases, oppositional subjectivities developed by juveniles for dealing with ontological insecurities which emerged as consequences of globalization and correspondingly post modernization within the framework of witchcraft, a ritual expression of alternative spirituality. Postmodernity undermined the notion of "a unified self". Our subjectivity is seemingly fixed and certain, but in fact, this state of certainty is both illusionary and ephemeral, and it is the most prominent problem of the postmodern self. Psychology and theology are two discourses that create normative patterns dealing with human behavior and human beings, and through the lens of these discourses, we establish systems for the purpose of giving meaning to "the broad mix of complex and contradictory events of modern life" (Blevins, 2008: 26).

At this point, I argue that, through practicing witchcraft, young people create their own discourses that help them make sense of the irrationalities and anxieties of postmodern everyday life. Before the advent of the global era, the "predictability" of everyday practices created "a sense of reliability of persons and things". This state of security is referred to "ontological security". "Existential anxiety" is the opposite of ontological security (Heelas, 1998: 58). Globalization has a disruptive effect on traditions and customs and it "threatens" individuals' "security, safety and even *identity*" (italics are mine, Kurth, 2009: 15). In other words, individuals lose their sense of ontological security and collapse into existential vacuity in the global age. In order to feel 'secure' again, and to construct an authentic identity; some young people choose to adopt a spiritual path and

construct their identities upon that path. If the spiritual path in question requires witchcraft as a ritual, then the young person who adopts that spiritual path feels even more secure, because we can claim that practicing witchcraft provides the individual(s) with a sense of control and therefore empowers them vis-a-vis unstable and unpredictable conditions of everyday life, in other words, the authority becomes vested in individuals. Witches are “active individualistic seekers”, according to ethnographic studies (Aloi, 2016:41). Individualistic self-discovery is reinforced by witchcraft (Ezzy and Berger, 2016: 53); in other words, there is a reciprocal and complementary relationship between post-modern individual and witchcraft. In this thesis I will argue that this is also the case in Turkey, and I will present evidence throughout the thesis in order to support this argument.

[...] the postmodern young adult displays a tendency to value conventional religious norms and practices, but the element of choice is of importance, as young adults seem to choose the aspects of religion that suit them. An increased interest in and a need for spirituality or a form of transcendence was found. Guidance by formal structures was favored, but did not necessarily refer to ‘church’ or religious structures. The results illustrated that the contemporary young adult explores and experiments in terms of identity and lifestyle. Views and values seem to be person-specific and based on emotions and experiences with a tendency towards ‘own authority’ and an emphasis on the self. The rise of individualism which characterizes the postmodern era has led to the creation of meaning by drawing on personal resources and on own personal moral beliefs and values. (Hall and Delpont, 2013: 8)

In the thesis, the question of why young people “have become prominent in the evolution of modern attitudes to witchcraft” emerges as an important question. The practice of witchcraft has often perceived as a choice of the “members of society who are most disempowered in daily life: the old, the poor, the marginal, and the *adolescent*” (Aloi, 2016: 13). This is still the case in contemporary era. Witchcraft functions as a tool that provides “self- knowledge” and “self-empowerment”. These themes are at the very center of the “teen witch phenomenon”, as well. The usage of witchcraft by disempowered individuals is not a new phenomenon. For example, magic has been used by “unmarried girls” in order to “gain knowledge and control of their destinies” (Aloi, 2016: 13–14).

According to the predictions of social scientist in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, religion was going to “wither away” and the world was going to be



secularized, towards the end of the millennium. However, they failed to notice the impetus of globalization and modernity give to the phenomenon of religion (Smith, 2008: 3).

Globalization, is a modern phenomenon that brings different cultures into contact with each other and this aspect of globalization can be entitled as ‘cultural globalization’..Since cultural globalization is defined in Encyclopedia Britannica as : “Cultural globalization, a phenomenon by which the experience of everyday life, as influenced by the diffusion of commodities and ideas, reflects a standardization of cultural expressions around the world.” (cultural globalization | anthropology | Britannica.com, n.d.); it can be claimed that it also have an effect on religiosity, as a part of cultural expression and everyday life. Moreover, globalization is a highly obscure and a slippery term. Starting with a basic definition of the term would be an appropriate way of broaching the subject:

In its most benign sense, globalization simply refers to an integration of global networks across national borders-economic networks, primarily, but also networks of labor, information and so on. In more suspicious and critical formulations, globalization is simply the term of art for the oppression and exploitation of that attend global capitalism. (Smith, 2008: 4).

Since “an ever-accelerating rate of social, technological and economic change; instant media access; and global access to goods, people and ideas” are the main characteristics of postmodernity (Hall and Delpont, 2013: 1) there is a distinct parallelism between the concepts of globalization and postmodernity. Thus, I will use the notions of “globalization” and “postmodernity” interrelatedly throughout the thesis. It is also important to note that, I will regard witchcraft as a postmodern phenomenon, because contemporary scholarly works define postmodernism as an occurrence *beyond* modernism, which emerged after the two world wars in the twentieth century. It occurred in a “climate of disillusionment with the restrictions of the scientific claims of positivist social scientists.” (ibid.) Postmodernity is a phenomenon which affects “contemporary individual’s social functioning, which incorporates perceptions regarding religion and formal structures”[...] “Postmodernism is regarded as a way of thinking and accepts not only facts, but also personal experiences and interpretations as real knowledge.” (Hall and Delpont, 2013: 1).

The post-modern individual is relaxed and flexible, orientated toward feelings and emotions, interiorization, and holding a ‘be yourself’ attitude. S/he is an active human being constituting his/her own social reality, pursuing a personal quest for meaning ... Post-modern individuals are concerned with their own lives, their particular personal satisfaction, and self-promotion. Less concerned with old loyalties and modern affiliations such as marriage, family, church, and nation, they are more orientated toward their own needs (Hall and Delport, 2013: 1).

In this sense, we can take contemporary magic as a postmodern concept, because postmodernity is the ground that both undermines the sense of unified self, and opens up an opportunity for free self-expression at the same time, given that the “postmodernist movement has a tendency to relativize belief systems and to reject the grand narratives (such as ‘withering of religion’ with regard to secularization thesis) that characterized modernity” (McIntosh, 2004: 1039). Therefore, individualization of religion is a postmodern phenomenon; and since witchcraft practitioner’s primary concern is self-expression and correspondingly –intentionally or unintentionally- subjectivity development based on the spiritual philosophy of magic, contemporary witchcraft is a postmodern phenomenon with regard to its emphasis upon self-experience and personal needs.

In order to illuminate the relationship between globalization and the process of identity construction of contemporary youth through the practice of witchcraft, one might start with an examination of the connection between globalization and religion. Hence:

Here religious voices and questions take on a new significance when brought into conversation with globalization. In particular, two sets of questions are generated at the nexus of religion and globalization. The first set concerns how religion is positioned by the discourses and project of globalization. If globalization is tantamount to the globalization of capitalist and free-market organizations of commerce and exchange, and if this is the outworking of a logic of modernity, and modernity is driven by the logic of Enlightenment, then the creeping expansion of globalization should be tantamount to a globalization of the Enlightenment- and thus of the Enlightenment’s account of religion’s withering and shriveling. (Smith, 2008: 4–5).

Capitalism and the Enlightenment paved the way for the modern interpretation of religion, in global world order. Therefore, the ‘expectations regarding global secularization’ have been reflected through global discourse, and the discourse of globalization contributed to the creation of ‘secularization thesis’. The increasing

development of modern Enlightenment will cause the reassertment of superstition and mythology with regards to religion, according to this sociological thesis (Smith, 2008: 4–5). Therefore:

Agents who participate in the market that yields iPods and jet aircraft couldn't possibly cling to the magical world of religious belief. Progress in modernity would be the progress of rationalization, Weber suggested, which would mean a radical "disenchantment of the world" and thus a secularization of the society. (Smith, 2008: 4–5).

However, there is a serious misestimation of secularization thesis: modernity did not cause withering of the superstition of religious belief and it did not fully demythologize the world. On the contrary, "the mechanisms of religious beliefs" took advantage of modernity and reached up to "un and antimodern ends" (Smith, 2008: 5). However, this claim of Smith is problematic in the sense that there are also many contemporary religious forms that are at peace with modernity. On the other hand, it can be said that given that most of the New Religious Movements utilize the discourse of antique spiritualities, these new forms of religiosities bear the traces of old religious and spiritual beliefs.

In contemporary postmodern societies religion lost its institutional characteristic and turned into a channel for self-expression, it is privatized and individualized in parallel with ever increasing subjectivization of everyday life. Hence, "new" and "alternative" forms of religiosity emerged as consequences of globalization, contrary to the former predictions of some social scientists. Some academics use the term, re-enchantment, in order to define the situation of religious and spiritual occurrences which emerged after and in despite of secularization. Re-enchantment can be assumed to be a counter argument to Max Weber's concept of disenchantment. One could argue, the conception of disenchantment was problematic since the very beginning given that the world has never been fully secularized and rationalized in history, and religious thought has never been replaced by scientific reason. The other way around, new forms of religiosity started to emerge thanks to the contemporary emphasis on subjectivization and the idea of personal liberty. In other words, religion was "freed" from institutional restrictions, therefore formerly inadmissible forms of religiosity and spirituality "wormed their way" in postmodern, global age. Moreover, religiosity and spirituality grew into means of self-expression and self-realization.

The history and contemporary existence of “new and alternative religious movements in the modern technologized world” (Kirby, 2014: 12) is contentious and complicated at the same time. The rise of the non-traditional varieties of religiosity and the ‘high birth rate of’ (ibid.) New forms of religiosity emerged in the twentieth century was a new and unique phenomenon in history. “The broad issues of secularization, modernization along with industrial and technological developments, the proliferation of communication technologies and globalization” (Kirby, 2014: 12–13) have played a big role on the appearance of the new variations of religiosity. In other saying, secularization and modernization stirred the appearance of new forms of spirituality, instead of making religiosity diminished.

The appearance of New Religious Movements (some academics also favor the terms “alternative religion” and “religions of re-enchantment”) in twentieth century, and occultism after the Enlightenment can be presented as counter examples against the fallacious prognosis of secularity thesis. “New religions” is a concept that originated in Japan in response to the boom of new forms of religiosity, after World War II. New Religious Movements (NRMs) can be considered as a global phenomenon. The ‘invention’ of New Religious Movements goes parallel with the increasing global characteristic of contemporary era. New Religious Movements consist of various religious and spiritual beliefs from all around the world. In other saying, different spiritualities’ cultural and geographical meanings ‘shift’ and result in engendering a new phenomenon, when it comes to New Religious Movements. The advent of new technologies, new ways of communication and dissemination of information through these contribute to development of New Religious Movements. However, the term “new” is not a fully accurate notion, for instance, new religions of post World War II Japan were actually comprised of extant religions that were subdued by secular government. In other words, secularization failed to get rid of religiosity, and this situation can be presented as an example. In the course of events, the notion “new” was elaborated to cover the counter-cultural spiritual movements of 60s’ United States, and afterwards started to be used in order to define the religions that stay out of church-sect-cult categorization (Kirby, 2014: 9). These religious bodies can be referred to ‘churchless’, therefore non-institutional religions. After the Enlightenment, Occultism arose from the long-continued Western tradition of esotericism, and it can be considered as a subcategory influenced from customary esoteric rituals and system of thought.

Occultism also informed by “the cultic milieu”. This cultic milieu highly affected the thoughts arouse from 1960s counterculture. Accordingly, occulture is the contemporary expression of the cultic milieu, and the society’s negative response against it lessened, so it holds a more large scaled attraction. (Kirby, 2014: 9). According to Danille Kirby, any kind of “deviant knowledge”, “from alternative healing modalities through to divination or magical practices” can be examined under the rubric of *cultic milieu*. Kirby notes that: “The term ‘deviant is here used to denote a digression from knowledges that are granted authority and are ideologically supported by the institutions and public manifestations of endorsed knowledge in the modern Western world’ (ibid. 13).

The conception of “cultic milieu” can sometimes be problematic. This problematic nature of the concept is stemming from the contemporary connotations of the term of ‘cult’. First of all, according to the theory of cultic milieu, the notion of ‘cult’ is deviant, but this is an obscure supposition because the concept of “mainstream norm” is essentially a “theoretical abstraction” in itself. Constructing a stabile conception of “normal” is impossible especially at the present, postmodern era. Emphasizing deviance can also cause some problems when it comes to real people and behaviors, because it may grow into prejudice and stigmatization and therefore provoke denigration. Moreover, linking the notion of deviation directly to the concept of cult is “technically difficult”, because:

What constitutes endorsed knowledge constantly shifts in response to cultural and social developments: the rubric of deviancy is more or less constantly shifting in the same manner. So, where arguably in the 1950s Western world religiosity was predominantly subject to a ‘relative unity and solidity’ and deviancy could be tested against that system, fifty years on there are certainly those who consider a Christian-based morality deviant in itself. So in general, although the cultic milieu is a useful construction in many ways, its central point derives from a relative position that undermines it as a tool of strict application (Kirby, 2014:15).

As mentioned above, the more contemporary denomination of cultic milieu is *occulture*. The broad culture that cultic milieu comprise of is articulated in a more definite way by the notion of occulture (Kirby, 2014: 15). The usage of the notion of occulture is preferable to the usage of cultic milieu, because it reflects the large-scaled nature of the area, emphasizes its ubiquity “as a culture of its own” (ibid.16) and eliminates the

adverse and confounding undertones of “cult” and scholarly understandings of mysticism (ibid.).

Occultism and esotericisms are two contentious concepts, in spite of being frequently used interchangeably. Esotericism is an extensive framework that is “an ensemble of spiritual currents in modern and contemporary Western history. Esotericists tend to focus on the mediating agents rather than the divine. Contemporary occultists also has the same tendency. In other words, this is one of the common points between esotericism and occultism. Moreover, esotericism can be defined as a philosophical phenomenon that does not signify any specific way of practice. It is important to note that; occultism grows from this philosophical framework of esotericsm. For that matter, “Occultism is a modern development within esotericsm.” (Kirby, 2014: 18). Therefore, occultism can be considered as a suitable ground for free self-expression if we consider its lack of strict rules.

[...] Occultism is a clear product of modernity, coming into existence on the heels of industrialization and the Enlightenment, and is intrinsically bound up in scientific worldviews, rationalism and disenchantment narratives: ‘Occultism...came into existence when the esoteric cosmology (based on universal correspondances) increasingly came to be understood as in terms of the new scientific cosmologies (based on instrumental causality).’ According to one of the earliest academic descriptions of occultism, it is a set of purposeful “practices, techniques or procedures” and that based on secret or clandestine dynamisms of nature and/or the cosmos “that cannot be measured or recognized by the instruments of modern science and which have as their desired or intended consequences empirical results, such as either obtaining knowledge of the empirical course of events or altering them from what they would have been without intervention (Kirby, 2014:18)

Thus, “occultism is taken as ‘a category in the study of religions, which comprises all attempts by esotericists to come to terms with a disenchanted world or, alternatively, by people in general to make sense of esotericsm from the perspective of a disenchanted secular world” (Kirby, 2014: 19). In other words, esotericism and therefore occultism are consequences of secularization and disenchantment.

In the circumstances, occultism is confined rigidly within a particular time and space and it is inherently related with “the modern disenchanted world”.

Therefore, “occultism is esotericism as filtered through the conditions of the modern age”. The important point here is:

The situation of the self within the modern world is a primary concern of the occultist; a point which would appear to be generally supported by the vast range of occult practices and beliefs that focus upon functional ontological strategies centred upon notions of re-enchantment. (Kirby,2014: 19).

To sum up, “esotericism may be seen as a long-standing Western tradition from which occultism has developed, post-Enlightenment, as a sub category informed by, but not restricted to, traditional esoteric practices and philosophies. The cultic milieu may be seen as the bed of ideas utilizing occultism as well as partaking in the broader concerns manifest within the 1960s counterculture. Occulture, then, is the current manifestation of the cultic milieu (Kirby, 2014: 19).

### **Some Explanational Concepts**

The concept of magic is at the centre of the arguments of modern occulture (Kirby,2014: 19). Therefore these two concepts (occulture and magic) are highly interrelated and additionally, ‘interwoven’. Magic is an ambiguous term in a sense and verges on the useless because it has a variety of connotations and meanings, and those meanings and connotations change from culture to culture. The notion is mostly used for addressing a “special or mysterious” phenomenon. Practitioners of magic mix their own beliefs and methods with old traditions. In other words, they add something from themselves to old rituals and practices. In this respect, the “virtuosi” in a sense re-shape the traditional practices that they are affiliated with. “Magic, like occulture, is an area of practice that holds a variety of techniques effectively in common which participants engage with at their own discretion.” (ibid.20). To sum up, magic is a general concept which is being used in order to define the set of practices and rituals that are intentionally applied by the practitioners in order to change or affect material reality by using spiritual forces; it belongs within the framework of the new religious movements of the cultic milieu (Aloi, 2016).

“For some, Witchcraft is a set of beliefs; for some a lifestyle; for others, a religion” says Peg Aloi in her edited book (Aloi, 2016: 5), and since my interviewees’ perception of witchcraft also varies from each other, I approach different descriptions and

perceptions of witchcraft with respect; but by considering the obscurity of the term, in order to avoid confusion I will be considering witchcraft as way of practice that functions as a channel for 'creating' magic. The practice of witchcraft reenchants everyday life, and because of this reason it is an attractive phenomenon (Ezzy, 2003: 57) especially for the young people who seeks for sense-making in postmodern global age.

Earlier interpretations of magic often have a disdainful undertone that views magic with contempt and depict it as "the most primitive level of humankind's endeavor" (Kirby, 2014: 20). The theorists who propounded these initial interpretation tended to dismiss the superstitious by the way of putting a great emphasis upon the notion of rationalization. In fact, contemporary Western texts mention magic mostly in general terms, and there is little explicit data about contemporary magic practices apart from emic documents. This situation may stem from "the assumption that magic is somehow primitive, or even possibly an embarrassment in our current age of rationality" (Kirby, 2014: 20).

The significant societal changes had a great impact on the nature of relationship between the individuals and communities. These shifts in the structure of society also affected the interactive relation between individuals and "cultural artefacts" (Kirby, 2014:13). Adopting a spiritual identity which is incompatible with mainstream religious structures can be assumed as a form of rebellion against hegemonic institutions that hold the whip hand. Therefore, by adopting a "deviant" spiritual identity, a person stand up to both patterns of mean making and the normative picture of human beings. In this case, through practicing witchcraft and identifying themselves upon that spiritual exercise people emancipate their subjectivity from the hegemony of disciplinary structures and achieve self-empowerment. That is to say, witchcraft practitioners disavow existing institutions and react against them by creating an alternative discourse.

According to Michel Foucault, constructions of normativity are questionable. The "disciplinary structures" that are engendered by those constructions seize and delimit human practice and subjectivity. "Western cultural discourses" produce and designate abnormal 'deviants' and structure "a normative picture of human beings" upon those. Through marking the events that do not conform with those "systems and patterns of meaning- making" as dangerous and by considering them as invisible, they "provide



meaning to human experience” (Blevins, 2008: 26). In this sense, mainstream religions can be considered as units that produce and maintain systems and patterns of meaning-making, alongside with other power mechanisms, such as state formations. Therefore, religiosities and spiritualities that are not part of normative religious structures are also considered as deviant and aberrant. Traditional religious structures (along with other disciplinary structures) underwent a change and the power “passed into other hands” with the impact of the idea of secularization. For instance, former practices of Christianity which function as mediators for self-examination, permeated and started to be function in modern secular institutions after the advent of Renaissance in the 16<sup>th</sup> century in the West. For example, the ideal of ‘being a virtuous Christian’ was substituted by the ideal of ‘being a virtuous and loyal citizen’. In other words, religious exercise of power realizes itself in modern institutions, at the present time (Blevins, 2008:31–32).

Rejecting institutional religion can be considered as part of the process of identity formation, because individuals “make a journey to their inner worlds” in an attempt to find their own identity and/or individual meaning subsequently the act of rejection. Correspondingly, after rejecting institutional forms of religion some individuals may incline towards new forms of beliefs in order to fill this spiritual void (Chryssides, 2007:11). Hence, contemporary spiritualities which include practicing witchcraft, can be acknowledged as one of those new forms of beliefs that fill spiritual void of the individuals. The Romantic Movement gave birth to “the present-day use of the term ‘spirituality’ and its accompanying privatization of religion (ibid.).

[...] the growth of rationalization also gave rise to a reaction against it. As industrialization and urbanization transformed the European countryside and irrevocably changed society and economy, the Romantic revival emerged as a critique of the Enlightenment. (Magliocco, 2004: 4)

According to Paul Heelas, in contemporary societies, there is a transition towards from conformist way of life and obedience to external authoritative figures to free expression of individuals’ subjective life. In this sense, a person’s unparalleled emotions, experiences and state of consciousness emphasized, instead of generally accepted forms of way of life (Heelas, 2006: 223). In other words, the mediating factors such as religious institutions between the individual and the numinous becomes removed from the agenda

of contemporary religiosity, therefore religion/spirituality also becomes individualized and privatized. However, individuals who are “striving to be themselves” and “insecure in their identities” may lean towards new conformity forms and new dependencies (ibid. 226). In this sense, I am going to seek for the answer of the question of whether young people’s inclination towards witchcraft spiritualities can be considered as a form of counter-action by giving references to the interviewees’ assertions about current political environment in Turkey.

From the mid 1990s onwards, a development within teenage witchcraft communities increased in parallel with technological developments, investment of youth culture, contributions of new media and rise of collective movements such as feminism, environmentalism and gay movement. At that time, witchcraft reemerged as a “culturally fashionable” phenomenon and became less taboo (Aloi, 2016: 97). In other words, we can talk about a “revival” of witchcraft in the 1990s in relation with evolving societal and political contexts and changing societal structure and this thesis will focus on the issue of development of youth/teenage witchcraft from the 1990s onwards in Turkey.

Given that ‘global access to information’ and technological developments are two of the main characteristics of postmodernity, and two of the consequences of globalization at the same time, and since proliferation of contemporary witchcraft is based on transfer of information through the new forms technology, contemporary witchcraft is a global phenomenon. In the second chapter, I will be exploring the dependence of dissemination of witchcraft through technology in order to present evidence for my argument.

I will question the possibility of creating an authentic identity upon a global spirituality, investigate the effects of western culture on contemporary witchcraft, and examine the ‘glocalization’ of witchcraft by mainly giving references to the assertions of the people whom I interviewed with.

Global networks of information integrate across national borders, make different traditions and cultures get into touch with each other, create a ‘climate of interethnic and intercultural contact’, give cause for ‘new kinds of hybridity and cultural mixing’ (Magliocco, 2004: 3–4). Hence, religion takes a ‘transcultural’, even an eclectic form and I argue that, in some cases, this eclecticism gives cause for the emergence of syncretic spiritualities”. Confident authenticity claims of followers notwithstanding, these

syncretic spiritualities which emerged ensuing globalization; lack of historical background because they consist of a combination of various spiritual beliefs. Individuals melt this “transborder” global information/knowledge and local cultural motifs in the same pot in order for creating new and alternative forms of spiritualities, which they consider as authentic and ancient. In other saying, they appropriate history, knowledge, ritual and culture of multiple religions, but not identity; and blend those values (which they appropriated) and local culture(s) for the sake of creating a new and unique identity and a new cultural form which is sometimes oppositional to dominant culture. Hence, the concepts, beliefs and practices get a ‘glocal’ characteristics .As a matter of fact, “each tradition and path has a very specific mini-culture of its own” (Aloi, 2016: 27), and this the case both in the west and in Turkey. All in all, it is a pursuit of identity creation, rather than religious and/or spiritual adoration. According to Douglas Ezzy and Helen A. Berger, “witches are less likely to become members of established witchcraft traditions, and more likely to develop an eclectic form of witchcraft *which they define as their own*” (italics are mine, Ezzy and Berger 2016: 42).They do so, because they identify themselves upon spiritual identities that they created themselves. Young people more prone to do so, because youth can be considered as the main ‘gear’ of societal mechanism which is in charge of change and innovation, so young people have a more vulnerable position. I will be investigating the ‘authenticity’ claims of witchcraft practitioners in the first chapter within the perspective of globalization.

Therefore, rather than getting through the problem of existential vacuity, maintaining the pursuit of identity construction becomes the main target. Most of the interviewees whom I have spoken to indicated that they do not care about the outcomes of witchcraft, and the main thing that gives them peace is the practicing magic itself; this situation can be presented as an evidence for my previous argument. The witchcraft practitioners may not be obtaining a fully determined identity at the end of the process, but it is a fact that they at least experience a sense of control over their lives (at it was mentioned at the beginning), therefore they feel secure to some extent.

They do not only create a counter discourse, they also establish an alternative hierarchy, a subculture that provides young people who are swamped with indefinitely many kinds of identities that imposed from and limited by disciplinary power structures and/or institutions, an opportunity for expressing themselves freely -but only- as far as possible.

Given that the 1990s cultural environment encouraged and celebrated the participation of youth in witchcraft, and galvanized the rise of the teen witch phenomenon with the emphasis on young females in media representations (Aloi, 2016: 5–6); scrutinizing the relation between gender and witchcraft emerges as a necessity for the sake of presenting a clearer understanding for the reader. For this reason, I am going to explore the connection between gender and witchcraft.

## **Methodology**

Since my study is focusing on the dynamics which make young people be inclined towards alternative witchcraft spiritualities in Turkey, I did not focus on a specific field, and I tried to present a general understanding, so I conducted seventeen in-depth interviews with the people from different regions of Turkey. In order to conduct face-to-face interviews, I visited the cities Ankara and Izmir. I also interviewed people from Antalya, Samsun and Rotterdam; but these were online interviews which I conducted through video-chat. Three of my interviewees were female, the remaining fourteen were male.

I have preferred to conduct semi-structural interview method. In other saying, the questions that I asked to my interviewees were not like survey questions, they were specifically designed in accordance with the spiritual paths of the interviewees. I also considered gender, age and profession of the individual(s) when I was conducting my interviews. Since I used semi-structural interview method, I outlined main questions but there were not specific questions, rather the questions of the interviews were structured depending on the context of each interviewee.

I also gave place to parts from other interviews that I conducted a year ago for another study of mine while examining the effects of negative media representations on youth identity.

My interviewees' age range differs from fifteen to forty-two. I specifically tried to focus on the issue of young people's subjectivity formation process, but I also made references to the assertions of adult individuals who practice witchcraft. I did so, because I realized that even the interviewees who cannot be considered as juveniles had striking opinions and deep knowledge about youth witchcraft in Turkey. Moreover, the 'adult' interviewees were very well aware of the issue of the 'teen witch phenomenon',

because they were experienced witchcraft practitioners. For instance, Nevermore (42) was practicing witchcraft since he was thirteen years old, Hector (30) was a witch since he was eighteen years old, Sirius (26) was practicing witchcraft for thirteen years old, etc. In other words, the more experienced and aged interviewees were aware of the situations which makes young people gravitate towards alternative witchcraft practitioners, given that they were practicing magic since they were teenagers. In addition, these experienced witchcraft practitioners gave me information about the development of alternative witchcraft practices from 1990s onwards, as ‘witnesses’ of these years. In this sense, it was important for me to talk with these individuals in order to get information about the process of subjectivity construction of Turkish youth.

All of my interviewees were actively practicing witchcraft except for one, and that person who does not practice witchcraft was very well informed about contemporary non-traditional witchcraft practices in Turkey, so I included his assertions in my thesis, even though he was not a practitioner himself.

Life stories of my interviewees were different from each other given that the ‘background informations’ changed in accordance with the interviewees’ age, gender, educational status and financial condition. On the other hand, there were many common points between the ideas of my interviewees, for example they share similar political views, feel similar alienation from the society, and have a shared belief in the superiority of antiquity, etc. As I observed, after adopting an alternative witchcraft spirituality, these shared beliefs become more apparent and makes people acquire a sense of group identity and sense of community even if the people who have similar beliefs do not choose to constitute a group formation. Moreover, young people who adopt alternative witchcraft spiritualities share similar experiences and construct their identities upon this spirituality at least to some degree. On the other hand, identity creation is a process which is open to change, so we can always mention about new possibilities.

Given that I focused on interviewees’ self-expressions, namely own statements, we cannot mention about the academic accuracy when it comes to interviewees assertions. However, I thought self-expressions of the interviewees may make us examine the issue within the perspective of the young people themselves, therefore may provide us a better understanding about the aspect of youth. What is more, self-expressions of young people may give us clues about the self-identity and therefore

subjectivity formation of young people. For instance, some of the interviewees of mine asserted that they persuaded to talk to me because I was an ‘outsider just like them’ and when I asked them what made them think that I was an outsider; they responded as giving reference to my outlook. For example, one of them said: “A person who has blue hair, lots of tattoos and piercings, like you, cannot be a boring mainstream adult who obeys the rules, so I trusted you.” Moreover, many of my interviewees indicated that they thought that I was an individual who was marginalized by the society like them. These assertions of the individuals indicates a lot about the aspect of young people who adopt an alternative spirituality in contemporary Turkey.



## CHAPTER 2

### AUTHENTICITY CLAIM OF WITCHCRAFT PRACTITIONERS

Some practitioners, even some academic works consider witchcraft as a particular form of spirituality, even as a form of religion. However, according to me, the possibility of regarding witchcraft as a form of religion is a questionable issue. First of all: “The problems are manifold in delineating a general definition of religion: a situation that is particularly exacerbated by the attempt to incorporate often obscure New Religious Movements.” (Kirby, 2014: 7). Moreover, we cannot talk about an academic consensus when it comes to scholarly definitions of religion. There is no general term that incorporates multifold and diverse beliefs and practices “that are commonly accepted as religious”. For Kirby, “approaches to the classification of religion can be divided into two main types, termed functional and substantive.”(ibid.). To put it all in simple terms, the functionalist perspective examines religion in accordance with its social role. In other words, if a belief system provides “a specific framework of cultural/social/moral meaning within which to interpret the world” (ibid.), then that belief system can be considered as a religion. On the other side, the substantive perspective “upholds the focus on ‘the sacred, the supernatural or the superempirical’ as the primary reference point to which religions must ascribe to be validly considered as such”(ibid. 8). While deciding whether new religions can be considered religions, examining the issue within the framework of the substantive perspective can provide us a better understanding.

Given that new and alternative religions differ from enormously in structure, geography and participatory modes from the more traditional ‘churchlike’ hierarchies that have historically been the norm, interpretation is, in such cases, particularly facilitated by locating the notion of religiosity in the

intention of participants, rather than in the extrinsic manifestations of beliefs. By prioritizing the search for and the experience of the sacred, the way is opened up for recognition of the validity of ideologies that may not give the appearance of religion, but are nonetheless inherently so due to participants' stated concerns. Here, then, if participants demonstrate a concern with and focus upon the superempirical, they are considered to be engaging in substantively religious behavior. [...] expressions of religiosity may manifest themselves in modes that fall outside traditional 'churched' understandings of religious affiliation. But while participants' concerns may be religious, they are not necessarily participating in 'religion'(Kirby, 2014:8).

At this point, mentioning the distinction between spirituality and religion may also be illuminating. For Hanegraaff, religion is “[a]ny symbolic system which influences human action by providing possibilities for ritually maintaining contact between the everyday world and a more general meta-empirical framework of meaning.”

On the other side, spirituality is:

Any human practice which maintains contact between the everyday world and a more general meta-empirical framework of meaning by way of the individual manipulation of symbolic systems. When talking of 'spiritualities' we should definitely not think merely or even mainly of the comparatively rare phenomenon of 'religious virtuosi'. In principle we are dealing with a common everyday phenomenon: every person who gives an individual twist to existing symbols is already engaged in the practice of creating his or her own spirituality (as cited in Kirby, 2014:8).

Accordingly, given that I interviewed individuals who define their paths as pagan, neo-pagan, Wiccan, hedgewitch, or spiritual Satanist, or who reject the categorization of their practices; my object of study can be examined under the rubric of spirituality rather than religion, if we consider those concepts' emphasis on individualization. Therefore, those beliefs systems are spiritualities which enable their adherents to express themselves individually, and witchcraft is the practice, the ritual form of expression within those belief systems. Since New Age also can be explored under the topic of spirituality, and not religion, with its emphasis on individualism, there are common points between New Age spiritualities and alternative witchcraft spiritualities. Due to this reason, throughout the thesis I will be giving examples also from New Age



spiritualities when investigating New Religious Movements' relations with contemporary societal, political, philosophical and economic issues.

Before coming to main point, I will try to explain the main characteristics of the alternative witchcraft spiritualities which I will focus on throughout the study. First of all, clarifying the distinction between the notions of Neo-Paganism and Paganism seems essential to me with respect to the scope of work (Tosenberger, 2010: 174). The root of both terms, pagan, refers to the polytheistic religions of the 'ancient' world. For instance, religious beliefs of ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome are referred to as "pagan", but the meaning of the word has different connotations when it comes to modern religious movements. "Paganism" can be used to refer to historical and modern religious beliefs both. On the other hand, "Neo-Paganism" exclusively refers to "modern revivals, recreations, reconstructions, reinterpretations, or revisionings of historical pagan religions."(ibid.). However, these two terms are being used interchangeably by practitioners when speaking of contemporary practices (ibid.). Additionally, I suggest that in Turkey most practitioners prefer to use the term "Paganism", instead of "Neo-Paganism. For instance:

Vlad (Male, 36, Istanbul): Neo-Paganism, Paganism, New Age...I strongly disapprove those conceptions. All of them. Paganism is a generic term. No one is experiencing it in real terms in this day and age. Therefore it [Paganism] is not effective.

Hector (Male, 30, Izmir): Witchery is a belief system; it is a way that has its origins in Paganism. We [Wiccans] embrace Paganism as our credo, and "witchery" is our way. Paganism is a polytheistic religion.

Relucif (Male, 26, Istanbul): In my opinion, Paganism is the indigenous religion of ancient people who lived before the advent of the monotheistic religions, and for me, it is closely related to Spiritual Satanism (here, it is essential to note that, he defines his way as Spiritual Satanism, therefore he also considers himself as a Pagan, because for him Spritual Satanism is a subsection of Paganism). On the other side, Neo- Paganism is an 'artifact' that was created by people after monotheistic religions lost their influence. Human beings are always in search of meaning, instinctively. After that (after monotheistic religions lost their importance - here, he is talking about contemporary condition of religion-), people started to search for new beliefs, so they created it (Neo-Paganism).

Hornless Stag (Male, 28, Ankara): Both New Age and Neo-Paganism are the products of popular culture. You know, some dude watches a TV series, a film or reads a book and becomes aware of it [witchcraft]. He asks himself: Is practicing witchcraft that easy? If it is...So, why not? Or some jerk writes something on the internet, says: "Do this-and-that and your wish will come true." It's nothing like that. I am a guy who rejects those "new" movements off the cut, because they [New Agers and Neo-Pagans] offend against the essence of the thing. Paganism is an ancient religion, but there are very few resources about it. I myself heard about real Pagans, but I did not meet any of them. I really respect them. They are continuing its existence, and they are passing down that culture. It is good. Just to clarify, Paganism is a polytheistic religion. It's a pre-Christian religion. Nay, some says Paganism influenced even that crucifix thing, because it's their [Christians'] ancestors' religion, you know. It is (Paganism) in their (Christians) genes. They still needed an icon, so they substituted the old icons with crucifix.

It can be said that Paganism is a more generic term vis-à-vis Neo-Paganism. It is also important to note that, for some academics, the notion of Pagan "has strong European connotations and, moreover, strong colonial connotations when applied to non-European religions", therefore "Paganism should be reserved for religions springing from Europe and the pre-monotheistic Near-East (Tosenberger, 2010: 174).

Wiccan is one of the most popular adaptation of Pagan practices and philosophy of Pre-Christian Europe to contemporary life and it is the expression of Neo-Paganism (Pike, 2006: 18–19).

Wiccan practitioners are generally more interested in environmental issues, and Wiccan spirituality has a more "feminine" characteristic--it is dualistic in the way that accepts both male and female divinities. In other words, it is a more mild-mannered formation of witchcraft spirituality.

As it was briefly mentioned above, the emphasis on the issue of individualization and the importance given to self-ethic are the most prominent the identifying features of New Age spirituality. According to Hanegraaf, supernatural entities here to fore viewed as apart from humanity, started to be manifested as a simple design of human consciousness.

Counterintuitively, humanity brings gods into existence. This matter of fact most flagrantly manifests itself in the 'I am god motif'. In contemporary societies issues are judged in accordance with self interests and the self functions as a godlike motif that creates s a human being's world (Ezzy, 2003: 51). For Heelas, New Age primarily

deals with the concepts of self and the sacralisation of the self (as cited in Ezzy, 2003: 51). It is essential to note that, here, Douglas Ezzy uses the term New Age in order that to define contemporary witchcraft (Ezzy, 2003). He uses the term as an adjective that describes the “New Age” characteristics of contemporary spirituality. Witchcraft is *not* a component of New Age, but “there are tendencies in contemporary spirituality that can be described as ‘New Age’”(Ezzy, 2003: 49). Ezzy points out that, “Both Hanegraaff and Luhrmann describe witchcraft *as part of the New Age*” (italics added, cited in Ezzy, 2003: 49). However, he also criticizes Hanegraaff’s usage of New Age and witchcraft, as interchangeable terms, because there are also some parts of witchcraft that distinct from New Age (ibid.). Throughout this work, I will make references to New Age, by adopting Ezzy’s conceptualization and using the notion as an adjective. In fact, most of my interviewees object being labeled as “New Agers”. For instance, one of my interviewees, Sirius, who defines himself as a ‘follower of the old way’, and practices witchcraft since he was thirteen years old, and is also a reiki master; says:

Sirius (Male, 27, Izmir): If you (would) ask me, New age is a culture of commodification that is taken from the East, Tibet, from here and there. It is the culture of the new generation. For me, it resembles capitalism because there is a marketing system within New Age. New Age promises people ‘a rose-pink worldview’. Be it, good intention, positivism, thingy...Frankly speaking, I cannot open up to New Age, because they [New Agers] appropriate extant culture and creed. An extant tradition is appropriated and exploited. For example, they say New Age culture is related to Reiki, and then Reiki teaching is became widespread (with the effect of New Age). Afterwards, they ‘invent’ a different variation of Reiki in West. (Some say) “I found a system of Reiki that can be presented as ‘third level Reiki’; and (I) entitled it as Kundalini Reiki.” (The) other (one) says “(I found) viola- something Reiki” About 150-200 different variations of (he makes a gesture at this point that means ‘so called’) Reiki boomed recently. This is a rather prevalent phenomenon especially in America and Europe. Appropriate a belief system, consume it... For example, they consume Reiki, they get enough and then fabricate new variations. I stumbled across internet forums that... These all are the effects of the internet culture. There are also some benefits of the New Age, because it enabled to proliferation of some concepts but these concepts degenerated at the same time. In other words, the essence have been lost. The thing called meditation was already in existence, in the West. The westerners thought that (meditation) was not available in their culture, and foreign cultures were totally different from theirs, so it (the New Age teaching) dispersed. I guess it started with

the thing... Probably it started with the 'era of the hippies'. I believe that hippies had their hearts in the right place until their culture was destroyed by LSD. Most of them traveled to India, and imported that (Indian) culture. 'Look, (the notion of) peace exists', whatever...Because of that reason, I think that they initially had good intentions. For me, they [ 'the Westerners'] indeed produced a good strategy. They immediately launched LSD to the market and made those clothes (of hippies) become fashionable. It is because you can consume things by the way of making it fashionable. New Age is also like that, it is a fashion. Reiki is like that, too. It first arrived to Turkey as a form of fashion. Hülya Avşar, such-and-such, all of them (celebrities) took Reiki (lessons), because it is a trend. I mean, it became (fashionable). As a trend? Yes, as a trend, but when you consider things like that you lose the essence.

Nevermore's statements goes parallel with Sirius'. Nevermore is a spiritual Satanist who practices witchcraft for twentynine years. He says:

Nevermore (Male, 42, Izmir): I am opposed to adaptation of old cultures to new culture, because of this reason I cannot accept the thing called New Age.... Because when traditional things adapted to contemporary age, they lose their essence. Therefore, yes you do something but the important thing is in which proportion the thing you do is adapted to the universe. I am sure that after about fifty years ...Maybe we cannot be able to witness, but...Did you see the film, Avatar? That is a science- fiction film. It takes place in space, whatever...There is a tree of life ( here, he adds a note: It is -the tree of life- actually a cross reference to Paganism) and people migrate to it, thingy...I think that maybe we will be able to that tree within fifty or a hundred years, but it is of course cannot be managed by way of New Age or this-and-that. ....

Similarly, Hector, who defines himself as a witch and practices witchcraft since he was eighteen; says:

Hector (Male, 30, Izmir):New Age is in fact the little bit altered (in order to adapt to the modern world) and then presented version of the old beliefs to the new, modern world and it is nothing more.

As it can be seen by examining the abovementioned statements of these three witchcraft practitioners, all of them underline the importance of the concept of "essence". They argue against being labeled as New Agers, on the grounds that New Age spirituality is eclectic, vague and--more importantly--inauthentic. On the other hand, they do not seem like they are fully aware that their spiritual beliefs are also eclectic, inconstant, and lacking an essence. For instance, Sirius very well knows that Reiki is a product of New Age movement. On the other hand, he himself is also a well-known

Reiki practitioner. He claims that Reiki was ‘denigrated’ by New Age and in spite of being dispersed all around the world at the same time. It means that, Reiki existed *before* the New Age movement. However, I argue that Reiki is a *direct* result of New Age.

Sirius views the adoption of Reiki by celebrities with scorn, as if it is an esoteric knowledge which belongs to a special group and should stay secretive. He also claims that Reiki has become a trend, after being advertised by New Age, and then it lost its essence. The most important question that needs to be answered here is: Can we really talk about the existence of “essence” in the post-modern era? Like Sirius, Nevermore also emphasizes the issue of essence, but at the same time he gives an example from a popular film, in other words a product of popular culture. Hector comments on the issue from a relatively objective viewpoint and claims that New Age is the slightly altered form of old practices, but the origins and even the “oldness” of those “old ways” is dubious for me. If we go back to the issue of essence, the whole process of post-modernism and all the concepts and products it begets, and therefore contemporary spirituality and most importantly *the post-modern self* with regards to it, lack of essence. In post-modern era, the meanings, beliefs, virtues and identities are becoming vague, rootless, unstable and groundless, because meanings are continually undergoing unpredictable and rapid changes.

Many of my interviewees put great emphasis on the issue of “authenticity”, and as it was mentioned above, many of them asserted that “absorbing” the true essence of alternative spiritualities is not easy and is not for everyone. In this sense, they implicitly underline their own uniqueness. However, according to some scholarly works, the participants are “less authentic than they typically believe they are”. On the other hand, Heelas asserts that “if spirituality is at work, participants would be experiencing ‘true’ authenticity” (Heelas, 2006: 237). I agree with this idea and additively I argue that if we consider religiosity and spirituality as a channel for psychological relief, there is no vast difference between mainstream religions and alternative religiosities. Young people see witchcraft as a phenomenon which provides them a meaningful worldview and “makes sense of cosmos, death and life for them”. It empowers them, makes them control their spirituality and their lives (Vayne, 2016: 53). I claim that this endeavor of sense-making of life and maybe more importantly death, is not a new concept that is intrinsic to today’s youth.

All those Christian techniques of examination, confession, guidance, obedience, have an aim: to get individuals to work at their own 'mortification' in this world. Mortification is not death, of course, but it is a renunciation of this world and of oneself: a kind of everyday death. A death which is supposed to provide life in another world. This is not the first time we see the shepherd theme associated with death; but here it is other than in the Greek idea of political power. It is not a sacrifice for the city; Christian mortification is a kind of relation from oneself to oneself. It is a part, a constitutive part of the Christian self-identity. (Foucault and Carrette, 2013: 143).

As I understood, the above-stated passage Michael Foucault criticizes the role of religion on the process of human beings' struggle with death, not just the natural process of decease, but also the "everyday death" or namely the sense of powerlessness and/or existential vacuity that is caused by the hegemonic power which does not make any sense. In a post-modern societal context that is dominated by "impalpable" forces such as shadowy institutional bodies, it is rather expectable that young individuals feel uneasy and insecure, and at the end some of them may experience a psychological disassociation and alienation from the society that they live in and from the adult community. Power structures surround and repress presentations of youth subjectivity. Consequently, juveniles may adopt a spiritual identity which makes them feel secure and powerful; and at this point, the mechanism of the so called alternative spirituality that they choose to take on basically functions in the same way that mainstream religions do.

The distinction from the adult community wipes out the necessity of getting permission from adults when choosing an alternative and nonmainstream spiritual path such as witchcraft. Thus, by exploring witchcraft identity, young individuals get through a psychological transformation which makes them feel free from the adult community and more mature at the same time. The rituals of transformation symbolize the opening up to personal change and passing from adolescence to maturity. However, this issue of transformation may grow into a personal conflict and create an inner struggle, because becoming an adult is equal to passing to an unknown stage in a sense, for adolescents. In other words, the process of psychological transformation can be considered as both new kinds of personal conflicts and the resolution of those conflicts

at the same time (Hannam, 2016: 78–79). I claim that this psychological transformation process -and correspondingly witchcraft identities and magic rituals as channels that pave the way for this psychological transformation- nonetheless provides a sense of relief for the young individuals, because at least the struggle with unknown forces of hegemony is being reduced to an inner struggle and to personal conflict. In other words, disassociation and alienation from society turns into a challenge of personal transformation, inner exploration and a meaning-making process. The only thing that has changed is the way of religious commitment. Individualistic exploration instead of mass worshipping gained importance in today's context.

To get back to the point of claims of authenticity and antiquity, I can say that it is questionable whether today's witchcraft is an antique spirituality which revived in contemporary era or it is an entirely new phenomenon.

It offers a religion with its roots in antiquity, its present ethos compatible with the ethos of secular society, and a future that is fluid and full of potential as it divides and multiplies according to the needs of its adherents. It also maintains an overarching plausible structure of a magical universe, drawn from the mystical traditions that are found in the esoteric core of most traditional religions, and yet perceived as modern counter-culture. As such it is highly acceptable to teenagers growing up in late modernity, who are in the process of establishing their own ethical and moral codes, and looking for answers. [...] When one looks at the religious biographies of pagans the similarity of their journey to paganism is striking, across tradition, gender, age and geographical location. There is a marked uniformity in pagans' experience of very early interest in mythology, magic, the divine in nature, mystical experience, magic and psychicism. (Harrington, 2016: 37)

Turkish pagans and other witchcraft practitioners also share a similar interest in antiquity, mysticism and old mythological plots. However, since “contemporary Pagan organizations usually claim a lineage that is ancient and unbroken, often tied to nationalism and ethnic pride” (Pike, 2006: 19), it is considerable that my interviewees tend to blend myths and beliefs that are endemic in the Anatolian region with a western rooted mythology when they are forming their claim of antiquity:

Hector (Male, 30, Izmir): I can say that witchcraft is more internalized in Turkey, because of Shamanism. Shamanism has always been rather prevalent in Anatolia. [Witchcraft] is inherited, it is in our genes. Since Shamanism is equal to Paganism--in my opinion--people in Turkey are more tolerant than westerners to

spiritualities which can be examined under the umbrella of Paganism. We [witches] believe in both Goddesses and Gods, Shamans were also believing in both. Like Shamans, we also use tintanabulas and drums [during rituals], for example. As a person with Alevi origins, I was raised witnessing old Shaman rituals. My paternal grandmother was an “ana” (mater). Ana means a high echelon in Alevi culture. My grandmother prepared house remedies (kocakarı ilacı) at home, she was a healer. It resembles elixir making of witches. Alevism is a belief system which encompasses environmentalism and humanism, just like Paganism. For instance, trees are sacred creatures in Alevism. It is the same in Paganism. There are many common points. Today’s Turkish Muslims’ rituals also contain undertones of Shamanism. For instance, Turkish Muslims’ burial rituals resembles Shaman rituals. Moreover, you can see many wish-fulfilling trees around Anatolia. Normally such things are prohibited by Islam, but in Turkey, in Anatolia, Muslim people take those trees in stride.

Calus also makes reference to Alevi religiosity when he is talking about the issue. Calus is a pagan who practices witchcraft for about ten years, he is also a ‘ghost hunter’ and makes devices that ‘catch’ paranormal signals. He lives in Rotterdam, but he was raised in Turkey. He says:

Calus (Male, 30, Rotterdam): I believe that I am going to proceed to another phase afterlife; because of this reason I think that selfishness is unnecessary and harmful. This life of ours is just a temporary stage. There is everlastingness waiting for us over there, so social awareness is especially important to me because this-worldly affairs shape your situation in afterlife in a sense. Conscientiousness is important. Love is important. If you love and are merciful in this world, you would be peaceful in another world correspondingly. Mundane deeds lose importance when you think about afterlife. We should avoid being selfishly individualistic. These opinions of mine resemble Alevi and Yezidi philosophies. Similar considerations have always been rather prevalent in Anatolia. Alevi and Yezidi people also practice witchcraft but they are concealing this fact because of social pressure.

Ashrenia (Male, 26, Istanbul): Well...Honestly, I do not believe in such things (mentioning about witchcraft). I did not try to practice witchcraft thus far; I may try it in the future but before that I have to be sure about its “serviceability” [he says this with a laugh in his face]. I am a “pantheist”, watch this space: it is different from “pantheist”. It [pantheism] also lies behind Alevi philosophy. According to Pantheism, there are many divinities and those (divinities) concert and consist holism, at the end. On the other hand, according to pantheism you are a lost soul who separated from “the whole”. You are an exile, and you have many lives. After each life, you are being honored or punished in accordance to your deeds. Do you see what I



mean? This is the same in Alevism. I guess Paganism is also related to Alevism. There is dualism in both Paganism and Alevism. There is the dark side and the bright side, there is goodness and evil, there is male and female... Like this. This is the same both in Paganism and Alevism. Alevi people uses amulets in order to protect themselves from hex, just like Pagans.

Hector, Calus and Ashrenia were all raised in Alevi families and it is to be expected that they are both giving examples from the culture they know best, while trying to establish a connection between pre-Islamic Anatolian culture and today's alternative witchcraft spiritualities. What is interesting is that some of other interviewees also declared that contemporary Anatolian culture resembles Paganism and today's witchcraft spiritualities. For instance, Nevermore's thoughts on the issue of resemblance between Anatolian culture and Paganism, as an individual whose father is a Muslim and mother is an Orthodox Christian, are similar to the thoughts of abovementioned three interviewees who have Alevi-origins:

When we (as members of Satanic order) pitch camp in Anatolian villages, we witness that old people living there hardly ever find us odd, as opposed to the people living in big cities. You know, the old guy who is seventy-something, asks us: "Is it [your belief] something like Shamanism?" He knows. He knows Paganism better than the metropole smug who has a doctoral degree. He [the old man] asks that if we worship "the tree". He mentions about the tree of life (etz chaim). You can find many common points in there (Anatolia).

Therefore, by examining the statements above, we can claim that individuals tend to blend and mix their current beliefs with the culture of the region which they were raised in, regardless of their "pre-existing" religiosity. I argue that by presenting such kind of evidence, they feel "safer" in their new and chosen spiritual identities. The homeless self finally manages to find an "invisibility cloak"<sup>1</sup> to hide in, to protect itself from the sense of meaninglessness, the continuous process of wrecking and rebuilding of subjectivities - which is a consequence of post-modernism-, and a "channel" to express itself, afterwards "adores" it with its inherited culture's motifs, and therefore it may more easily be accustomed to and internalize the new spiritual identity. The claim of authenticity of spiritual identity is equal to the claim of authenticity of subjectivity, in other words. Women's rights, environmentalism and individual

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<sup>1</sup> Invisibility cloak is a piece of fabric which makes the wearer invisible in the famous fantasy novel which is about witchcraft, Harry Potter. Here, I played on words.

authority are notions which have an impact on witchcraft, and all of these notions stemmed from contemporary western ideology (as cited in sayfa Aloi, 2016). According to Henrik Bogdan, witchcraft is a new religious movement which was “established as a part of western religiosity showing no tendencies of fading away” (Bogdan, 2008: 146). What is more, the contemporary teen- witch phenomenon arose from the western world according to scholarly works. For instance, one of the scholarly articles on the subject states: “One need only search the Internet with the words ‘young people and witchcraft’ and countless resources and references appear, *originating from across the Western world.*” (italics are mine, Hannam, 2016: 75).

For instance, Wicca, “with its largely European roots and predominantly white practitioners” (Parthenos, 2016: 93) seems like indigenous to western world, indeed. However, the term Europe is rather ambiguous, and this vague characteristics of the term may and do cause myth creation(s). For Richard H. Roberts, “Europe is always someone’s representation and designed to construe, to include and to exclude”. (Heelas et al., 1998:192). Therefore, since cultural globalization caused the blurriness of cultural boundaries, in contemporary age reconsidering such spiritualities regardless of geography, race, ethnicity, etc. comes to the forefront as a necessity for the sake of producing anthropologically more accurate and contemporary studies.

For Ezzy and Berger, “while there are a few national differences, the similarities are far more common than the differences”.

Via life politics, repressed existential issues press themselves back to the agenda. Key to understanding this shift is the notion of reflexive individualism. This means that as tradition recedes as an organizing principle—a process attended by the universalization of culture through the implementation of such innovations as global time zones, calendars and maps--we have seen the widespread uprooting of disembedding of cultural elements from their original sources by individuals as a way of furnishing themselves with the means for what Giddens calls self definition as a sense of personal identity and meaning or a means of orientating oneself in the absence of “traditional” guidelines. (Ezzy and Berger, 2016).

According to some scholarly claims, since the internet was invented in the West, internet searching is an action which was originated from the West (Aloi, 2016). It is true to some extent, but assuming that information about witchcraft is still only disseminating from the West would be erroneous. There are other internet sites, texts, etc. too which were

established by non-western witchcraft communities in other regions of the world. When it comes to today's technology usage, we cannot underestimate the role of globalization on the process of dissemination of knowledge through technological tools. Internet functions as only a device, a channel which makes the spread of information easier; but the creation of knowledge is not indigenous to western world. Every culture adds something to the "pool" of knowledge, even if the knowledge in question was initially rooted in the West. In other words, knowledge takes shape in accordance with the pre-existing traditions, beliefs and culture of the target group, and becomes "glocal". Given that new technologies "bring traditions into increasingly intimate contact with each other" (Smart, 1998: 83) as a consequence of globalization; the knowledge that spread through internet takes an syncretic, therefore a glocal form. A Turkish youngster who sets up a Wiccan altar and practices witchcraft by summoning a Hindu deity at his/her Muslim parent's home can be given as an example for this contemporary glocally shaped alternative spiritualities. It is not an exaggerated example by the way, many of my interviewees practice such "blended" forms of witchcraft and nearly all of them accept various deities from different cultures as their providences. For instance, Sirius is a witchcraft practitioner who was born in a Muslim family and defines himself as a Pagan while his way of rituals contains undertones of Wiccan tradition; and he is a well-known Reiki master who rejects New Age culture at the same time. Way of ritual of Hornless Stag can be given as another example which proves the argument outrightly: he appeals to demons and djinns while practicing magic, albeit not strictly being a Necromancer<sup>2</sup>, he also believes in Islam and practices traditional Islamic witchcraft, too. Defining and categorizing my interviewees' spiritualities was nearly impossible because of this syncretic and glocal characteristics of the contemporary witchcraft youth culture in Turkey; and I made a great effort while trying to convey each interviewee's perception of spirituality accurately, as much as possible.

Individuals are creating "new traditions" in a sense, by incorporating different cultures and histories under the umbrella of a so-called authentic and antique alternative spirituality. The crucial point here is, the attempt of proving the claim of authenticity requires a certain kind of myth-making. Adding something from the inherited national tradition to the newly created myth can be assumed to be a "natural

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<sup>2</sup> Necromancy is a form of black magic practice which is made by summoning the souls of the deceased human beings and demons.

tendency” of human beings, because people try to be accustomed to their new subjectivities through this way, as discussed above. However, newly created traditions are so vulnerable that they may “crumble” easily, because the “evolution of *post* modern individualism” may cause detraditionalization to a some degree (prefix in italics appended by myself, Smart., 1998: 82); because the evolution of post-modern individualism also paved the way for the individualization of religion, therefore post-modern individuals can reject the points (of religion and/or spirituality that they believe in) which come into conflict with their personal choices. We can point to a mixing of “liberalism and traditional religion” when it comes to new alternative spiritualities. According to Ninian Smart, “the modification of existing religious traditions has been great in the last half-century”, because of the impact of globalization. New kind of religious and spiritual groups and/or organizations which are tolerant to “experiential individualism” emerged consequently. The members of such groups are bonded together by means of emotion, rather than the “bonds of customary tradition.” Smart gives examples from organizations such as Islamic Brotherhood, Pentecostal Church, etc. to fortify her claim, but in my opinion groups and organizations which include people who practice magic can also be given as an example for the issue of the new spiritual groups which allows individual experience. However, such organizations can be conservative as a response to postmodernism while using “the technical methods of today”. Despite not finding any clue about the conservatism within witchcraft communities in Turkey, I agree with the idea that formation of such groups can be a counter-response against postmodernity.

For Smart, the claim of antiquity is being emphasized mostly by young people, because they are trying to reestablish traditions. She says: “I would have been hard to imagine Brahmins of the Veda period arguing for their antiquity.” (Smart, 1998: 84–85) In parallel with that, I observed that old people who practice traditional Islamic witchcraft in Turkey also do not feel the need to mention the antique roots of their belief<sup>3</sup>. “While on the one hand a modern individualism makes it easier for people to change or abandon what they perceive as traditions, on the other hand this era is, lie others, one of the invention and reinvention of traditions, not one of detraditionalization per se.” (Smart, 1998: 87).

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<sup>3</sup> Out of curiosity and in order to have a wider knowledge about the issue of contemporary witchcraft in Turkey, I also visited old people who practice Islamic witchcraft, but I did not interview with them. I visited them as a “client” and I did not mention about my academic study; so I could only observe them and their practices.

The usage of new technologies while rejecting that the emergence of new alternative spiritualities as a direct product of postmodernity may seem contradictory at first, but it is in fact the expected result of adopting a new spirituality which shapes within the slippery ground of postmodern societies. What is more, witchcraft practitioners' usage of new technologies while trying to sustain a so-called antique tradition is the evidence of detraditionalization that is caused by postmodernity the practitioners are waging a war against. Thus, detraditionalization can be considered as the victory of postmodernity.

Practitioners share an aspect of the world that celebrates the mystic and the sacred through rituals and language. Their shared beliefs, experiences and even language helps them to create a separated group both within and the outside of society and/or adult community, and by creating a separated group they celebrate their disassociation and marginalization by the way of reflecting the issue of exclusion from the society under the cover of uniqueness, namely authenticity. It specifically caught my attention that some of my interviewees used old Turkish words, instead of current synonyms of these words. For instance, Sirius used the word “veçhe” (this word means ‘face’ in old Turkish) instead of “yüz” (face); and “kadim” (‘ancient’ in old Turkish) instead of “eski”(old) . Similarly, Hector frequently used the word, “kadim”, and both Sirius and Hector used these words rather repetitively. According to Ferdinand Saussure, certain words may in fact may be signifying something different, in other words, words may be referring to something psychological (Saussure, 2011) In this case, interviewees' usage and repetition of old words may be signifying the claim of authenticity. Therefore, for example the word “kadim” functions as a *signifier* which implicitly makes reference to the *signified*: the claim of authenticity. Given that the interviewees in question uses these words repetitively, the signified meaning may be signaling a superior concern, the repetitive words may have some underlying meanings. Repetitiveness also signals “shared values” (Deleuze, 2004), such as the wish of regaining an authentic subjectivity of witchcraft practitioners within a postmodern society in our case. Anthony Giddens explains the act of repetitiveness within the framework of compulsiveness and addiction (Giddens, 1994). Can we assume repetitiveness as a psychological response of the individual(s) against postmodernity? Giddens explains the effects of repression of traditions by the ideology of Enlightenment upon the psychological conditions of

individuals within the perspective of psychoanalysis and refers to Sigmund Freud. I argue that the paragraph below Giddens's work may present an answer for the question above.

As a good medical specialist, Freud set out to cure neuroses; what he actually discovered, however, was the emotional undertow of disintegrating traditional culture. The emotional life of modern civilization was essentially written out of Enlightenment philosophy, and was alien to those scientific and technological endeavours that were so central to the coruscating effects of modernity. Science, and more generally 'reason', were to replace the supposedly unthinking precepts of tradition and custom. And so, in a sense, it proved to be: cognitive outlooks were indeed very substantially and dramatically recast. The emotional cast of tradition, however, was left more or less untouched. (Giddens, 1994: 68).

Freud was not only dealing with the issue of psychology he was also "concerned with a social universe of belief and action at the point at which, in matters directly affecting self-identity, *tradition was beginning to turn into compulsion*" (Giddens, 1994: 68).

For Giddens, "modernity was compulsive" in the sense that individuals emotionally drive to repetition without even being aware of it. In other words, individuals unconsciously reconstruct the past lives, not in the mode of tradition but through actions (Giddens, 1994: 68). When it comes to people's experiences of life, there is a "recording" and human beings unconsciously and constantly recapitulate those past experiences. Past influence present in an emotional way, and this influence manifests itself through feelings. "Compulsiveness in its broadest sense is an inability to escape from the past. The individual, who believes himself or herself to be autonomous, acts out a surreptitious fate. Concepts of fate have always been closely allied with tradition [...]"(Giddens, 1994: 68).

I argue that my interviewees' statements can be construed as the reflection of compulsiveness and repetitiveness through language. Since compulsiveness and repetitiveness are stemming from past experiences, a question arises at this point: As young individuals who have born into a post-traditional society and experienced post-modernity from the very beginnings of their lives; in what sense is my interviewees' usage of language signaling repetitiveness? I claim that, maybe in our case not tradition but the wish of creating an authentic tradition becomes compulsive. Young individuals are "striving" to create a tradition of their own because:

Tradition hence is a medium of identity. Whether personal or collective, identity presumes meaning; but it also presumes the constant process of recapitulation and reinterpretation. Identity is the creation of constancy over time, that very bringing of the past into conjunction with an anticipated future. In all societies the maintenance of personal identity, and its connection to social wider identities, is a prime requisite of ontological security. This psychological concern is one of the main forces allowing traditions to create such strong emotional attachments on the part of the 'believer'. Threats to the integrity of traditions are very often, if by no means universally, experienced as threats to the integrity of the self. (Giddens, 1994: 80).

It is important to note that, young people whom I interviewed with may be feeling disassociated and excluded from the society, it is true that some of them were marginalized from society in a sense; but it would be erroneous to consider them as totally eccentric and ignorant human beings who are detached from life. On the opposite way round, all of my interviewees are employed –except for students- and nearly all of them are intellectually curious and socially and politically aware.

### **Dissemination of Witchcraft Through New Technologies**

Today's expeditious dissemination of witchcraft is directly related to expansion of internet and youth's interest in "adolescent paganism" (Lewis, 2016: 18). There is a parallelization between "the growing number of younger participants" (ibid.), and young people's internet usage, development of World Wide Web and proliferation of mass computer ownership. In fact, internet changed the entire social structure of paganism, and it added a "contemporary" characteristic to it. The effect of internet on paganism is much more considerable than other religious bodies. In this "multimedia age", heretofore esoteric knowledge is just a click away. People can reach any kind of information by "googling" it, "from the film genre to be led to the occult milieu, where magic is 'real', complete with communities of interest and many esoteric schools", within minutes (Harrington, 2016: 35). According to the statements of my interviewees, internet is the main source of information about witchcraft for practitioners who dwell in Turkey. On the other side, the situation maybe different in the West. For instance, an academician claims that "printed books are the key source, while internet provides a 'transport layer' to information"; while she is scrutinizing the issue of contemporary British teenage witchcraft, by predicating on her interviewees' declaration (Vayne, 2016: 63).

Internet, as a vast source of information, evolved into a generally available tool for everyone since its first emergence and it is not a channel of communication which is under control of governing institutions; in this sense any kind of knowledge, including “deviant” ones can be disseminated through World Wide Web. This is the situation that clarifies the reasons of witchcraft communities’ widespread usage of internet in order to communicate each other, and that is why internet has a great impact upon today’s witchcraft. Stated in other words, internet became an essential part of contemporary witchcraft spiritualities, which they can freely express themselves. Young people can and do hide their real identities by using a nickname and opine anonymously, therefore they can disseminate any kind of information through internet. However, there are also negative effects of this situation. Internet creates a “bandwagon mentality” which causes the homogenization of information and correspondingly opinion, and this situation is “exacerbated by peer pressure and the relative anonymity of internet interactions”. When it comes to an alternative witchcraft spirituality, such as Wicca or paganism, individuals cannot find many different viewpoints available on the internet. It would not be wrong to say, today’s witchcraft culture is nearly totally internet based, therefore there are huge similarities between practices and beliefs, and this situation also contrasts with the authenticity claims of the practitioners. In fact, ironically internet jargon and therefore even the language that is used when talking about authenticity and antique roots is homogenized. It is expectable that the general tendency of young people is choosing to follow internet groups which they are most affiliated with; when we think about the “endless possibilities” which presented by today’s new technology, seekers can find and reach any kind of information that would satisfy their curiosity.

What is more, “online paganism” contributed the issue of growing number of young practitioners who practice rituals solitarily (Lewis, 2016: 18), and this is one of the main differences between the practice patterns of pre and post 90s young witchcraft practitioners (Vayne, 2016: 57).

Postmodernism makes an emphasis on free will and individual liberty, so according to postmodernist theorizations societies cannot be examined as a whole. Societal fragmentation increases in accordance with increasing individuality. In other saying, postmodern societies are diversified, and unstable. Postmodern viewpoint rejects the possibility of coming up with absolute explanations and estimations with respect to societal issues, so individualistic improvement gains importance. Therefore, when it comes to the issue of religion, individual seekership becoming widespread rather than



mass movements. Different from mainstream religions, alternative spiritualities usually do not have strict body of rules. This situation makes solitary practice possible and widespread.

Moreover, in parallel with the weakening of social relations, individuals turn towards “hand craft their own individual spirituality” and solitary witchcraft creates a suitable environment for “hand crafting” spiritual practices (Lewis, 2016: 22). It means that, solitary practice of witchcraft enables to provide a spirituality which “encompasses their own experiential belief” for young people (Harrington, 2016: 38). Self-transformation gradually occurs while adopting such a spiritual identity, and entering into witchcraft community does not require initiation ritual in contemporary era. Stated in other words, “no one converts to paganism” anymore (as cited in Ezzy and Berger, 2016: 41). Through an operation of “exploration and self-discovery”, individuals become witches. What is more, the would-be witches can initiate themselves, and this is a totally new case, which is peculiar to contemporary era. (ibid. 46).

Formation of spiritualities which preconditioning witchcraft as a way of worshipping and/or ritual, “gradually shifted from a hierarchical coven-based tradition into a solitary path focused upon personal growth”, and this change in formation was accelerated by internet (Tosenberger, 2010: 173). Coven basically can be defined as an assemblage of witches, a mechanism which consists of several people and enables practicing witchcraft aggregately. If we think of the “churchless” characteristic of alternative forms of spiritualities which includes witchcraft as a matter of fact, was not a centralized movement before the advent of internet, it is has never been an organized religion. Internet usage became much more prevalent, especially after 1996 around the globe, and after that time the interest in solitary forms of witchcraft became widespread too. In such an environment, spiritual formations such as paganism seems like a suitable form of religiosity to adopt, for the young individuals who seek meaning, because paganism is different from other religions in the sense of allowing practicing alone (Ezzy and Berger, 2016). For example, nearly all of the interviewees whom I spoken to were solitary practitioners, most of them asserted that they were Pagans, and/or believers of other spiritualities related to or close to paganism such as Wicca, spiritual Satanism, et. When internet usage became widespread, solitary practice started to be considered as “legitimate” by many pagans (practicing alone or with a group). In a sense, internet

caused “the commercialization of paganism”, and therefore witchcraft, and this situation has both positive and consequences according to practitioners. For example, Havsfrun is a twenty-two years old hedgewitch who was raised in Belgium, and lives in Istanbul for about ten years. Her way of practice is totally based on solitary rituals. According to the online article that I discovered while doing research about the concept of hedgewitchery on one of the most popular website about occult and esoteric knowledge, which is entitled as [www.witchvox.com](http://www.witchvox.com), hedgewitchery is:

(...) a combination of Traditional Witchcraft (NOT Wicca) and Shamanism, with herbalism, healing, and a deep love for nature added to the mix.” Hedgewitchery is loosely based on the old wise woman (and man) Tradition. The wise woman Tradition is, quite possibly, the oldest eclectic magickal tradition. If you think “wise woman” and picture the strange old lady who sold herbs and magickal charms, acted as midwife and healer in the ancient times, you are not far off. This tradition never truly died out, and in recent years, more and more people are turning to it and adapting it to modern times.(Witchvox Article, n.d.)

Havsfrun (Female, 22, Istanbul): I think solitary witchcraft is more individualistic, therefore more liberating. Hedgewitches practice witchcraft without being stuck to any kind of order or coven. They instinctually practice it (witchcraft), for instance they suddenly find an inspiration and prepare magic potions.

Havsfrun specifically underlines the individualistic characteristic of solitary witchcraft. It seems like joining a group such as a coven, would be an obstructing act for her and would hinder her “inspiration”, namely, free self-expression. When I asked her about her frequency of internet usage, she said nonstrikingly:

When I first interested in the issue (of witchcraft), I tried to find printed sources like books, but unfortunately I could not be able to find many (books), and then, of course, I asked “uncle google”. You have to use it (internet) nowadays. You need it in any case. After a certain point, you are being jammed and obliged to appeal to internet.

There is an increasing fragmentation with pagan community because of the growing quantity of solitary practitioners who perform rituals alone, despite of some practitioners who sometimes participate in group practices, such as pagan festivals (as cited in Lewis, 2016: 18). This is mostly the case when we are talking about western paganism. Events like pagan festivals and conferences encourage networking and group identity. Such events are relatively prevalent in the West, for example in United

Kingdom. Festivals are also a well-known way of assembling at least within witchcraft communities in United States; and “such occasions constitute the most visible way that contemporary American Pagans construct their communities” (Hope and Jones, 2006). One of the advantages of festivals is that a common body of knowledge can be established during such events. On the other side, it should not be forgotten that, collective occasions such as festivals, conferences and collective rituals requires organization, at least to some degree. When I asked the interviewees about the existence of such events in Turkey, was met negative answers. If we consider the absence of organizations and events, like festivals which require a body of rules at least to some degree, we cannot mention about a “fragmentation within the witchcraft community” in Turkey, because I am not sure if we even could mention about the ever-existence of a community formation in Turkey. The emergence of alternative witchcraft spiritualities is a new phenomenon in Turkey.

Hector (Male, 30, Izmir): We (witches) were here (in Anatolia) nearly since the beginning of the time, but coming out as witches (he uses the Turkish word, *cadı*) is a new occurrence for us, too. As I know, there were one or two people in Izmir who were openly defining themselves as witches, in 80s. The usage of the word (witch) started to become prevalent since 90s, in Turkey. However, people still are afraid of concepts such as witchcraft, sorcery, etc. For example, when I first told my cousin that I am a witch, she almost fainted (he says this laughingly). Things like djinns, Satan and black magic occurred her mind probably. In response, I said to her: “Be calm, I am still the same person. This is just a belief system, just like... Like Sufism. There is nothing to be afraid of.

Hector’s statements can be presented as evidence for the issue of emergence of witchcraft as a popular alternative spirituality in Turkey, occurred in 90s, approximately concurrently with the West. On the other hand, it seems like in Turkey people still approach witchcraft –especially nontraditional witchcraft- cautiously. Therefore, it would be claimed that, young witch phenomenon is more popular in the West, but it does not mean that it is not going to be as popular as it is in the West, in Turkey, in the time to come. Moreover, the “mass accessibility of pagan witchcraft” paved the way for a more visible form of paganism (Melissa Harrington) in the West. In Turkey, paganism and therefore witchcraft is not so “visible” in a sense. It is true that more people became aware of new forms of spiritualities with the advent of new technologies, on the other hand it appears that still not much people –especially “adults”- seem like they do not know much about alternative forms of spiritualities aside from practitioners

themselves. I do not think that especially adult individuals are not considering neither paganism nor other spiritual beliefs which includes witchcraft as valid forms of spirituality. On the other hand, it may become more visible and can be accepted as so in the future.

Hector (Male, 30, Izmir): Maybe it is too early for Turkish society to take it (new and alternative witchcraft spiritualities) as normal. Maybe within 500 or 1000 years we (Turkish people) are going to be more tolerant.

In Turkey, there are some occasions that resemble friend meetings rather than big organizations, some small-scaled gathered rituals, and a few covens in Turkey. It should be noted that the existence of covens in Turkey is a question of debate. Some interviewees mentioned about the existence of covens in Turkey, but the accurate number of these covens arguable. For instance, some of my interviewees said that there are several covens, some of them claimed that there are only two or three “genuine” coven formations, and the others mentioned about the total absence of coven based practices in Turkey. It is important to note that, some of them use the Turkish word “kovan” instead of coven. Kovan means bee hive, and the pronunciation of the word highly resembles the pronunciation of the English word, coven. In the circumstances, I will be using both the words coven, and kovan; with regards to interviewees’ usage.

Hector (Male, 30, Izmir): I prefer using the Turkish word kovan, instead of coven, because I like using Turkish words. I love my language so much. Despite using English words sometimes, I usually prefer Turkish. The word, kovan reminds me of the Alevi term “Cem”. Cem means banding together, the assemblage. The English word coven has the same meaning. Moreover, I guess the English word coven stems from “covenant” in Latin. Covenant stems from another word which means bee hive. Do you see the connection? Bee hive...Bees are sacred creatures. I guess it was Einstein...He said that if bees become extinct, we, human beings become extinct within four years, too. Bees were blessed by the Goddess. Honey is the elixir of immortality according to Pagan literature. The things which contain honey are sacred because of this reason. Honey is one of the most sacramental oblations. All in all, using the Turkish word kovan seemed befitting. We have spent so much effort to make it (usage of the word) prevalent.

This usage of Turkish word, kovan, can be presented as the effect of aforementioned issue of cultural globalization on language. If we go forward with questioning the

quantity and quality of the coven formations in Turkey, the most reliable information can be obtained by asking practitioners themselves. Therefore, I asked my interviewees whether they were ever invited to join a coven, and what they know exactly about the covens in Turkey. Filius is a high school student who is interested in the issue of witchcraft, and he lives Samsun. He said:

Filius (Male, 15 Samsun): Frankly speaking, I was never invited to a kovan. As I know, there are kovans in Istanbul and Izmir. There are “Gizemli Ay Kovani” (The Coven of Mysterious Moon), “Evrensel Birlik Kovani” (The Coven of Universal Oneness), and several others as I know, but... There is an internet site, [www.witchvox.com](http://www.witchvox.com), you can find information about the covens in Turkey from that site.

When I examined the internet site, [www.witchvox.com](http://www.witchvox.com), I noticed that there are four active covens in Turkey right now, these are: “Fallen Allies” in Ankara, “Ceithri Seuti” in Istanbul, “Evrensel Birlik Kovani” (Coven of the Universal Oneness) and “Kadim Çember Kovani” (Coven of the Ancient Circle) in Izmir. I also intuitively perceived that some of the people whom I interviewed with were the members of those covens, but they were keeping it quiet. They were also avoiding to disclose the names of the covens and pretending that they do not know anything about the coven formations in Turkey. This attitude seemed inconsistent, even self-contradictory to me in a sense, because of the fact that on a well-known web site, the names of the covens and the locations of the covens are publicly revealed. It is important to note that at this point, a person who explores the website in order to get information about the covens in Turkey, does not even need to have a user account. The information about covens is available for everyone. I argue that this issue of concealing information about the covens is stemming from the wish of creating a sense of mysteriousness, and this is also related to the individuals’ claim of authenticity and antiquity. Stated in other words, the practitioners resubmitting a matter of common knowledge as if it is an esoteric secret, a deep rooted tradition.

When I asked Filius if he is in contact with the members of the covens that he has mentioned, he said:

There is an age limit if we are talking about kovans, you have to be eighteen, so I was not invited yet. I am not in communication with the members of these kovans, I have never met any of them. On the other hand, there are some witches that I know and I am in

communication with. And there is also that I never asked any of them (the witches that he knows personally) whether they are affiliated with a coven formation or not. In short, I am not sure. Maybe I came across with somebody who is already a member of a coven, but...I have talked to many people in order to get information from them, just like you do.

I asked him whether he wants to be a member of a coven in the future, and he answered:

You know...Of course! If I enter the university and go to Izmir or Istanbul, why not? I would like to.

In response, I asked him about the advantages of joining to a coven. He said:

I even so much wanted to join the Whatsapp group (he is talking about the online messaging board, that I first met him through and also some other interviewees of mine and I will mention about it in a detailed way later), because sharing information, and even materials (talking about texts in a hard copied form) becomes much more easier if you are a member of such a group. Investigating issues together with people is better than investigating alone. Besides, energy increases during group rituals. By the way, establishing a kovan is much easier in big cities like Izmir and Istanbul, because social oppression is lesser in metropolises.

On the other side, unlike Filius, some others are not so sure about the advantages of joining a coven. For instance:Blackrouge (Female, 18, Ankara): My mentor (she calls a senior practitioner as her mentor) said that joining to a coven in Turkey would be an irrational decision. You can solitarily practice those things (she is mentioning about the rituals).

When I asked her that why would it be an irrational act to join a coven, she answered:

It is not a necessity. Joining a coven neither makes you a better witch, nor levels you down. She (the senior witch) said that it is all about believing in yourself and bettering yourself. Maybe you would witness something really different (after joining a coven), but...It may also harm you. Yes, maybe in some instances it may harm you. She said (here, she talks about her "mentor", repeating her words, as if she talking to herself and not me) "you are at the bottom of the ladder", but...I want to experience it regardless of what...I am in love with experiencing different things. I will do that. I must do that, because I believe that I am different than other people. If I would find the opportunity...You know, I am living an underprivileged area (she is dwelling in a

small town),so...We are two (people) here (who practices witchcraft). Just me and my best friend.

As it can be observed by examining the statements of Blackrouge and Filius, they both think that dwelling in a big city makes joining and/or establishing a coven formation easier, because societal pressure is lesser in big cities. The both teenagers seem rather complainant about living in a provincial area. However, while Filius seems willing when it comes to joining a coven; the same issue leaves a question mark over Blackrouge's mind. It is maybe because, Filius overestimating the advantages of dwelling in a big city on his future witchcraft identity. Probably he is imagining those covens as secretive and mysterious organizations which would provide him an authentic identity. On the other side, Blackrouge's "mentor", whom I know personally, has a more realistic viewpoint about the covens, as an individual who is living in Istanbul -the biggest metropole of Turkey- and had a chance to behold those covens in person. It is also important that, Blackrouge wants to experience joining a coven, because she believes that she has to try many things as much as possible, because she is "different than other people". Maybe she wants to compare herself with others, and prove her own uniqueness. Therefore, her desire to be a part of a coven is stemming from the wish of being more individualistic, rather than experiencing a sense of togetherness. In other saying, even the ones who join or want to join covens maintain being individualistic.

If we consider the limited number of witchcraft practitioners in small cities and towns, internet becomes a rather crucial tool for communicating with each other and to get information about witchcraft especially for the young people who dwell in provincial areas. Among other things, here we are talking about the contemporary, post-modern form of witchcraft that is mainly practiced by young people, as a matter of fact, there are many "adults" who practice traditional forms of witchcraft, such as Islamic witchcraft in provincial areas, but this is a different topic which must be examined in another study and it stands out of our main point. If we get back to issue, the role of new technologies on the rise of youth's interest in witchcraft in small cities and towns cannot be overlooked. For instance, there are lots of internet forums and social networking sites such as Facebook and Tumblr, instant messaging clients for smart phones such as Whatsapp and Line, internet blogs, etc. which enable young seekers make contact with each other online. Such tools of new technology especially helpful for "housebound" teenagers who cannot

go out of towns that they dwell in, cannot obtain permission from their parents to go out and/or travel, and for the ones who are in financial difficulties. By joining those networking sites and messaging clients, young practitioners meet each other, establish online groups and share information with each other. For instance, I have met with some of my interviewees through a Whatsapp group, including Filius and Blackrouge, later they accepted to have an interview with me; and we conducted our interviews through another online application named Skype that has a video call service. We conducted the interviews through Skype, because both Filus and Blackrouge were teenagers who cannot go out of their house towns at that time. I was also actively sharing information with others through the Whatsapp group, which was entitled as “Turkish Pagan Folk”. The group members were mostly teenagers whose ages were approximately between 15-17. I invited to the group by Relucif, he was the moderator of the group at that time. I met with Relucif through Facebook, he was one of the followers of the Facebook page which was entitled as “Pagan, Celtic, Medieval Folk Turkey”. It would not be wrong to say, without the “assistance” of internet, I would never be able to find people to interview with. There are also other “online meeting places” available along with social media groups, for instance internet forums. Nevermore, Aurora, Hector and Sirius are the moderators of an internet forum which is entitled as “Gnoxis”. Gnoxis is one of the most popular websites in Turkey that provide information about the topics like witchcraft, paganism, Satanism, etc. I also examined Gnoxis website and I would say that it so indeed is like an “encyclopedia of esotericism”, and it seems like the authors make a great effort in order to provide information for keen young seekers. The moderators of the forum are relatively older and therefore more experienced than the other members, in other saying, they are acting as “tutors” of younger seekers. However, the moderators are not acting like authoritative figures, so we still cannot mention about a hierarchical organization. They also do not try to proselytize, because missionary activities have never been a part of witchcraft spiritualities. Hector clearly indicates that: “We do not care about proselytizing. There are no such things as missionary activities in Paganism, because the only ones who really deserve it can walk along this path.”

According to some scholarly works, young witchcraft practitioners are rather enthusiastic, but their interest is superficial at the same time (Harrington, 2016: 29). However, some other works argue that it may be a superficial interest in the level of entertainment, but there is also a possibility that it can be a genuine spiritual commitment



(Aloi, 2016). In other saying, it questionable that whether this youth interest in witchcraft is only a fad or a permanent commitment. When I asked the people whom I interviewed with whether it is an ephemeral interest or a life-time commitment, most of them indicated that they take their witchcraft identities seriously and consider their belief as a “true” religion. For instance, one of my interviewees who defines himself as a witch, and his spiritual belief as Wiccan, says:

Sylvan (Male, 17, Istanbul): For me, being a witch is the path that you choose to walk along throughout your life. Wiccan is the religion which I became a part of (it).

For Sylvan, being a Wiccan is a lifetime choice and he indicates that he will be stay as a witch until the end of his life. In other words, it is not a trend for him, it is a “serious” religious commitment. On the other side, Enoch says, as another teenager who is a spiritual Satanist and practices witchcraft:

Enoch (Male, 19, Istanbul): There are many points within Satanism that I totally opposed with. I feel a symphaty towards it (Satanism), but I thinkthere are a lot of missing points. I do not think that Satanic doctrines as totally accurate. On the other hand, if I do not believe in something above human beings, something like a creator...I feel a void inside. It (Satanism) makes me feel empowered for now (he says this with a sarcastic emphasis, and a smirk on his face). When we first met (he is referring to the interview that I conducted with him for another academic study which I examined the issue of contemporary Satanism in Turkey), I was more devoted, but now...I am not sure. It (your belief) manifests itself through your style, your clothes, you know. You start to wear black, pentagram pendants, as such... It is like fashion. For a while now, I am not practicing witchcraft, because I think that it is unnecessary.

As I observed, the degree of commitment may change over time, and this is especially the case for teenagers. They are more tend to follow spiritual beliefs as if it is a fashion cycle. On the other hand, experienced senior practitioners internalize their new spiritual identities and I do not think that they take it as a trend. For example, it seems to me that Hector is a witch who is rather devoted despite not even “seeming like a witch”. He has a wife and a daughter that he is liable to look after; and a decent work. Like Hector, Nevermore is a senior practitioner who works as a research fellow one of the most prestigious universities of Turkey. Hereby, the degree of commitment is a subjective issue. Some practitioners takes witchcraft seriously, they internalize it and practice it as a form of spiritual ritual; while some others “uses” it in order to fit in with the crowd. New

Age witchcraft spiritualities (here, New Age is used as an adjective) are different than coven-based traditional witchcraft spiritualities in the sense that the New Age practitioners' commitment tend to be ephemeral. There are "casual part-timers", "serious part-timers" and "fully engaged" practitioners of New Age (Ezzy, 2003: 61).

[...] fully-engaged New Age practitioners 'devote their lives to the spiritual quest': a commitment comparable to that of the traditional Wiccan. Furthermore, the serious parttimers, according to Heelas, are not motivated by a 'consumeristic outlook'. Rather, their spiritual practice is taken seriously, but only as one part of their life. (Ezzy, 2003: 61).

Most New Age practitioners, especially younger ones, tend to be casual part-timers; and "online commitment" helps them to maintain this situation. For instance, teenagers whom I interviewed were students, they were studying and trying to complete their mundane deeds, hence it seems like it is not possible for them to "devote their lives to the spiritual quest", in contemporary age. This may be one of the reasons that explains why there are not many coven-based witchcraft communities nowadays.

To sum up, before the internet became prevalent, witchcraft practitioners were meeting each other by the way of face-to-face communication channels, they were mostly getting information from experienced practitioners. Additionally, coven formations were much more prevalent. On the other hand, currently, people mainly interacting with each other via internet, and they learn about witchcraft from internet sources. Ipso facto, we can say that today's witchcraft communities are not well-organized structures. They are fragmented and focus "on small friendship groups or larger networking associations that demand little in the way of commitment." Moreover, they are mainly mediated by internet (Vayne, 2016: 54). As it was mentioned above, the integration to a witchcraft community does not firmly require a conversion experience nowadays. It is a "process of becoming" rather than a conversion act (ibid. 54). However, the crucial point is: this is the situation in the West. The emergence of alternative spiritualities in Turkey is a newer phenomenon, in comparison with the West. I claim that in Turkey, the advent and spread of alternative spiritualities developed in parallel with the advent and spread of internet, because up to that time there were no informational sources about new religious movements such as alternative witchcraft spiritualities in Turkey. This point is evident in my interviewees' statements.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE EFFECT OF MEDIA ON WITCHCRAFT SUBJECTIVITIES

Media representations of witchcraft started to be altered after the 1990s. Before that time, it “was heavily mediated by mass marketed consumer culture in the form of books”, but especially after the advent of internet, people turned towards online texts along with books. Of course, books that address the issue of witchcraft did not become extinct from consumer culture, as we explore in the previous chapter.

Teenage witchcraft is located “in the glossy images of popular media”, and it is no more a part of a “hidden esoterica” (Aloi and Johnston, 2016: 8). Media texts cannot be considered as the only reason that promoted teenage witchcraft, media is one of the popular mainstream areas which caused increasing youth interest in witchcraft along with internet usage and mass computer ownership. There is a correlation between media text and internet usage when we are talking about proliferation of witchcraft. In such a way that through media texts people became aware of witchcraft as a part of a belief system and started to “investigate the newest of the magical tools”, the internet, in other words. (Harrington, 2016: 35). Moreover, whereas “witches do not proselytize”, the spreading of info about witchcraft is being distributed mainly through mass media products such as movies, TV films, books, etc. (Ezzy and Berger, 2016: 53) and because of this reason, mainstream culture has a huge impact on today’s witchcraft perception of youth.

Popular media images of contemporary witchcraft “provide a cultural orientation to the beliefs and practices of witchcraft”. It is also important to note that, these contemporary media images are rather positive, on the contrary of previous media descriptions. However, it would be erroneous to assume that young people are only passive followers of media, on the contrary, they are active seekers (Ezzy and Berger, 2016: 51).

However, overemphasizing the role of the person as seeker can be problematic in the sense that it may cause the underestimation of the importance of mediating tools such as books and more contemporarily mass media as “modes of distribution of information about witchcraft”. Individual seekership is not the only factor that causes the interest in witchcraft, rather the “individual seekership within a cultural and media saturated context that facilitates interest in issues and concerns that have a resonance with Witchcraft beliefs and practices” creates such an orientation towards witchcraft. The process of becoming a witchcraft practitioner is being accelerated by various social and cultural “trends” which contain overtones of witchcraft practices and beliefs (Ezzy and Berger, 2016: 46). In short, mainstream media both reflects and creates the interests of juveniles (ibid.).

The mainstream characteristic of media texts and orientation of the media to “preteen or teenage audience” (Ezzy and Berger, 2016: 44) are remarkable factors which contributed to emergence of witchcraft as a popular trend within youth culture.

### **The Empowering Characteristics of Spellbooks**

Along with other products of popular culture, spell books contributed to the entrance of witchcraft to mainstream culture. Witchcraft re-enchants everyday life and provides the practitioners a sense of empowerment and it does this mainly through spells. The popularity of spell books has increased “in parallel with the Witchcraft movement”. Gerald Gardner’s (he is known as the “creator” of Wiccan spirituality) well known book, which is entitled as *Witchcraft Today*, galvanized the emergence and spread of new genre spell books in 1950s. *Witchcraft Today* and the other early spell books were being published by small publishing houses at that time, and the main target group of the spell books was coven-based practitioners. Witchcraft rituals was the main theme of the books; and spells were constituting a smaller part of the books. Nevertheless, today’s popular new genre spell books developed from these early writings. One of the most important contribution of these early spell books on the popularization of witchcraft is; “they presented a simplified and more accessible description of witchcraft practice.” (Ezzy, 2003:48). The new genre spell books started to come into agenda in the second half of the 1990s (ibid. ).

The spells in these books mostly use basic household items such as perfumes, essential oils, herbs, candles, string, and paper. These are combined with various techniques for focusing the mind, visualizations and short incantations, typically of a few lines or so. They are often timed to the phases of the moon or day of the week, and use a variety of sensual cues such as burning candles, flower petals, and tying knots or planting seeds. The spell books focus on providing technologies for managing emotions, such as love, depression, disappointment, desire, fear, and anxiety. They provide techniques for working with emotional and interpersonal issues. (Ezzy, 2003: 49)

As I observed, we cannot mention about a diverse range of printed sources about witchcraft written in Turkish language, so people who are interested in the issue frequently tend to learn English, if they do not know English already. For instance:

Hector (Male, 30, Izmir): When I first interested in the issue (of witchcraft) I was only eighteen or nineteen. You know, there was no such thing as sources which written in Turkish, back then. The only ones which I could find were about Wicca, so I compulsorily started with examining Wicca. By the way these were (mentioning about the sources which he could find) written in English. Yes, I started with reading in English, but without knowing the first thing about English!

In response, I asked him how he could manage to do that; and he answered:

Believe it or not, I translated a book of Scott Cunningham, word by word; by looking at English-Turkish dictionary in every whipstitch. It was unbelievable. I could never be able to read even a children's book in English until that time. It was impossible for me. But this...This was a passion for me, so I managed to translate it. Now, I make translations every single day. I translate books, online texts which I find through internet, etc. I take notes (he shows me a notebook which is full of hand-written notes and also sketches), in order not to forget the things that I learned.

Sirius (Male, 26, Izmir): I started with reading Turkish sources. I have read many books from "Sınır Ötesi Yayınları" (Transfrontier Publishings) and Akaşa Yayınları (Akaşa Publishins). The books about ancient Egypt, thingy...By the way, I do not prefer Akasha Publishing, because that publishing house mostly publish books that are about ufology and such...I have read everything that I could find. I have also read many things from Klan Yayınları (Clan Publishings). I started reading sources in English senior year of high school, because at that time I could be able to learn English. There are accurately translatedsources in the market, nowadays. However, when it comes to issue of learning practices...Turkish sources are...The first book that translated to Turkish, about the practice of magic, was "The Real Witches' Kitchen" (by Kate West) (Cadının Mutfağı, in Turkish). I

felt very excited when I saw that book because it was the first time that I have seen the word, witch, on the cover of a book. However, it was a total failure for me, because, first of all, it was about Wicca. It was full of silly recipes. You know, unsavory soup recipes (he says this in a sarcastic way). After that, “The Real Witches’ Garden” (by Kate West ) (Cadinın Bahçesi, in Turkish) was translated to Turkish. It was a more proper book, but even so it was not a good source. I read “A Wisewoman’s to Spells, Rituals and Goddess Lore” (Büyücülük Klavuzu). It was written by a feminist, in a woman’s eyes, so I did not like it. It was too woman-centric. The book was not mentioning about equality of women and men. Sometimes, people ask me for advice. I actually do not recommend any book which was published in Turkey. There are no proper resource books in Turkish. I like Scott Cunningham’s books. However, he (Cunningham) defines himself as a Wiccan, and because of this reason, there are missing points in his books. If you are interested in the issue (of witchcraft), you must research thoroughly. You have to read internet texts, encyclopedias and many other sources like that, and then pick and choose convenient information. Ancient knowledge (is the convenient knowledge).

I specifically tried to translate the names of the publishing houses that Sirius mentioned about in English because the names of the publishing houses that publishes books about esotericism, mysticism, occultism, New Age culture and witchcraft generally have mystic connotations, as I observed. In the West, there are many publishing houses which publishes the books about above-mentioned issues. For instance, Llewelyn Publishing is one of the most well-known New Age publishing houses that fell in step with the rising trend of teenage witchcraft, in recent years, in the West. Carl Weschcke, President of the Llewelyn Publishing, is a “major figure”, “who for many years exercised a near monopoly over pagan publishing”. However, because of the “quality” of some of the books that published by Llewelyn Publishing, Carl Weschcke has been accused for being the person to blame for “dumbing down of paganism” (Lewis, 2016: 19). The main reason of this situation was that the spellbooks of one of the most popular authors who writes for teenagers, Silver Ravenwolf, were published by Llewelyn Publishing. Ravenwolf’s books are still quite controversial, because the target group of her books are teenagers and more experienced witchcraft practitioners assert that Ravenwolf takes advantage of witching culture for commercial purposes, therefore exploiting witchcraft spirituality by appealing teenagers. Ravenwolf’s spellbooks were seen as the reason for dumbing down of paganism such an extent that, a term called “Llewellynization” came to the fore and became popular within witchcraft communities

(ibid. 19). One of my interviewees, Sirius, also mentioned about “dumbing down of paganism”:

Sirius (Male, 26, Izmir): There is a book, which is entitled as “Witchcraft for Dummies”. Did you hear about that? I think such things are so funny. These (books) are the products of consumption culture of no use. The whole story is about marketing.

The establishment of publishing houses which publish books about witchcraft and related concepts is a relatively new phenomenon -that emerged in direct proportion to popularization of witchcraft in Turkey-, vis-à-vis equivalents in the west. Along with Akaşa Yayınları and Sınır Ötesi Yayınları, Kabalcı Yayınları, Ayrıntı Yayınları, Mitra Yayınları, İmge Kitabevi and Neden Kitap and Altıkırkbeş Basın Yayın are some of the other publishing houses in Turkey which publish books about the issues that related to witchcraft such as paganism, mysticism, Wicca, esotericism, occultism, New Age, etc. Not all of these publishing houses are fully dedicated to publishing books about witchcraft and related concepts. For instance, Altıkırkbeş Basın Yayın and Ayrıntı Yayınları generally publish books of underground literature. The reason behind the situation that Altıkırkbeş Basın Yayın and Ayrıntı Yayınları publish books about witchcraft and related issues, may be the perception of some segments of the Turkish society which causes the assumption that witching culture is form of underground and/or alternative culture. In other saying, witchcraft culture still is not as visible as it is in the West, in Turkey.

It is also important to note that, most publishing houses in Turkey that publish books about witchcraft also publish self-help books. The reason of this situation may be stemming from the interrelatedness of the concepts of self-development, self-discovery, identity creation, individualization with contemporary witching culture. For example:

In these days, daily life detracts human beings from their own self-awareness, lock people in mundane deeds and force them to live in this setting (of mundanity); and even a little different voice from outside can open a door of change and make them (human beings) regain the self- awareness that they have lost. Our mission is to be one of those “different voices” ( Mitrayayinlari.com, 2016 translation mine).The paragraph above which I found online while examining the website of Mitra Yayınları and translated (in Turkish), proves my claim about “the interrelatedness of the concepts of self-development, self-discovery, identity creation, individualization with contemporary witching culture.”

If we get back to the subject of new genre spellbooks, since the two experienced interviewees, Sirius and Hector specifically mentioned about Scott Cunningham's books, I considered making an investigation about the author necessary. According to Matthew Hannam, Scott Cunningham is one of the authors who contributed to the rise of solitary witch phenomenon, because the spells that appear in his books are specifically designed for solitary practitioners (Hannam, 2016: 74). Scott Cunningham's books have an influencing effect on Silver Ravenwolf. Ravenwolf used Cunningham's solitary witchcraft practices as a reference point and made them more appealing for teenage audience (Martin, 2016: 130). What is interesting is that the same interviewees who spoke highly of Cunningham's books, disparaged Ravenwolf's pieces, probably without knowing the impact of Cunningham on Ravenwolf's books, because when I asked them about their opinions on Ravenwolf and Cunningham, they did not mention about the relationship between the two authors' works. When I asked them their opinions about one of Ravenwolf's most well-known books, *Teen Witch Kit*, they responded as:

Sirius (Male, 26, Izmir): From my point of view, it is a product of marketing. It is exactly like *Witchcraft for Dummies*. On the other hand, authors like Scott Cunningham, take it (the issue of witchcraft) more seriously. He is a person who devoted his life to witchcraft.

Hector (Male, 30, Izmir): It is a product of corruption. People who honestly choose to adopt this path (witchcraft) do not commercialize their beliefs. The ones who do that are kind of people who make money by betraying their belief and their past.

At this point, I find necessary to mention about the content of *Teen Witch Kit*. The book is being advertised on well-known publishing house *Barnes and Noble's* web site with these words:

Here is everything the novice spell-caster needs to practice the Craft of The Wise—and be a force for good. Step into the sacred space and discover the secrets of one of the world's oldest mysteries: the art and science of white magick, a gentle, loving practice. The kit contains a beautifully illustrated book of instruction, plus six magickal talismans (including a silver pentacle pendant), salt, and a spell bag. The kit box converts into your own personal altar.

All of the spells were created especially for teens by Silver RavenWolf, one of today's most famous witches and the author of the bestselling *Teen Witch*. The spells address common concerns such as making and keeping friends, tackling homework, and finding



true love. With step-by-step instructions and clear magickal symbols, the spells are easy to perform (Noble, n.d.).

The kit is presented as an easily accessible form of ancient arcane knowledge(s). The book promises its audiences to make them competent on the “secrets of the world’s oldest mysteries”, through “clear magickal symbols” and the spells which are “easy to perform”. In this sense, the kit seems appealing to the teenagers who do not have all day to work on the rituals, part-time practitioners, in other saying. The kit also contains talismans and other witchery paraphernalia such as salt and spell bag. Therefore, it offers young practitioners who have to receive an allowance from their parents to live off -such as students- an opportunity to acquire the basic witchery paraphernalia by wholesale, for a small fee. Nevertheless, Sirius and Hector hit the right notes in the sense that *Teen Witch Kit* is a product of consumption culture of the contemporary age. Before scrutinizing the relationship between consumption culture and witchcraft, I am going to briefly mention about impact of new technology on witchcraft literature. Therefore, as it was mentioned in the previous part, Sirius underlines the concept of antiquity while he is recommending reading internet texts. This situation can be presented as an evidence to the issue of new technologies’ “seeping into” today’s witchcraft culture. It appears that, there is a correlation between new technology usage and spread of witchcraft literacy. As I observed, young people mostly download books and other sources about witchcraft from internet, in eBook format. In a similar manner, when I was exploring sources, I could manage to find a large number of books (both in English and in Turkish) in eBook format. On the other side, when I went to bookstores in order to check up on the sources about witchcraft, I could find only a limited number of printed books. The most frequent books about witchcraft that translated to Turkish that I could find in popular bookstores were *Dr. Snake’s Voodoo Spellbook* (Dr. Snake’in Voodoo Büyüleri Kitabı in Turkish), and *Wizardology /The Book of Secrets of Merlin* by Dugald A. Steer (Büyü Bilimi Merlin’in Sırları Kitabı in Turkish), so I want to briefly mention about these books. First, as I understood by examining the books, the maintarget group of the books are teenagers who are interested in “mystical” issues. In this sense, these are two good examples of popular new genre witchcraft books that were specifically “produced” for young people who were born into a culture of consumption. The covers of the books are vividly colored, appealingly illustrated and specially designed for creating a façade of esotericism.

For instance, red and black colors of Dr. Snake's Voodoo Spellbook's cover instantly draw the attention. My interviewees also made reference to this book when they are talking about the witchcraft books that were written for teenagers. For example, Hornless Stag, who refuses to categorize his belief and started to be interested in the issue of witchcraft 'as a natural consequence of a paranormal occurrence that he was experienced when he was a child'; said:

Hornless Stag (Male, 28, Ankara) : There is a book, Dr. Whatshisname's Voodoo Something...It is a totally nonsensical book. Crossroads spell, I knew not what...There are so many weird things in that (book). It says, if you pour your loved one's pee into a sack, you will have money. Totally ridiculous...It is just to job to be on the fiddle. It is nothing more than a children's book. The cover of the book is full of red and black (color). Red resembles blood and black resembles darkness. These concepts are related to Voodoo. It is indeed appealing on the outside but when you look inside, you realize that it is useless.

Sirius (Male, 26, Izmir): Dr. Snake's Voodoo Spellbook is a miserable source. It is a marketing product and nothing more. It is a funny book, actually. It says "if you buy this healing oil...", thingy. It is too ridiculous. It is like our fake-psychics (here, he is mentioning about the TV celebrity-psychics who were rather famous in 90s' Turkey). Total fabrication.

Nevermore (Male, 42, Izmir): It is like Harry Potter, in a sense (he is talking about Dr. Snake's Voodoo Spellbook). It is a product that is written for commercial purposes. I think these kind of books unfavorable, because it makes young people get desperate. They are working hard, but they cannot reach to fruition. "Now I am going to do this spell and she will be in love with me." You know, there is no such thing.

Filius (Male, 15, Samsun): I have seen something as "the chance oil" in Dr. Snake's Voodoo Spellbook. I think it is (written) for commercial purposes. You can buy that chance oil thing from the web site of Dr. Snake. He is really selling it.

Hornless Stag also specifically mentioned *about Wizardology/ The Book of Secrets of Merlin* when he was sharing his opinions about the popular books that are easy to come by in many bookstores in Turkey:

Hornless Stag (Male, 28, Ankara): Two years ago, I saw that in a bookstore. It was like a children's book. Actually...You know,

somehow I liked it. It was so colorful, so and so... These things are so attractive for inexperienced teenagers.

The abovementioned statements of witchcraft practitioners has belittling undertones, and this belittlement causes from the commodification of witchcraft, as I observed.

### **Commodification of Witchcraft**

As it can be understood by examining the above-mentioned phrases, interviewees specifically underline the contemporary situation of commercialization of witchcraft, by using the common statements, such as “commercial purposes” and “marketing product”. Indeed, It can be claimed that today’s popular new genre spell books are rather commercialized and commodified. For Heelas, popular spell books are the components “of the spiritual technologies of the New Age that have become a commodified ‘cultural and practical resource’ (Heelas, 1993: 112). *Wizardology/The Book of Secrets of Merlin* by Dugald A. Steer and *Dr.Snake’s Voodoo Spellbook* are two popular spell books that translated in Turkish which can be given as examples suitable for this situation.

The main target group of contemporary commercial market products is “adolescent would be witches” (Aloi, 2016: 13). In other saying, there is an increasing commercialism when it comes to teenage witchcraft. Growth of a commercial market made contemporary witchcraft both more visible and more accessible for the ones who are interested (Aloi, 2016: 74). The decline of life-as religion and the development of “subjective-life spirituality” as consequences of turn to subjective life caused the theme of “subjective well being” become popular in market. The emphasis on “one’s one life” and the “quality of one’s own being” inspired marketing tactics and a new sector has developed. The capitalism market economy has oriented towards spirituality by considering demands of people who are striving for personal development and want to fulfill their personal potentials. This situation can be observed by examining promoting and advertising materials. For example, the “use of the term ‘mind, body, spirituality’ (or variants) insubjective well-being culture” is a rather widespread phenomenon, it is also visible in health and education sectors (Heelas, 2006: 224). This may be the reason behind most of the publishing houses in Turkey which publish books about witchcraft and related concepts, also publish books about self-healing, self-development, etc. The abovementioned spellbooks which targets teenagers also

can be considered as self-development books because these books also touches upon the concept of self-development through spells. In other saying, there is a great effect of commodification of spirituality on publishing sector. When it comes to commodification of witchcraft spiritualities, mentioning about disposal of witchcraft paraphernalia, becomes necessary. As I observed, there are websites which provide the service for online shopping (of witchcraft paraphernalia). For instance “Kırlı Çıkı” is a rather well-known Facebook page within witchcraft communities in Turkey, that people can buy witchcraft “tools” such as magic wands, animal bones, magic potions, herbs, witch altars, spices, God and Goddess figurines, animal teeth, animal carcasses, pelt, papyrus paper, bird feathers, gemstones, crystals, pendants, animal horns, dead insects, handmade notebooks, jewelry, jawbones of sharks, amulets, fairy dust, etc.; online. However, selling witch paraphernalia is a controversial issue. Many people whom I interviewed with, indicated that they are opposed to idea of selling materials of witchcraft. For example:

Aurora (Female, 30, Istanbul): I do not find selling charmed talismans and such things reasonable, because if you decide to handcraft such a talisman, you should design it for a specific person in accordance with his/her needs. You should know that individual personally and become accustomed to his/her energy. For me, there is no such thing as “I am going to make 30 copies (of talismans) and whomever I sell them to, would be able to use (those talismans)”. I do not think that buying ‘finished products’ is reasonable. On the other hand, buying ‘raw materials’ may be necessary in some cases. For instance, during rituals using natural fresh water is more beneficial than using tap water. In such cases, selling such things (raw materials) is no objectionable. Materials such as fresh water, wood blocks, etc. can be sold. There is no problem about it.

Aurora says she was interested in the issues like mythology, witchcraft and spirituality since she was a little child. She is the daughter of an elite family and has high income and works in a prestigious job.

Havsfrun (Female, 22, Istanbul): I never buy anything from those websites (such as Kırlı Çıkı) except for animal carcasses. Carcasses that I cannot be able to find by myself. Dead animals. I would never buy such a thing as a magic wand, so and so... Because you can never be sure about those things origins. For example, somebody else may transmit his/her dark energy to those objects by touching them. Objects ‘gather’ energy. I prefer supplying the things that I use during rituals from nature, by myself.

Sirius (Male, 26, Izmir): There was a website, ‘Tapınak Çöplüğü’. Through that site, they (the owners of the website) were selling a thing called ‘moon water’. You know, you put a glass of water somewhere receives moonlight and ‘charge’ (the water). They were calling it moon water. It is ridiculous to buy such a thing. If you are talking about ‘craft’, you have to do it (charge the water) by yourself. This is (selling witchcraft paraphernalia) is a Western thing. In the West, there are shops where you can buy those stuff. For me, it is not ethical (talking about selling witchcraft paraphernalia). You can buy such things as cauldrons, thingy... Because you cannot make a cauldron at home. On the other side, selling things such things as magic potions, magic wands, etc. is utterly incorrect.

The statements of most of my other interviewees were also similar to those abovementioned. In other saying, most of my interviewees were opposed to the idea of commodification of witchcraft. However, a few of them advocated selling witchcraft paraphernalia. For example, Blackrouge is a teenager who defines herself as a witch and interested in witchcraft since she pulled through a serious illness; says:

Blackrouge (Female, 17, Ankara): I know the moderator of the Facebook page, Kirli Çıkı, personally. She is a great person and she does us a favor (the ones who live in small towns) by selling those things. She deserves the money she gains. I cannot go to the city center in order to buy such things (witchcraft paraphernalia), because I am still receiving an allowance from my parents and going to city center is a huge burden to me. I cannot find those things in here (in the town), so I have to buy those from internet. Besides, there is nowhere that I know which I can buy those things. In this case, she (the moderator of Kirli Çıkı) provides a great service for me and for the people like me.

As Blackrouge asserted that, we cannot mention about the existence of shops which specifically sell witchcraft paraphernalia, in Turkey. As I observed, people who practice witchcraft in Turkey frequently do shopping from herbalists, shops that sell objects from ‘exotic’ places such as India and China, online shops, etc. On the other side, in the West, there are many shops where people can buy witchcraft paraphernalia from, as Sirius indicated. For instance, George D. Chryssides asserts that “New Age shops continue to survive” (Chryssides, 2007: 16), Anna E. Kubiak says that “there are shops known in Warsaw as ‘witches’ shops’ (sklepy czarownic) (Kubiak, 2007: 256), Melissa Harrington mentions about “witch shops” in Britain (Harrington, 2016), etc.

## **The Concept of Self-Awareness and its Relationship with Spellbooks**

There is a correlation between self-awareness and spellbooks. For instance, some spellbooks “provide a slightly more complex spiritual practice that leads into a discovery and awareness of self” (ibid.) For instance, some books of witchcraft which contain spells pave the way for ecological awareness and therefore self-discovery. To make it clear, the emphasis on sacredness of nature is a shared belief by many pagans, and this idea is stemming from the belief that “there is a power within nature” (Cush, 2016: 141) that provides spiritual balance that is needed for accomplishing personal aims. The concept of ecological awareness has also humanitarian connotations. On the contrary of traditional religious philosophy, love of nature and “valuation of the material world” is at the center of many witchcraft spiritualities (Cush, 2016: 152). For instance, “Paganism is more nature- friendly than the monotheistic religions” (McIntosh, 2004: 1039). On the contrary, traditional and institutionalized forms of religiosity were underlining the unimportance of the material world. For example, Islam makes emphasis on afterlife. Furthermore, turning down this-worldly pleasures is a virtue according to Islamic philosophy, and to be rewarded afterlife, a Muslim should consider material world as an examinational phase.

Witchcraft practitioners tend to consider natural areas as their sacred places. This seems like one of the common points between Turkish and westerner witchcraft practitioners. For example:

Hornless Stag (Male, 28, Ankara): If you want to summon an entity (he is talking about demons and/or djinns), you have to go to a natural place, such as a forest. There must not be any other human being around. When I was studying (at university) I was sneaking into a boscaje out of bounds. You know...I was trying to be isolated from other human beings.

Hector (Male, 30, Izmir): I prefer to practice (witchcraft) in the outdoors. When you practice in nature, you feel as happy as a child. Your heart beats like crazy. It (practicing in nature) makes you feel peaceful and happy. According to pagan philosophy, nature is not something apart from human beings. It is inside you and inside all living creatures. I am (a part of) nature, you are (a part of) nature...We use nature's energy. Sirius (Male, 28, Izmir): When you are initiating yourself, the first thing you should do is to believe in yourself. This is the most important point. You must believe in yourself, and then nature and finally in cosmos. Today's rituals are not mystical as old rituals, because people cannot practice in

the nature. In the good old days, people were not disconnected from nature. There are sacred places for me. You know... Natural sites. Nature is sacred. An ancient temple, an old tree... These things are sacred. I very frequently visit natural sites.

As it was indicated by witchcraft practitioners, the individuals who have an interest in witchcraft and the related concepts, are considering nature as a sacred concept. Contemporary witchcraft spirituality differs from traditional witchcraft in the sense that the primeval witchcraft practitioners were attached to external authorities such as priests, priestesses, Gods, etc. On the other side, contemporary forms of witchcraft are self-oriented and encourages self-discovery and this encouragement also stems from the environmental orientation, because environmental concern is a phenomenon of the global age that makes emphasis on individualism. Hence, through investigating nature, young people do investigate their inner worlds at the same time, because as Sirius points out, nature provides a sense of tranquility to young people who were exhausted from the societal and existential anxieties, and makes them feel the sense of “wholeness” that they are seeking for. Many alternative witchcraft practitioners are actively involving in environmental actions. It is a fact that the world is facing serious environmental problems and being involved in environmental actions signalizes societal awareness which may pave the way for self-awareness in the future, because young people can explore and internalize the libertarian ethic of alternative witchcraft spiritualities (as products of global era which empathizes individualization) through participating societal actions with their free will. Participatory worldview is one of the distinctive characteristics of contemporary alternative spiritualities from traditional religiosities. (Ostling, 2003). For example, in Facebook pages which I regularly look over, I frequently behold informative articles about environmental issues and online invitations which invite young people to participate nature conservation events. On the other side, traditional religious belief systems, for instance monotheistic religions were based on causality.

Kate West's books *The Real Witches' Kitchen* and *The real Witches' Garden* can be considered as the spellbooks which the audience can get inspiration from for self-discovery and self-awareness. When I examined these books, I realized that the books imbue the reader(s) with environmental awareness and the idea of having a participatory role in environmental services. The author makes emphasis on love of nature and gives her audience information about botanic, at least to some degree. In the introduction

part of another book of hers, *The Real Witches' Craft*, Kate West evidently makes emphasis on the importance of self-discovery and awareness with these words:

The path of the Craft is as much a journey of self-exploration as it is a journey into other worlds. if not more so. To understand what lies around us we have to develop and refine our own self-knowledge and awareness. We need to put aside the limitations we learned through our formative years so that we can appreciate the skills and talents we truly have. It is only through a process of self-development that we can become who we're really capable of being, and thereby truly able to realize the magic we know we're capable of working to help ourselves and the world around us. (West, 2010).

In fact, the above-mentioned statements perfectly sums up the relationship between the alternative witchcraft spiritualities and the concept of individualization.

Filius (Male, 15, Samsun): There is a book: *The Real Witches' Kitchen*. It is not being published anymore. I found it from the internet and read it in eBook format. That book contributed to my practice a lot.

According to my observations, especially the younger witchcraft practitioners –like Filius- read Kate West's books and take those books rather seriously. On the other side, the more experienced practitioners tend to underestimate the role of such books on the subjectivity creation process of teenagers. On the other side, nearly all of the teenagers whom I met through the Whatsapp group, Pagan Folk Turkey, were reading West's books and I may claim that, they were at least establishing a sense of environmental awareness by reading those books. For instance, most of them were talking about the importance of protecting nature, animals, etc. by making reference to West's books.

### **Gendered Characteristics of Contemporary Media Representations**

Alongside environmentalism, feminism and gay movement are two other collective movements which have an impact on the new genre spell books and encourage self-discovery. For instance, some spell books make an emphasis on the issue of feminism and gender equality and raise an interest in actively participate in feminism. Witchcraft emerged as a *large scaled* movement in parallel with the rise of feminist ideology, in 1960s and 1970s in the West. At this time, patriarchal characteristic of Christianity started to be seen as an oppressive factor upon feminine identity, so many



feminist women “turned to alternative religious traditions” which glorifies goddess figure (Bogdan, 2008: 146). Paganism was “the first religion in the west to accept and promote the feminine face of the divine” (Harrington, 2016: 37).

Rising interest in feminism also effected the other alternative witchcraft spiritualities along with paganism, for instance, feminist movement contributed to the spread of Neo-Paganism (McIntosh, 2004: 1039), “the Goddess movement” as a different version of Wiccan spirituality bears the traces of New Age spirituality (Bogdan, 2008:147), the “North American forms of Wicca took on a decidedly feminist slant” (Tosenberger, 2010: 178), etc. Insomuch as, for Peg Aloi, “Wicca is a Indo-European rooted word which “refers to female practitioner of witchcraft” (Aloi, 2016: 5).

The experience of victimization makes some young females be inclined towards witchcraft. The rituals, practices and belief system of witchcraft helps them to get the better of this experience of victimization (Aloi, 2016: 99). It can be claimed that, victimization is not only being experienced by women, LGBT people may also go through victimization and gravitate towards witchcraft. Weaver was one of my interviewees and he was an ‘openly gay’ person (as he stated himself) who also tried to practice witchcraft, and he criticized victimized individuals’ appliance to witchcraft:

Weaver (Male, 21, Istanbul): Homosexuality is (a concept that is) hard to understand, especially in nowadays and in our society. Homosexual individuals need power in order to ‘survive’. They (homosexual people) want to ‘cut corners’ and acquire power through magic, instead of make an effort (to acquire power). I observed that, LGBT people who cannot embrace their own identities are trying to browbeat and frighten others (heterosexual individuals) and be accepted by society by saying “I am a witch, stay away from me; otherwise you will be cursed!”

Nevermore (Male, 42, Izmir): Five years ago, I met with a girl through internet. She was living in Ankara. She was such a beautiful girl, I liked her. We have talked to her through Skype and Facebook, for a while. Then we decided to talk face to face. She suddenly said that “I have to tell you something, I am not a virgin.” I answered: “So...What is the big deal?” and she said: “Aren’t you going to ask me why (I am not a virgin)?” It was ridiculous. I said: “It is none of my business, but if you want to tell me and get it off your chest, then tell me.” And she told me that during a ritual some guys deflowered her. There is not such a ritual, I know. Probably, some guys made up that (ritual) and raped her.

Those ‘victimization stories’ that Weaver and Nevermore mentioned above goes parallel with the scholars’ claims in the sense that individuals who experience victimization gravitate towards practicing magic. On the other hand, victimization may not be the only reason that make young women and/or LGBT people inclined towards witchcraft. However, it is a fact that there are some spellbooks which target young women and emphasize the issue of self-empowerment, therefore, it can be claimed that –by also considering the tendency of contemporary publishing houses towards publishing books about popular concepts which increase correspondingly along with societal needs- those kind of books proves the reality of young women’s and also LGBT people’s –who experienced victimization- seeking for self-empowerment.

The new genre spell books generally have pink and/or purple covers, they are full of illustrations, and “recipes for performing spells”. The spells are generally related to the issues of love and money, and because of this reason according to Douglas Ezzy, the spells “are designed for young teenage or pre-teen women.” Spells “provide a technology of self- empowerment especially for women” (Ezzy, 2003: 48). What is more, according to some academic articles, especially teenage girls are tend to solve their problems by practicing magic (Aloi, 2016: 20). For Douglas Ezzy says:

There are spells for making yourself attractive, to find your true love, to deal with disappointment in love, for getting rid of a problematic lover, and to get rid of your new boyfriend’s ex-girlfriend. There are also spells for getting wealthy, including how to succeed at gambling, and home protection spells. (Ezzy, 2003: 48).

Moreover, these spell books which are specifically designed for female readers are more prevalent and popular in the West. I realized this situation when I was carrying out a media analysis. In Turkey, young individuals tend towards reading informational sourcebooks, internet texts, etc. rather than reading spellbooks. This situation may be stemming from the relative scarcity of spellbooks that were written in Turkish or translated in Turkish.

Contemporary media texts commercialize “young and beautiful” witch figures (Foltz, 2005: 147). As James Lewis claims, “because the teen witch literature appeals primarily to young women, the movement is becoming increasingly dominated by women” and the movement is gaining a more and more feminine characteristic (Lewis,

2016: 21). However, by considering my interviewees' statements, I can argue that this is not the case in Turkey.

Dignification of female power and rejection of paternal authority are two of the ways of contemporary young witchcraft practitioners' expression of their unparalleled experiences. It is a fact that witches are being mostly described as female in TV series and movies, but it does not mean that male witchcraft practitioners does not exist. There are many male practitioners in the West who were drawn to witchcraft (Aloi and Johnston, 2016: 8). I argue that, the quantity of male witchcraft practitioners may be above the quantity of female practitioners in Turkey; according to my estimations which are based on my observations and interviews. For example, fourteen of my total seventeen interviewees were male. At least, It can be said that the male practitioners more visible than female ones in Turkey. On the other hand, it seems like female witchcraft practitioners are being responded more positively than male ones, in the West. The impact of media images on this situation is incontrovertible. For instance, according to Aloi, "Goth boys are being targeted as potential criminals", on the other side the girls who adopt Gothic fashion, listen to heavy metal music, etc. are being considered as physically attractive and desirable (Aloi, 2016:120).

Famous American TV series such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Charmed* and the movie of *The Craft* and suchlike texts on teenage witch literature presents a representation of power which "my otherwise be lacking". The images of femininity that is presented by such texts are rather self-determining, sexually independent and empowered, and the represented identities are gendered (Aloi, 2016: 99). Along with abovementioned TV series, there are also other 'more contemporary' TV series and movies which emphasize female power. For example, many of my interviewees mentioned about *American Horror Story* (TV series) and *Twilight Saga* (movie series that based on the novel trilogy of Stephanie Meyer), when they are talking about the gendered media representations of witchcraft. When I glanced those visual popular media products, I also realized that both in *American Horror Story* and *Twilight Saga*, female characters are being represented as liberated, powerful and self-reliant human beings. For instance, in the third season of *American Horror Story* (the season's title is *Coven*), there is a character, Madison Montgomery, who practices witchcraft and gets rid of victimization by the way of magic. In an episode, a group of college boys rape and videotape Madison, and she takes revenge by casting a spell over and killing them.

Similarly, in Twilight Saga, at first, the main female character, Bella Swan, is being portrayed as a 'loser' who is withdrawn from society. However, Bella becomes a vampire after a while and acquires the ability of protecting herself from malicious actions of other vampires, by using her supernatural powers. There are also visual popular media products, such as TV series, in Turkey which treat the topic of witchcraft. For instance, 'Selena' is one of the most popular TV shows in Turkey which is about witchcraft. In this TV series, orphan sisters discard evil with the help of a white witch named Selena. Similarly, *Acemi Cadı* was a popular Turkish TV show which was about a teenage witch's adventures, who was getting rid of peer pressure by appealing magic.

As It can be deduced by examining abovementioned statements, media representations which depict female practitioners are quite positive. On the other hand, when It comes to male witchcraft practitioners, especially the young ones, both media's and people's responses may not be so positive. For example, Danielle Kirby mentions about "Satanism scare of the 1980s" in the west, within the framework of media representations (Kirby, 2014: 15). Similarly, negative media representations caused Satanism scare in the 1990s, in Turkey. In the subsequent chapter, I will be examining this issues of Satanism scare and impact of negative media representations on young witchcraft practitioners; and while examining the issue I will be using some parts from another study of mine which I completed before, so I will be making self-references.

### **The Effect of Negative Media Representations on Youth Identity**

Although we cannot mention about a specific repugnance of society to male witchcraft practitioners, in the 90s, young males who wear black, listen to metal music, etc. had their share of accusations of Satanism, in Turkey; and some of those people who "look like Satanists" were witchcraft practitioners.

Conspiracy narratives and allegations about the crimes which were supposedly committed by 'Satanists' captured mainstream media's attention and became quite prevalent towards the end of the 1990s, in Turkey. The crimes that imputed to Satanists were ranging from suicide promotion to murder and animal sacrifice. However, the accusations that reported in the news were questionable, and the addressee of the news was quite ambiguous. This situation caused moral panic, paranoia and, related to this, victimization of certain groups such as followers of metal-rock

subculture. Statements that caused teenagers to become target for accusations have been widely circulated through printed media, and caused to spread of conspiracy narratives.(self citation). For instance, the paragraph below was translated from a newspaper article, and it can be presented as an example of the aspect of Turkish media against marginal-looking young people.

Heavy-metal fans usually wear black clothes. They prefer wearing printed T-shirts with scary symbols and illustrations on them. Satanists usually grow their hair and they generally have goatee beards. They wear pentagram and/or inverted cross shaped accessorizes (Zaman, 26 September 2000).

I also conducted interviews with people who experienced Satanist accusations, and the statements of the interviewees prove the victimization of people because of negative representations. For example, Enoch, as a spiritual Satanist, mentioned about the accusations that he experienced with below-mentioned statements:

Enoch: People who like to wear black were accused for being Satanists. Heavy-metal fans were being considered as criminals (laughing). Media exaggerated the issue and built an empire of fear. As a consequence, black-wearing or long haired young people were beaten, arrested, accused, etc. In other saying, the opposite party became 'Satanic' and did really bad things. I know somebody who was beaten terribly 12 years ago for wearing black clothes. He was attacked by strangers and injured seriously. People were also being accused by legal authorities, although there is no legal code about Satanism. You cannot arrest anybody for being a Satanist. In 1990s, it was a daily act for police officers to bust Akmar Passage. Satanic fanzines sold there and it was the meeting point of heavy-metal fans and Satanists. Shop owners were arrested for selling drugs.

Enoch's declarations give us an idea about the negative effect of media on young people. On the other side, even the members of 'adult community' were accused of being Satanists, in 90s. For example Apache, was a record shop keeper in Akmar Pasaji, and he also mentioned about the victimization that he experienced because of his profession and outlook:

Apache (Male, 58, Istanbul): They (policemen) asked me for somebody who could talk about Satanism. They said: "we are looking for Satanists" and I responded: "Satanists are not hanging around here". Towards the evening, police officers busted the passage. They were looking for fanzines and other stuff. They

collected the fanzines, CDs and even a tourism magazine! They took me to the police station. They did not even let me take my coat. They took me to Bayrampaşa (police station) and placed me under arrest. They did so because of the fanzines. I was selling them. (They said that) fanzines were propagandizing Satanism, I did not know that. There is no legal code for Satanism. They put me under arrest, because they assumed that the criminals planned the murder in here (Akmar Passage). They (police officers) tortured some people. They tortured innocent people. Some of them still cannot come to the passage because of that inherited fear. If you want to interview with them –I warn you- they will never talk to you. People (talking about customers) are still asking for “Satanic T-shirts and Satanists’ stuff”. This is totally ridiculous. What is a “Satanic T-shirt?” This is silly. They say that, this is Satanist’s passage. This is not true.

It is an erroneous assuming that people who wear black, listen to metal music, have long hairs and piercings, etc. are who have an interest in esotericism, occultism, New Age, witchcraft, etc.; as accusing them as ‘potential’ Satanists. I claim that people’s way of dressing is not related to their inclinations. On the other hand, people who want to feel special may express themselves through witchcraft and reflect this chosen spiritual identity through their dressing styles. In other words, dressing style, therefore the goods that are being consumed by young people may function as the ‘tools’ which they reflect their ‘uniqueness’ and ‘specialness’ upon, and those goods also function as indicating marks that shows in which group the juvenile uses them belong to. There are some academic works also goes parallel with the claims of mine. For example:

The omnipresent physical displays of identity through clothing, hairstyles, and accessories are assurances of recognition of not only one’s individual identity but also of one’s place in the larger peer group. Preppy, Goth, or Geek, each group is marked by specific consumer choices that identify their members not only as individuals but also as members of these social networks (Deutsch and Theodorou, 2010: 231).

This dual exercise, of individuation of self and connection to a social group, results in a relationship with material culture wherein consumption is used to both mark and mask difference. As Mary Pattillo- McCoy (1999) noted in her study of Black youth in Chicago, “[the youth] use their own bodies and the accessories that adorn them as status markers and symbols of identity . . . [they are] walking mega-malls forever trying to stay in material dialogue with their friends as well as their enemies” (p. 146). Teens can differentiate themselves from their parents and other youth through the consumption of goods associated with distinct adolescent subcultures (e.g., punk, jock, hip-hop, etc). In doing so,

youth can claim a sense of individual identity that also links them to a group identity, thereby balancing their needs for individuation of self (from both adults and non-in-group peers) and connection to others (in-group peers) (Deutsch and Theodorou, 2010: 231).

As it can be construed by examining above-mentioned paragraphs, the consumption goods may be used as the indication marks of young people's spiritual beliefs. I argue that, books can also be considered as such consuming products which function as indication marks, and I can say that I extrapolated this idea through examining the indictments of my interviewees. The books that chosen by individuals may also reflect readers' political inclinations, along with their spiritual beliefs.

### **Counter-cultural?**

Desire to be different, the wish of having a place in the society and controlling destiny and unexpectedness of contemporary life make young people be inclined towards alternative witchcraft spiritualities, but choosing to become a witchcraft practitioner may also be "a part of a larger counter-cultural protest". According to Denise Cush, "involvement in esoteric practices tend to be correlated with counter-cultural political engagement" (Cush, 2016: 151), and the idea of "being different than others" may also be stemming from having counter-political ideologies. In this sense, I asked my interviewees about their thoughts on the current political situation in Turkey, I got interesting answers. For example:

Calus: Within last 10-15 years, conservatism risen in Turkey, and this situation made (Turkish) people prejudicial against others who are not religious. In response to this, opposite party became adverse against Islam. It is like self-defense. I assume that you have seen the voting rote of AKP in Holland. It was approximately seventy percent. I was an atheist before (becoming a pagan), because of the issue of politicization of religions in contemporary age. For instance, here (in Holland) there is a conflict between religions. There is a politic battle of dominance between Christianity and Islam.

Sirius: My father was a socialist, so he was not even passing by a mosque. My mother is Muslim but she is not a conservative, not a bigot. I was raised by easygoing parents. What is more, in Izmir, people are not so conservative. Because of these reasons, It (coming out as a pagan) did not stir up a problem.

Nevermore: AKP's political dominance is neither a coincidence, nor a joke. This is the reality of Turkey. In Anatolia, if you are praying five times in a day, you can do whatever you want; because Turkish people are simple-minded. I do not have a problem with headscarfed people, such-and-such. There is no difference

between you (he points at me) and a headscarfed person for me. What disturbs me is another thing. The perception of people who become aroused sexually when they see woman hair disturbs me. This is not genuine Islam. It is the corrupted version of Islam that is experienced in Turkey. Is committing pedophilia legally prohibited in Turkey? Yes, it is. Muhammed's wife was nine years old. If it is sunna, should we also marry underage women, too? Islam in Turkey is the degenerated version of Islam. Because of this reason, the young people, especially teenagers turn their steps towards alternative spiritualities. It is an action of rebellion for them.

Aurora: (The politics of) AKP degenerated Islam. They legalize their actions under cover of religion. They pressurize and discriminate people by exploiting the religion. People in Turkey separated into two groups because of them: "ourselves" and "the others". They made people backslide and put off by Islam. I think maybe because of this reason people started to be interested in the issues like paganism in recent times. Atheism also became really popular lately. There are two kinds of people: the ones who fully reject religiosity, and the others who feel some kind of spirituality within themselves. Latter group incline towards paganism and such, Wicca, witchcraft, etc. Moreover, these concepts also became very popular recently.

### **Wish of 'Feeling Special'**

The books written by Turkish authors can be considered as the onset of the exploration and learning processes of the young people who are interested in the issue of witchcraft. It is because young people generally look for the sources which are written in Turkish, and they can find these books of popular authors like Ergun Candan and Erhan Altunay, easily. For example:

Sirius: When I was thirteen, I read Ergun Candan's book. I do not remember the title of the book, but as I remember it contained information about parapsychology, telekinesis, etc. I started with that book. When I read that (book), I understood that I was (a pagan). It was implicit in me. I knew that. I was always keen on it. I remember that when I was a child I was praying, talking to God and saying "I know that there is no such thing (supernatural), but I please let it be so!" When I found that book (Ergun Candan's book) in Migros (a supermarket)... Indeed, I found it in Migros (he says this laughingly) and cheered up. I felt so happy because of realizing that "there is really a such thing". Later, I read Candan's other books, too.



The young people who need to feel themselves “special” and “different than others” (as one of my interviewees, Blackrouge indicates, too) within a society that they feel that they are alienated and disconnected from; may and do assume that they finally found the evidence of their specialness when they discover the books that contain information about seemingly self-empowering forms of spirituality. In this sense, I assume that some books may be functioning as “actuating force” that inspire an interest in witchcraft and correspondingly start the process of self-discovery and self-empowerment. This is exactly what happened to Sirius when he came upon with Ergun Candan’s book in a supermarket. As he indicated himself, he “has always wanted to believe that he was special and there is a thing called supernatural” and he thought that he found the wherewithal proof when he read the book. In fact, this “I want to believe” scheme is pertaining to neither Sirius, not Turkish youth. It is a common point for many young individuals from all around the world, who feel a spiritual void and do not know how to deal with the existential anxiety that is caused by postmodernity and the global age, as it was explored in the previous chapters.

There are significant flaws in our ability to know how well we are performing and to understand how likely it is that we are accurate in our judgements. Perhaps the best illustration of this cognitive weakness is the statistically illogical tendency of the average person to believe he or she is more competent than the average human being. Most people think that they are better parents and spouses than most others. Automobile drivers think they drive more safely than most others, managers believe their business skills are above average, and teachers pride themselves in didactic skills that exceeded those of their peers. Furthermore, there is evidence that those who are less competent on any given task have more difficulty recognizing their true level of ability than do more competent individuals. In experimental settings, it can also be shown that even artificially induced self-serving attributes are nearly impervious to disconfirming evidence. People who in a first phase of an experiment were made to believe that they had certain above-average interpersonal skills [...] (Hammer, 2008: 454).

As it can be understood by examining above phrase, the tendency for believing that the assumption of being “more competent than the average human being” is not intrinsic only to young people who practice witchcraft, but I argue that these “flaws in ability to know how well we are performing” is one of the reasons which make juveniles inclined towards spiritual rituals that would make them feel special and empowered.

Practicing witchcraft, casting spells and such “give young people a sense of identity, a control over and meaning in their lives and help them deal with their problems” and enhance their self-esteem (Cush, 2016: 148). Relucif’s statements can be given an example for this situation:

Relucif (Male, 26, Istanbul): Jiddu Krishnamurti says: “It is no measure of health to be well adjusted to a profoundly sick society.” For us, (talking about the satanic order he used to be a member) this society consists of the people who are being controlled by elite, who obey, believe unquestioningly, and who are being controlled like puppets by the help of perception management. Sick and disempowered people. The members of the order were different than others. Some of them were smarter than other people, some of them were thinking differently, some of them had extraordinary savor...Because of such reason, most of them were excluded from the society. The others have chosen to live as recluses. Contrary to what is believed, we were not maniacs in black who listen to metal and rock music. The opposite way round, we were individuals who read a lot, love to learn and explore, get good marks and have the ability of dialectical thinking. These were the common points which unified us. We were all aware of this fact (we were different from other human beings). It was something that we have always known. When I came across with it (the order’s doctrine) while surfing in the internet, I felt that I was reading about something that I already know. It was just that...It was like somebody denominated the situation that I have always live in.

### **The Politicization of Spiritual Beliefs**

There are also other popular informational source books which treat the issues like witchcraft, mysticism, occultism, etc., written by Turkish authors and I cannot categorize as neither spellbooks, nor pieces of fantasy literature. Turkish author Erhan Altunay’s books the first example that comes into my mind when it comes to the most popular books in Turkey that are dealing with the issues like esotericism, occultism, New Age, mysticism, witchcraft, etc. *Kadim Cadılık Öğretisi/Wicca*, *Paganizm-1/Kadim Bilgeliğe Giriş*, *Paganizm-2/ Mezopotamya-Mısır*, *Mısır’ın Ölüler Kitabı* and *Tibet’in Ölüler Kitabı* are some of the most well-known works of Erhan Altunay. Ergun Candan is another Turkish author that writes books about esotericsm, mysticism, occultism and witchcraft. *Ezoterizme Giriş*, *Gizli Sırlar Öğretisi* and *Kiyamet Alametleri* are Candan’s best-selling books. My interviewees also made reference to Altunay’s and Candan’s book

while mentioning about the source books written by Turkish authors that they can easily access.

Filius: I have bought this book (he shows me the book). Kadim Cadılık Öğretisi. I wanted to have theoretical knowledge, so I specifically chose this book. However, when I examined the book I realized that it contains inaccurate knowledge. There are rituals for summoning Gods and Goddesses, but the way of rituals is so wrong. These can be considered as prayers, not rituals. Such a book that supposed to be giving information at the beginner's level and which contains inaccurate knowledge may be misleading for its audience. Original rituals contain dance and music. They are not like prayer-like oral practices.

Blackrouge: I do not know English, so I cannot read in English, so I started with reading books in Turkish. I have read Erhan Altunay's books. Given that I am living in a small town, I cannot be able to find the books that I want to read. I bought Erhan Altunay's Wicca Something. I cannot remember the title of the book right now. It was generally about Wicca. I learned how to read Tarot cards, what to do during (spiritual) festivals, about herbalism etc. from that book.

Sirius: The knowledge at the beginner's level may be acquired by reading Erhan Altunay's books. You know, general concepts, basic knowledge...Altunay also publishes online texts on a web site: [www. hermetics.org](http://www.hermetics.org)

As the statements of the interviewees prove that, Erhan Altunay's books easy to come by, and it seems like the books rather popular within witchcraft community in Turkey. Even the interviewees who did not specifically mention about Altunay's books, indicated that they know about the author and his books. Similarly, when it comes to Turkish authors who write about the issues related to witchcraft, nearly all of my interviewees touched upon Ergun Candan. One of my interviewees, Enoch, borrowed me a book of Candan which is entitled as *Ezoterizme Giriş* and wanted me to "read and examine it in order to make me see the issue through the perspective of the practitioners". When I read the book, I observed that the book indeed was like a source book, including "encyclopedic" and "historical" information with arguable validity. Nevertheless, the book helped me in the sense that I could more easily understand the concepts which the people whom I interviewed with frequently refer to. I also observed that the book was written throughout the lens of an "esoteric" who was raised in Turkey, and it contains "Anatolian motifs". For instance, the author frequently make

reference to Anatolian culture and implicitly claims that the esoteric culture and witchcraft practices originated from Anatolian culture and appropriated by westerners, later. He also mentions about the relationship between Islamic culture and esotericism, and most interestingly he claims that Mustafa Kemal, “the founder of Republic of Turkey” was interested in esotericism. Candan indicates that, Mustafa Kemal put an end to operation of lodges and zawiyahs, because he “very well knew that at that time (twentieth century), there was no need for such organism anymore; because the era of self-initiation has come.” (Candan, 2013: 63). In other words, the author suggests that Mustafa Kemal had esoteric beliefs himself, he did not mean to put an end to occult culture in Turkey by closing up lodges and zawiyahs; oppositely, his main aim was to put an end to “corruption” of esotericism. He also indicates that “the members those corrupted organizations were not focusing on philosophy like they did in ancient times, and they were opponents of Mustafa Kemal who were yearning for devastating Republic of Turkey.” (Candan, 2013: 63). In this respect, Candan recreates the secular discourse—intentionally or unintentionally— through seemingly counter-secularist assertions. Hence, there is a latent dichotomy of secularism and counter-secularism within the statements of the author. This dichotomist relationship of Turkish citizens with the concepts that stemmed from the West is not a new phenomenon, and it is mainly caused by the instant implementation of the reforms.

Mustafa Kemal called incessantly for the need for Turkey to abandon the old path for the new one, represented by Western civilisation, in order to ‘take the place it deserved within the family of civilised nations’. In order to accomplish the process of civilisation as soon as possible, Atatürk devised a disconcerting series of laws, which were prepared and implemented in the space of very few years, at a very fast pace. The announcement of a new measure was always as sudden as the explosion of a bomb, and its approval by parliament was even quicker. No time was left for gradual adaptation [...]” (Bottoni, 2007: 185).

Laicism is the Turkish version of secularism, and it has distinguishing characteristics. The secularization of society could not keep pace with the secularization of institutions, so an adaptation problem occurred within the society (Bottoni, 2007). What is more, Mustafa Kemal took example by the western secularization when making religious reforms, thus his reforms were representing “modernism of the western world”. However, republic of Turkey was “designed” as a nation state, so trying to adapt westernization while being nationalistic at the same time caused the emergence of a love-

hate sensation when it comes to western concepts. Ergun Candan's above-mentioned expressions which advocates esotericism upon laicism discourse can be given as an example for the issue of love-hate relationship between Turkish citizens and the western concepts. Hence, we can trace back the perception and "confusion" of Turkish individuals by examining the contemporary books which treat spiritual topics. Moreover, Candan's claims about the origins about the origins of esotericism bear the traces of nationalistic characteristics of secularist reforms of Mustafa Kemal. Therefore, It can be claimed that there is an incontrovertible impact of local culture and history on even the books which are about the topics that are popular around the world; therefore the books of Turkish authors have a glocal characteristics.

Adopting a spiritual identity maybe cannot be considered as a form of 'counter-political action', but it can be said that the individuals who practice non-Islamic witchcraft, namely the ones who adopt an alternative witchcraft spirituality; are generally tend to have politically non-mainstream leanings. I can claim so on the strength of my interviewees' assertions. As it can also be observed by above examples, all of my interviewees were opposing the current dominant political ideology of Turkey. It is expectable that those individuals who have non-mainstream leanings feel unattached from the society, therefore they may feel 'different' than other members of the society, and this feeling of difference may be acknowledged as a positive thing by some individuals, therefore they may seek for the spiritualities which would make them feel unique.

### **The Effect of Fantasy Literature Upon Youth Spiritual Identity**

Popularization of fantasy novels in parallel with the expansion of the ideologies like feminism and individualism, increasing interests in ancient history and ecological issues, are some of the factors that galvanized individuals' interest in witchcraft. Feminist and ecological movements became widespread in the last decades of twentieth century, and these now-mainstream notions also contributed to popularity of fantasy novels along with spellbooks, magazines and the other books which treats the topics of witchcraft, esotericism, occultism, etc. "Rise of occultism and mysticism" within the obscure movement of New Age, also had an increasing effect on popularization of fantasy literature (Ezzy and Berger, 2016: 46–47).

The "teen witch" phenomenon has become present within witchcraft community, and then it also became a rather popular topic publishing sector, and fantasy

novels about witchcraft which targets young people became popular accordingly. For instance:

It is a fact that, fantasy literature contributed to the issue of—at least visible- teen interest in witchcraft, even if it is not the main reason. Young people have not heard about witchcraft or the concepts which are related to witchcraft such as Wicca, paganism, etc. until reading fantasy literature; start to be impressed by the positive imagery of witchcraft practitioners who have a moral sense and practice beneficial magic. These “new” positive imagery of witches and wizards in literature is a rather recent occurrence.

Blackrouge (Female, 17, Ankara): My best friend (who is also a practitioner) is nuts about Harry Potter. When Twilight series published, I was also pacing around, saying “Jacob, Jacob...” (Jacob is one of the main characters of Twilight series). I was such a teen then. However, I did not dream about such thing...I did not say (that) “I wish I could be a vampire”. Probably, she (my best friend) also does not try to be a wizard (like Harry Potter). Even so, before that (before reading Harry Potter and Twilight) we did not know anything about it (witchcraft). We were not aware of it.

Aotenju (Male, 17, Antalya): Popular culture paves the way for ancient knowledge to go public, entertainingly. For this reason, I have a favorable opinion about the products of popular culture. I also first started to be interested in paganism and similar topics by dint of popular culture products. I frequently read Japanese manga.

The abovementioned examples prove that young witchcraft practitioners have a ‘close relationship’ with popular fantasy literature. Their assertions go parallel with my claims in the sense that they are being appealed by popular fantasy literature and the visual media representations -such as movies- based on fantasy literature, even if the impact of fantasy literature is not the main reason that makes young individuals incline towards witchcraft spiritualities. I am going to specifically mention about two examples of fantasy literature which my interviewees frequently referred to.

Harry Potter craze which first appeared in 1997, can be given as one of the most well-known examples of the reflections of correspondingly risen popularity of witchcraft, on fantasy literature. The question should be asked at this point is, whether Harry Potter—as an example of popular fantasy novels of the 90s which treat the subject of witchcraft- is a consequence of popularity of witchcraft, or the impact of fantasy novels on young people has caused a rise of interest in witchcraft. I argue that the relationship is reciprocal. Harry Potter is a fantasy novel that “enchants the world” and

accommodates the spiritual needs of young people (Harrington, 2016: 26). The novel is about the adventures of an orphan whose name is Harry Potter, in a wizardry school. The novel indeed presents its audience an appealing fantasy world which is full of magic and miracles. The characters of the novel resort to witchcraft when they are in a tight corner. In other saying, the characters manage to escape from difficult situations by appealing to magic. Such an imaginary world may be functioning as an imaginary “bolt hole” for the young people who are struggling with the everyday problems of contemporary age. Lord of the Rings series –which consists of three books: The Fellowship of the Ring, The Two Towers and The Return of the King- by J.R.R Tolkien is also one of the most well-known examples of fantasy literature, and it is slightly different than other counterparts of fantasy literature. First of all, the publishing date of Lord of the Rings dates back to 1950s, that is to say, the novel cannot be considered as one of the popular products of the “millennial era”. However, the novel became popular again in 2000s, with the impact of the same titled movies that based on Tolkien’s novels and directed by Peter Jackson. The imaginary world that was created by Tolkien was turned into a screenplay grandiosely under favor of new technology, so the movie created a tremendous impression around the world and the popularity of the novels also increased correspondingly. Many of my interviewees referred to Lord of the Rings novel series when I asked them about their opinions on the popular fantasy novels which have an inspiring influence over young people who are interested in witchcraft.

Enoch (Male, 18, Istanbul): The Lord of the Rings...You know, weird creatures and such...These things impressed teenagers.

Ashrenia (Male, 25, Istanbul): Maybe they (teenagers) are being impressed, but...They do not talk about it. I did not hear about anybody as yet who says “I like Gandalf and I want to make my magic wand light up just like him”.

Filius (Male, 15, Samsun): In fact, I am a little bit a fantastic person. You know, I like to watch and read The Lord of the Rings and such...I really like fantastic literature; so the word, sorcerer, appeals me. I like it when somebody calls me “sorcerer” aside from pagan or Wiccan. I would love to be called as a sorcerer.

The abovementioned statements of my interviewees jibe with my presumptions about the impact of fantasy literature on the rising trend of witchcraft within youth communities, in Turkey. In a similar manner with their peers in the west, Turkish juveniles are also being fascinated and correspondingly influenced by popular

fantasy literature. Based on my observations, I can make a claim in such a way that, rather than the novels which attract relatively younger audience, such as Harry Potter, more “recondite” books written for adult audience are being taken more seriously by witchcraft communities. Interviewees were tending to disparage novels such as Harry Potter, while they were speaking highly of Lord of the Rings and the other books of Tolkien, for instance Hobbit. This situation may be resulting from that the perception that Tolkien’s novels are works of high literature, according to assertions of my interviewees. For instance: Crimson (Male, 25, Ankara): “Teen witch” (he says that in English) products, such as Harry Potter... These things became very popular in nowadays and damaged the concepts like Wicca and paganism, and caused the emergence of a weird culture. People who claim that they can do anything with a magic wand and people who are under the assume that they can acquire anything with saying one or two words showed up. People who are aware with the fairies... People who see life through rose- tinted glasses... Because of this, I can only give a favorable opinion when I consider them as works of art. At the present time, there are many proper source books in our country. Anyway, ancient concepts such as Wicca and paganism should not be corrupted by such products of popular culture.

As I observed, the more experienced witchcraft practitioners tend to belittle fantasy literature, and especially the movies based on fantasy literature. On the other side, teenage practitioners more openly declared their knowledge on popular fantasy literature.

### **Witchcraft Spirituality as an Answer to the Question of Self-Identity**

Young individuals maybe unconsciously trying to possess ontological security and cope with existential anxiety, by “falling back upon” fantasy worlds.

Since the self is a somewhat amorphous phenomenon, self-identity cannot refer merely to its persistence over time [...] Self-identity, in other words, is not something that is just given, as a result of the continuities of the individual’s action-system, but something that has to be routinely created and sustained in the reflexive activities of the individual. [...] Self-identity is not a distinctive trait, or even a collection of traits, possessed by the individual. It is the self as reflexively understood by the person in terms of her or his biography. Identity here still presumes continuity across time and space: but self- identity is such continuity as interpreted reflexively by the agent. This includes the cognitive component of personhood. To be a ‘person’ is not just to be a reflexive actor, but to have a concept of a person (as applied both to the self and others). What a ‘person’ is understood to be



certainly varies across cultures, although there are elements of such a notion that are common to all cultures. [...] (Giddens, 1991: 53).

Postmodernity gives rise of obscurity and the sense of uncertainty and turns upside- down the relationship between individuals and the society, so the individuals' continuities of action-system may not go straight, therefore the process of routine creation of reflexive activities is being interrupted. Hence forth, in such a slippery ground of contemporary postmodern environment, individuals may head towards alternative imaginary fantasy worlds that they can artificially maintain the routine creation of reflexive activities that they need in order to possess self-identity. Since "the self as reflexively understood by the person in terms of her or his biography", and "identity presumes continuity across time and space, but self-identity is the continuity as interpreted reflexively by the agent", on the other hand we cannot mention about a linear perception of time and space because of the state of flux as a consequence of postmodern contemporary age; the individuals may choose to create their self-identity within the consistent sensation of time and space that provided by the advantage of imaginary fantasy worlds, and they do so "on the level of the unconscious and practical consciousness". Therefore, "falling back upon" fantasy worlds may provide answers for the existential question of self-identity, and stirs an artificial feeling of ontological security. What is more, self-identity cannot be possessed separately from the societal and the interpersonal relations.

A person with a reasonably stable sense of self-identity has a feeling of biographical continuity which she is able to grasp reflexively and, to a greater or lesser degree, communicate to other people. That person also, through early trust relations, has established a protective cocoon which 'filters out', in the practical conduct of day-to-day life, many of the dangers which in principle threaten the integrity of the self. Finally, the individual is able to accept that integrity as worthwhile. There is sufficient self-regard to sustain a sense of the self as 'alive' – within the scope of reflexive control, rather than having the inert quality of things in the object-world (Giddens, 1991: 54).

Given that contemporary postmodern societal environment interrupts the consistency of the perception of time and space, individuals cannot establish and sustain continual "biographies", and this situation "threatens the integrity of the self". Since possessing the sense of self-integrity through reflexive actions people is based on communication with other people, namely societal relations; individuals cannot maintain

their personal biographies and have a sense of self-identity without interacting other people. In this sense, young individuals, especially adolescents, namely millennials who were born in postmodern age, are in a vulnerable position when it comes to effect of societal relations on self-identity creation; because existential question of self-identity is innate -in a sense- for those unexperienced individuals. Therefore it can be claimed that young people who feel disconnected from the society, and have problems with connecting with other people would turn their steps towards alternative communities which they can express themselves better within. I argue that the members of witchcraft communities share a common interest in fantasy literature and this shared interest makes them communicate with each other more easily and more openly. What is more, these people share similar biographies that they establish upon imaginary fantasy worlds and by adopting an alternative spirituality correspondingly. In this sense, fantasy literature have an impact on sustaining a consistent biography and therefore, find answers for existential question of self-identity. However, these “adventitiously” acquired biographies have fragile characteristics:

The existential question of self-identity is bound up with the fragile nature of the biography which the individual ‘supplies’ about herself. A person’s identity is not to be found in behavior, nor – important though this is – in the reactions of others, but in the capacity to keep a particular narrative going. The individual’s biography, if she is to maintain regular interaction with others in the day-to-day world, cannot be wholly fictive. It must continually integrate events which occur in the external world, and sort them into the ongoing ‘story’ about the self. As Charles Taylor puts it, ‘In order to have a sense of who we are, we have to have a notion of how we have become, and of where we are going.[...]’ (Giddens, 1991:54).

For instance, adolescents may become not interested in alternative spiritualities in time and cannot sustain the biographies that they acquired through creating biographies based on fantasy and alternative spiritualities, therefore they may not have the “capacity to keep a particular narrative going” as it was mentioned in the above-paragraph. I claim that this situation is not intrinsic to young people who adopt alternative spiritualities; it is a common threat for all individuals in this contemporary environment which causes consistent establishment-demolishment and reconstruction process of structures. Therefore, It cannot be said that the young individuals who appealed by imaginary fantasy worlds that are provided by fantasy literature and incline towards witchcraft

practices are fully detached from the society they live in -even if they are outcasts-, the self-identity acquisition is a process which more or less takes place within a social environment; and the “acceptance of the reality of things and of others” cannot be thought apart from this process of self-identity possession. For Anthony Giddens:

A stable sense of self-identity presupposes the other elements of ontological security – an acceptance of the reality of things and of others– but it is not directly derivable from them. Like the other existential dimensions of ontological security, feelings of self-identity are both robust and fragile. Fragile, because the biography the individual reflexively holds in mind is only one ‘story’ among many other potential stories that could be told about her development as a self; robust, because a sense of self-identity is often securely enough held to weather major tensions or transitions in the social environments within which the person moves (Giddens, 1991: 54-55).

Given that acquiring a stable sense of self-identity is fragile, because there are more than the individual who seeks for self-identity possession “hold in mind only one ‘story’ among many other potential stories”, therefore the ‘story’ that “could be told about individual’s development as a self” has a changeable characteristics. Therefore, even if the young individual who defines his/her self-identity upon the biography that he/she created with related to an alternative witchcraft spirituality lose his/her interest in such spiritualities in time, he/she would probably turn towards the other potential stories in order to regain and maintain the sense of self-identity. Since societal changes has an impact upon self-identity possession, and in postmodern age –unlike traditional societies- we cannot mention about balanced and stable societal relations and occurrences; it can be claimed that the ontological security of individuals is “chronically” under duress.

I argue that in traditional societies, the perception of individuals of time and space were more stable, for instance, and role of the individuals within society were somewhat definite in contrast with contemporary societies.

It is predicable that, the “caretaker” figure can be considered as the allegorical representation traditional society formations, which provides a sense of wholeness and/or integrity among human beings. The fear of the absence of caretaker creates an intuition of “subjective death” upon individuals, even the individuals cannot conceive it unconsciously. The paragraph below explains the issue of anxiety that caused by the fear of death of the self: In psychoanalytic theory, the existential horizon of finitude does not

have a prominent place in the origins of anxiety – or, rather, the unconscious cannot conceive of its own death, not for the reason given by Kierkegaard, but because the unconscious has no sense of time. Anxiety about death in Freud's theory comes primarily from fear of the loss of others, and is thus directly connected to the early mastery of absence. The discrepancy between these two interpretations, however, is more apparent than real. For if we cannot understand 'subjective death', then death is no more or less than the transition from being to non-being; and the fear of non-being becomes one of the primal anxieties of the developing infant. Threats to the being of the infant in the first instance are feelings or presentiments of loss – the realisation that the constancy of persons and objects is bound up with the stable relations provided by the caretaking agents. The possible loss of the caretakers provides the initiating framework from which fears of death and sickness emerge with regard to the self (Giddens, 1991: 49).

The absence of predictability of the outcomes of daily routines and lifetime actions in contemporary societies may give cause for anxieties which develop out of the question of self-identity, such as the fear of subjective death. This situation give rise for maybe not "schizoid personalities" but "schizoid identities" that possessed by individuals who live in an environment full of uncertainties. In other saying, the individuals who become wholly absorbed in imaginary fantasy worlds exaggeratedly in order to acquire a biography and therefore self-identity, may develop deviational subjectivities, and become dependent to fantasy to sustain the identities that they acquired and to deal with the fear of non-being, namely subjective death and to avoid being "(socially) invisible" . In this sense, the development of schizoid identity resembles the process of the emergence of schizoid personality. The paragraph below which explains the emergence of schizoid personality and the fear of being invisible within the framework of science of psychology, may provide us a clearer understanding about the issue:

Mirror image and self can effectively become reversed in more pronounced and semi-permanent schizoid personalities. The experience of agency is withdrawn from the body and attached to a fantasy world of narrative biography, separated from the intersecting of the imaginary and the reality principle upon which ordinary social activity depends. Self-identity is no longer integrated with the day-to-day routines in which the person is involved. The individual may in fact feel invisible to others, since the body in action ceases to be the 'vehicle of the self'. Freud notes that children often play at being invisible, and that the game may

takeplace in front of a mirror. The child finds a method of making itself disappear – by ducking away from the mirror or moving out of sight of its own reflection. The game touches on deep anxieties. The fear of being invisible is connected to the early relations with parenting figures – and especially the fear that the absent mother might never return. The child’s exploration of its own disappearance is closely associated with the difficulty of grasping that the absent parent has not ‘gone for good’.(Giddens, 1991: 60).

If we predicate our claims on abovementioned statements, the pre-postmodern societal structures were functioning as a kind of “parenting figure” which providing individuals senses of safety, consistency and integrity, therefore with the advent of postmodernity, the fear of absent parenting figure (traditional stable societal relations) causes individuals’ “exploration of their own disappearance”, and correspondingly anxiety.

## CONCLUSION

The appearance of New Religious Movements (some academicians are also favoring the terms “alternative religion” and “religions of re-enchantment) in twentieth century, and occultism after the Enlightenment can be demonstrated as examples to this situation. Speaking of which, “New religions” (*shin shukyo*, in Japanese) is a concept that originated in Japan, came into play in response to the boom of new religiosity forms, after World War II.

The early academic studies that examine the nature of “cult” paved the way for the emergence of the idea of the cultic milieu. Those early interpretations of cult was “deeply entwined with mysticism” (Kirby, 2014: 14). However, after Ernst Troeltsch’s religious Church/Sect/Cult typology was put on scholarly display, “interpretation of the term ‘cult’ has shifted in more recent years towards a less mystical, more general understanding premised in a group’s deviance from the dominant culture” (Kirby, 2014: 14).

In the Church/Sect/Cult typology, there was a notion of the mystical embedded within the category of ‘cult’, which suggested that the desire for personal, non-institutional, religion or religiosity, unfettered even by a broader community, was often an element of this type of religious behavior. This particular aspect of mysticism is very much in keeping with personalized and privatized religion as it currently understood, insofar as the individual seeks direct access to the without necessarily paying heed to broader normative or institutionalized ideas about accessing the deity. (Kirby, 2014: 14).

However, the conception of “cultic milieu” can sometimes be problematic. This problematic nature of the concept is stemming from the contemporary connotations of the term of ‘cult’. First of all, according to the theory of cultic milieu, the notion of ‘cult’ is deviant, but this is an obscure supposition because the concept of “mainstream norm” is essentially a “theoretical abstraction” in itself. Constructing a stable conception of “normal” is impossible at the present time. Emphasizing deviance can also cause some problems when it comes to real people and behaviors, because it may grow into prejudice and stigmatization and therefore provoke denigration. Moreover, linking the notion of deviation directly to the concept of cult is “technically difficult”, because:

What constitutes endorsed knowledge constantly shifts in response to cultural and social developments: the rubric of deviancy is more or less constantly shifting in the same manner. So, where arguably in the 1950s Western world religiosity was predominantly subject to a 'relative unity and solidity' and deviancy could be tested against that system, fifty years on there are certainly those who consider a Christian-based morality deviant in itself. So in general, although the cultic milieu is a useful construction in many ways, its central point derives from a relative position that undermines it as a tool of strict application (Kirby, 2014:15).

The more contemporary denomination of cultic milieu is *occulture*. As it was mentioned above, the connotations of "cult" and "mystic" can sometimes be problematic. ( Kirby, 2014: 15). The most simple definition of occulture is:

[...] often hidden, rejected and oppositional beliefs and practices associates with esotericism, theosophy, mysticism, New Age, Paganism and a range of other subcultural beliefs and practices.( Kirby, 2014: 15).

The usage of the notion of occulture is preferable to the usage of cultic milieu, because it reflects the large-scaled nature of the area, emphasizes its ubiquity "as a culture of its own" (Kirby, 2014: 16) and eliminates the adverse and confounding undertones of "cult" and scholarly understandings of mysticism (ibid).

Occultism and esotericisms are two contentious concepts, in spite of being frequently used interchangeably. Danielle Kirby uses the definitions that have been made by Faivre and Hanegraff while clarifying the issue, and I also found proper to adopt this scheme in order to illuminate the topic. Accordingly, esotericism is an extensive framework that is "an ensemble of spiritual currents in modern and contemporary Western history", and it comprehends the ideologies like Gnosticism, Neoplatonism, and theosophy. Esotericists tend to focus on the mediating agents rather than the divine. Contemporary occultists also has the same tendency. In other words, this is one of the common points between esotericism and occultism. Moreover, esotericism can be defined as a philosophical phenomenon that does not signify any specific way of practice. It is important to note that; occultism grows from this philosophical framework. For that matter, "Occultism is a modern development within esotericism." (Kirby, 2014: 18).

Rather than being conceived as a part of esotericism proper, occultism is rather an offshoot, utilizing notions and practices from

the long history of Western esotericism on occasion, but in a way that should be seen as a borrowing and recontextualization of practices and ideas, rather than the direct descendant of the body of knowledge denoted by “esotericism”. Occultism is a clear product of modernity, coming into existence on the heels of industrialization and the Enlightenment, and is intrinsically bound up in scientific worldviews, rationalism and disenchantment narratives:

‘Occultism...came into existence when the esoteric cosmology (based on universal correspondances) increasingly came to be understood as in terms of the new scientific cosmologies (based on instrumental causality). (Kirby, 2014: 18).

According to one of the earliest academic descriptions of occultism, it is a set of purposeful “practices, techniques or procedures” and that based on secret or clandestine dynamisms of nature and/or the cosmos “that cannot be measured or recognized by the instruments of modern science and which have as their desired or intended consequences empirical results, such as either obtaining knowledge of the empirical course of events or altering them from what they would have been without intervention.” (Kirby, 2014: 18)

According to abovementioned interpretation, unlike esotericism, occultism is an “eminently practical preoccupation”. On the other side, esotericism is a set of philosophic beliefs, rather than practices. However, for Kirby this early definition of occultism is in contradiction with Faivre’s and Hanegraff’s interpretations, because those scholars “attribute occultism’s origins to the mid-nineteenth century”, and before contemporary era “there was only philosophical inquiry without any form of practical application.”(Kirby, 2014: 19). Kirby claims that “there is much that is ‘occult’ rather than esoteric that does not actively seek empirical events” (Kirby, 2014: 19). The practice of meditation can be given as an example. Meditation, as an occultural experience, focuses on “internal states of being” rather than seeking empirical consequences. Thus, “occultism is taken as ‘a category in the study of religions, which comprises all attempts by esotericists to come to terms with a disenchanted world or, alternatively, by people in general to make sense of esotericism from the perspective of a disenchanted secular world” (Kirby, 2014: 19).

In the circumstances, occultism is confined rigidly within a particular time and space and it is inherently related with “the modern disenchanted world”. Therefore, “occultism is esotericism as filtered through the conditions of the modern age”. The important point here is: “the situation of the self within the modern world is a primary



concern of the occultist; a point which would appear to be generally supported by the vast range of occult practices and beliefs that focus upon functional ontological strategies centred upon notions of re-enchantment.” (Kirby, 2014: 19).

To sum up, “esotericism may be seen as a long-standing Western tradition from which occultism has developed, post-Enlightenment, as a sub category informed by, but not restricted to, traditional esoteric practices and philosophies. The cultic milieu may be seen as the bed of ideas utilizing occultism as well as partaking in the broader concerns manifest within the 1960s counterculture. Occulture, then, is the current manifestation of the cultic milieu, existing within a context of a lessened general perception of deviancy from the broader culture, holding a more widespread appeal, and shorn of its emphasis upon mystical associations.” (Kirby, 2014: 19).

I argue that, contemporary non-traditional witchcraft is highly influenced from esotericism and emerged and developed from occulture, so I found it necessary to mention about the concepts of esotericism, occultism and occulture. What is more, given that my interviewee’s spiritualities’ syncretic nature I have decided not to categorize witchcraft spiritualities that adopted by interviewees; as neither New Religious Movements nor religiosities. Therefore, throughout the thesis I used the term, alternative witchcraft spiritualities, when referring to my interviewees’ spiritual paths. According to Danielle Kirby:

There is white magic and black magic, ceremonial and ritual magic, earth magic and shamanistic magic, internal transformative magic and sympathetic magic, left-hand path and right-hand path magic, magic utilizing secondary technologies and magic without tools (Kirby, 2014:19-20)

As it was mentioned above, there are different variations of practices, when it comes to the concept of magic. I claim that rather than examining the way of practices, exploring the ‘functioning’ of magic may give us a better understanding about the influence of witchcraft upon contemporary youth identities.

Tanya M. Luhrmann asserts that human consciousness may have an impact upon material (world), and during magic rituals “the trained imagination can alter the physical world” (as cited in Kirby, 2014: 21). This assertion emphasizes the association between the matter and psyche and the contemporaneous purpose of the participator. Magic is an

overthrowing of material conceptions of the imaginable; hence, the question of instrumentality loses its significance (as cited in burada paraphrase den paraphrase Kirby, 2014: 21). Within the conception of magic, the purposeful practices which deals with the recondite, impalpable and supernatural dynamisms of the nature, and those which directly affect daily life are related with the physical world or psyche. Thus, “the intentional nature of the practice”, “the superempirical nature of engagement” and “the variable location of intended results” are three important features of contemporary definition of the notion of magic (Kirby, 2014: 21).

Kirby briefly states that:

[...]magic is a set of practices attempting to engage the unknown, intangible and the superempirical; occultism is the modern set of knowledges from which various forms of magic derive; and esotericism is the stream of thought that has contained these [...]. (Kirby, 2014: 21).

As Kirby puts into words, there is a variety of magical practices that depend on regional, therefore cultural differences. The history and contemporary existence of “new and alternative religious movements in the modern technologized world”(Kirby, 2014: 12) is contentious and complicated at the same time. The rise of the non-traditional variations of religiosity, “high birth rate of” (Kirby, 2014: 12) new religious movements and the variety of the emergent forms of religiosity emerged in the twentieth century was a new and unique phenomenon in history. “The broad issues of secularization, modernization along with industrial and technological developments, the proliferation of communication technologies and globalization” (ibid. 12–13) have played a big role on the appearance of the new variations of religiosity. The emergence of the issues of secularization and modernization in the early modern era also had an influence on the arguments that deal with the topics of occultism and fantasy (ibid. 13).

As one can see, the emanation of *globalization* played a non-negligible role on the process of proliferation of new religious movements. Globalization, in the narrowest sense, is a phenomenon that brings different cultures into contact with each other. In spite of initially emerging as a conception for illuminating economical issues, afterwards the term began to be used in order to elucidate other facts, which affect societies. Therefore, globalization has also a huge impact on culture, and this aspect of globalization is entitled as ‘cultural globalization’.

At this point it is important to note that, magical practices of my interviewees nearly totally differs from Islamic witchcraft, which is a rather extensive topic that requires meticulous study and can only be examined independently, so I focused on contemporary witchcraft spiritualities that adopted by young people, in Turkey, throughout the thesis. I would argue that, Turkish witchcraft practitioners has an unparalleled characteristic, because the practitioners have to perform their rituals and express their culture in an environment which is under the influence of Islamic culture, at least to some degree. In other respects, contemporary witchcraft spiritualities that takes its origins from Europe, at least to some degree, and consequently bears the traces of Christian culture; at least this is the common claim of many of the scholarly work contemporary witchcraft that I examined so far. Based on my observations I can say that there is a deficiency of academic work examines contemporary witchcraft practices on the outside of Western world. There is considerable difference between historical, political and social conditions of Western countries and Turkey. At this point, the question that needs to be answered is; which societal changes and/or external factors caused the individuals who dwell in Turkey appropriate that ‘Western’ cultural phenomenon, namely alternative contemporary witchcraft spiritualities? Throughout the thesis, I tried to find answers for this question, and in the sense that I presented an academic aspect within the perspective of the individuals who dwell in an area that is ‘out of Western world’. Young people whom I interviewed with, were trying to build their own subjectivities by adopting a spiritual identity which is different from their parents’, but as I observed they were trying to preserve some characteristics of their predecessor’s religious culture at time same time. I claim that, they do so in order not to be totally and abruptly alienated from the culture which they raised within, and to internalize and be accustomed to more easily the new identity that they adopted. What is more, the process of subjectivity creation cannot be occurred apart from the society that the individual lives in. Since persons’ actions of identity creation take shape within a particular cultural and societal environment, creating a subjectivity which is isolated from that society and culture is inevitable. The question is, if “The growth of media interest in Witchcraft and the more general development of a cultic milieu throughout the West help to inform the cultural background in which young people chose to become Witches.”; in which sense and by what means young individuals within a non-western society choose to become witches? There are two proper answers of this question, one

is the issue of global interaction that we have scrutinized in the previous chapters, and the other is cultural homogenization. To sum up, the witchcraft spiritualities that adopted by Turkish juveniles have global and syncretic characteristics.

As it was declared many times before, in this contemporary age spirituality has individualized, but with the impact of mass media, it also became homogenized in a sense (Ezzy and Berger, 2016: 51). The proliferation of mass computer ownership and development of World Wide Web also had an influencing effect on dissemination of knowledge of contemporary witchcraft spiritualities. Internet also has a ‘homogenizing’ effect on the issue of witchcraft. What is more, it is interesting that many people whom I interviewed with made a great emphasis upon authenticity and antiquity, while gaining advantage from new technology and internet. In the first chapter, I tried to analyze the issue of authenticity claim within the framework of contemporary widespread technology usage. New technologies also paved the way for the rise of a new phenomenon: solitary witches who part-timely practicing magic. This issue of rising interest in solitary practices, the reasons and consequences of this situation also scrutinized throughout the thesis.

Visual popular media products such as movies and TV series also cause cultural homogenization. From movies and TV shows, juveniles learn about witchcraft. In this sense, movies and TV shows are functioning as “mediating-experiences” that pave the way for young people become aware of witchcraft (Ezzy and Berger, 2016: 46), the influence of such media products on the identity-creation of non-western youth is greater than thought. For instance, a British adolescence’s frequency of encounter with information about Wiccan spirituality is further than his/her Turkish peers, normally; but through visual popular media products non-western juveniles also can acquaint themselves with rising trends in contemporary age, thanks to global interaction. Since the interest in witchcraft has become a popular issue within youth communities in the west, it has also become a popular subject that treated in movies and TV shows.

Printed sources such as spellbooks, source books and fantasy novels can also be considered as popular products which have an influence on the identity-creation formation process which based on alternative witchcraft spiritualities of young people.

The popular media products which treat the topic of witchcraft became popular especially from the 1990s onwards. In other words, the proliferation of popular media products that about witchcraft went parallel with the rising interest of teenagers in witchcraft. Moreover, such media products also caused some young people become interested in witchcraft, therefore there is a reciprocal relationship between popularization of media products which treat the issue of witchcraft, and rise of teen witch phenomenon.

These abovementioned popular media products sometimes being considered as the products of consumption culture; hence some witchcraft practitioners tend to denigrate those media products. On the other hand, we can indeed mention about the 'commodification of witchcraft'. For example, It cannot be denied that there is an impact of commercial purposes on the proliferation of some utilizers. Moreover, some witchcraft practitioners sell witchcraft paraphernalia by themselves, so I scrutinized these issues within the perspective of contemporary commodification of witchcraft.

Contemporary media representations of witchcraft practitioners and magic are rather positive, so it is expectable that young people are being appealed by media and gravitate towards witchcraft and magic. Especially female witchcraft practitioners are being represented as powerful and physically attractive individuals by media. There is also a correlation between feminist and gay movements and contemporary media representations. What is more, these social movements also influence identity-creation process of young people. For instance, the ones who want to be empowered may lean towards witchcraft. On the other side, media representations of male witchcraft practices may not be so positive in the sense that young men who have an interest in mysticism, esotericism, witchcraft, etc. may be accused of Satanism and this situation may be stemming from negative media representations. I also scrutinized this negative effect on especially young males by giving references to a previous study of mine.

As it was mentioned above, feminism and gay movement are social movements that have a close relationship with contemporary witchcraft spiritualities. It can be claimed that contemporary witchcraft spiritualities make young people more sensitive towards societal occurrences. For instance, contemporary witchcraft spiritualities' emphasis upon environmental issues may and do pave the way for environmental awareness.

There is also a correlation between the individuals' political leanings and the spiritual paths that they adopted. For instance, young individuals who may feel alienated from the society because of their political ideology may gravitate towards 'deviant' and alternative witchcraft spiritualities. In this sense, I examined the possibility of whether alternative witchcraft spiritualities can be considered as forms of counter-action.

To sum up, by adopting alternative witchcraft spiritualities, young people try to establish authentic self-identities that would make them feel unique, special and more capable than other human beings. In this contemporary postmodern and global environment, traditional societal structures once functioning as protecting 'cocoons' started to be altered, it is expectable that this absence of once fully defined and protective societal structures creates a sense of existential anxiety, therefore young people seek for regaining the ontological security by applying 'magical identities'. However, as it was mentioned in the introduction chapter, if we regard the changeable and unexpected characteristics of identities, the 'newly created' identities are always open to change.

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