It is oft said that ‘the teenager’ entered the Western cultural imagination in the 1950s, due in large part to the emergence of popular music and media that spoke to the growing population of youth eager for a shift in ideology and political climate. Since its emergence, the description has carried a burdensome set of connotations. Labelled as rebellious, disenfranchised and unpredictable, adolescent and teen identity, with its rage of hormones and angst, its effervescent optimism and passion has found expression in many of the most transgressive, spectacular and revolutionary cultural transformations. It is perhaps unsurprising that from its ‘inception’ the space of teenage-hood has been associated with the occult and spiritual marginalization. Historically, prior to the modern definition of teenage-hood, puberty (particularly in girls) was attributed a magical and somewhat dangerous quality that needed to be contained or controlled for the wellbeing of the family, village and community. If the birth of modernity heralded a less ‘uncanny’ view of adolescent identity and emergent sexuality, the capacity of youth to challenge the status quo was understood as a consequence of their essentially ‘in-between’ nature, both corporeally and socially. Historian Marion Gibson suggests that the popular account of the Salem Witch trials penned by Marion Starkey, *The Devil in Massachusetts* (1949), ‘related the Essex County Witchcraft trials directly to the modern American phenomenon of the teenager—dissatisfied, oppositional, and threatening to traditional American norms’ (2007: 120). Socially teenagers have held an identity between spaces, the place of liminality. Psychologists and cultural commentators alike have observed that teenagers and the ‘darker’ side of spiritual exploration have a mutual magnetism. Within psychology and psychoanalysis, it is well documented that teenage-hood is a period associated with religious crisis, which can be expressed as an ‘occult phase.’ As R.E. Muuss states in his seminal *Theories of Adolescence*:

Adolescents are in a period of life during which they may experience existential or religious crisis and may begin to evaluate their religious
upbringing, religious ideas and the role and function of religion in their personal lives. In other words, it is more or less characteristic for adolescents to move from “received faith” (received from parents, religious teachers, the church, a cult, or a group of believers) to a personal, existential commitment to a belief system, to challenge, to replace or abandon their “received faith”. (1996: 262)

Yet, teenage engagement with the occult in general and with Pagan faith more specifically in the 1990s and 2000s is unique in its visibility and its viability in consumer culture. What surfaced across Europe, North America and Australia in the mid 1990s was a singular cultural trend that emerged as teenagers collectively began to actively construct identities as Witches. Through an engagement with, and consumption of, mainstream media texts and forms, teen Witch identity, understood as an expression of spiritual or religious longing, surfaced as distinct from the established adult Neo-Pagan Witchcraft communities.

The picture of Western adolescent cultures at the turn of the millennium is one that paints a generation of teenagers, the Y Generation if you will, fighting a range of pressures that proliferate due in part to the increasing conglomeration of media forms and the emergence of the Internet. This same generation is seen claiming solace in popular culture’s refashioning of historical icons of magic, power and rebellion. As Lynne Schofield Clarke observes,

[T]his is a generation that some claim is defined by its interest in spirituality. Yet this is also a generation defined by alienation and high school shootings, increases in sexually transmitted diseases, heightened awareness of terrorist activities, and prominent hate crimes based on prejudices of racial/ethnic identity and sexual orientation. (2003: 14)

Popular culture in the mid 1990s had become a place of spiritual meaning, offering texts as scripture and therapy; and as Gordon Lynch describes in his examination of ‘Generation X’s’ search for religious identity, ‘popular culture is an important medium and resource for the contemporary search for meaning for many individuals’ (Lynch 2002: 53). As Lynch (ibid.) and various theorists of both popular culture and contemporary religion have argued (Beaudoin 2000; Carrette & King 2005; Heelas 1996), popular culture has facilitated a new engagement with the realm of the spiritual, which signals a significant departure from traditional forms of religio-spiritual inspiration and practice. In an era which has seen the decline of traditional religious institutions and practices, the proliferation of what has been nebulously and ubiquitously