Hannah E. Johnston and Peg Aloi, editors, *The New Generation Witches: Teenage Witchcraft in Contemporary Culture* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007) xv + 172 pp., £45 (cloth).

"Teenage Witches" is a loaded term, marrying adolescent sexuality, the lure of exploring non-mainstream religion, and fears of manipulative magic, seasoned with social worries about the kids turning out all right. As Ronald Hutton writes in the foreword, "Witchcraft and adolescent women have had a long association in the European imagination." He goes on to mention Fotis in *The Golden Ass*, the accused and accusers in various witch trials, and how in the early modern period (roughly 1500-1800), young women who "represented themselves as witches and drew upon the rich imaginative life of which teenagers are capable [described] the nature of the witch religion into which they had been initiated." In other words, at least some of our "knowledge" about early-modern witchcraft may well represent adolescent fantasies, as well as the fantasies of prosecutors and inquisitors.

This edited volume is part of Ashgate's Controversial New Religions series, and series editor James Lewis writes in his contribution, "The Pagan Explosion," that the teen Witch phenomenon took off commercially in the mid-1990s, with Llewellyn, North America's leading publisher of Pagan books, switching from books for the 1960s generation to those aimed at a younger audience, typically, "a very young woman in her teens."

That said, Melissa Harrington suggests in her chapter "The Perennial Teen Witch: A Discussion of Teenage Interest in Modern Pagan Witchcraft" that "The teen Witch is older than she looks," for social scientists have been examining the phenomenon since early 1970s—about the same time than an early wave of paperback "How to be a Witch" books was cresting, I might add. To those researchers, the interest of teen Baby Boomers in esoteric religion was a seen as a challenge to the "secularization thesis" that dominated sociology of religion at the time. In the decades since then, Pagan organizations of various sorts of mushroomed, far more books are available, and the Internet has made it easier to find both people and books. Nevertheless, the organizations tend to restrict membership to those eighteen (or in some cases, sixteen) or older, and even adult Pagans tend to regard teenaged seekers as less serious than they. To counter that perception, Harrington interviews five well-known British Witches who came to the Craft in their teens—Vivianne Crowley, Dawn Meadows, Charis and Jim Fox, and her own husband, Rufus Harrington. Harrington finds that Goddess-religion empowers teen girls and that as esoteric religion, the Craft continues to be "counter-cultural" enough to appeal to teenagers today. Or as Hannah Johnston writes in her own chapter, there is "a growing alliance between contemporary Witchcraft, 'girldom,' and agency."

Sociologists Douglas Ezzy and Helen Berger, who have produced their own book-length work on teen witches (reviewed elsewhere in this issue) discuss how teens come to Witchcraft when their "individual seekership" occurs within a "cultural orientation." That cultural orientation is heightened today by the fact that "images of contemporary Witchcraft are widespread in society" and typically positive. Witchcraft and other forms of contemporary Paganisms, the authors note, "bring into question traditional theories of conversion, community, and the influence of mass media on religion."

Other contributors—Julian Vayne, Heather Jenkins, Morboriel Parthenos—discuss their personal journeys, while Matthew Hannam describes the history of Minor Arcana, "the first teen Witch organization of its kind in the UK," founded in 1997. While the participants' stories are different, themes emerge: inspiration from reading of other Witches (e.g., the Farrars) in the popular press, a sense of feeling "different," and a spiritual uplift from spending time outdoors or working with animals

are among them.

Turning to the television and movie portrayals, Hannah Johnston sees those cited as inspirational in creating the identity of a teen Witch as representing triumphs over victimization and disempowerment. While the fictional victims overcome these threats (if only temporarily in, e.g., *The Craft*), Johnston sees the methods used as reinforcing cultural ideas of femininity and of Witchcraft as an innate female power. Where that conclusion leaves male teens is a topic that needs to be explored.

Stephanie Martin's contribution, "Teen Witchcraft and Silver RavenWolf," explores the tension created when RavenWolf, one of Llewellyn's most prolific authors of how-to Witchcraft books, produced her 1998 book *Teen Witch* and the follow-up *Teen Witch Kit* two years later and provoked negative reactions from some adult Pagans who launched a cyber-smear campaign against her. RavenWolf was accused both of mercenary tendencies (Imagine, someone writing for money!) and of encouraging teens to engage in magical practice without the appropriate ethical training and group support. The irony here is that Llewellyn staffers have told me that they estimate that 70 percent of Pagan book buyers of any age are solitary practitioners.

Teenage Witches are a moving target. As the editors remark in their introduction, "the collection does not establish a homogenous community of teenagers, practicing a definitive form of beliefs or subscribing to coherent, static lifestyle practices." No one stays a teenager forever, and anyone who chose Witchcraft based on *The Craft* is probably not a teenager anymore, even though in its day it may have been "the greatest single influence on the growth of teenage Witchcraft in America," according to media scholar and co-editor Peg Aloi. Teen Witches, as this collection makes clear, exist for the most part as individuals connected more by the Internet than by face-to-face networks, frequently excluded from or unaware of adult organizations, events, festivals and so on. If, as Denise Cush suggests in her UK-based research, "Calling themselves Witches and practising spells seemed to give the girls a sense of identity…" what happens when they are no longer teens? Indeed, Professor Cush herself can only wonder whether this identification represents "a genuine spiritual commitment." For some, she suggests, it will be a genuine spiritual path, but her research reveals that the tension between witchcraft-as-spiritual-technology and Witchcraft-as-religion still exists, leading younger teens in particular to be attached to "doing" while they are still uncertain about "believing."

Chas S. Clifton
Colorado State University-Pueblo