

Witches of Instagram: Invoking the Spirit of Witchcraft in the Twenty-First Century

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Abstract: The concept of witchcraft, or witchery, has persisted across places and times in many forms and under many labels. Broadly it denotes the practice of, and belief in, magical skills and abilities which are practiced by individuals and groups. It has been known to be historically misunderstood, misrepresented, and condemned, and has been connected predominantly with femininity and feminism. Although witchcraft began as a spiritual practice and lifestyle, one that was especially entwined with nature, it gradually made its mark on many things, ranging from popular culture to activism. In the twenty-first century, especially through the platform of social media, it has also become a brand. Mostly associated with the social media Instagram, a number of young women have emerged identifying themselves as witches, building a community of women with similar beliefs. With the inherited culture of witchcraft, they have not only destigmatized its notion, but also have reestablished it into a brand that is aesthetic, collaborative, and even commercially budding. This paper observes this transition from an ecofeminist perspective, and tries to understand how the spirit of witchcraft has been resurrected as an assertion of power for women through mysticism, self-identity and interconnectivity.

Introduction

Witchcraft is a concept that has persisted in many forms and under many labels across different places and different times. It has always been a slippery notion, difficult to define and varied in representation, making it all the more intriguing and enchanting. Broadly witchcraft or witchery is known as the practice of and the belief in magical skills and abilities which are practiced by individuals and groups. It has been known to be historically misunderstood, misrepresented, and even condemned. Many a time it has been closely connected with femininity and feminism. Even though witchcraft began as a spiritual practice and lifestyle especially entwined with nature, it has gradually seeped into many things, ranging from popular culture including

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literature, music, visual media, and fashion to even activism. In the twenty-first century, especially through the platform of social media, witchcraft has also become a brand. Mostly relying on the social media platform Instagram, a number of young women have emerged identifying themselves as witches and building a community of women with similar beliefs. Some of them have inherited the culture of witchcraft, some have grown into it. But they all have attempted to destigmatize the concept of witchcraft and reestablish it into a brand that is aesthetic, collaborative, and even commercially budding. Keeping in mind the historical perception and reception of witchcraft, the paper intends to observe this transition of witchcraft in popular media and culture, and understand how it has been reclaimed and re-established as an assertion of power for women through mysticism, self-identity, and interconnectivity. The paper also keeps in mind the theoretical perspective of ecofeminism in reading the correlation between witchcraft and the knowledge and power of women in relation to nature and its elements.

The paper divides its argument into three sections. The first section discusses the concepts of witch, witchcraft, and magic and how these have been known across certain cultures in certain eras. It also discusses how witchcraft and feminism have often been intertwined with each other, and how witchcraft has made its way gradually into popular culture through varied representations. The second section focuses on the women who are known as the witches of Instagram, and discusses the diversity that they bring in destigmatizing witchcraft. The final section looks at this phenomenon with an ecofeminist perspective, and concludes on how the witches of Instagram have resurrected witchcraft in a new light in the twenty-first century.

A Brief History of Witches Across Time and Space

To outline the history of witches or witchcraft, even briefly, appears to be challenging given how varied they are. To define a witch itself is a dire task – a dictionary definition would say that a witch is a person who practices witchcraft, and witchcraft or witchery is the practice or belief in magical skills and abilities. These can be practiced by solitary practitioners, or by groups often known as covens. The popular image gives us women in black cloaks, pointed hats, broomsticks, and an overall negative insinuation. But witchcraft is a broad term, and it varies from culture to culture.

The term “witch” comes from the ancient Anglo-Saxon word “wicca”, which is derived from “wicce” which means “wise”. The word also has a Germanic root “wic” meaning “to bend” or “to turn” (“What Is Witchcraft”, n.d., para 1). Witchcraft, in keeping with this etymology, would mean the craft of the wise. These crafts would include a range of activities, including but not limited to healing, especially through herbs and folk medicine; clairvoyance; and communicating with spirits. Witches were also “unlicensed doctors”, pharmacists, and midwives (Ehrenreich & English, 1973, p. 1). Witchcraft, therefore, has always had religious or medicinal underpinnings, mostly for its emphasis on connecting with nature, utilizing the power that is embedded in nature, and using that power for healing and improving one’s life.

Witchcraft is related to religions, beliefs, and practices that are ancient. In European traditions, it is connected with Paganism, or Wicca. Paganism dates back to pre-Abrahamic religions characterized by animistic, pantheistic, or frequently polytheistic approaches to divinity. The word “pagan” comes from the Latin word “paganus”, meaning “country-dweller”. However, gradually the word came to be used as a substitute for “non-Christian”. Neo-Pagan or “new Pagan” religions too have similar attitudes towards divinity as Paganism, and emphasize on the female aspect of the deity in form of the Goddess, the Great Mother, the Lady, or Gaia meaning the earth. They also have a reverence for the natural world as the “body” of the Goddess, and deep respect for women in the role of Pagan priestesses, especially in Wicca (Harbold, 1994, para. 6-7).

Wicca is a recognized religion and its followers call themselves witches (Gaskill, 2010). Wicca or Neo-Pagan Witchcraft is also known as the Craft, or the Old Religion, and is one of the largest and most influential branches of the Neo-Pagan movement. Even though the exact emergence of the religion is unspecified, Wicca became popularized during the 1950s after Gerald Gardner, an English civil servant and amateur anthropologist, claimed to have found a coven. The Wiccans follow a dualistic world-view. But rather than good/evil, the duality is male-female; and rather than polar opposites, these are seen complementary to each other. The practices of the religion are mostly drawn from Celtic and Norse/Germanic sources (Harbold, 1994, para 9-11).

Similar religions prevail in different parts of the world under different names. Shamans, mediums, medicine men/women, witch doctors are only a few names that share similar meanings as the witch. Iceland has *völva* or female Shaman who practice magic or *seidr*. Derived from old Viking traditions, some of them still persist in continuing it (“Völva the Viking Witch or Seeress”, n.d.). Southern Africa has *sangoma*, a diviner and shaman, and *inyanga*, the herbalist. The *sangoma* is usually female, and the *inyanga* is almost exclusively male. Practitioners of the African religion Voodoo are often referred to as witches as well. The Americas have several witchcraft traditions. Central America has Brujería, Afro-Caribbeans have Santería, and African and Native Americans have Hoodoo. African Diasporas have Louisiana Voodoo, a combination of ancestral religions and the Catholic religion which emerged during the time of slavery. The forms of these practices changed over time due to the spatial dispersal of the practitioners, and the intermingling of Christianity. In Asia, Japan has the shamanistic religion Shinto which is widely accepted alongside Buddhism. China has its own witchcraft embedded in magic and mysticism (“Witchcraft Across the World”, n.d.). Inspired by Hindu religious philosophy, India has witches known as *daayan*, medicine men known as *ojha*, and mystic worshippers of the goddess Kali known as *tantric*. The Manipur region has faith healers called *maiba* or *maibi*. *Atharva Veda*, the fourth of the sacred *Vedas* of Hinduism, records practices of faith healing and contains *mantras* that are used in witchcraft (Moniraj, n.d.). Traditions like these are not limited to India alone, rather, can be seen throughout the region of the Indian subcontinent. There is also the legend of Khana, an astrologer presumably from West Bengal living in between 800 AD to 1200 AD, who was famous for her *bachan* or words of wisdom. The legend states that she gained reverence in her land, but was later persecuted because her wisdom outwitted that of the authority and made them feel threatened (Islam, n.d.). Her words, however, persisted, and the knowledge prevailed.

While mentioning the difficulty in defining and outlining a spacio-temporal history of witchcraft, the paper still attempts at it to illustrate that the different forms of witchcraft, or similar traditions of spirituality and mysticism, begun as religions with their self-fulfilled systems, but gradually were appropriated and represented as fragments. Even though witchcraft advocated for close-knit communities and a sense of interconnectivity, witches begun to be

stigmatized and even demonized. According to Gaskill (2010), a witch is not only resistant to a simplified definition but also filled with paradoxical images. And that contributes to witches being “othered”. They are similar to any other human being, while containing qualities that most human beings either do not have or would wish to have but is afraid of.

The notion of magic too is blurry and is often misrepresented in popular culture. According to Wiccan beliefs, there is a power that exists in all things, and through rituals – involving things such as music, dance, visualizations and the manipulation of objects – this power can be awakened and concentrated and can be set to affect a particular goal. That, essentially, is the purpose of the spells used in witchcraft (Frankle & Stein, 2005). Witches prefer to spell it “magick” instead of magic to distinguish between performance and ritual (Martin, 2017). And as dark as it appears, even the commonest act of blowing the candles out on a birthday cake follows a similar principle – using one’s intentions to influence an action. Similar thing can be said about blessing somebody, or cursing somebody out of spite.

Magic, when it emerged, was a necessity. Both men and women were witches, even though witchcraft has always been predominantly matriarchal in nature. And having the knowledge of the craft meant having power and therefore authority. It enabled one to solve problems in the community, have a respected position, and have a certain amount of agency. A group of independent women gathering together in a patriarchal world is not something that the dominant ideology could allow. Especially with the rise of Christianity in Europe and later through colonialism, witches were gradually being branded. The European witch hunts took place from the 14th century to the 17th century. A book called *Malleus Maleficarum* (translated as *Hammer of Witches*) was written in 1484 by the Reverends Kramer. It included instructions on how to conduct a witch hunt and was widely followed (Ehrenreich & English, 1973). Accusations of witchcraft were cloaked with charges ranging from political subversion and religious heresy to lewdness and blasphemy, but according to Ehrenreich & English, the actual reasons were different:

First, witches are accused of every conceivable sexual crime against men. Quite simply, they are “accused” of female sexuality. Second, they are accused of being organized. Third, they are accused of having magical powers affecting health—

of harming, but also of healing. They were often charged specifically with possessing medical and obstetrical skills. (1973, p. 8)

Practice of rural religions or rituals against an established one, expression of female sexuality and sexual freedom against Christian morality, use of herbal medicine against the emergence of pharmaceuticals and the medical profession – these, then, can be speculated as the presumed “crimes” of the accused witches. Kapsalis (2017) too mentions female sexuality being tied to accusations of witchcraft, and that the allegations against them ranged from inducing hysteria in women to making men impotent. Magic, for these women, was a way of resisting against the patriarchy. As Gordon White mentions in an interview in reference to the current turn towards the occult (as cited in Faife, 2017, para 26), “magic has always been a tool of the underdog, less structured than any system of priests and clergy, more resistant to control thanks to its archaic origins and anarchic, individualist spirit.” Any form of resistance from women, however, were used against them – as in the past and so in the present.

The initial portrayal of witches in popular culture had been mono-dimensional. But gradually popular culture began to bring forth witches that were varied, layered, and complex. According to Korvette (2015), witches were primarily portrayed onscreen as jealous aging women who were pitted against beautiful young women. Even fairy tales such as *Sleeping Beauty*, *Snow White*, or *The Little Mermaid* are examples of that. In films like *The Witches* (1990), Donahue (2015) notes, witches are portrayed as ugly and evil. A similar portrayal is found in the film *Hocus Pocus* (1993) as well. However, as the feminist movement grew, the representation of witches began to be more diversified. Korvette (2015) notes how the first major pop culture witch appeared in the TV series *Bewitched* (1964-1972) one year after the publication of Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique*. More versatile witches followed in the TV series *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* (1996-2003), *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1996-2003), and *Charmed* (1998-2006). Donahue (2015) states that for this period of time witches were portrayed in a lighthearted manner, but gradually the portrayal began to be darker. Films like *The Craft* (1996) and *Practical Magic* (1998) brought forth witches that were more empowered, subversive, and, according to Róisín (as cited in Donahue, 2015) stylistically in keeping with the 90’s grunge or punk themes. Guadanigno (2018) notes how

witches have moved from the edges of the action to becoming the plot themselves in popular culture. More recently witches have been given a more gothic guise, especially in TV series *Game of Thrones* (2011-), *American Horror Story: Coven* (2013), and *Penny Dreadful* (2015). Buckley (2017) states that these witches have been portrayed as beautiful, while possessing sexuality that is deadly. She also mentions the 2015 film *Witch* where the depiction of witchcraft is complex with the undertone of centuries-old patriarchal fear of female power and the witches' attempt to overthrow its authority. Buckley continues to note, referring to Mary Beard, that the lore of witches were used to disempower women. And it is still used as such, for instance, in the way Hillary Clinton or Theresa May have been portrayed as witches with pointy hats and broomsticks. Buckley also points out, however, that witches nowadays are seen more as feminist figures (para. 3-13). Among other portrayals of witches, the *Harry Potter* franchise is notable, especially as it depicts the scholarship that is required to be a practicing witch. And the 2014 film *Maleficent* retells the story of Sleeping Beauty while humanizing the witch (Korvette, 2015). The remake of the original *Sabrina, Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* (2018-), too, turns the lighthearted witch tale into a darker tone.

Bastién (2017), however, notes the dominance of white witches on screen. She points towards both the absence of black witches and the misrepresented presence. With the example of the 2005 film *The Skeleton Key*, she shows how black witches are either silenced or used to exemplify the white American fear of black folk magic. Bastién also mentions the overall tendency to “exoticize” and “otherize” black witchcraft practices (2017, para. 4).

In music the R&B artist Princess Nokia's song “Brujas” has a music video that pays a homage to her African-Nuyorican heritage. Rapper Azalea Banks and singer Lana Del Rey also post witchcraft-related elements on their social media platforms (Martin, 2017). The fashion world includes witchcraft as an influence, especially revealed in *W Magazine's Salem Spread* in September 2016 (Petrarca, 2016), and Preen's SS17 and AW17 collection (Martin, 2016). Instead of witches being branded, witches themselves are turning witchcraft into a brand in popular culture, especially with the aid of social media.

#witchesofinstagram – Invoking the Spirit of Witchcraft

Instagram, the image-based social media platform, has proven to be a space for a community of self-proclaimed witches. These women have made Instagram a virtual home for a digital modern-day coven. They have faith in witchcraft and/or practice the rituals, though not everyone follows the same doctrine or the same methods. Some of them grew up with the tradition of witchcraft, some of them just got interested and decided to delve deeper. And many got interested because it allowed them to be spiritual without the written-down rules of a systemic religion. Elisabeth Krohn, founder of London-based witchcraft magazine *Sabat* claimed that the open and collaged nature of witchcraft is something that appeals to many women (as cited in Martin, 2017). Similar views were shared by Michael Hedstrom. He said that the millennial access to information about all kinds of beliefs, including Catholicism, Protestantism, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism and various pagan beliefs can be liberating and paralyzing at the same time, inducing anxiety about the array of options to choose from. Spirituality, in this scenario, helps them to combine elements from several religions instead of choosing just one (as cited in Martin, 2017).

The witches of Instagram, most of them millennials, practice witchcraft inspired by varied cultural traditions, including Wiccan, Germanic Pagan, African and Native American-based Hoodoo, Hispanic-based Brujeria, folk-based root-work, or even something referred to as “secular witchcraft” (Sullivan, 2017). These witches have other occupations as well – writers, poets, artists, photographers, models, makeup artists, fashion designers, herbalists and so on. But they also sell crystals, herbs and oils, amulets and pendants, tarot cards, candles, books on the occult, and much more. They provide spiritual guidance, and they promote each other. According to Anna Biller, director of the 2016 feminist horror-thriller *The Love Witch*, the way people respond to religions depend on the concerns of the era. In the sixties the inspiration for diving into witchcraft ranged from exploring nudity, sexuality, the demonic, and the beyond to exploiting drugs and getting outside of Christianity. Currently, on the other hand, witchcraft aligns more with concepts like inner healing, meditating, and also female empowerment (as cited in Martin, 2017). Faife’s (2017) thoughts run in the same direction about the surges of interest in witchcraft. According to him, the interest in witchcraft have reappeared on a roughly 20-year cycle since the mid-20th century, and

it often corresponded with the changing perceptions of women in popular consciousness and new strains of feminist thoughts. In the 1970s it was about the recognition of female potency in both creative and sexual terms and a form of spirituality focused on the Goddess(es) and the divine feminine; in the 1990s it was about portraying witches as women who were independent and quietly powerful, especially through the representation in popular movies and TV shows; and now it has become about spreading newer textual and visual representations of the craft for the new audiences (para. 28).

Typing and searching the hashtag #witchesofinstagram on Instagram brings above 2.6 million results. Some of these witches are there for the gothic style and dark visual aesthetic, some are there for exploring mysticism and spirituality. Martin (2017) notes statements from a number of women who feel that social media has provided the witches of today with a sense of community – even “solitary witches” without a coven could feel like they belong. Some even feel that witches can be more vocal about their beliefs these days as people on social media are seemingly more accepting (Sullivan, 2017).

The archetypal predecessor of these Instagram witches is Bri Luna aka The Hoodwitch. Part Mexican and part African-American, with her 415 thousand Instagram followers she shares knowledge of spiritual practice and self-healing through crystals, meditation, and moon rituals. Her bio on her Instagram says “Everyday magic for the modern mystic”. Healing for her is a tradition, something that she inherited from her two grandmothers, one of whom was a *curandera* or Latin American traditional native healer, and another who practiced southern style conjure and healing remedies. Bri Luna has her Instagram account The Hoodwitch (@thehoodwitch) and her own website of the same name to interact with those who follow her. There she discusses aspects of witchcraft, shares her lifestyle, sells her products, and features other inspiring women weekly labelling them as “Goddess of the Week”. She wanted to provide a sacred space to have conversations about topics that people could not express openly elsewhere, and social media proved to be appropriate. Her initial intention was to make people, especially women, explore through magic the parts of themselves that they had forgotten. And for her, magic is anything that embraces nature and makes one feel empowered – following any specific doctrine or spiritual path is not a requirement (Lodi, 2015). Asserting that witches are the original

activists, Bri Luna also shares resources for collective healing in a fraught political climate. Initially alienated by predominantly white witchcraft traditions, she intends to make American witchcraft more inclusive by bringing African, Indigenous, and Mexican practices on the foreground (Sollée, 2018).

There are several other young witches, or rather *brujas* (the Spanish word for “witch”) following the African, Caribbean, and indigenous Latin American *brujería* tradition, who are bringing back their heritage as well. Brujeria involved practices that enabled women to combat patriarchal oppression. Later, however, it was condemned and stigmatized by colonializers and the Catholic Church. From the image of mystic healers, brujas begun to be represented as evil enchantresses engaged in a taboo practice. Brujas like NoNo, Emilia Ortiz, and Tatiana Morales are reclaiming their ancestral knowledge and power, and redefining its image by bringing forth the diversity that it contains. They are making their practice visible on social media, especially Instagram, as a protest against the long history of practicing it in secret for fear of the society. Showing the diversity that these traditions embody, they are trying to obliterate the stereotypes and restyle their image. Emphasizing on the oral nature of witchcraft, and its affiliation with being indoctrinated by an elder especially in the family, they are trying to bring back a part of their root that was once forced to be lost (Yu, 2018).

Along with the rise of the witches in the US, a similar scene on witchcraft is seen in UK too. The young witches of Britain are centering their practice around technology, and are claiming that witchcraft is going through a “golden age” and the craft is having a revival (Barns, 2017).

Among the many Instagram witches, some are Courtney Brooke aka Light Witch (@light_witch), The Craft of The Wise (@thecraftofthewise), Liz Migliorelli aka Sister Spinster (@sister_spinster), Chiquita Brujita (@chiquitabrujita), and Sophia Rose aka Laabeja Herbs (@laabejaherbs). There is also Katie Karpetz aka The Witchery (@witcheryway) from Canada, and Sarah Telaar aka Ancient Hearts (@ancient_hearts) from Germany, along with the predominantly US-based witches. Among the male witches Michael Cardenas aka Olde Ways (@oldeways) is popular. And through the image-based Instagram in an image-oriented culture, they are building a like-minded community, and building a business.

Instagram is not the only platform that is used by these witches to gain visibility and commercial popularity. Some advertise on their own websites, or at e-commerce websites like Etsy. Most of these self-proclaimed witches are also self-proclaimed feminists and they make a point of promoting each other by buying each other's products and posting about them on their own social media spaces. In many of the cases, the commercial success of these witches turned out to be accidental. Katie Karpetz from The Witchery, for instance, started posting on Instagram the items she made for herself. Gradually, people who followed her started asking if they were meant to be sold (Sullivan, 2017). Searching "witchcraft" on Etsy brings over 28,000 results, and from 2015 to 2017 the purchase of witchcraft-related products have increased from 30% to 60% (Faife, 2017). Many of the witches do not mind non-practicing people being solely interested in the "witchy aesthetic" and even design products aimed at newcomers. Some, on the other hand, take offence in the cultural appropriation and the commercialization, especially by companies that mass-produce similar products. However, the significance of the movement of magic being mainstream remains undeniable (Sullivan, 2017).

The interest towards witchcraft is not only limited to personal development but also to larger causes. Many witches are gathering their intentions together against more social and political reasons like ending patriarchy and destroying fascism. One instance in the US gained popularity when a group of witches known as "resistance witches", working under the hashtag #MagicResistance, decided to gather together to perform a binding spell to limit the power of the newly elected president in 2017. The gesture was part ritualistic and part activist performance (Burton, 2017). As Sullivan (2017) quotes from Patton and Campos who are affiliated with the New Orleans School for Esoteric Arts, witchcraft has been about witches and women resisting together. Even though they currently have to exist in a capitalist society, they intend to be a part of it ethically, all the while re-educating the next generation in the process. And as the hopelessness regarding the current social and political scenario keeps growing, more people are leaning towards witchcraft for answers and a desire to bring about change, for both healing and protest.

With a colorful community that is gradually growing, the witches of Instagram are taking control of their narrative, and changing the way witches are represented in the dominant narrative. From stereotypes

of taboo practitioners who were once condemned and forced to stay at the margin, they are diverting witchcraft into a source of sisterhood, self-love, and an assertion of power.

An Ecofeminist Perspective

Ecofeminism combines ecology and feminism and argues that patriarchal societal values and beliefs have resulted in the oppression of both women and nature, ignoring women's work, knowledge, and "situatedness" regarding nature (Nayar, 2010, p. 249). The Western tradition of seeing things in terms of binaries have *naturalized* women and *feminized* nature – allowing men to dominate and exploit both (Nayar, 2010, p. 250). Ecofeminist spirituality argues that the older cultures, myths, and religious beliefs respected and revered nature, and perhaps need to be retrieved. Instead of treating women and nature as these "others" that need to be repetitively and perpetually used and abused, they understood the importance of women's knowledge, and legitimized female power, female bodies, and female sexuality (Nayar, 2010, p. 251-252).

Older, primarily Goddess-centric religions such as Native American religions, or Hinduism acknowledged that all human and non-human lives are embedded in nature. The same principle is seen in Pagan and Wiccan beliefs and practices as well. The Wiccan tradition of a dualistic world-view also coincides with the non-binary approach of ecofeminist spirituality. Harbold (1994) contends that the central concern of deep ecology – becoming eco- or bio-centric instead of human-centric or anthropocentric – aligns with the concerns of Neo-Pagan religions. He even advocates for harmony between Neo-Pagan spirituality and deep ecological concepts, since both promote a new balance between people and nature.

While not suggesting that the current revival of witchcraft completely connects with the current ecofeminist current, there appear to be similarities in their essence. Witchcraft too situates the female body in the context of nature, and sees nature as a source of power. By bringing back the wisdom from the ancestors and using that wisdom to heal not only the community but also the collective, modern-day witches are bringing back the tradition that aligns with ecofeminism. Harbold (1994) refers to Starhawk, Eisler, and Spretnak and states that the Goddess-centered nature of Paganism or Wicca breaks through patriarchal myth and metaphor that dominated and suppressed both

women and nature. Thus a new set of subversive discourse emerges, one that brings forth the narrative of women in terms of female experiences connected with nature and spirituality.

Parker (2012), a practicing medicine-making herbalist, also claims that witches are essentially ecofeminists, and the herbalists of today are bringing back the lost legacy. From ancient women who were ostracized for their knowledge to women nowadays who are often criticized for the same reason, witchcraft appears to be the bridge and binds ecofeminism with mysticism and spirituality.

Conclusion

The current scenario of the rising presence of witchcraft on Instagram is not completely unproblematic. Its persistence itself contains several paradoxes. On one hand practicing witchcraft and building it as a source of commercial success appears to be intriguing, considering that in this case the economic empowerment of women is happening through ancient women-centric knowledges. On the other hand, however, the question arises whether or not this seemingly subversive act is succumbing to the sole purpose of establishing its material and monetary value. Question also arises when one attempts to place this occurrence in the larger spectrum, that is, the social, cultural and political reality, and inspects if the current trend of witchcraft truly adheres to its originary subversive intentions, or has placed itself in the position of a mere spectacle in keeping with the media it uses. The notion of cultural appropriation in witchcraft and the dominance of white witchcraft traditions over the comparatively more marginalized ones are also concerns that come forth in looking at this phenomenon.

That being said, the witches of Instagram have opened a platform for discourses relating to witchcraft. They have brought into discussion again both the history of this tradition and the future potential of it. They are reinforcing the notion that certain ancient knowledges need to be remembered and revered. They are also reminding people that those knowledges were a source of power emerging from, persisting for, and practiced by women. With this witchcraft renaissance, they are pointing out the necessity of looking back at history, unlearning and relearning certain aspects, and re-evaluating its representations. By placing the power of nature in the center and connecting the human with it, witches of Instagram are intertwining two drastically

different spatial constructs, and using the association to invoke the spirit of witchcraft. Through mysticism and spirituality, self-assertion and interconnectivity, they are bringing back the Craft, changing its previously popular public perception, and portraying the different faces of it in front of a newer lens.

The paper sees further scopes in delving deeper into this phenomenon keeping in mind the questions posed above, along with placing it in the contexts of gender, race, and different spatial dimensions. For the time being, however, it concludes that the witches of Instagram are resuscitating the old ways in a new time and in a new light.

Notes

1. The paper was first presented on 11 September 2018 at the Culture, Power and History themed Annual Conference of the Department of Anthropology, Jahangirnagar University, Bangladesh.
2. The number of the followers of Bri Luna aka The Hoodwitch (@thehoodwitch) and the results of the hashtag @witchesofinstagram were derived from an Instagram search made on 10 April 2019.

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