



# The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft

By Ronald Hutton

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**The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft** By Ronald Hutton

Here is a book that brings witchcraft out of the shadows. *The Triumph of the Moon* is the first full-scale study of the only religion England has ever given the world--modern pagan witchcraft, otherwise known as wicca. Meticulously researched, it provides a thorough account of an ancient religion that has spread from English shores across four continents.

For centuries, pagan witchcraft has been linked with chilling images of blood rituals, ghostlike druids, and even human sacrifices. But while Robert Hutton explores this dark side of witchery, he stresses the positive, reminding us that devotion to art, the natural world, femininity, and the classical deities are also central to the practice of wicca. Indeed, the author shows how leading figures in English literature--W.B. Yeats, D.H. Lawrence, and Robert Graves, just to name a few--celebrated these positive aspects of the religion in their work, thereby softening the public perception of witchcraft in Victorian England. From cunning village folk to freemasons and from high magic to the black arts, Hutton chronicles the fascinating process by which actual wiccan practices evolved into what is now a viable modern religion. He also presents compelling biographies of wicca's principal figures, such as Gerald Gardner, who was inducted into a witch coven at the age of 53, and recorded many clandestine rituals and beliefs.

Ronald Hutton is known for his colorful, provocative, and always thoroughly researched studies on original subjects. This work is no exception. It will appeal to anyone interested in witchcraft, paganism and alternative religions.

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## **Editorial Review**

From Publishers Weekly

This spirited, amusing and immensely informative history of paganism in 19th- and 20th-century Britain centers on Wicca, the system of witchcraft Gerald B. Gardner introduced to a startled public in the 1950s. The book's first half takes the reader on a breakneck tour of Victorian and Edwardian culture, demonstrating that Wiccan belief and practice owe much to the scholars, novelists and poets who resurrected Pan and the Goddess, crafting romantic visions of a pre-Christian past. The second half proceeds at a more leisurely pace, detailing the development of British witchcraft over the past 50 years among Gardner's followers, critics and rivals. In this meticulously researched book, Hutton modestly demolishes myths perpetuated by both pagans and their hostile critics and maintains an attitude that is at once skeptical and ultimately sympathetic. He displays astounding breadth, with literary references ranging from Keats to Mary Daly, and peppers his work with insightful portraits of characters such as Madam Blavatsky, Aleister Crowley, D.H. Lawrence, Dion Fortune, Alex Sanders, Starhawk and the obscure 19th-century wonder-worker and wart-healer known as Cunning Murrell. In a field generally characterized by polemical or apologetic historiography, Hutton's exceptional work is by far the most scholarly, comprehensive and judicious analysis of the subject yet published. It will remain the standard for many years to come. (Feb.)

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### **Review**

"An excellent reference edition....I highly recommend it."--*Weekly Alibi*

"Hutton uses his historical skills to tease apart some of the themes in this popular rural romanticism, and to locate their purely modern origin."--*Times Literary Supplement*, UK

"Hutton's book is excellent..."--*Times Literary Supplement*

"Hutton has synthesized a huge body of sources, and woven together a fascinating narrative with supreme skill. The reader is sure to be gripped by the wonderful cast of characters that he assembles...Hutton shows us that paganism is a matter of interest not only for the classicist and archeologist, but for the modern historian as well. In doing so his *Triumph of the Moon* proves to be a triumph of cultural history."--Owen Davies, *History Today* (UK, Vol. 50 No. 3

### **About the Author**

Ronald Hutton is Professor of History at the University of Bristol. He is the author of seven other books, including *The Stations of the Sun*, which *The Times Literary Supplement* called "a tour de force from one of the liveliest and most wide-ranging English historians." He lives in the United Kingdom.

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