



# Witchcraft: A Very Short Introduction

*Malcolm Gaskill*

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## **Witchcraft: A Very Short Introduction** Malcolm Gaskill

Witchcraft is a subject that fascinates us all. Indeed, from childhood most of us develop some mental image of a witch--usually an old woman, mysterious and malignant. But why do witches still feature so heavily in our cultures and consciousness? From Halloween superstitions to literary references such as Faust and, of course, Harry Potter, witches seem ever-present in our lives. In this *Very Short Introduction*, Malcolm Gaskill takes a long historical perspective, from the ancient world to contemporary paganism. This is a book about the strangeness of the past, and about contrasts and change; but it's also about affinity and continuity. He reveals that witchcraft is multi-faceted, that it has always meant different things to different people, and that in every age it has raised questions about the distinction between fantasy and reality, faith and proof. Delving into court records, telling anecdotes, and challenging myths, Gaskill re-examines received wisdom, especially concerning the European witch-hunts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. He also explores the modern memory and reinvention of witchcraft--as history, religion, fiction, and metaphor.

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