

Witchcraft, Magic, Alchemy and Monsters



Pagan Traditions

- Pagan traditions were strong in Europe as a result of pre-Christian and Roman traditions, and survival of Celtic traditions in Ireland, Scotland, and parts of France
- Pre-Christian holidays such as *Samhain*, *Parentalia*, *Saturnalia*, transformed into Christian holidays such as Halloween, Christmas, St. John's Day
- Greek paganism survived as *apotropaioi*, Hecatian witchcraft, and Hermetic traditions
- Druidic traditions survived as peasant folk traditions and stories, midwifery, and "hedge" magic
- Strong beliefs in the nature cycle, evil and good spirits and faeries, and gods transformed into Christian saints



Magic

- Europeans distinguished between white magic ("Right-hand") and black magic ("Left-hand")
- White magic practitioners frequently called "Hedges", "Cunning-men/women", "seers" focused on divination, healing, and warding
- Black magic practitioners called "Hexen", "witches", "sorcerors", focused on curses, casting of harmful spells, calling up the devil and other evil spirits
- Most magical practices originated either in Celtic traditions or Hecatian traditions (Hecate – Greek goddess of night, witchcraft, judgement, and crossroads). Her symbols were a goat, black dog, wolves, bat – became associated with Satan.



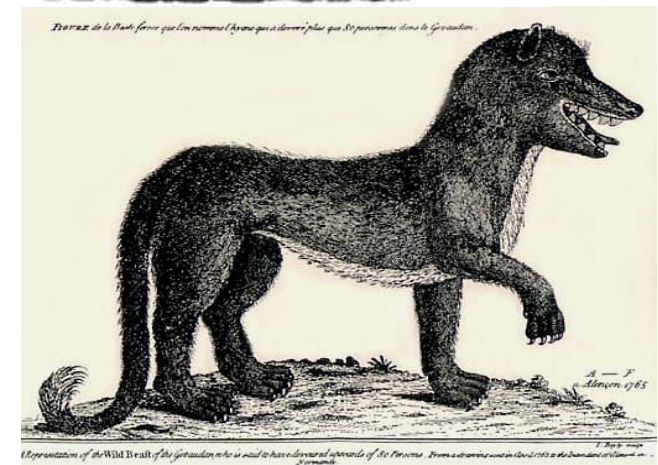
Witch Trials

- Between 40 000 and 100 000 men and women were executed for witchcraft during Middle Ages and Renaissance. There were 12 000 formal witchcraft trials
- Governments and the Church alike were concerned about witchcraft.
- Accusations of witchcraft were usually an easy way to gain neighbour's property, remove a rival, or punish a perceived wrong (a miscarriage, a still-birth, illness, accident, or infidelity)
- Common targets of witchcraft included midwives, millers, widows/widowers, educated members of the community



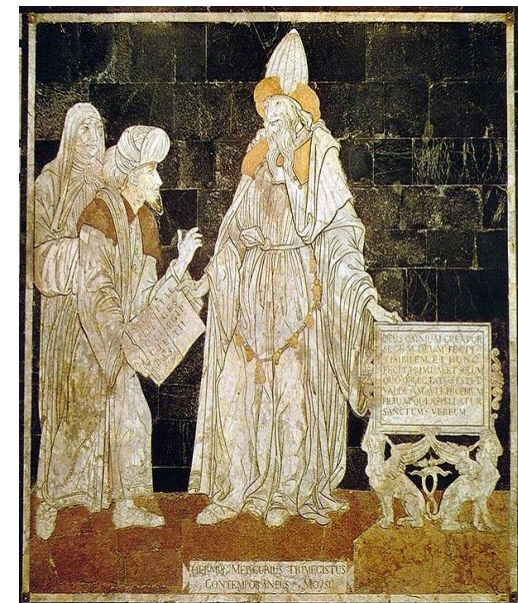
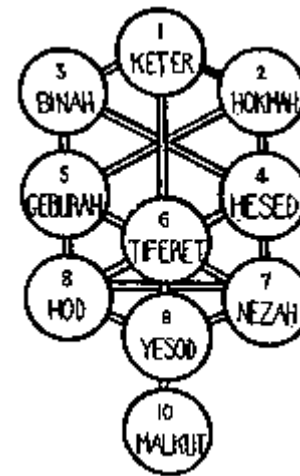
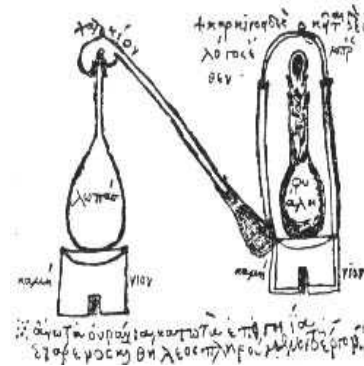
Monsters

- Europeans believed in existence of monsters
- Black Shuck/Barghest in British Isles
- Vampyres and walking dead (*Totzenmann*) in Germany, Eastern and Southern Europe
- Fairies (a.k.a. Gentry, Good Folk, Little Folk) in British Isles and Scandinavia: leprecauns, elfinn, changelings, duerghar
- Trolls in Scandinavia
- *Golem* of Prague
- *Loup Garou* (werewolves) in France. The hunt for the Beast of Gévaudan (which reportedly killed 113 people, and injured 49 more) took three years, and hundreds of hunters.



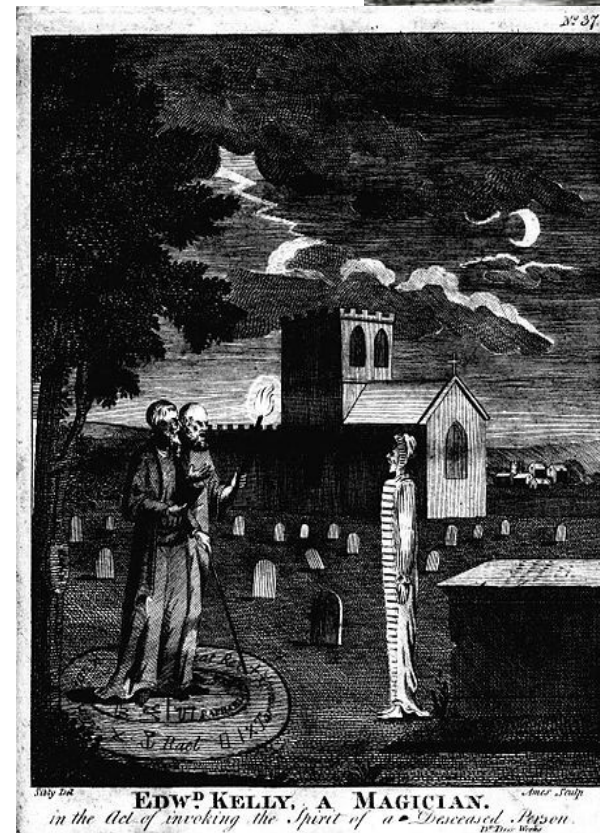
Alchemy

- Belief in the spiritual nature of the elements, the Great Plan, and secrets of the ancients
- Alchemy – derived from Arabic *al-kimia*, in turn derived from Greek *chemia*, in turn derived from Egyptian *keme*.
- European alchemy grew out of Arabic alchemy, Byzantine magic, and Jewish Kabbalah
- Hermetic Traditions – Hermes Trismegistus – a mythical Greek philosopher, magician, and alchemist
- Alchemists were obsessed with physical and spiritual transmutation, Philosopher's Stone, Elixir of Immortality
- Leads to creation of secret societies and development of modern sciences



Necromancy

- Means "speaking with the dead", rather than raising the dead
- A practice of summoning the spirits of the dead to gain their secrets. Originated in Egyptian, Greek, Celtic and Jewish traditions
- Medieval and Renaissance Europeans believed that Necromancy meant dealing with the Devil (as only the souls of the damned could be called up) and condemned it as witchcraft and Satanism – *Munich Manual of Daemonic Magic*
- Necromancers were frequently alchemists and magicians and claimed to derive their power from the knowledge of the great ancients
- Not to be confused with nigromancy (black magic).

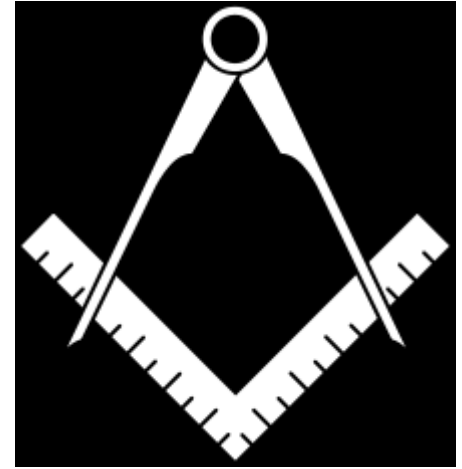


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EDWARD KELLY, A MAGICIAN. in the Act of invoking the Spirit of a Deceased Person.

Secret Societies

- Developed out of Medieval knightly orders, alchemist societies, *Holy Vehmic Courts* of Germany, and Church secret societies
- The Masonic Societies – late 16th century to present. Claimed to be successors to the builders of the Pyramids and their secrets
- The Bavarian Illuminati – founded in Bavaria by Adam Weishaupt in 1776, a short-lived (allegedly) society to achieve world domination and liberation of men from tyranny and religion
- Brothers Hospitallers of St. John of God, and other knightly orders – grew out of Knights of Malta and Knights of St. John



Famous Practitioners

- Hermes Trismegistus
- John Dee (1527-1609) – Elizabeth I's spymaster, astrologer, advisor, cartographer, and mathematician
- Edward Kelley – Dee's confidante, necromancers, claimed to summon spirits, angels, and the Devil himself
- Count Cagliostro (1743-1795) – real name Giuseppe Balsamo. Claimed to be immortal, the Eternal Jew, alchemist, necromancer, and criminal.
- Alistair Crowley (1875-1947) – "The Great Beast", European occultist, cult leader, alchemist, magician, junkie and practitioner of sexmagik.
- Adam Weishaupt (1748-1830) – German philosopher, jurist, founder of Illuminati, claimed to have secret knowledge

