Landscapes of the Witches' Sabbath: Space, Place, and Fantasy in Early Modern Europe, 1500-1750



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"The sea, the mountain, the forest, this ravine, that river… Everything that surrounds us from childhood contributes to molding us, forming us, conditioning us…

Dionisio de Azuke was once asked what elements shaped the [Basque people]. Dunixi, who was above all a poet, did not remember the factor of blood, or venerable traditions, or language or folklore.

The landscape and the wind – was what he answered."

Miguel Pelay Orozco, "Los vascos… el mar…" in *Itxaskaria: Los Euskaros Y El Mar*

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Abstract

Amidst the early modern European witch craze, fantasies of the witches' sabbath spread across the continent, spurred by the terrors and anxieties of people across the social strata. Believed to be the gathering of diabolic witches who would worship the Devil, feast, dance, and engage in demonic orgies, the sabbath inverted early modern customs and rites to play a central role in witchcraft belief. While the belief in the sabbath may seem rooted in fantasy, those constructing the sabbath narratives needed to place their stories in a real setting to make them believable. This thesis explores the landscapes associated with the witches' sabbath across early modern Europe, using these spaces and narratives to understand the relationship between people and landscape over time. Delving into the *mentalités* of common people and learned demonologists alike, this thesis explores the landscapes of the sabbath from Portugal to Poland to uncover how different cultural and geographic contexts moulded the sabbath belief to fit their local landscape.

Using two specific case studies – Zug, Switzerland and the Pays de Labourd, France – and other examples from the European witch craze, this thesis argues that the sabbath narratives are indicative of local perceptions of landscape, reflecting personal and societal values, emotions, and anxieties tied to space. This thesis explores mountains, forests, cemeteries, and many more landscapes tied to the sabbath myth, analyzing each landscape using spatial historical methodologies and a boots-on-the-ground approach, walking through the world of early modern witchcraft belief. Moreover, through the examination of the legacies of the sabbath in the world of art, it investigates how the perception of landscape changed across time, and how early modern relationships with space have shifted and carried on into the modern world, long after the end of the witch craze.

Long Abstract

This thesis explores the landscapes associated with the witches' sabbath across early modern Europe, delving into the *mentalités* of people across the social strata to uncover their changing and contextual relationship with space and landscape. The witches' sabbath was one of the core beliefs at the heart of the early modern witch craze. This deepest and darkest fantasy involved witches renouncing God, reaffirming their pact with the Devil, feasting, dancing, and engaging in orgiastic sex with demons. At first glance, few aspects of early modern witchcraft belief may seem further from reality than the sabbath. Unlike other elements of witchcraft, the sabbath is seemingly rooted in fantasy: cows fell ill, infants died, and storms sunk ships and ruined crops, but these phenomena had natural explanations. While the sabbath stands apart in its fantastical nature, there are elements of truth buried deep within these narratives, glimpses of the reality woven within the story. This thesis examines the landscapes tied to narratives of the witches' sabbath across Europe during the witch craze and their legacies beyond this context. However, the following work is not purely a history of witchcraft – instead, it is a history of space, place, and landscape, an examination of the ways that early modern Europeans interacted with the world around them. I argue that the perception of landscape reflects social and cultural contexts, in which we see complex emotions and relationships. However, these perceptions are not static but constantly change over time with every interaction. The following work is an interdisciplinary approach to the fantasy of the witches' sabbath, combining social and spatial history through extensive archival research, geographic information systems (GIS) mapping, and a boots-on-the-ground approach to writing, which allows for both an intimate understanding of landscapes and a broad examination of patterns across extensive regions of early modern Europe.

This thesis constructs its analysis by examining a wide range of sabbath narratives. Due to the geographic immensity of the witch craze, sabbath belief spread across Europe and localized to fit local cultures. This thesis explores landscapes as varied as the beliefs themselves from Portugal in the west to Poland in the east, from Italy in the south to Finnmark in the north. Each of these regions are filled with a multitude of different sabbath landscapes, providing a rich tapestry of spatial relationships for interpretation. Two specific case studies are featured for in-depth analyses: the Canton of Zug, Switzerland, and the Pays de Labourd, France. Both case studies were the sites of vivid sabbath narratives centred around specific and varied landscapes.

However, this thesis is not only interested in the geographic breadth of these narratives. The sabbath was the collision of beliefs from both sides of the social strata. Common magical beliefs held by the lower social strata interacted with and informed the beliefs of the educated upper strata, with their worlds becoming entangled during the interrogation process. Interrogators, armed with the theological knowledge about witchcraft presented in demonologies, questioned lower-strata common people, often women, about their actions as witches including stories of the sabbath. These lower-strata individuals would respond with details regarding their perception of the sabbath from within their context, offering a vivid vision of their own fantasy, populated with details that the upper strata interrogator trained in the demonological arts would understand and accept. These details from the confession would then populate the future demonologies, thereby adding to the corpus of demonological literature and promoting the parasitic model of witchcraft literature. This thesis therefore examines the perspectives of common people and upper strata demonologists and jurists from early modern Europe to create a complete and nuanced interpretation of the sabbath landscape, not bound by social status.

Lastly, this thesis examines the landscapes of the sabbath across the *longue durée*, from the origins of the witch craze until the present. While Europe's obsession with the dangers of witchcraft was born in the late medieval conspiratorial landscape and largely died with the onset of the Enlightenment, the legacies of the witches' sabbath lasted far longer. As witchcraft belief changed and shifted across the centuries, so too did perceptions of landscape. This thesis explores not only how the understanding of space has changed across time, but also how shifting witchcraft beliefs and stories caused the sabbath landscapes to accommodate contemporary relationships with landscape. From the earliest stories of the sabbath in the fifteenth century to the latest films involving the diabolical gathering of witches, each depiction adds to our understanding of where these sabbaths belong in our collective imagination.

The work begins by defining both the witches' sabbath and explaining the essential terms taken from human geography that are essential to this work. I argue that due to the complex and transcultural nature of sabbath narratives, the witches' sabbath can therefore be defined simply as the organized gathering of witches to perform *maleficia*, dance, feast, worship the Devil, or engage in orgiastic sex. However, I argue that all these components are not necessary in conjunction to form a witches' sabbath, but rather any combination of these elements. In relation to space, place, and landscape, I define each of these terms as unique. Space is defined as concrete, the world without any human emotions and experiences attached. Place is therefore the inverse, defined by our connections to the world around us. Landscape, the last essential term for this thesis, is defined as a collection of spaces, tied to our subjective interpretations and relationships with the world. Each layer adds progressively more meaning and significance to the human perception of space.

This section of the introduction is followed by a historiography of the sabbath landscapes, beginning in the decades immediately after the witch craze and ending with the

most recent explorations of the witches' sabbath in the twenty-first century. This section explores how the spatial elements of sabbath belief have been both explored and ignored across the centuries. It examines how each successive wave of witchcraft studies approached the sabbath from different perspectives. The earliest wave presented a hyper-rationalist approach led by Georg Conrad Horst, dismissing the sabbath as a peculiarity and not worthy of study, while the following wave of the mid nineteenth century was defined by the romantic and nationalistic movements of the early nineteenth century. However, it was the romantic movement that placed the greatest emphasis on the landscape, with Grimm's *Deutsche Mythologie* providing the first attempt at a database of sabbath landscapes, though one heavily skewed toward his vision of the sabbath as a continuation of the Wild Hunt myth. Subsequent romantically aligned movements led by problematic figures such as Margaret Murray and Montague Summers examined the sabbath with varying interest in the landscape. However, as the romantic approach to witchcraft has faded in the subsequent decades, so too have in-depth analyses of the sabbath, particularly those that feature descriptions of the landscape.

We then transition to a historiographic analysis of early modern sources with the upper strata demonological texts published and disseminated across Europe during this time. This section examines how the upper strata jurists and demonologists interpreted the sabbath landscape, with each successive text across over a century building upon the previous literature to provide a multilayered vision of this phenomenon. Beginning with the earliest demonologies of the fifteenth century such as the *Formicarius* and extending to the last major demonological text in the mid-seventeenth century, the *Blockes-Berges Verrichtung*, this chapter follows the changes in sabbath belief and traces the shifting relationship with landscape and environment across the early modern period.

"Chapter I: The Wide World of the Witches' Sabbath" begins the heart of this thesis by examining how broad narratives and interpretations of landscapes differed across the vastness of Europe during the early modern witch craze. The narrative of the sabbath was malleable to fit any context. Each culture added their own aspects to the belief, making it fit in any situation. So too were the landscape narratives shifted and adjusted for each geographic and cultural context. This chapter explores some of the most common sabbath landscapes to understand how different regions of Europe interpreted the world around them within this narrative framework. Mountains, crossroads, homes, and heaths all come under the microscope, among other landscapes. Each example provides further examples of how this belief was localized, with elements added to the story to fit within specific contexts. Some mountains were believed to be the site of the sabbath for witches from expansive areas as others only featured in local areas, while broad anxieties about the wealth held in cellars permeated local and individually specific fantasies. Each example from across Europe paints a picture of the complexities and variations in sabbath belief across broad geographic and temporal contexts.

Chapter II opens the case studies by investigating the example of Zug, Switzerland, whose trials spanned the length of the early modern witch craze, beginning in 1559 and ending in 1748. Across these trials, the people accused of witchcraft in Zug named dozens of locations as the sites of the witches' sabbath, but three landscapes repeatedly appeared: the Meliacher forest, the *Allmend* common pasture, and the Lorzentobel valley. This thesis examines each of these landscapes both as individual places and within the context of broader perception of such spaces across Europe. In the canton of Zug, the Meilacher was a communal oak forest just beyond the city walls owned by the *Bürgergemeinde* citizen's organization. Populating the fantasies of the people from at least the early seventeenth century until the end of the witch craze, the Meilacher became synonymous with the sabbath,

reflecting local anxieties regarding the health and wellbeing of the wood resources, as well as the restrictions surrounding their use. However, the Meilacher also fits within the broader perception of forests as complex landscapes in the early modern world. While providing the essential resources for life in premodern Europe, the forests were also landscapes of fear, associated with disorientation, disorder, and violence. The *Allmend* fields present a unique case study of anxieties over the commons and the collective wealth of the community. In Zug, the wealth of the commons lay in their cattle. As the primary source of caloric intake through milk, butter, and cheese, cows were an essential aspect of life in early modern Switzerland. The death of a single cow could devastate a family, an illness that spread across the common pastures could ruin the entire community. With cattle deaths and *Allmend* sabbaths appearing in nearly every witch trial in Zug, we see a direct link between the anxieties surrounding cows and the landscapes of the sabbath, intensified by contemporary fears related to the loss of common lands, rights, and resources. The Lorzentobel Valley presents a multilayered landscape with numerous and varied features yet defined by its relationship with the senses. The steep walls, thick forests, caves, and heavy fog are a constant barrier to vision, which has often been viewed as the essential sense for the understanding of landscape. This section argues against that belief, as the perception of the Lorzentobel as a site of the witches' sabbath is centred on the lack of visibility and visual isolation of this space.

Chapter III takes the thesis to the Basque coast of France during the summer of 1609, exploring the landscapes of Pierre de Lancre's *Tableau de l'inconstance des mauvais anges et demons*. This core demonological text provided both de Lancre's justification for the brutality of the witch panic, and the most vivid vision of the sabbath thanks to the Bordeaux jurist's ethnographic writing style and personal obsession with the phenomenon. This chapter explores the Basque vision of the witches' sabbath through the eyes of de Lancre, as the

voices of the accused were lost in an archive fire in the eighteenth century. Three major sabbath landscapes are explored: ruins, sacred spaces, and seascapes.. We begin by exploring de Lancre's home in Bordeaux, where we see the relationship with ruins, centring on the Gallienne Palace. This hulking ruin of a Roman amphitheatre stood outside the city walls and appeared extensively in de Lancre's recounting of the tale of Isaac de Queryan, a Bordeaux man executed for witchcraft. This section argues that ruins played the role of a *memento mori*, a reminder of human mortality and the inevitability of societal collapse, anxieties that inspired the terror of witches and their gatherings. The holy landscape of the Pays de Labourd may at first seem a strange place to encounter the Devil, yet for early modern Europeans, the relationship with the sacred and unseen world was a powerful element of landscape perception. The interiors of churches, which were the sites of black masses and diabolical gatherings in the local Basque imagination, were sites where the veil between the real world and the sacred were thinnest, where spiritual battles could be waged. This association extends beyond the inside of churches, but to other sacred sites as well, such as the holy mountain of La Rhune. Cemeteries, where the world of the living and the dead collided fit within local and cross-continental beliefs of the witches' sabbath as a remnant of the Wild Hunt belief, where the souls of the dead undertook ecstatic nocturnal journeys. As a coastal region, the sea was essential to life in the Pays de Labourd. Yet this space, for all its richness, was full of dangers and anxieties. With an immense fishing and whaling industry that brought the Basque from the Bay of Biscay to the coasts of the Americas, the community relied on the wealth of the sea but faced increased dangers from storms and shipwrecks. Further, the rocky coastline of the Pays de Labourd itself was a marginal space, existing between the land and the sea, invoking anxiety.

Finally, "Chapter IV: The Legacies of the Witches' Sabbath" explores how the sabbath fantasy has changed and adapted in the world of art from the early modern period to

the present. This chapter examines select examples of sabbath art from collections around the world, ranging from sixteenth century etchings and prints to modern film and videogame adaptations of the sabbath fantasy. Each example illustrates a shifting relationship with the witches' sabbath and with space, as some landscapes that played a constant role in the trials and demonologies were forgotten in favour of others, such as forests and mountains, which have become the most commonly envisioned landscapes of the sabbath in the contemporary imagination. This chapter illustrates how the end of the witch craze was not the end of the sabbath's role in the perception of landscape, demonstrating how early modern relationships with space have continued to play a role in the modern spatial imagination, centuries after the last witch trials of the eighteenth century.

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Note from the Author

Portions of this thesis have been previously published as articles. A version of the examination of demonologies from the introduction appeared in the *European Review of History* 31, no. 1 (February 2024) as "Darkest Forests and Highest Mountains: The Witches' Sabbath and Landscapes of Fear in Early Modern Demonologies." Sections of Chapter I and Chapter II appeared in the article "Seeing the Unseen World: Countering the Vision-Centric Landscape in Narratives of the Witches' Sabbath," in *Network of Early Modern Senses (NEMoS)*, November 2024.

Generative AI was not used at any point in the planning or writing of this thesis. AI tools such as Transkribus and Google Lens were used for transcription and translation assistance.

Introduction

Every landscape tells a story. Written across space are the encounters and imaginations of people across centuries, continually adding new meanings, new narratives, and new emotions to our understanding of the world. Yet the construction of a landscape is complex and multilayered, with the context of our interaction with space dictating our emotional response. In one situation, a landscape may inspire comfort, while in another, terror and anxiety take over. By day, for example, woodlands may be peaceful places, tranquil retreats from the human-constructed world. As twilight descends, the forest is silent. The trees and their leafy boughs muffle sounds, while the thick canopy shades the last dying lights of the sun from the forest floor, swiftly bringing the promise of night. As shadows grow, so too do our anxieties. An ageless and nameless fear takes over, burrowing itself into our psyches, connecting our fearful fantasies to this space. Where once stood a landscape essential to our humanity and our society, the forest becomes a landscape of fear and uncertainty.[1] But where does this fear come from? Is it from our deepest animal instincts, where the fear of the dark and the fear of disorientation combine? Or does it stem from our social and cultural relationship with the forest across time?

Such terrors in the forest are not a recent phenomenon. In the morning of 16 August 1737, seventy-year-old Elisabeth or Lisi Bossard stood on trial for the crime of witchcraft in the Swiss town of Zug, facing her accuser, sixteen-year-old Katharina Kalbacher. Nine days prior, on 7 August, Kalbacher, for reasons not listed in the historical record, confessed to the crime of witchcraft before Zug's head of state or Ammann, Johann Christian Blattmann.[2]

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[1] See: Djo Juliette Fischer et al., "Are We Afraid of the Woods? – An Investigation of the Implicit and Explicit Fear Reactions to Forests," in *Environmental Research* 260 (November 2024): 1-10.
[2] Phillipe Bart, "Zwischen Gott und Teuffel: zur alltagsgeschichtlichen Relevanz der Zuger Hexenprozessakten von 1737-1738" (Seminararbeit, Universität Zürich, 2002), 8.

Following her own confession, Kalbacher accused six other women of witchcraft, including Lisi and her four nieces. In the interrogation chamber, Lisi was brought face to face with Kalbacher who claimed that for fourteen years, on the Sunday before St. Mary Magdalen's Day, she and other witches had joined the Devil for the witches' sabbath in the Meilacher or Eichwald forest, located just beyond the borders of Zug's city walls.[3] Lisi denied this, stating "No, I have not done this, and would not do this…"[4] However, Lisi's staunch denial was not to last in the face of torture. On 22 August 1737, Lisi Bossard's resolve cracked under the weight of the strappado and she confessed to being a witch, and thus her sabbath narrative emerged. Forty years before at the Lorze river near the margins of the Canton of Zug, she was first tempted by the Devil and signed the pact with him. In return she was given a stick that she would use to fly to the Meilacher forest, where she and the other witches of Zug would gather under the eaves of the Meilacher's oak trees to dance with evil spirits and transform into cats, dogs, and canaries to commit crimes of *maleficia*.[5] It was here in the darkness of the forest that the fantasies and subconscious fears of Lisi, Katharina, and the interrogators of the city of Zug were allowed to play out, and it was this narrative of the Meilacher that led to Lisi's execution on 16 October 1737.[6]

Such tales were not confined within the borders of forests, a space that traditionally inspires a sense of dread. Le Sentier du Littoral de Saint-Jean-de-Luz à Hendaye is a popular fourteen-kilometre gentle hike across the Basque coastline of southern France. The trail meanders through historic villages and seascapes on its path along the Bay of Biscay, capturing the essence of the landscape between the Pyrénées and the Atlantic Ocean. Crashing waves and the salty air remain a constant, a fresh reminder of the proximity to the

[3] StAZG A 105/6 fol. 18B.
[4] "*Nein, hab nichts gethan, Und woll nichts gethan haben…*" StAZG A 105/6 fol. 18B.
[5] StAZG A 105/6 fol. 43B. *Maleficia* can be defined as evil magic constructed from the pact between witch and the Devil, found in witchcraft trials and demonological literature across Europe in the early modern era.
[6] "Anklagen und Hinrichtungen wegen Hexerei im Stand Zug 1559-1748," *Staatsarchiv Zug*, (April 7, 2015).

sea. To the modern hiker, such a place is far removed from the darkness of the forest, a site of relaxation and natural wonder. Yet that was not always the case. In his demonology *Tableau de l'Inconstance des Mauvais Anges et Demons*, the Bordeaux jurist Pierre de Lancre recounts the testimony of Marguerite Hareder, one of the key witnesses in the mass witch trials he oversaw through the French Basque Country in the summer of 1609.[7] According to de Lancre, Marguerite described immense gatherings of witches along the coast of Hendaye, where the Sentier du Littoral runs today, featuring "as many people there as there are stars in the sky."[8] While de Lancre expresses doubt about the number of witches at this sabbath, at no point does the demonologist question the reality of the sabbath along this stretch of the coast. This adherence to belief illustrates that Pierre de Lancre imagined a sabbath featuring upwards of twelve thousand witches *could* happen in this landscape, that this was a space where such a diabolical gathering *belonged*. Yet somewhere between 1609 and the present, the diabolical association with this landscape was lost, and shifting perceptions painted this place as the site of leisure rather than horror.

In both examples, we see narratives of witchcraft interwoven with the land, where space is an essential component in the imagination of the witches' sabbath. These narratives of the witches' sabbath, separated by hundreds of years and thousands of kilometres, were set in real landscapes that the people involved in the trials interacted with. It is this thread connecting space and witchcraft that is the heart of this thesis. Yet our exploration of this connection is not tied purely to the forests and seascapes of Zug and the French Basque Country. Instead, this thesis spans the breadth of Europe and the entirety of the early modern

[7] Due to the nature of de Lancre's style of narrative, the author provides only the first name of the girl. However, further research has proven that only one girl named Margueritte is currently known to have participated in the Labourdin witch craze, so I have taken the liberty to assume the girl described by de Lancre is indeed Marguerite Hareder. See: Jan Machielsen, *The Basque Witch-Hunt: A Secret History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2024), xvii.

[8] *"…qu'il y auoit autant de monde cõme d'estoilles au ciel…"* Pierre de Lancre, *Tableau de l'Inconstance des Mauvais Anges et Demons* (Paris: Chez Nicolas Buon, 1613), 64.

witch craze, tying together the varied landscapes of the continent, which were as diverse as the fantasies of the sabbath themselves.

The following work is not a history of witchcraft, nor is it an examination of the witches' sabbath as a phenomenon. Rather, this text is an exploration of the early modern landscape and how people interacted with the world around them, framed within the lens of the sabbath narratives constructed over the course of the early modern period. Witch trials occurred across Europe, with each region demonstrating staggering differences in belief and concepts of who could be a witch and what actions constituted the crime of witchcraft. Yet amidst all this discord, every trial and text provide a small window into the lives of people long gone, with their narratives reflecting their interactions with the world around them. Narratives of witchcraft offer us a glimpse into the *mentalités* of people across the social strata, from the dejected accused witch to the illustrious demonologist, and this text uses this opportunity to dissect and explore what these people believed about the physical world in which they lived, regardless of status.

Yet among the many facets of witchcraft belief, the narratives of the witches' sabbath are unique. While the death of cattle, the illnesses of childhood, or the violent crop-ruining storms of the early modern little ice age were often blamed on witches and figured extensively into witchcraft confessions, each was a real event that had taken on a diabolical new meaning. However, the sabbath was different. Unlike the other aspects of witchcraft belief, the witches' sabbath existed purely in the realm of fantasy. These diabolical gatherings of witches and demons did not actually happen. No accused witch flew into the night, gathered before the devil, renounced God, or feasted and copulated with demons, no matter how vivid their narratives appeared. Despite being pure fantasy, the witches' sabbath is an essential component of understanding reality in early modern Europe. The sabbath was often a reflection of everyday lives and anxieties set in their unique contexts. Beneath layers of

terrifying fantasy, we see the way early modern Europeans understood village culture, religious life, and social expectations. Their emotions and anxieties around so many aspects of their lives are laid bare amidst these imagined events. The setting of these fantasies is no different. The landscapes where people placed the sabbath illustrate the spaces they felt diabolical deeds belonged, spaces where witches and demons could gather in their diabolical meetings and hold symbolic meaning and significance.

The unique role of the sabbath in witchcraft narratives poses numerous questions about their relationship with the landscape, which this research aims to address: How are early modern concepts of space reflected in accounts of the witches' sabbath across the European continent? What does sabbath belief tell us about these spaces, and how do different regional beliefs in witchcraft shift in accordance with localized concepts of space? Lastly, how are shifts in concepts of landscape and space made evident in fantasies of the witches' sabbath? The following work is an attempt to answer these questions, dissecting the fantasy of the sabbath to gain an understanding of the geographic themes and patterns at its core, across the European continent in the age of witch trials. I argue that through the examination of the landscapes of the witches' sabbath in both specific case studies and broader examples across Europe, we may gain a deeper understanding of how early modern Europeans understood the world around them. Despite the sabbath's fantastical nature, pulling back the layers of fantasy reveals the everyday emotions and experiences tied to space. This thesis will reconstruct the sabbath as seen across time and the social strata to immerse ourselves in their worlds. We will walk in the footsteps of peasants, trace the fantasies of demonologists, and delve into the imaginations of artists across time, uncovering their specific relationship with space. With a fantasy as broad and varying as the witches' sabbath, it is essential to view its associated landscapes in as many specific localities as possible. Therefore, this thesis explores how broad perceptions of landscape were constructed

across Europe, and how the sabbath fantasies were subsequently localized. Our journey will take us through two extensive case studies in Zug, Switzerland, and the Pays de Labourd, France, as well as landscapes from Portugal to Poland, as we use the witches' sabbath to understand how early modern Europeans interacted with the landscapes in which they lived. Each case study and every landscape will bring this thesis closer to the people who constructed the sabbath fantasies, adding another thread to the rich tapestry of spatial relationships during this tumultuous era in European history.

However, landscapes are not static. Through human interaction or natural processes, landscapes shift and change over time. Forests are felled, caves are formed, and even mountains are bound to crumble. Human perceptions and relationships with space are similarly dynamic. The story of the witches' sabbath is a story of change across time, where an idea evolved with each retelling in every new context, adding layers of meaning and symbolism before ultimately shifting to the realm of fairy tales and fantasy. Across this thesis, we see the perception of space change across time and in different contexts. Landscapes essential to early modern life in one context become a space of fear and terror in another. Perceptions of landscape also shift across the early modern period, as humans began to question their role in the natural world, the spiritual world, and beyond. This thesis traces these changes across time, beginning at the dawn of early modernity in the early sixteenth century, following through the witch craze until organized witch hunting ended in the mid to late eighteenth century, and then exploring the legacies of these landscapes through to the early twenty-first century. This examination over the *longue durée* illustrates the dynamic nature of landscape perception, how slowly shifting beliefs and fantasies change our relationship with the world around us.

As a spatial history, this thesis builds upon decades of work in the field of spatial history, historical geography, and the use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS)

mapping.[9] Primary sources from across the witch craze were examined for their discussions of space, with the most frequently appearing landscapes forming the foundations of each chapter, while each spatial narrative was recorded and categorized in a database. Each database was then mapped using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software to illustrate and visualize spatial patterns across these narratives. While some landscapes are the subject of deeper dives throughout this work, these maps serve as a broader and more complete vision of the landscapes of the sabbath.

However, any exploration of space and landscape is incomplete when viewed exclusively through maps and books. The world can only truly be understood by walking its breadth, exploring the landscape on foot. As phrased poetically by Robert Macfarlane in his reflections on walking through history:

> "The eye is enticed by a path, and the mind's eye also. The imagination cannot help but pursue a line in the land – onwards in space, but also backwards in time to the histories of a route and its previous followers. As I walk paths, I often wonder about their origins, the impulses that have led to their creation, the records they yield of customary journeys, and the secrets they keep of adventures, meetings, and departures."[10]

Walking through landscapes plays a vital role in our understanding of space, place, and the past, permitting our senses to explore and our mind to wander. It is little surprise that this boots-on-the-ground vision of spatial history narratives has gained traction in recent years, from analyses of the First World War by walking the length of the Western Front to a decades-long odyssey tracing the human migration from the African Rift Valley to the tip of South America.[11] This vision of history on foot was best described by Matthew Kelly as

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[9] See: Alan R.H. Baker, *Geography and History: Bridging the Divide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Susanne Rau, *History, Space, and Place*, trans. Michael Thomas Taylor (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019); Riccardo Bavaj, Konrad Lawson, and Bernhard Struck, eds., *Doing Spatial History* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2022); Alexander von Lünen and Charles Travis, eds., *History and GIS: Epistemologies, Considerations, and Reflections* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2013).

[10] Robert Macfarlane, *The Old Ways: A Journey on Foot* (London: Penguin Books, 2012), 15.

[11] See: Anthony Seldon, *The Path of Peace: Walking the Western Front Way* (London: Atlantic Books, 2022); "Out of Eden Walk," National Geographic, last accessed February 10, 2025, https://outofedenwalk.nationalgeographic.org/

"loco-descriptive writing," walking the reader through a landscape and steadily uncovering its past across the journey.[12] Over the course of writing this thesis, I walked the spaces described in the sabbath fantasies, over alpine hiking trails, through cities, and across varied landscapes, allowing the landscape to tell its own story. While these landscapes have changed across time, we see echoes of the early modern when paired with primary sources and contemporary maps and art, allowing us to step into the mind of the early modern Europeans who constructed their own visions of the witches' sabbath.

Concerning the Witches' Sabbath

Before we begin our examination of the early modern landscape, we must first understand the thread that ties these spaces together – the witches' sabbath. This diabolical gathering of witches and demons was a core element of the witchcraft fantasies of early modern Europe, and an essential component of the legacies of witchcraft imagery in the modern world. Willem de Blécourt argues that the sabbath was "the cultural precondition of most large witch hunts" as its presence indicated a major conspiracy against Christendom, far larger than the individual witch.[13] As a result of the sabbath's centrality to witchcraft belief, versions of the event appear across Europe, featuring common narrative elements while simultaneously changing and evolving to fit every unique context. In some corners of Europe, the sabbath appears very different from other regions, united by only a handful of elements; therefore, for this thesis, the development of a definition of the sabbath to be used across Europe is essential. I argue that the witches' sabbath is the gathering of two or more witches to practice dark magic, worship the Devil, engage in feasting, dancing, or orgiastic copulating with demons. Sabbath narratives often featured a journey to a specific location at a specific

[12] Matthew Kelly, *Quartz and Feldspar: Dartmoor – A British Landscape in Modern Times* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2015), 194.
[13] Willem de Blécourt, "Sabbath Stories: Towards a New History of Witches' Assemblies," in *The Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe and Colonial America*, ed. Brian P. Levack (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 84.

time, frequently under the cover of darkness. Many examples of the sabbath contain all of these elements, while some contain only the number of witches and one of the actions. Therefore, it is vital to make this definition as fluid as possible, allowing for the breadth of the sabbath fantasy to be explored.

The origins of the witches' sabbath as an idea are as malleable and difficult to pinpoint as a definition of the sabbath itself. While some historians have claimed that the origins of the sabbath stretch back thousands of years to pre-Christian traditions, others have argued that such ancient origins are nothing more than their own fantasies and applicable to only a tiny subsection of trials.[14] The general consensus of witchcraft historians is that the origins of the sabbath can be firmly traced to the medieval belief in the Wild Hunt, in which groups of women would travel the land following a goddess, sometimes taking flight, as seen in the tenth-century canon *Episcopi* and a number of other medieval documents and trials.[15] However, the nocturnal journey was only one aspect of the origins of the sabbath narrative. In the eleventh century, the concept that heretics, lepers, and Jews met the Devil at night for secret rituals and orgiastic sex emerged, appearing in trials and treatises across France.[16] By the middle of the twelfth century, the concept of ritualistic murders of Christian children by Jews exploded across Europe. Known as the blood libel, this narrative led to an immense spike in the conspiratorial belief that groups of outsiders would gather at night to kill children for dark rituals.[17] The links between late medieval anti-Jewish sentiment and the earliest witches' sabbaths are clearest in the name – while the term sabbath itself is a reference to

[14] See: Carlo Ginzburg, *Ecstasies: Deciphering the Witches' Sabbath* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Richard Kieckhefer, "Review of *Ecstasies: Deciphering the Witches' Sabbath* by Carlo Ginzburg," in *The American Historical Review* 97, no. 3 (June 1992): 837-838.
[15] Willem de Blécourt, "Sabbath Stories," 90-91; Ronald Hutton, *The Witch: A History of Fear, from Ancient Times to the Present* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 130-146.
[16] R.I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Authority and Deviance in Western Europe 950-1250*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 60.
[17] See: Magda Teter, *Blood Libel: On the Trail of an Antisemitic Myth* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2020).

Judaism, many fifteenth-century accounts of witchcraft referred to the gathering of witches as a "synagogue."[18] These two separate beliefs came together in both the popular imagination and in the learned theological context, filtering through both religious texts and secular authorities by the first years of the fifteenth century to form the first cohesive sabbath beliefs.[19]

The development of this first concrete vision of the witches' sabbath coincided with another significant marriage of ideas. While belief in evil magical users long predated the late medieval period, the fifteenth century saw a consolidation of what a witch looked like. In the foothills of the Swiss Alps, the localized version of the diabolical magic user was that of the *Hexe*, described by Laura Stokes as the "Alpine Witch" model.[20] This supernatural figure preyed on children and livestock, rode wolves, and summoned powerful hailstorms to ruin crops, aspects of which translated into the *mentalités* of people across Europe through the witch craze, though without the involvement of Satan.[21] Simultaneously, Dominican inquisitors arrived in the Swiss foothills to hunt Waldensian heretics, whom they had already associated with the heretical concept of the nocturnal Devil worship, cannibalism, and orgiastic rituals.[22] When this widely-held upper strata belief encountered the common alpine *Hexe* tradition, the result was the creation of a new figure, the diabolical witch, who attended sabbath gatherings to pay homage to the Devil while still performing the dark magic of the older folkloric *Hexe*. This combination of belief systems and the earliest vision of a coherent and complete witches' sabbath can be seen as early as 1428, amidst the witch trials of Valais

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[18] Michael Ostling, "Imagined Crimes, Real Victims: Hermeneutical Witches and Jews in Early Modern Poland," in *Ritual Murder in Russia, Eastern Europe, and Beyond: New Histories of an Old Accusation*, eds. Eugene M. Avrutin, Jonathan Dekel-Chen, and Robert Weinberg (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017), 21.
[19] Michael D. Bailey, *Origins of the Witches' Sabbath* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2021), 4-7.
[20] Laura Stokes, *Demons of Urban Reform: Early European Witch Trials and Criminal Justice, 1430-1530* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 22.
[21] Stokes, *Demons of Urban Reform*, 22-25.
[22] Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society*, 60-61.

(Wallis in German) described in the report of Hans Fründ, the chief clerk of the canton of Schwyz until 1461. Fründ describes how the witches of Valais would gather before the Devil, renounce God, the Saints, and the Church, before paying a tribute in the form of a black sheep, a measure of oats, or a part of their body. The Devil, as a black animal such as a bear or a ram, would then transport them from "one mountain to another, and [teach] them to make ointments with which they would anoint chairs and ride on them from one village to another and from one castle to another, and then gather in the cellars of the people who had the best wine."[23] Here, in the decades immediately after the Waldensian hunts across the region, we already see a fully formed vision of the witches' sabbath, one that would haunt the European imagination for centuries to come.

From these roots, the fantasy of the witches' sabbath spread across Europe. Each region produced a version of the sabbath that fit their own local beliefs, shifting elements of the story so it made sense to them. These visions of the sabbath were a combination of upper-strata demonological beliefs and lower-strata folk beliefs. Jurists and theologians published dozens of demonological texts across the early modern witch craze, which provided a wealth of information about the deeds of witches and accounts of their sabbaths. These texts were then published and disseminated around Europe, landing in the hands of civic interrogators. When local accused witches were brought into the interrogation chamber, their localized folk beliefs in magic collided with the demonological beliefs brought by the interrogator. The interrogation process then became a matter of dialogue, where the accused provided individual details unique to their own lives and worlds to the interrogator, populating the demonological vision of the sabbath with localized elements to forge a believable narrative that would bring torture to an end. These details would then make their way back into future

[23] Bailey, *Origins of the Witches' Sabbath*, 29.

demonologies following sentencing, perpetuating the cycle and creating an increasingly complex vision of the witches' sabbath.[24]

For hundreds of years until the final witch trials of the mid to late eighteenth century, the sabbath was a constantly evolving belief, rooted in medieval origins but populated by deeply local beliefs and traditions. The multifaceted nature of these gatherings of witches have brought numerous names to the tradition. Sabbath, synagogue, *Gastmälere* (guest banquet), *Tanz* (dance), *societas*, gathering, each term reflects different aspects of the contemporary and local witch belief. The most famous term, sabbath, first appeared in the middle of the fifteenth century in France, locally spelled *sabbat*. This was the chosen terminology used by most demonologists of the witch craze. Though this term is rooted in the antisemitic origins of the sabbath belief, I have elected to use this as the word for this phenomenon throughout this thesis for several reasons. First and foremost, it is the most recognizable term for a gathering of witches, used in popular culture and academic writing alike. Second, while words such as *Tanz* or dance have gained popularity, particularly in Germany, the term does not reflect the full scope of the early modern sabbath belief. The witches' sabbath was far more than an inverted village dance, as we will see throughout this thesis – it was an amalgam of common and upper strata beliefs and rituals that included an immense variety of acts. Lastly, erasure of the term sabbath sidesteps the antisemitic origins of the witch craze and the sabbath fantasy. These stories were based on anti-Jewish sentiments common across Europe in the late medieval to early modern period. I feel that changing the language around the sabbath would cause this belief to lose much of its symbolic significance, and whitewash witchcraft belief to reflect modern society's attempt to stamp out antisemitism, meanwhile perpetuating historical inaccuracies. Instead, this text will

[24] Lyndal Roper, *Witch Craze: Terror and Fantasy in Baroque Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 106-107.

follow the naming conventions used by historians of the witch craze over the past centuries and refer to this phenomenon as the witches' sabbath.

The use of witchcraft trials as historical sources has presented historians with a complex series of methodological problems, and the concept of the witches' sabbath is emblematic of these concerns. How do we examine an idea that exists solely in the fantasies of people across the early modern period, and how do we unravel these narratives when they are presented solely through the eyes of the scribe, recording confessions led by interrogators and taken under the pain or threat of torture?

Historians have approached such questions in numerous ways, though I argue each methodology has shortcomings. In his analysis of the *benandanti* phenomena of the Friuli region, Carlo Ginzburg used inquisitorial records to examine the world of those standing trial, arguing in the preface to *The Night Battles*: "…I have attempted to penetrate behind the apparent uniformity of these beliefs and grasp the various attitudes of the men and women who lived by them, and how they were altered under influences of several kinds, both of popular and inquisitorial provenance."[25] Ginzburg examined these records to find what he believed to be the authentic belief of the common people, as held by the *benandanti* on trial rather than their interrogators. Yet Ginzburg's approach in teasing apart these popular and inquisitorial ideas proves problematic in its aims, as his goal of finding an underlying folk religion separate from the Catholicism of the time is reliant solely on the actual presence of such a belief, which has been debated by scholars since the book's publication.[26] Trying to

[25] Carlo Ginzburg, *The Night Battles: Witchcraft and Agrarian Cults in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, trans. John and Anne Tedeschi (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2013), xxv.
[26] See: Yme Kuiper, "Witchcraft, Fertility Cults, and Shamanism: Carlo Ginzburg's *I benandanti* in Retrospect," in *Religion im kulturellen Diskurs*, eds. Brigitte Luchesi and Kocku von Stuckrad (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004): 33-60.

find this authentic belief prevents Ginzburg from interacting with the role of the interrogator in the construction of a narrative.

This approach has been built upon by historians in the six decades since the publication of Ginzburg's studies. Focusing on medieval heresy rather than early modern witchcraft, John H. Arnold has grappled with similar ideas of belief and truth. Similar to the early modern witchcraft narratives explored in this thesis, Arnold examines the heresy trials of the medieval Languedoc as a blend of fantasy and reality, stating that: "[w]e do not necessarily have to agree with the inquisitors' conceptions of reality, but we must accept that not only was it their reality, but also a reality that they imposed on others – namely on the deponents themselves."[27] To combat this blurred division between reality and fantasy based on the interrogator's beliefs, Arnold argues that historians can read heresy trials though the lens of heteroglossia, in which the historian looks for the conflicting voices of the accused and the interrogator separately. By seeking these two different voices through close reading of sources, Arnold's methodology allows these discourses to be separated to find the actual experiences of the accused and try to return their agency.[28] Arnold's approach in separating the voices of the interrogator and the accused builds upon his criticisms regarding the presence of the individual subjective experience within the interrogation process. For Arnold, this interrogation always comes in a culturally constructed discourse, meaning that we cannot unproblematically hear the voice of the individual. In his historiographical analysis of several approaches to inquisitorial documents, Arnold's emphasis on the construction of subjectivity through discourse places his work in stark opposition to the works of Lyndal Roper, whose approaches use this subjectivity to highlight the significance of narrative coproduction.[29]

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[27] John H. Arnold, *Inquisition and Power: Catharism and Confessing Subject in Medieval Languedoc* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 15.
[28] Arnold, *Inquisition and Power*, 22-23.
[29] John H. Arnold, "The Historian as Inquisitor: The Ethics of Interrogating Subaltern Voices," in *Rethinking History* 2, no. 3 (September 1998): 383-384; Roper, *Witch Craze*, 58-59.

In her studies of witchcraft trials in Germany, Roper has argued that beneath the foreignness of the experience of witchcraft are profound psychic experiences that can be analyzed to better understand the witch and the world that they inhabited.[30] In *Witch Craze: Terror and Fantasy in Baroque Germany*, Roper argues that witchcraft narratives were a conversation between interrogator and the accused, where an interrogator led the victim along the traditional narrative of temptation and fall that permeated demonological texts and widespread social belief, which the accused would then populate with enough personal details to create a unique narrative of witchcraft.[31] Witchcraft narratives needed a specific blend of widespread demonological belief and deeply localized personal perspectives to be believable, which in turn provide essential threads of reality interwoven among the fantasies, permitting us a glimpse into the everyday lives and beliefs of early modern Europeans.[32] These narratives rely on one another, and are intrinsically linked. They are steeped in both reality and fantasy. However, Roper analyzes the collaboratively constructed witchcraft narratives solely to explore their psychic dimensions – this thesis illustrates the limitations of this method, bringing the confession into three-dimensional reality by reading the sources as records of space and place.

Laura Kounine takes Roper's psychological approach further by implementing Carol Gilligan's *Listening Guide* methodology, a psychoanalytic approach to reading which examines the voices in a story to allow for an in-depth understanding of the person's identity, psyche, and context.[33] While Kounine argues that this methodology is useful in the understanding the complexities of personhood and identity through early modern witch trials,

[30] Lyndal Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Sexuality, and Religion in Early Modern Europe* (London: Routledge, 1994), 3.
[31] Roper, *Witch Craze*, 45-47.
[32] Roper, *Witch Craze*, 52.
[33] Laura Kounine, *Imagining the Witch: Emotions, Gender, and Selfhood in Early Modern Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 15-16.

witch trials seldom include the actual voices of the accused, but are rather filtered through the lens of the interrogator and the pen of the scribe.[34] Kounine argues that the application of the *Listening Guide* to confessions from the Duchy of Württemberg uncovers the "multifaceted, variegated, and at times conflicting notions of personhood" of the accused, listening through layers of fantasy imparted by the interrogator, the scribe and the accused themselves.[35] Through this approach, Kounine directly challenges historical perceptions of both selfhood and the significance of trial records as sources, arguing that her methodology investigates "how, in the process of giving an account of oneself, a person's psyche traversed and negotiated cultural landscapes, when a person capitulated to the cultural norms and when they attempted to resist, and how a person could appropriate cultural – official, local, and familial – categories in an attempt to revise and survive a particular situation."[36] Yet this text illustrates a similar methodological problem faced in Arnold's approach. By separating the voices of the accused and their interrogator, and exploring the mentalities of each in isolation, we lose sight of the significance of coproduction and attempt to isolate a voice that was not recorded in isolation.

My approach to witchcraft trials and treatises takes elements from each of these authors while forging its own path through a spatial approach. Like these four methodological approaches, this thesis is centred around the concepts of reality and fantasy and how we can uncover the realities of life in early modern Europe amidst fantasies of witchcraft. This work is also reliant on the interweaving of demonological ideas from across Europe and the personal details provided by the accused in local witch trials. Yet unlike Ginzburg, Arnold, and Kounine, I argue that the nature of confessions mean that the voices of the interrogator and the accused are intrinsically intertwined, following Roper's methodology. Instead of

[34] Kounine, *Imagining the Witch*, 8.
[35] Kounine, *Imagining the Witch*, 222.
[36] Kounine, *Imagining the Witch*, 230.

separating the voices of the upper and lower strata, this thesis examines these narratives as an *amalgam*, by which I mean an entwined narrative that features both perspectives to understand space in early modern Europe.

The importance of placing the amalgam at the heart of my methodology is tied to Roper's concept of a conversational interrogation. The accused had to populate their confession with personal and local details in combination with broadly accepted demonological concepts to appease the interrogator and bring torture to an end.[37] Among these details were places that the interrogator would find acceptable as a setting for the witches' sabbath. Using the localized details about space, place, and landscape provided in the confession narratives in conjunction with the discussions and depictions of space found in early modern demonologies and art, I unravel the layers of fantasy surrounding the sabbath to uncover the perceptions of these spaces on both a local and pan-European level.

However, unlike Kounine's and Roper's approach, I do not seek to unlock solely the *inner* world of the accused, but rather their relationship with the world around them. I argue that the personal and localized spatial details injected into these sabbath narratives reflect early modern placemaking, where people interacted with and were influenced by their environment. The landscapes of the witches' sabbath in this text are therefore a reflection of early modern fears and anxieties painted onto the topography of the early modern world by the accused and interrogator alike, the spatial elements of the process of localization and narrative construction. Like Natalie Zemon Davis's approach to letters of remission in sixteenth century France, the fictive elements of these placemaking and spatially reflective narratives are the centre of this analysis.[38] Using the witches' sabbath narrative structure

[37] Roper, *Witch Craze*, 52.
[38] Natalie Zemon Davis, *Fiction in the Archives: Pardon Tales and their Tellers in Sixteenth-Century France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), 3.

allows us to identify landscapes that inspired fear and anxiety in the early modern imagination, picking up the threads of reality left behind in the amalgam to understand the early modern relationship with space, place, and landscape.

Concerning Space, Place, and Landscape

To understand the significance of landscape in the visions of the witches' sabbath, developing an understanding of the key concepts of space, place, and landscape is vital, as they form the basis of the geographic discipline and lay the foundation for this study. Space can be defined as the physical world, created by nature and by human hands, but devoid of abstract concepts of meaning, symbolism, and narratives that have been laid down by people. Space is the blank canvas of a location where meaning can be built over time.[39] Geographically, space is tangible, yet the moment a person touches or interacts with space, its nature changes. Place, then, is intangible as it is a space that has developed human connection and meaning as a result of direct interaction with people. *The Dictionary of Human Geography* defines place as requiring this interaction and as "continually emergent" as the meaning of place shifts over time. As more people interact with space, their own personal connection with the location adds layers of understanding building upon previous interpretations of space.[40] Place as a concept is relative to the individual, as different spaces can be tied to unique experiences and contexts. Edward Relph describes the experiential basis of place building as founded on "personal geographies composed of direct experiences, memory, fantasy, present circumstances, and future purposes."[41] In using place as a basis of examination, Relph argues that we are therefore using the concept as a mirror, "reflecting and

[39] Derek Gregory et al., eds., *The Dictionary of Human Geography*, Fifth ed. (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 709.
[40] Gregory et al., eds., *The Dictionary of Human Geography*, 539-540.
[41] E. Relph, *Place and Placelessness* (London: Pion Limited, 1976), 4.

revealing human nature and seeking order and meaning in the experiences that we have of the world."[42]

However, the reflection of human nature goes beyond the individualistic conceptions of place, allowing individual interpretations to intertwine into a communal image of place, in which the meanings associated with space share commonalities across a group of people. Symbols associated with locales are created through shared experiences and interactions between individuals.[43] Therefore, the broader concept of place, acknowledged by many, is an act of collective agreement that supersedes individual interactions with the landscape. Meaning, significance, and symbolism are all aspects of place that are passed down through generations and between individuals over time. Though these two concepts are inherently concepts of geography, it is this process of providing meaning over time that brings historical thinking to space and place.

While space and place represent both the concrete and the abstract, the concept of landscape builds upon the ideas of place and adds greater complexity in the interpretation of space. Exploring this complexity, D.W. Meinig explains that landscape is both important and ambiguous, encompassing a range of essential yet varying definitions based on individual, situational contexts.[44] With this level of complexity and ambiguity, it is vital to this work to provide a definition of landscape that reflects its significance across the text. I define landscape as a collection of places, varied in their human-constructed symbols and significance, that together construct a broader interpretation of space. Like a chapter is constructed from numerous paragraphs, a landscape is the amalgamation of numerous places, each contributing their own unique meanings to present a whole. While to many, a landscape

[42] Relph, *Place and Placelessness*, 4.
[43] Relph, *Place and Placelessness*, 57.
[44] D.W. Meinig, *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes: Geographical Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 1-2.

might evoke a vision of the natural world, my definition goes deeper. Both the natural world and the human-constructed world constitute our understanding of space and place, therefore a landscape too can contain both environmental and human aspects, as well as the interplay between the two. The Sainte Barbe cemetery of Saint-Jean-de-Luz exemplifies this definition of landscape. Sitting upon a hill on a spit of land between the harbour and the sea, the cemetery is the site of numerous layers. To the west, the Bay of Biscay leads into the Atlantic Ocean, its waves crashing against the rocks below. To the east, the town of Saint-Jean-de-Luz sits on the seaside next to the twinned village of Ciboure across the river La Nivelle. In the distance, La Rhune mountain looms overhead, a shadow signalling the beginning of the Pyrénées. At the centre, the cemetery stood for centuries as described in de Lancre's *Tableau*, but today only the rolling hill remains, a grassy knoll where one can stand at the borders of land and sea. This vision is one of numerous *spaces*, human-constructed and natural *places* both with attributed meanings, that come together to construct a single vision of a *landscape*. Yet it is not simply human agency that produces a landscape. Plants, animals, every aspect of the ecosystem interacts with space in different ways to create a landscape, based on their needs. Specific plants flourish on sunny slopes while others thrive in the shade. Animals follow well-worn paths to food sources and along ancient migratory routes. Each living thing interacts with space to form a complex and multifaced landscape.

This complexity in the creation of a landscape leads into the next vital aspect of landscapes for this thesis: through the attribution of meaning to place, certain landscapes develop a deep symbolic meaning, tied to intangible human ideas. Such symbolic landscapes can be placed in both specific locations and broadly generalized geographic features. One example of the symbolic specific landscape that is perhaps most recognizable in the modern world is the memorialization of First World War battlefields. In the decades after the armistice of 11 November 1918, participating nations have found different ways to

commemorate, memorialize, and in many places mythologize the landscapes on which the most horrific battles of the First World War were fought. Every memorial was carefully selected spatially and symbolically, elevating certain battles and certain narratives, while allowing others to fade into obscurity.[45] Canada was no different – at the site of one of Canada's largest battles of the First World War, Vimy Ridge, an immense and somber memorial was erected in 1936. An active choice was made by the Canadian government to preserve as much of the battlefield as possible. Select trenches and tunnels were preserved with concrete and shell holes remained unfilled except by grass and trees. The conservators of the site believed that the preservation of the battlefield as a landscape was paramount as both a spectacle and a moral duty, to learn the lessons of the destructiveness of the war, using the scars on the landscapes as a testament to the horrors that were inflicted upon this space.[46]

As a Canadian, my own relationship with the First World War was entrenched in early childhood – I was taught that the First World War was one of Canada's foundational moments, where a demographically insignificant corner of the British Empire gained a sense of independence and identity at home and abroad through the immense contributions and sacrifices of Canadian volunteer soldiers.[47] I was taught that at Vimy Ridge, the four Canadian Divisions fought as one for the first time in the war and captured a supposedly unconquerable position, a moment of incomparable unity and identity-construction through an all too rare victory in the war, a nation-building myth that has been broadly debunked in the past decades.[48] I was critical of the myths that had been created surrounding the First

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[45] See: James Wallis and David C. Harvey, eds., *Commemorative Spaces of the First World War: Historical Geographies at the Centenary* (London: Routledge, 2017).
[46] Adam Coombs, "'This Sacred Soil of Vimy', An Environmental History of the Vimy Ridge Memorial Park, 1920-2007," in *Études canadiennes/Canadian Studies: Revue interdisciplinaire des études canadiennes en France* 80 (2016): 93.
[47] For the most extensive and comprehensive history of Canada's evolution from 1914 to 1918, see: Tim Cook, *At the Sharp End: Canadians Fighting the Great War 1914-1916* (Toronto: Viking Canada, 2007); Tim Cook, *Shock Troops: Canadians Fighting the Great War 1917-1918* (Toronto: Viking Canada, 2008).
[48] See: Robert Rutherdale, "National Myths and Pivotal Battles: The Case of Vimy," in *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 18, no 2 (2017): 167-178.

World War in my country amid flourishing nationalism, and critical of the role that Vimy had to play in our collective imagination. However, when I set foot on the battlefield on a visit to the memorial in the summer of 2024, the symbolic landscape of the Vimy Ridge Memorial Park told its own story. As I walked through the trenches, gazed into the cavernous shell holes, and walked up the ridge toward the towering white limestone Canadian National Vimy Memorial, I was overwhelmed by a deep sense of grief. The symbolism of the landscape merged with my educational and cultural context to elicit a powerful emotion, a mix between the conscious planning of those who designed the park and my own unconscious reaction to place. My rationalist criticisms of the Vimy myth were lost to the much deeper symbolism I had been taught as a child. As I stood at the top of the ridge and reflected both on the symbolism of space in my Canadian identity and the pointless slaughter that was the First World War, the power of landscape brought me to tears.

However, symbolic landscapes are not merely linked to a single place or a confined landscape. In exploring the symbolism of broader geographic features, Gary Backhaus uses the example of mountain peaks: "The mountain peak qua mountain peak, that is, its straightforward apprehension does not seem to be a symbolic landscape. But if a mountain peak symbolizes for us the pinnacle of achievement or the heights of esoteric knowledge, then the mountain carries symbolic meaning, for it translates states of affairs in the medium of mountain peak experience into the media of action and thought, respectively. But are mountain peaks ever merely/only mountain peaks, do they not always carry a symbolic dimension?"[49] Using Backhaus's argument, the very existence of a mountainous landscape in general would inspire an emotional reaction in a person or population, which would then add a layer of meaning on top of those given to one specific mountain.

[49] Gary Backhaus, "Introduction I: The Problematic of Grounding the Significance of Symbolic Landscapes" in *Symbolic Landscapes*, eds. Gary Backhaus and John Murungi (Springer, 2008), 7.

The geographic world is ever shifting. Rivers divert course, alpine glaciers accumulate and melt, and forests grow and shrink due to human interaction. The human perception of landscape is similarly fluid. As years and centuries pass, layers of meaning are added, with each generation leaving behind their own concepts of place. Describing this phenomenon, William J. Turkel states: "There are no untainted passages through a place: you always leave something of yourself, and you always take something with you. And as there can be no untainted passages, there can be no pristine places either. What there are instead are muddy places, lived places, places filled with the tracks of those who have gone before."[50] This idea of layers of human interaction built upon the landscape, like the stratigraphy of the physical earth below us, is a concept referred to by geographers as palimpsest. Much like the layers of rock and soil that compose physical landscapes, a palimpsest is "a conceptual model of a place as a multilayered structure that emphasizes the coexistence of multiple visions and impacts of different cultures on the landscape."[51] A palimpsest's multilayered model of geography is uniquely suited to spatial history, allowing the historian to view the creation of a landscape as a temporal process, in which attributes of past and present exist simultaneously within a space.[52] However, even with centuries of layers added to the landscape, entire paradigm shifts regarding the symbolism of landscapes are possible. Where once a landscape provoked a negative reaction from the populace, a paradigm shift over time can lead to the same landscape being viewed as a place of great beauty. The symbolic landscape of mountains discussed previously exemplify how attitudes can shift over time. In the late seventeenth century, mountains were seen as useless, symbolic of unproductivity due to their uncultivatable soil and harsh conditions, with their disorder evoking a feeling of disgust. The sterility of mountains evoked a sense of dread and distaste from Leeds historian Ralph

[50] William J. Turkel, *The Archive of Place: Unearthing the Pasts of the Chilcotin Plateau* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008), 135.
[51] Barney Warf, ed., "Palimpsest," in *Encyclopedia of Geography*, Volume 4 (Los Angeles: Sage, 2010), 2111.
[52] Meinig, *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscape*, 6.

Thoresby in 1697, describing the mountainous landscape of the English Lake Country as full of horrors: "dreadful fells, hideous wastes, horrid waterfalls, terrible rocks, and ghastly precipices."[53] Under a century later, tourists would pour into the very same "hideous" Lake Country, as the 1760s saw an explosion of mountain-based tourism across Europe.[54] Where once mountains symbolized fear and horror due to their sterility and disorder, over time a developing sense of the sublime allowed a shift in their symbolism. The creation of palimpsest landscapes and the shift in the meaning of symbolic landscapes over time are two of the foundational concepts of this research, and this shift in attitudes toward the natural world will be explored throughout the text.

At the heart of this thesis and at the centre of the witch craze is one overarching emotion: fear. It was fear that drove people to accuse their neighbours of witchcraft, it was fear that was interwoven in every narrative of diabolical magic. While other emotions, such as envy and sadness play vital roles in the witch craze, fear is an underlying theme throughout. The witches' sabbath itself was the product of countless fears, a fantastical concoction of the anxieties that plagued both the upper and lower strata of society condensed into a single terrifying ritual. If landscapes are "not merely the world we see, [but] a construction, a composition of that world," how does fear affect perception of landscape, and how do we as humans construct landscapes of fear?[55] Yi-Fu Tuan opens his *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* by claiming that "[p]lace is security, space is freedom: we are attached to one and long for the other."[56] In this text, the act of place-making is an act of anchoring oneself in the landscape, creating a sense of comfort within space through

[53] Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500-1800* (London: Allen Lane, 1983), 258.
[54] Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, 260.
[55] Denis E. Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* (Beckham: Croom Helm Ltd., 1984), 13.
[56] Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 3.

experience and meaning. The landscapes of the witches' sabbath, however, are the inverse of security. The development of place through sabbath narratives does the opposite of developing a sense of comfort, but rather builds a sense of discomfort and fear. Central to the exploration of this dichotomy between place making fear is another of Tuan's texts, *Landscapes of Fear*. As the first geographic text to explore the relationship between fear and landscape, this work is foundational to my research and has helped to define the discussions of place and fear throughout this thesis. Tuan begins by separating fear into two separate categories: alarm and anxiety. While alarm is the reaction to a sudden stimulus that triggers a fight or flight response, anxiety "is a diffuse sense of dread and presupposes an ability to anticipate… [It] is a presentiment of danger when nothing in the immediate surroundings can be pinpointed as dangerous."[57] With witchcraft and the sabbath existing solely in the realm of the imagination, the terrors of witchcraft are deeply rooted in the anxious form of fear, where anticipation and dread are born from fantastical images and narratives. The landscapes of the witches' sabbath are not places where a fight or flight reaction would trigger, but instead are the results of unnamed intangible anxieties.

The world of early modern Europe was a world of uncertainty. Cattle could die, children could fall ill, and storms could flatten a year's crops. Death came in ways inexplicable to the people of the time. The misfortunes of fate and the unexplained paired with an era of upheaval, as war and confessional strife gave a rhythm of constant fear and anxiety in the early modern mind. Where anxiety is constant, humans are driven to seek security.[58] To create security, humans organize space in ways that reduce anxiety. Tuan symbolises this security as a circle in which humans have control: "Closed circles are satisfying to complete; and if they are small and therefore subject to control they are good…

[57] Yi-Fu Tuan, *Landscapes of Fear* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979), 5.
[58] Tuan, *Landscapes of Fear*, 10.

The minimum requirement for security is to establish a boundary, which may be material or conceptual and ritually enforced."[59] The sense of control over even the uncontrollable is vital to the creation of security, and landscapes out of the control of humans can therefore easily become landscapes of fear. This need for control and desire to create boundaries brings us to the final part of my definitions of space, place, and landscape: places that exist outside of the human constructed boundaries of security can become landscapes of fear, with these marginal spaces composing most of the landscapes associated with the sabbath.

The study of marginal space is reliant on the concepts of centre and periphery. In *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values*, Tuan notes that "[t]he idea of 'center' and 'periphery' in spatial organization is perhaps universal. People everywhere tend to structure space – geographical and cosmological – with themselves at the center and with concentric zones (more or less well defined) of decreasing value beyond."[60] The process of developing place out of space consequently revolves around the self with decreasing levels of spatial awareness moving away from the body. However, when paired with the concept of circles of security, the centre extends beyond the body and into these circles. The edges of the circle, like the boundaries of the body, are the periphery, where understanding and knowledge becomes limited. In a world where the unknown creates anxiety, these marginal spaces at the periphery of the body and the controlled world can easily see the blending of reality and fantasy, for "…contexts invariably grow fuzzy and mystical around the edges."[61] In marginal spaces, it is easier for the palimpsest of place to gain layers of fantasy, where the imagination blends with reality, even if the fantastical far outweighs the real.[62] It is in these combinations of space, place, and symbolism that we see

[59] Tuan, *Landscapes of Fear*, 206.
[60] Yi-Fu Tuan, *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall Inc., 1974), 27.
[61] Tuan, *Space and Place*, 88.
[62] Tuan, *Space and Place*, 86.

the development of a uniquely marginal landscape, that can easily become the haunts of witches' and demons and the site of their diabolical sabbath. Understanding the interplay within this geographic framework allows us a fresh window into the visions of the witches' sabbath and is the guiding concept behind this research.

Concerning the Landscape in Sabbath Histories

As one of the core tenets of the European witch belief, the sabbath appears frequently in witchcraft historiography; however, analyses of this fantastical phenomenon are sparse. While the sabbath has appeared through textual sources from the first studies of the nineteenth century until the present, few have attempted to unravel the belief. Rather, historians have stated what little was described in the trials and demonologies without analysis, or with dubious hypotheses, before moving on to other aspects of witchcraft belief. To truly understand the relationship between space, place, and the concept of the witches' sabbath, we must examine the pre-existing literature on the subject, both for the landscapes they describe, and the approaches taken to explore the sabbath. While this is the first text to directly focus on the landscapes of the sabbath across Europe, many previous historians have explored sabbath narratives that feature location details. The following section will serve two purposes. First, I aim to construct a historiography of sabbath histories from the past centuries, tracing the developments and shifts in approaches to this fantasy and the role it plays in the analysis of the European witch craze. Second and most importantly, I will explore the landscapes that these previous historians mentioned from their primary sources. This section provides the foundational knowledge essential to understanding how historians have understood the sabbath and presents the foundations for this thesis.

The pursuit of witchcraft studies as a disciplinary subfield can be viewed as a series of waves of scholarship, each with its unique historiography that extends into its approach to the sabbath fantasy. The decline of the witch craze in the late seventeenth and eighteenth

centuries did not remove magic and witchcraft from the popular imagination. Where early modern audiences had relied on the witch for both terror and titillation in courtrooms, demonologies, and art, the nature of witchcraft belief itself fascinated later educated society: witchcraft was one facet of the past's cultural zeitgeist, a testament to the natural progression of society over time from darkness to enlightenment. The earliest texts that used this approach and attempted broad studies of the witch craze, among other paranormal phenomena, came as the witch craze was ongoing. In his four volume *Bibliotheca seu acta et Scripta magica*, published between 1739 and 1740, Eberhard David Hauber highlighted in his brief foreword the text's role as entertainment, with stories of witchcraft and the supernatural acting as a source of enjoyment for the reader in the same era where witchcraft accusations and sabbath fantasies could still result in execution in parts of Europe.[63] This shift from fear to fascination became even stronger in the nineteenth century. In his 1818 text *Dämonomagie, oder Geschichte des Glaubens an Zauberei und dämonische Wunder*, Protestant minister and historian Georg Conrad Horst framed the era of the witch craze as a battle between enlightened Germans and the common beliefs of the time displayed in the trial documents, despite its publication a mere thirty-six years after the execution of Anna Göldi as Europe's last witch.[64] Horst's enlightened approach to the witch craze is particularly clear in his analysis of the sabbath seen in the third volume of his *Zauber-Bibliothek*, published in 1822. The author extensively describes several sabbath beliefs found in demonological texts, particularly in Pierre de Lancre's *Tableau*. However, rather than offering any analysis of the events (and no mention of the landscapes), Horst uses the sabbaths described in the texts as a

[63] Eberhard David Hauser, *Bibliotheca seu acta et Scripta magica* (Lemgo: Johannes Heinrich Meyer, 1739), i.
[64] Christa Tuczay, "The Nineteenth Century: Medievalism and Witchcraft" in *Palgrave Advances in Witchcraft Historiography*, eds. Jonathan Berry and Owen Davies (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 53.

means of deriding early modern beliefs. At one point when describing the means of transport to the sabbath, Horst exclaims in an aside: "Are these not strange things??? [sic]."[65]

However, Horst's derision of the common belief sat in opposition to other German scholars of the era, the first scholars who would describe the landscapes of the sabbath. The late eighteenth century saw the rise of the German Romantic movement, led by Johann Gottfried Herder's elevation of the folk beliefs into objects of esteem and reverence. Amidst this cultural reimagining, the Grimm brothers Jacob and Wilhelm further brought the supposed world of the common people to the forefront, as told and re-envisioned by their middle class or aristocratic informants.[66] The brothers' famous collection of German folk and fairy tales is populated with stories of magic, many of which still impact its perception into the twenty-first century. Across the breadth of these tales, the evil witch is a constant figure.[67] Each of these stories presents the witch as an old woman, vile and dangerous, who aims to harm an innocent child or a beautiful woman. Such stories fit with the scholarly interests the brothers held in the origins of the witchcraft tradition. Yet this most famous publication of the Grimms did not feature the sabbath. Instead, the first analysis of the phenomenon and the associated landscapes came later from Jacob Grimm and his 1835 *Deutsche Mythologie*.

Published over two decades after the brothers' collection of folk tales, Grimm's study provided an overarching analysis of the German folkloric and mythic tradition in accordance with the burgeoning sense of German nationalism. Grimm, a philologist, believed that political rule had to be based on a shared linguistic, cultural, and historical foundation that

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[65] "*Sind das nicht merkwürdig Dinge???*" Georg Conrad Horst, *Zauber-Bibliothek, oder von Zauberei, Theurgie und Mantik, Zauberern, Hexen, und Hexenprozessen, Dämonen, Gespenstern, und Geistererscheinungen. Zur Beförderung einer rein-geschictlichen, von Aberglauben und Unglauben freien Beurtheilung dieser Gegenstände*, vol. 3 (Mainz: F. Kupferberg, 1821), 371.

[66] The foundations of the Grimm's tales as *actual* peasant belief rather than romanticized aristocratic belief of what peasant belief *should* look like has been extensively debated. Moreover, their German origins have also been called into question, as some of their informants were French Huguenots. See: Jack Zipes, *The Brothers Grimm: From Enchanted Forests to the Modern World* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 28-29.

[67] See: Jacob Ludwig Carl Grimm and Wilhelm Carl Grimm, *The Complete Grimm's Fairy Tales*, trans. Margaret Hunt (New York: Quatro Publishing Group, 2020).

united a people and formed a unique identity.[68] Encyclopaedic in scope, *Deutsche Mythologie* attempts to present the entire German folkloric tradition including a focus on common witchcraft beliefs. Among Grimm's witchcraft discussions is the first exploration of the witches' sabbath including some of the landscapes associated with the fantasy, listing natural locations such as meadows, hilltops, and oak forests, alongside other human locations such as execution sites and hanging trees. Grimm specifically draws attention to one specific site, the first in witchcraft historiography and one we will return to in Chapter I: the Blocksberg of the Harz mountains.[69] This specific peak was at the centre of many German sabbath narratives that spread across the country, and was even central to one of the last demonologies of the era, Johannes Praetorius's *Blockes-Berges Verrichtung*. After placing an early focus on the Blocksberg, Grimm expands the geographic focus of his sabbath discussion. Such locations include the nearby Horselberg within the Thuringian Harz mountains and expand outward, encompassing those within the limits of Germany such as the hills of the Schwarzwald, the Staffelstein near Bamberg, and Fichtelberg in Silesia. However, despite the book's intent to build a specifically German identity, Grimm draws attention to sabbath sites across Europe ranging from Hekla Mountain in Iceland to Monte Paderno in Italian province of Bologna.[70] Grimm's text provides the first attempt to list sabbath landscapes after the conclusion of the witch craze, but also presents a notable trend in the analysis of these spaces: of Grimm's thirty five sabbath landscapes, all but four are hills and mountains, with the remainder all being natural sites.[71]

Table 1: Specific Landscapes listed in Deutsche Mythologie by Jacob Grimm

Landscape	**Type**	**Page**
Places of paganistic sacrifice	Sacred Spaces	591

[68] Jakob Norberg, *The Brothers Grimm and the Making of German Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 3.
[69] Jacob Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie* (Göttingen: In Der Dietrichschen Buchhandlung, 1835), 591.
[70] Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie*, 592.
[71] Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie*, 592

Meadow	Heaths	591
Under linden trees	Forests	591
Under oak trees	Forests	591
Under pear trees	Forests	591
Under the gallows tree	Forests/crossroads (see Chapter V)	591
On the Drei Büheln	Hills	591
On the Drei Köpchen	Hills	591
The Brocken	Mountains	591
Heuberg	Mountains	592
Horselberg	Mountains	592
Inselberg	Mountains	592
Köterberg	Mountains	592
Weckingsstein	Mountains	592
Black Forest Hills	Hills/Forests	592
Staffelstein	Mountains	592
Fichtelberg	Mountains	592
Blakulla	Mountains/Seascapes	592
Nasafjäll	Mountains	592
Blaakolle	Mountains	592
Dovrefjeld	Mountains	592
Lyderhorn	Mountains	592
Kiärru	Mountains	592
Domen	Mountains	592
Balvolde	Fields	592
Hekla (Hekkelfjelds/Heklufiall)	Mountains	592
Trommenfjeld	Mountains	592
Benevento	Forests	592
Barco	Mountains	592
Paterno	Mountains	592
Spinato	Mountains	592
Tossale	Mountains	592
La Croce del Pasticcio	Mountains	592
Puys de Dome	Mountains	592
Baraona heath	Heaths/Moors/Wetlands	592
Seville sands	Heaths/Moors/Wetlands	592
Cirniegola fields	Fields	592
In Serbia on “swept threshing floor on a mountain”	Mountains	592
Kopasz tetö (Bald Summit)	Mountains	592
Babia Gora	Mountains	593
Spákonufell	Mountains	593

Grimm's approach to the landscapes of the sabbath points toward a broader trend in nineteenth century romanticism. As noted by Ronald Hutton, early folklorists believed that the beliefs of common, rural people were the remnants of practices from earlier centuries that were performed inherently and intrinsically, unchanged across epochs with folklore acting as a "living fossil" of a bygone era predating Christianity.[72] To Grimm, the sabbath was one such remnant, a shadow of the Wild Hunt beliefs that filled European folklore dating back centuries. Originating in pagan Germanic and Celtic legend, the Wild Hunt belief centred around the nocturnal rides of a horde of ghosts and spirits, led by an often-female divine figure. This belief heavily featured in the tenth-century canon *Episcopi*, where the paganistic army of spirits evolved into groups of women pursuing the goddess Diana through the night and would later inspire demonological interpretations of the sabbath.[73] Grimm's *Deutsche Mythologie* was the first text to draw a link between the paganistic Wild Hunt and the early modern sabbath belief, noting in particular the links between Holda, the Germanic goddess leading the Hunt and the Thuringian mountains tied to the German sabbath belief.[74] By tying the sabbath to the Wild Hunt, Grimm chose to highlight a selection of sabbath landscapes, setting aside those that did not fit within the nineteenth century imagination of the pagan past. Following Grimm's foundations, the other romantics of the nineteenth century similarly embraced the sabbath as a form of peasant belief, sometimes lacking the links to the Wild Hunt such as French romantic historian Jules Michelet, though their approach rarely examined or described landscape.[75]

While Grimm and the romantics dominated the first century of witchcraft historiography, the first studies of witchcraft from a rationalist perspective came in the mid-

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[72] Ronald Hutton, "The Wild Hunt and the Witches' Sabbath," in *Folklore* 125, no. 2 (2014): 163.
[73] Jonathan Durrant and Michael D. Bailey, *Historical Dictionary of Witchcraft*, 2nd ed. (Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2012), 187.
[74] Hutton, "The Wild Hunt and the Witches' Sabbath," 162; Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie*, 594.
[75] See: Jules Michelet, *La Sorcière* (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1966).

nineteenth century, with the publication of Wilhelm Gottfried Soldan's *Geschichte der Hexenprozesse aus dem Quellen dargestellt* in 1841. Rather than focusing on the masses wrapped up in the trials and the common beliefs of ordinary people, Soldan and the rationalists instead sought to synthesize witchcraft from its intellectual and legal foundations.[76] However, unlike the romantics, the rationalists such as the esteemed Joseph Hansen had little interest in the sabbath landscape, and instead placed their attention primarily on the sabbath's origins and links to the theologies of heretics, ranging from the Cathars to the Waldensians.[77] The narratives of the sabbath and what it meant to the people who constructed them were therefore left out of the early academic histories, and were placed within the confines of the romantics, who used the sabbath and the belief in magic to populate the popular imagination of the past. With the rationalists decidedly uninterested in the topic during pre-war wave of witchcraft histories, the English language sabbath histories of the inter-war wave of witchcraft studies would once again return to romantic history. At the forefront of these histories are the works of two authors whose approaches to witchcraft are as prolific as they are problematic: Margaret Murray and Montague Summers. While neither author was a historian, both were instrumental in the spread of witchcraft studies in the first half of the twentieth century. However, despite their impact on the field, both of their works drew intense scrutiny, both at the time and into the present.

Margaret Murray was not a historian by trade. Instead, Murray worked in Egyptology at University College London but was fascinated by witchcraft, publishing numerous articles on the topic before the publication of her first book on the witch craze, *The Witch Cult in*

[76] E. William Monter, "The Historiography of European Witchcraft: Progress and Prospects" in *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 2, no. 4 (Spring 1972): 435-436.
[77] Joseph Hansen, *Zauberwahn, Inquisition und Hexenprozess im Mittelalter und die Entstehung der grossen Hexenverfolgung* (München: Drud und Verlag von R. Didenbourg, 1900), 226-241.

Western Europe in 1921.[78] Written as a response to the rationalist approach to witchcraft which dismissed witch belief as purely delusion and fantasy, Murray argues that accused witches were the survivors of an ancient pagan religion that remained dominant among common people until the fourteenth century. Described by Keith Thomas as "commendable [in its] desire to approach European witchcraft in the spirit of detachment" but "almost totally groundless", the Murray approach to witchcraft studies drew intense criticism from rationalist historians, but revived interest in the sabbath.[79] Montague Summers was likewise not a historian and was no less problematic. A Roman Catholic convert and self-proclaimed ordained priest, Summers approached the early modern witch craze from the perspective of fearful vigilance – that the scientific realism of the modern world and the Victorian obsession with the occult had allowed diabolism to seep into society and that his texts could protect the world from the evils of Satan.[80] Summers's *The History of Witchcraft and Demonology* was published in 1926, just five years after the publication of Murray's *Witch Cult in Western Europe*, and similarly argued that those accused of witchcraft were members of a religious sect. However, unlike Murray, Summers believed accused witches were actual members of a satanic sect, aiming to tear apart the foundations of Christian society, a thread he reiterates across his numerous treatises and translations of early modern demonologies.[81]

Despite their lack of official historical training, both Murray and Summers steered the conversation during the pivotal interwar phase of witchcraft historiography in the English-speaking world, including their unique perspectives on the witches' sabbath and the landscape narrative. Montague Summers made the witches' sabbath one of the core discussions of his *History of Witchcraft and Demonology*, dedicating a full chapter to the

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[78] Juliette Wood, "The Reality of Witch Cults Reasserted: Fertility and Satanism" in *Palgrave Advances in Witchcraft Historiography*, eds. Jonathan Berry and Owen Davies (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 70.
[79] Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (London, Penguin Books Ltd., 1972), 227-228.
[80] Wood, "The Reality of Witch Cults Reasserted," 77.
[81] Wood, "The Reality of Witch Cults Reasserted," 78.

topic. Despite some bizarre claims made by the author in line with his fantastical approach to witchcraft (notably that houses with "To Be Sold" signs were common sites of the sabbath in early twentieth century England), Summers provided a more balanced list of sabbath landscapes based on early modern sources compared to the Grimm's *Mythologie*.[82]

Table 2: Specific landscapes listed in The History of Witchcraft and Demonology *by Montague Summers*

Landscape	**Type**	**Page**
Various mountaintops	Mountains	112
Every hilltop in Finland	Hills	112
"A field near a village"	Fields	113
"A wood"	Forests	113
"A tor"	Hills	113
"A valley"	Valleys	113
"An open waste beneath some blasted oak"	Heaths/Forests	113
"A cemetery"	Cemeteries	114
"A ruined building"	Ruins	114
"Some solitary chapel or semi-deserted church"	Churches	114
"A house belonging to one of the initiates."	Homes	114
"some trees"	Forests	114
"a cross"	Sacred Spaces	114
"Some ill-omened gully"	Valleys	114
"Isolated hilltop"	Hills	114
"Ancient cromlechs and granite dolmens"	Ruins/Cemeteries	114
"The stones of Marais de Dol"	Ruins	114
"The monolith that lies between Seny and Ellemell (Candroz)"	Ruins	114
"Market crosses"	Communal Spaces	114
"The very heart of the city of Bordeaux"	Communal Spaces	114
"The Blocksberg or the Brocken"	Mountains	114
Various hills in Pomerania	Hills	114
"A tumbledown house" formerly belonging to a religious order in La Mouille	Homes/Ruins	114
Kirke of North Berrick	Churches	114

[82] Montague Summers, *The History of Witchcraft and Demonology* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. Ltd, 1926), 133.

“A large château”	Homes	114
A house	Homes	114
A churchyard	Churchyards	115
A house	Homes	115
“Malking Tower” Lancashire	Communal Space	115
“Blockula”	House [incorrectly assumed]	115
“Wooded spots”	Forests	115
Mount Atlas	Mountain	115
“Mountain of Bructeri, which some call Melibœus”	Mountain	115
“A well just outside the upper gate of Rothenberg”	Communal Space	117
“Clearings in a wood”	Forests	119
“A cross-road”	Crossroads	120
“Deserted wastes”	Heaths	133
“On the hill-side”	Hills	133
“Vaults and cellars”	Cellars	133
“Empty houses innocently placarded ‘To be Sold’.”	Houses	133
“The outskirts of a wood”	Forests	142
“a field at *Salem*-Village”	Fields	146
Numerous houses in Paris	Homes	150
“In a Gothic cathedral”	Churches	151

Rather than purely focusing on the natural world like Grimm, Summers’s chapter on the sabbath explored a wide variety of landscapes, but with a focus on landscapes at the societal margins: “[i]t was advisable that the selected locality should be remote and deserted to obviate any chance of espionage or casual interruption, and in many provinces some ill-omened gully or lone hill-top was shudderingly marked as the notorious haunt of witches and their fiends.”[83] The landscapes discussed by Summers were not restricted to gullies and hills. Rather, a wide variety of landscapes were explored, ranging from mountains to chateaus, churchyards to ancient stone monuments.[84] All of these locations shared a sense of marginality, located on the edge of society, despite the breadth of landscapes. Among the locations described by Summers is the Swedish Blockula [sic], which the author wrongly

[83] Summers, *The History of Witchcraft and Demonology*, 114.
[84] Summers, *The History of Witchcraft and Demonology*, 114-116.

describes as "[o]bviously a fine Swedish country house, perhaps belonging to a wealthy witch…" as compared to the island in the Kalmar strait the site was identified as.[85] However, this mix-up of landscape helps to reveal Summers's approach to the sabbath: he believed in the sabbath as a real phenomenon, not only in early modernity but also in his own age, a ceremony that belonged in the dark, hidden away from the world. Accordingly, Summers largely describes the sabbath as happening in and around homes and castles, hidden from prying eyes and more fitting with the concept of conspiracy. Further, Summers noted that witches met for the sabbath outdoors only "[w]hen circumstances permitted" contrary to the narrative of Grimm, the romantics, and many early modern demonologists.[86] Despite such glaring differences from the source material, Summers repeatedly draws upon demonologies from across Europe in relation to their sabbath explorations, including many that will be discussed later in this chapter.

Like Summers, Margaret Murray used the discussions of the witches' sabbath in a variety of demonologies but added features that reflected her arguments about the witch craze, especially her claim that witchcraft was a survivor of an ancient pagan religion. Most importantly, Murray uses a single line from the 1613 updated edition of de Lancre's *Tableau de l'inconstance des mauvais anges et demons*, the demonology at the centre of Chapter III of this text, to define the phenomenon and where it can be held. Murray refers to de Lancre's brief exploration of the trial of Estebène de Cambrue from 1576 who noted that the "grand Sabbat" or the largest assemblies of witches would occur four times annually, but smaller sabbaths called "Esbats" would be held throughout the year.[87] Using limited evidence from this note in de Lancre and a brief note in the trial of Forfar's Issobell Smyth in 1661 that the only sabbaths that could be referred to as the sabbath were those held on "Candlemas, Rud-

[85] Summers, *The History of Witchcraft and Demonology*, 115.
[86] Montague Summers, *Witchcraft and Black Magic* (London: Rider & Co. Ltd., 1945), 199.
[87] de Lancre, *Tableau*, 123.

day, Lambemas, and Hallomas" with all others being classified as "esbats," Murray concocted a vision of the witches' sabbath that reflected neither the trial evidence nor the commonly held beliefs of early modernity.[88] Despite this tenuous claim not appearing elsewhere in the breadth of demonologies discussed by Murray in the text, her entire concept of the sabbath is built along this premise of a subdivided event and defined her approach to landscape. Noting the difference between the grand sabbath and the regional esbat, in accordance to de Cambrue's testimony, Murray explains that the categorization of space was her own, as the previous lack of division between sabbath and esbat was "due to the inaccuracy of the witches themselves; and therefore it is not surprising that de Lancre and other authors should also fail to distinguish between the two."[89] Citing de Lancre, Bodin, and other demonologists, Murray describes the site of the sabbath as a fixed place, emphasizing the appearance of standing stones and stone circles in the historical record. By making stone circles in Guernsey, Belgium, France, and the British Isles the primary site of the major sabbaths, Murray attempted to validate the sabbath as a gathering of paganistic worshippers, practicing an ancient faith at an ancient site.[90] Notably, Murray also miscasts the Swedish Blockula as a form of building, but turns it into a religious site with a chapel "for the religious service."[91]

Removed from the religious connotation of the sabbath, Murray's esbat landscapes are those she did not tie to the paganistic faith, but instead as sites of dancing, feasting, and other business by practitioners of the cult.[92] Fitting with the concept that the esbat had no fixed rites, Murray concluded that it also had no fixed landscape, discussing mountains, ruins,

[88] Margaret Murray, *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe: A Study in Anthropology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921), 110.
[89] Murray, *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe*, 107.
[90] Murray, *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe*, 107-108.
[91] Murray, *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe*, 108.
[92] Murray, *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe*, 112-113.

and fields from trials and demonologies but with little analysis of why these locations were selected.[93] The sites of the supposedly differentiated esbat did little to further Murray's argument about the existence of a pre-Christian faith, and despite being the majority of landscapes mentioned in both trials and demonologies, they formed little more than a footnote in her witchcraft magnum opus. Margaret Murray and Montague Summers together defined the interwar period's interpretation of witchcraft and the sabbath in the English language. While both of their hypotheses on the reality of witchcraft fell out of favour by the 1960s, Juliette Wood notes that it was Margaret Murray whose works would fit best within the continuing tradition of witchcraft historiography, with the thread of the pre-Christian religious movement appearing in the next wave of sabbath histories and beyond.[94]

In the anglophone sphere, it took a full five decades before the sabbath returned in earnest to the historical consciousness as more than a simple passing fancy. The 1980s saw the first English publications centred on the sabbath, but this new wave was triggered by advances outside of the English sphere in the previous decades. The text that triggered this resurgence in sabbath stories was the 1966 work of Italian historian Carlo Ginzburg, *I benandanti*, translated into English as *The Night Battles: Witchcraft and Agrarian Cults in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century* in 1983. Ginzburg's text, however, was not a text dedicated to the sabbath. *The Night Battles* was instead the story of the Friulian folk belief in the *benandanti*, or good walkers, individuals born in a caul believed to possess magical powers who would heed a call on the Ember Days, anoint themselves with ointment, and fly to selected meeting places where they would do battle in the air against witches using bundles of fennel.[95] However, Ginzburg noted the distinct similarities between the night flights of the Friulian *benandanti* and the sabbath beliefs that swept across Europe at the same time,

[93] Murray, *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe*, 118-121.
[94] Wood, "The Reality of Witch Cults Reasserted," 70.
[95] Ginzburg, *The Night Battles*, 66.

hypothesizing that these beliefs could be linked to a pre-Christian past through the steady evolution of the belief under inquisitorial scrutiny.[96]

Despite being neither a specific history of the sabbath, nor a direct link to the previous approach of Margaret Murray, *The Night Battles* provides a notable approach to space, place, and the development of the sabbath idea. The *benandanti* of Ginzburg's study repeatedly reference the site of their nocturnal battles as the field or valley of Josaphat, where "we [the *benandanti* and the witches] fought, we pulled each other's hair, we punched each other, we threw each other to the ground and fought with fennel stalks."[97] By placing their battles at the field or valley of Josaphat, the *benandanti* provided a fascinating glimpse into the boundaries between the real and spiritual worlds, and how the sabbath or pre-sabbath belief often crossed these spaces. The Valley of Josaphat (or Jehosaphat) references the biblical prophesy of God's final judgement of nations in the valley of decision to the east of Jerusalem, facing the Mount of Olives.[98] These *benandanti*, while never having visited Jerusalem or the Valley of Josaphat were travelling to this space in the imagination, recalling its beauty, its scent, and its "flowers and roses in abundance."[99] The battle and the battlefield were situated at the boundary between reality and fantasy, symbolically placed at the site of God's judgement and where they too determined the fate of the crops. However, by the mid seventeenth century, as the *benandanti* were increasingly shifted into the image of the witches they were originally supposed to fight, the landscapes also shifted from the realm of fantasy to reality. In 1649, a *benandante* on trial for witchcraft claimed that rather than in the valley of Josaphat, they met instead in a field called Santa Chatarina, a mile and a half from Udine in the Friuli, for their

[96] Ginzburg, *The Night Battles*, 24.
[97] Ginzburg, *The Night Battles*, 75.
[98] Joel 3:2, 3:12, 3:14.
[99] Ginzburg, *The Night Battles*, 75.

battles, marking a notable shift in the landscape of their battles from the foreign to the local.[100]

While not specifically a story of the witches' sabbath, Ginzburg's approach to the evolution of the sabbath and the ecstatic journeys of the Friulian *benandanti* sparked more discussions of the sabbath by witchcraft historians, further spurred by Ginzburg's follow-up, the far more contentious *Ecstasies: Deciphering the Witches' Sabbath* in 1989. Written as a continuation of Ginzburg's examination of the *benandanti* from *The Night Battles*, *Ecstasies* was an attempt to trace the roots of the ecstatic cultic beliefs that Ginzburg believed spawned both the sabbath fantasy and the nocturnal battles of Friulian folklore. Spanning the Eurasian continent over thousands of years and mixing the study of history, anthropology, and folklore studies, *Ecstasies* is an ambitious and expansive text, and one vital to the return of the sabbath to the mainstream of witchcraft studies. However, Ginzburg's ambition in *Ecstasies* was not without controversy, blighting the sabbath's return to the field. *Ecstasies'* frantic pacing, expansive scale, and often selective use of examples led to a flurry of debates over Ginzburg's methodologies, leading an academic divide between those who supported his thesis and those who dismissed *Ecstasies* as far-fetched.[101]

Despite the critiques, *Ecstasies* remains a vital text in returning the witches' sabbath to the field of witchcraft studies by seeking the concept's origins. With its role in sabbath historiography being so vital, it is essential to examine Ginzburg's text for its approaches to the landscapes of the sabbath. However, among the countless paths that *Ecstasies* strays down, the links between space, place, landscape, and the witches' sabbath are simply not among them. Even in the individual case studies Ginzburg selected to explore across time and

[100] Ginzburg, *The Night Battles*, 122.
[101] See: Stephen Mitchell et al., "Witchcraft and Deep Time – a debate at Harvard," *Antiquity* 84, no. 325 (September 2010): 865-868; Bob Scribner, "The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly," *History Today* 41, no. 11 (November 1991): 54; Richard Kieckhefer, Review of Ecstasies: Deciphering the Witches' Sabbath, 838.

space, only two landscapes were directly referenced: cellars and meadows. In describing the medieval traditions of Western Europe that would lead to the development of early modern European witchcraft belief, Ginzburg notes that Waldensians in the late fourteenth century were believed to gather for orgiastic celebrations in underground places referred to as a *Buskeller* (a Swiss dialect term meaning "full cellar"[102]), drawing an early link to the cellars and underground sabbath sites that would appear in both trials and demonologies across early modernity, a trend we will examine in Chapter I.[103] The only other reference to any form of sabbath landscape appears later in the text in Ginzburg's exploration of ecstatic combats and the realm of the dead. Citing nineteenth century Russian folklorists, Ginzburg notes that many in Ossetia believed that some chosen individuals would travel to the realm of the dead, a great meadow called *burku* or *kurys*, where they must pluck flowers and crops to ensure good health and a fruitful harvest.[104] Here we once more see the blurring of real and mythic space in Ginzburg's approach to sabbath belief, and the use of fields as magical sites.

Despite its problematic nature and absolute lack of landscape-based explorations, *Ecstasies* brought the sabbath back into discussions of witchcraft, predominantly through the debates over the ecstatic journey.[105] While Ginzburg admittedly reinvigorated the study of sabbath histories, the modern historiography shied away from any deeper analysis of the landscapes of the sabbath as they appeared in the records, because this merely seemed to reflect elite rather than popular *mentalités*, the focus of Ginzburg's works. The following wave of witchcraft studies often touches on the sabbath as a topic of discussion in examples across the continent, from Iberia to Finnmark. However, few of these texts seek to explore the

[102] This translation from the Swiss dialect comes from Ginzburg, who cites: Friedrich Staub and Ludwig Tobler, *Schweizerisches Idiotikon*, Band IV (Frauenfeld: Verlag von J. Huber, 1901), 1744-1745.
[103] Ginzburg, *Ecstasies*, 78.
[104] Ginzburg, *Ecstasies*, 163.
[105] See: Willem de Blécourt, "The Return of the Sabbat: Mental Archaeologies, Conjectural Histories, or Political Mythologies?" in *Palgrave Advances in Witchcraft Historiography*, eds. Jonathan Barry and Owen Davies (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007): 125-145.

landscapes associated with these sabbaths, continuing the trend set by Ginzburg in *Ecstasies*. There is perhaps no stronger piece of evidence for this deficit in spatial analysis than the collected works of *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft.* Despite being the premier academic journal for the publication of witchcraft histories since 2006, as of the writing of this thesis, only *three* articles describe or even mention the landscapes associated with the witches' sabbaths they explore.[106] Instead, the theological and cultural basis of the sabbath takes the limelight, with little attention paid to its setting and the reasons behind its placement.

In his recent book on the Basque witch craze, Jan Machielsen states that "[h]istorians have rather neglected the witches' [sabbath], certainly when set against the vast amount of attention that the wider subject has received. Methodological worries about truth and reality have made the [sabbath] into a realm where few have dared to tread."[107] Our examination of sources from the nineteenth century to the present proves that comprehensive examinations of the sabbath are rare, and those that exist are marred by problematic approaches to the topic. While there have been numerous explorations of the witches' sabbath across two centuries of historiography, few historians have attempted a deeper dive into the subject in the past wave of witchcraft histories, particularly when it comes to descriptions of the sabbath landscapes. This thesis aims to combat this trend, by building upon pre-existing histories of the witches' sabbath, while analyzing their contents through a new spatially-oriented lens. Unlike many of the previous sabbath histories, this examination will not try to unravel the mysteries of the sabbath, but rather will sift through the fantasies to uncover how the sabbath was tied to spaces and landscapes across Europe. This thesis will analyze many of these texts from a

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[106] These articles are: Thomas DuBois, "Magic and Witchcraft Historicized, Localized, and Ethnicized: A Response to Stephen Mitchell's *Witchcraft and Magic in the Nordic Middle Ages*" in *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* 8, no. 1 (Summer 2013): 82-89; Willem de Blécourt, "The Flying Witch: Its Resonance in the Sixteenth-Century Netherlands" in *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* 11, no. 1 (Summer 2016): 73-93; Arne Cruse and Liv Helene Willumsen, "Magic Language: The Transmission of an Idea over Geographical Distance and Linguistic Barriers" in *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* 15, no. 1 (Spring 2020): 1-32.
[107] Machielsen, *The Basque Witch-Hunt*, 120.

spatial level, reimagining the landscapes they describe to reconstruct the world in which these fantasies were first recorded. To explore these records, we turn our attention to the elite literature that helped consolidate and spread the vision of the sabbath across Europe and which formed the foundations of the upper strata element of the confession amalgam – demonologies. Yet even this is an oversimplification, for, as this section demonstrates, demonologies themselves drew on the confessions of accused witches, so that the popular and elite strata can never be fully divided.

Concerning the Landscape in Demonologies

Central to the spread of the sabbath fantasy and its vision of marginal space was the creation, publication, and dissemination of demonological texts by theologians and jurists, many of whom presided over the trials, adding their own beliefs to those of the accused under interrogation. By confessing, the accused acted as experts in their local geographies, constructing narratives that fitted spaces and allowed the blending of ideas with their interrogators. Local beliefs came face to face with elite concepts of witchcraft, as these confessions populated the widely distributed demonologies written by learned men. These texts provide insight into the witches' sabbath and landscapes upon which they were imagined, acting as vital tools for understanding the creation and dissemination of place-based narratives of witchcraft.

Understanding the significance of demonological texts to the construction of the overarching sabbath narrative relies on the examination of these works both individually and collectively. In *The Witch in the Western Imagination*, Lyndal Roper describes the texts as "parasitic on one another", reliant on preceding texts across confessional lines, using many of the same ideas and themes and sharing stories of *maleficia* over their period of publication.[108]

[108] Lyndal Roper, *The Witch in the Western Imagination* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2012), 30.

Roper argues that this collective body of parasitic literature serves as a form of entertainment, where shocking and erotic details regarding the sabbath fantasy were shared through demonological texts to blend terror with titillation.[109] Included in her analysis of demonological literature are texts with deep landscape-based roots, whether in the text itself or in its accompanying artwork. Jacques de Gheyn's "grisly" sabbath art set in "remote, wild landscapes," Praetorius's *Blockes-Berges Verrichtung*, and Happel's *Größte Denkwürdigkeiten der Welt* exemplify how landscape-centred art and literature were paired with demonological literature to construct a literary body of entertainment, fleshing out the backdrop to the erotic and exotic imagery of the sabbath narrative.[110]

Most demonologies discussing the witches' sabbath appeared during a short period between the waning decades of the sixteenth century and the first decade of the seventeenth century. While notable demonological texts such as Johannes Nider's *Formicarius* and Heinrich Kramer's *Malleus Maleficarum* were written in the fifteenth century, the concept of diabolical witchcraft was in its infancy and both Nider and Kramer provide only tangential reference to phenomena that could be interpreted as a foundation for sabbath beliefs, meaning no sabbath landscapes could be explored.[111] The end of the sixteenth century marked a shift in the frequency and ferocity of witch hunts, coinciding with the reprinting of the *Malleus Maleficarum* and the development of new demonological treatises, beginning in 1574 with Geneva-based Huguenot Lambert Daneau's *A Dialogue of Witches*.[112] Daneau's account

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[109] Roper, *The Witch in the Western Imagination*, 31.
[110] Roper, *The Witch in the Western Imagination*, 34, 41-43.
[111] Heinrich Kramer in Book 2, Question 1, Chapter 3 of the *Malleus Maleficarum* discusses the ability of witches to be transported from one location to another by magical and diabolical means, however, does not mention the nocturnal gatherings of witches that formed the basis of sabbath belief. Johannes Nider, while similarly lacking a discussion of the sabbath, explores some forms of ecstatic visions, which Gàbor Klaniczay links to ecstatic and shamanistic traditions which have been hypothesized as sources of the sabbath belief. See: Christopher S. Mackay, *The Hammer of the Witches: A Complete Translation of the Malleus Maleficarum* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 292-302; Gabor Klaniczay, "Entre Visions Angéliques et Transes Chamiques: Le Sabbat des Sorcières dans le *Formicarius* de Nider" in *Médiévales* (no. 44, 2003): 43-71.
[112] Brain Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 4th ed. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 189.

outlines the sabbath in details that appear in nearly all subsequent demonological treatises: the unnatural arrival at the sabbath by flight or riding an animal, the dances with demons, the creation of poisons and magic, and the reaffirmation of the pact.[113] Daneau also provided the demonological context for other, confessionally linked ideas. Some Protestant demonologists viewed the sabbath as an illusion, a construction of Satan, and in such cases the narratives were less elaborate.[114] In accordance with this Protestant trend, Daneau refrains from extensive descriptions of the sabbath itself, however he does mention the distances travelled to the sabbath through the use of Satanic illusion: "Onely in cogitation of mind and illusion of the Diuell, like as in our sleepe we thinke that we haue seene many things, and haue beene in suche places where we neuer were: and many times that we haue talken with those that are very farre of from vs, yea perhaps mor than two hundred miles."[115] While the reality of the sabbath was hotly debated between Catholics and Protestants, Daneau's inclusion of the sabbath in the *Dialogue* points toward the permeation of the sabbath belief across confessional lines along with the first hints at the locations tied to this belief.

First released in 1580, Jean Bodin's *De la démonomanie des sorciers* was the most widely published demonological treatise of the early modern period, with twenty-three editions and translations of the original French into German, Italian, and Latin.[116] Bodin, a prolific writer of French political theory and law in the late sixteenth century, continues trends set by Daneau in his descriptions of the sabbath, while adding increasingly detailed accounts of these fantasies. *Démonomanie* intermixes the theological arguments circulating about witchcraft with the records of trials that Bodin researched and attended through his

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[113] Lambert Daneau, *A Dialogue of Witches, in Foretime Named Lot-Tellers, and Novv Commonly Called Sorcerers: VVherein is Declared Breefely and Effectually, vvhat soueuer may be Required, Touching That Argument. A Treatise Very Profitable And Right Necessary for Iudges to Vnderstande, Which Sit Vpon Lyfe and Death* (London: Printed by T. East for R. Watkins, 1575), fol. 39-42.
[114] Willem de Blécourt, "Sabbath Stories," 98-99.
[115] Daneau, *A Dialogue of Witches*, fol. 42.
[116] Jonathan L. Pearl, introduction to *On the Demon Mania of Witches* by Jean Bodin (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2001), 9.

career, using them to provide spatial perspectives on sabbath beliefs. In his chapter on the bodily transport of witches by demons, Bodin notes: "I have remarked in many accounts and trials that the locations of witches' assemblies are distinctive and indicated by some trees or crosses…"[117] Using trial records in Poitiers and Maubert, Bodin describes how sabbaths were held at roadside crosses, which acted as location-based props for the fantasies of the sabbath dances.[118]

However, Bodin's work also built upon the foundations of earlier witch trials from across Europe. Using an example from Italian jurisconsult Paolo Grillando, Bodin recounts the 1526 story of a peasant near Rome who followed his wife to the sabbath, smearing grease over their naked bodies to be transported by the Devil "faster than a bowshot" upon the back of a billy goat.[119] Upon their arrival, the dances and feasting of the sabbath began under the supervision of the finely adorned Devil, until the peasant praised God, when the revellers, tables, and food all disappeared. At daybreak, he discovered that the sabbath had been held at Benevento, a great walnut tree on an estate belonging to the Pope a hundred miles from Rome.[120] Bodin was not alone in citing Grillando and the fantasies surrounding Benevento. The story of Benevento was further explored by Francesco-Maria Guazzo in his 1608 *Compendium Maleficarum* following the parasitic model of demonology. Guazzo retells a version of this story, stating that upon the witches' summons she would "always find her Little Master waiting by the door in the form of a goat, upon which this woman said that she rode holding tightly to its hair, and the goat rose into the air and in the shortest time carried her to the wizard walnut tree of Benevento and gently put her down there."[121] This specific

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[117] "*.i'ay remarque en plusiers histoires, & procez que les lieux des assemblées des Sorciers sont notables, & signalez de quelques arbres, ou croix…*" Jean Bodin, *De la Démonomanie des Sorciers* (Paris: Chez Jacques (?)[sic] Libraire Iuré, 1580), 83.
[118] Bodin, *De la Démonomanie des Sorciers*, 83.
[119] "*.les transporte plus soudain que un traict d'arc…*" Bodin, *De la Démonomanie des Sorciers*, 82.
[120] Bodin, *De la Démonomanie des Sorciers*, 84.
[121] *"...& inuenit semper Magisterulum suum in forma hitci illam expectantem ad ostium, super quo mulier ipsa dixit, quod equitabat, & applicare solebat fortiter manus ad crines, & (?) hircus ille ascendebat per aerem, &*

location has an extensive history of links to Italian sabbath narratives. The Benevento walnut tree first appears in a fifteenth century trial in which an accused witch was said to have used ointment to transport her there, where many witches would gather for the sabbath every Monday, Saturday, and Sunday in March, April, May, August, September, and December.[122] The origins of this association between the sabbath and the walnut tree in Italian narratives has been the subject of historical debate, with some scholars correlating it with Lombard pagan traditions while others tie it to the name of the local stream (Sabato) sounding close to the term sabbath, despite a lack of etymological association.[123] While the significance of the specific site at Benevento remains unclear, Marina Montesano argues that the most likely roots of this story lie thousands of years before Bodin's *Démonomanie*, in the ancient Roman association between walnut trees and magical powers and properties.[124] These ancient traditions associated with the landscape informed the Italian understanding of the sabbath and the types of places where these fantastical events could occur.

Bodin also incorporates earlier accounts of the forest and the mill as sites of the sabbath at marginal locations into his narrative in *Démonomanie*. Citing the work of Joachim de Cambray in *Natura daemonum*, he refers to the story of how a German woodcutter travelling through a forest by night stumbled upon a gathering of witches and demons, who danced and feasted until he caused them to suddenly disappear.[125] Likewise, Bodin refers to a trial in Potez, where the accused confessed that they were transported to the Frenquis mill near Longny by reciting magic words, where they worshipped six devils, renouncing God and dancing before having sex with them.[126] These stories reflect a broader trend in the spatial

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breuissimo tempore deserebat ipsam usque ad Nucem Beneuentanam, & ibi suauiter deponebar." Francesco-Maria Guazzo, *Compendium Maleficarum* (Mediolani: Ex Collegis Ambrosinus Typographia, 1626), 84.
[122] Marina Montesano, *Classical Culture and Witchcraft in Medieval and Renaissance Italy* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 175-176.
[123] Montesano, *Classical Culture and Witchcraft in Medieval and Renaissance Italy*, 176-177.
[124] Montesano, *Classical Culture and Witchcraft in Medieval and Renaissance Italy*, 178.
[125] Bodin, *De la Démonomanie des Sorciers*, 86.
[126] Bodin, *De la Démonomanie des Sorciers*, 87.

imagination of sabbath separate from the trees and roadside crosses discussed previously. Set at the margins of the settled and the wild world, they are places where the imaginations of both the common people on trial and the learned demonologists could place the sabbath fantasy. The narratives of space that Bodin takes from other jurists and demonologists are interwoven with his own experiences to provide an overarching view of early sabbath landscapes that would inform the next waves of demonologists across Europe in its translations and republications.

The spatial imaginations of the sabbath established by the early demonologists were continued and developed following the 1580 publication of Bodin's *Démonomanie*. Nicolas Rémy's *Daemonolatreiae libri tres* in 1595 added new dimensions to the demonological sabbath fantasy, evoking the trials of hundreds of accused witches across the Lorraine region of France in the last decades of the sixteenth century. Beginning in 1575, Rémy, a lawyer by profession, began to oversee legal matters including hundreds of witchcraft trials as one of the Provosts of Nancy.[127] The significance of space and landscape in the witch trials of the Lorraine borderlands can be seen in Rémy's descriptions of the witches' sabbath. Across *Daemonolatreiae*, Rémy recounts cases involving the fantasy of the witches' sabbath but shifts the marginal spaces from the mills, forests, and crosses of Bodin's *Démonomanie* to the hills and mountains of the Lorraine countryside. Recounting the story of one Didier Finance, who in 1581 confessed to having attended the sabbath "at a certain place upon the Donon, which is a very steep mountain in the Vosges," Rémy places the sabbath fantasy in a space at the margins of society difficult to access, where the imagination could run wild.[128] A more vivid example is laid out in Rémy's retelling of Claude Choteau's account of travelling

[127] William Monter and Edward Peters, "Rémy, Nicolas (ca. 1530-1612)" in *Encyclopedia of Witchcraft: The Western Tradition*, edited by Richard M. Golden (Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio, 2006), 955.
[128] "*…ac designato super Hupellam, qui mons in Vogesis peradruus est…*" Nicolas Rémy, *Daemonolatreiae libri tres* (Lugdunum: In Officina Vincentii, 1595), 99.

between the town of Lützen and the neighbouring village of Wisembach at the foothills of the Vosges mountains. In the 1589 account, Choteau "had climbed the better part of the hill which stands between the two places, when he was suddenly pulled up by a violent whirlwind… Then he observed in a retired corner, locally known as Morèle, six masked women dancing around a table laid with much gold and silver, tossing their heads like mad women; and near them was a man sitting upon a black bull watching them as if he were some casual passer-by."[129] The hill described by Choteau in his confession, located between two settlements with the whirlwind transporting him to an even more secluded location on the hill, reflects the role marginal space had on the developing demonological concept of the witches' sabbath.

While Rémy primarily discusses the sabbath landscapes as a setting for selected case studies he oversaw, Henri Boguet specifically dedicates the twentieth chapter of his 1602 *Discours des Sorciers* to the topic of place and the sabbath. Serving as Chief Justice of the district of Sainte-Claude beginning in 1587, Boguet like Rémy constructed his demonological treatise from his judicial experience presiding over witch trials.[130] However, unlike Rémy's extensive use of the Lorraine's hills and mountains to create a unique spatial identity for the sabbath fantasy of *Daemonolatreiae*, Boguet identified the sabbath with no specific landscape feature. Instead, Boguet states "[s]o it will be seen that it is useless to consider too much of the place where witches hold their Sabbats and assemblies."[131]

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[129] "*Iamque eius montis, qui interutrumq; vicum assurgit, bonam partem conscenderat, cum subito turbine correptus stetit, circunspectans atonitus, nuncubi rei adeo insolentis causa aliqua appareret. Nam caetera tranquillissmus, quietissimusqye aer erat. Aduertit in secessu quodam (eum accolae crepidinem Moreliam appellant) lauratas muliers sex, instructam multo auro, atque argento mensam quamdam saltando circumeuntes: perindeque sua iactantes capita, ac qui intermperiis agitantur: tum iis astantem in nigro tauro hominem, qui eas uti otiosus aliquis in triuio spectabat*." Rémy, *Daemonolatreiae*, 112.
[130] William Monter, "Boguet, Henri (ca. 1550-1619)" in *Encyclopedia of Witchcraft: The Western Tradition*, edited by Richard M. Golden (Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio, 2006), 133.
[131] Henri Boguet, *Discours des Sorciers* (Lyon: Jean Pillehotte, 1602), 49.

Even so, several locations used by Boguet demonstrate the patterns of marginal space seen in previous demonological texts. Boguet lists such spaces as a meadow near a ruined house outside of the village of Longchamois and a secluded place near the water outside of the village of Coirieres called és Combes "where there are no roads at all."[132] The concept of distance arises in Boguet's work too; however unlike Daneau's evocation of sabbaths over one hundred miles away, *Discours* refers to sabbath sites in close proximity to the homes of the accused. Chapter XVI discusses concepts of local sabbaths, where instead of flying to the sabbath, witches went on foot because it was nearby. Boguet refers to the trial of Clauda Jamprost, Clauda Janguillame, and Jacquema Paget of Orcières, all of whom attended the sabbath at the nearby field of Longchamois. Likewise, the trial of the Gandillon family of Nezan placed the sabbath narrative at a site called és Fontenailles "about two arquebus shots distant from Nezan…"[133] An examination of these locations' topography continues patterns that first appeared in Rémy's treatise on Lorraine: Boguet's *Discours* was based on his judicial work in the abbey of St. Claude the Franche-Comté, the mountainous region of eastern France bordering Switzerland.[134] The locations discussed by Boguet, such as Nezan, Longchamois, and Orcières all exist in the Jura Mountains and the French Alps, regions resembling Rémy's Lorraine in their mountainous topography and isolation. Boguet's account of witches walking to the sites of the sabbath demonstrates the relative isolation of these villages and the confines of their imaginations within regions that could be traversed easily on foot by the average person accused of witchcraft.

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[132] "…*qui est du tout sans chemin*." Boguet, *Discours des Sorciers*, 49.
[133] "…*distant de deux traits d'arquebuze de Nezan*…" Boguet, *Discours des Sorciers*, 42. The arquebus, an early modern rifle common into the sixteenth century had an effective range of 200m, meaning that the distance described by Boguet was likely no more than 500m. See: "harquebus." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, last updated February 7, 2012. https://www.britannica.com/technology/harquebus.
[134] Monter, "Boguet, Henri," 133.

The new demonological idea that the sites of the sabbath could be close to the homes of the accused was soon elaborated with another setting: a sabbath held in public holy spaces in the dead of the night. While most of Boguet's sabbaths occur at typical marginal spaces, he notes the presence of the sabbath at courtyard of the Priory of Mouille, continuing Bodin's discussion of the sabbath in landscapes of the holy but placing the act itself within the confines of a public religious space.[135] The inclusion of such holy spaces in demonological texts represents the spatial acknowledgement of the sabbath as an inversion of religious practice, a form of black mass that could be practised directly in sites of faith. Boguet, however, was not alone in doing so. The concept of gatherings of witches before Satan in religious spaces was present in the 1597 *Dæmonologie, in Forme of a Dialogue* by King James I, a rare depiction of the witches' sabbath in a tangible and well-described location from a Protestant context.[136] Though the witches' sabbath is not called by name in *Dæmonologie*, James I refers to the religiously inverted gathering of witches by the command of Satan, placing it within the confines of the church: "Yea, that he may the more viuelie counterfeit and scorne God, he oft times makes his slaues to conveene in these verrie places, which are destinate and ordeined for the conveening of the servantes of God (I meane by Churches)."[137] James I subdivides these spaces of faith even further by mentioning the use of the pulpit as a site of worship for accused witches, in which the Devil would occupy the pulpit with the witches showing their adoration through "the kissing of his hinder partes."[138] The use of churches and monasteries for the sabbath may seem an odd choice, but in early

[135] Boguet, *Discours des Sorciers*, 49.
[136] James Sharpe, "In Search of the English Sabbat: Popular Conceptions of Witches' Meetings in Early Modern England" in *Journal of Early Modern Studies* 2, (2013): 165.
[137] King James I, *Dæmonologie, in Forme of a Dialogue* (London: Curwen Press, 1924), 36; for a modern translation with commentary see: Lawrence Normand and Gareth Roberts, *Witchcraft in Early Modern Scotland: James VI's* Demonology *and the North Berwick Witches* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000), 384.
[138] King James I, *Dæmonologie*, 37.

modern Europe these spaces were viewed as supernatural and marginal in their own way as we will see in our exploration of the Basque Country.

By the time Francesco-Maria Guazzo published his demonology *Compendium Maleficarum* in 1608, the circulation of demonological concepts of the witches' sabbath from Bodin to Boguet had provided a variety of sabbath locales. Guazzo combines both new stories and retellings of fantasies, such as the Benevento tale. While fields and forests are again revisited in an example from 1590, set in a wooded field between Marainviller and Igney-Avricourt, Guazzo introduces new marginal spaces for the sabbath.[139] The *Compendium* features the story of a man of Oostbruck in the Netherlands who was magically transported to a subterranean cave outside the town of Wijk, where a witches' sabbath was underway, and the story of a peasant in York who stumbled upon a sabbath beneath a "mound" with a hole in the side (likely a prehistoric barrow) outside his village.[140] Guazzo also refers to the story of Antonio Leone, a charcoal burner of Valtellina who followed his wife to the witches' sabbath in a local count's wine cellar, a site associated with the sabbath in a variety of cases across Europe.[141] Guazzo expanded the landscape of the witches' sabbath yet further, using the remnants of the ancient past and the unseen subterranean world to construct further landscapes of fear and paving the way for more in-depth narratives about both the sabbath and the landscape.

The modest discussions of the sabbath that occurred in the demonological texts published in the waning years of the sixteenth century and the first decade of the seventeenth century provided a glimpse into the spatial understandings of early modern demonologists, but it was the writings of Pierre de Lancre on the Pays de Labourd that provide the most vivid

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[139] Guazzo, *Compendium Maleficarum*, 88.
[140] Guazzo, *Compendium Maleficarum*, 90, 82.
[141] Guazzo, *Compendium Maleficarum*, 86-87; the links between cellar raids and the sabbath fantasy can be linked to the breach of social expectations and the anxieties surrounding the loss of the fruits of one's success. For more, see: Roper, *Witch Craze*, 118.

explorations of the witches' sabbath of any text. Published in 1612, de Lancre's *Tableau de l'inconstance des mauvais anges et demons* recounts the author's reflections on his time presiding over witch trials in the Pays de Labourd region of France. However, unlike the preceding demonological texts, de Lancre's *Tableau* acts as demonology and ethnography for the Pays de Labourd region, as de Lancre carefully describes the region and the trials that occurred between the Bay of Biscay and the Pyrenees, focusing specifically on the local sabbath fantasies. As a result of the vividness of de Lancre's depictions of the sabbath, and the *Tableau*'s role as the sole remaining record of the Pays de Labourd witch craze, this text will be explored in depth in Chapter III, with its historical and geographic context at the heart of the discussion. De Lancre's geographic and ethnographic narrative served as the foundation for the sabbath narrative and marked a shift in the demonological literature, vividly reconstructing the fantasies of both interrogator and accused and the world in which they lived.

Demonological publications slowed substantively in the first decades of the seventeenth century. In 1669, Johannes Praetorius's *Blockes-Berges Verrichtung* was published, over half a century after the flurry of demonological texts that marked the turn of the century, and he now had the works of around sixty demonologists to draw upon.[142] However, unlike previous demonological texts, *Blockes-Berges Verrichtung* constructs its narrative around a single landscape, the titular Blocksberg, popularly known as the Brocken or Venusberg, a mountain at the heart of the Harz mountains of central Germany. Praetorius tells the story of the Blocksberg itself as an entity rather than just a setting, constructing a

[142] Praetorius includes examples from a variety of other demonologists in the second and third chapters of Part II of the text, with the third chapter outlining the spaces associated with the sabbath in the works of other demonologists across Europe. See: Johannes Praetorius, *Blockes-Berges Verrichtung* (Berlin: Contumax GmbH & Co. KG, 2010), 148-170; Gerhild Scholz Williams, "Demonologies" in *The Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe and Colonial America*, ed. Brian P. Levack (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 81.

narrative of space with witchcraft providing additional detail to his narrative. This perspective inverts the works of previous demonologists, to whom space was an increasingly important, yet always secondary, discussion to support their arguments regarding witchcraft. Praetorius provides the most direct examination of a singular space in relation to the witches' sabbath of any demonological author of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Like Rémy over half a century earlier, Praetorius uses mountains and hills as the marginal spaces at the heart of the sabbath fantasy, but he presents the Blocksberg as an entity in itself. However, Praetorius's text on the Blocksberg was not his only work to take this approach. In 1662, he compiled his first geographic study of folklore and legend, set in a single location: *Daemonologia Rubenzalii Silesii*, a study of legends surrounding the Rübezahl mountain in Silesia.[143] Here the landscape itself sparked the imagination in the same way that the diabolical acts of witches had in previous demonologies. Both are acts of place-making, attributing value and meaning to a space by collecting and retelling accounts of the sabbath. They are evolutions of the demonological model, moving beyond the description of actions of demons and witches at the sabbath, to provide a deeper level of reflection on the landscape itself.

Johannes Praetorius was one of the last major demonological authors, and in turn, the last major connection to the sabbath fantasy and landscape. Demonology itself was a dying pursuit: while publication continued well into the eighteenth century and nineteenth century, the power that demonologies held on the imagination declined until the occult fascination of the nineteenth century, which saw renewed interest in demons and demonology but without the same fervour.[144] However, Praetorius's *Blockes-Berges Verrichtung* also signalled a shift

[143] Thomas Nicklas, "Confluences géographiques et démonologiques en Germanie: Johannes Praetorius (1630-1680) et l'imaginaire topique de la 'Nuit de Walpurgis'," in *Grandes et petites mythologies I: Monts et abîmes: des dieux et des hommes*, eds. Karin Ueltschi and Flore Verdon (Reims: Épure, 2020), 215-216.
[144] Scholz Williams, "Demonologies", 82.

in the human vision of the landscape, exemplified in his own approach to demonology. In the waning years of the seventeenth century and through the eighteenth century, European perspectives on the landscape shifted, particularly those relating to wild spaces. Keith Thomas notes that through the seventeenth century, even non-demonological English texts espoused fear and distaste for mountains, repulsed by their sterility and ruggedness and instead "infinitely preferred the tamed and fertile landscape over which man had asserted control."[145] In line with the demonologies published in this era, controlled and human landscapes existed within the realm of God, whereas wild spaces and those at the margins were places to be feared, places in which man and God could not exert control. Toward the end of the eighteenth century, landscape became a key feature in writing, as the natural world and wild spaces became associated with a growing sense of the sublime. Where order once stood as the pinnacle of goodness in both society and landscape, the eighteenth century inverted popular views on the landscape, and though wildness and wilderness evoked strong emotions, they aroused awe rather than of fear.[146] While Praetorius does not go so far as to declare the Blocksberg as sublime or beautiful, his text marks an important shift in the understanding of landscape. He tells the story of place rather than solely of witches and demons, dedicating a chapter of his text to describe the Blocksberg in detail, from its latitude and longitude to the expanse of Thuringian forest that surrounds the peak, and so he articulates a new focus on wild and marginal spaces and their meaning to humanity.[147]

When viewed individually, each demonology adds new elements to the sabbath narrative by including new locations. However, when viewed as a collective body across two centuries, we see these texts as a steady movement in the understanding of space. Landscape

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[145] Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, 258.
[146] Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, 259-260; Kip Redlick, "Wilderness as Axis Mundi: Spiritual Journeys on the Appalachian Trail" in *Symbolic Landscapes*, eds. Gary Backhaus and John Murungi (Berlin: Springer, 2009), 74.
[147] Praetorius, *Blockes-Berges Verrichtung*, 49-53.

played an increasingly important role in the imaginations of early modern Europeans, as made evident in the stark difference between the works of Daneau and Praetorius. Where once landscape received little attention in sabbath narrative, it gained increasing prevalence until it became the sole focus of a demonology. This progressive evolution of demonologies shows how marginal spaces played upon the *mentalités* of these authors and acted as a repository for their narratives and imaginations.

Structure of Thesis

This thesis consists of four chapters, which address and analyse the landscapes of the witches' sabbath in the early modern witch craze and beyond. We begin our exploration of the landscapes of the sabbath in "Chapter I: The Wide World of the Witches' Sabbath," where we think about space in the broader European context, examining how people across the continent developed localized sabbath narratives to fit landscapes that made sense within their own cultural and geographic context. This chapter analyzes many of the most famous sabbath landscapes including mountains, cellars, crossroads, and heaths, spaces where people could easily imagine the witches' sabbath, but with clear details that made these spaces specific. This chapter explores some primary accounts of the witches' sabbath along with the re-examination of the works of other historians using a landscape-centric approach.

We then transition into our case studies of the thesis. The two specific case studies of this thesis reflect two different perspectives on the witches' sabbath, those seen in trials conducted by insiders in the community, and those found in treatises, written by communal outsiders. "Chapter II: The Sabbath Landscapes through Local Eyes – Zug, Switzerland" is our first case study of common belief, exploring the sabbath landscapes described in the 197 witch trials of Zug, Switzerland between 1559 and 1748. The records left behind document the fantasies of the people of Zug, populated with extensive details that they drew from their real experiences of place. The records of the Zug witch trials contained lists of the places

where the accused claimed to have attended the witches' sabbath. These narratives of space were constructed by community insiders on both sides of the interrogator-accused amalgam, providing a local perspective on how these specific places elicited the emotions tied to the sabbath. This chapter centres on three specific landscapes that appear frequently in the narratives of the accused in the trial records: the Meilacher forest, the *Allmend* field, and the Lorzentobel valley.

In "Chapter III: The Sabbath Landscapes through Foreign Eyes – The Pays de Labourd and Pierre de Lancre," we journey to the southwestern frontier of France to explore the Basque country. However, unlike in Zug, our examination of this region focuses on a single witch panic: the 1609 witch hunt that spread across the Pays de Labourd under the supervision of Bordeaux jurist, Pierre de Lancre. Unlike the trials of Zug, we see the Basque witch craze solely through the eyes of Pierre de Lancre, an outsider. When Pierre de Lancre arrived in the Basque region in summer of 1609, he set foot into a foreign world, where he did not speak the language, did not understand the customs, and did not know the landscapes. When he interrogated the between sixty and eight accused witches and five hundred witnesses across the thirteen Labourdin parishes, his understanding of the Basque landscape was one dramatically different from those under interrogation.[148] When the trial records from the Pays de Labourd witch panic were lost in an eighteenth-century archive fire, we lost the original records of the sabbath landscape narratives.

However, Machielsen has demonstrated very effectively that the localized sabbath belief can be found by combining de Lancre's records with the Zugarramurdi trials from across the Spanish border, though his analysis did not include the landscapes described in the Zugarramurdi accounts, if they were mentioned at all.[149] Instead we have spatial narratives

[148] Machielsen, *The Basque Witch-Hunt*, 148.
[149] Machielsen, *The Basque Witch-Hunt*, 119-145.

carefully selected by Pierre de Lancre and recorded in his *Tableau de l'Inconstance des Mauvais Anges et Demons*, the demonological account of his time in the Pays de Labourd, to which landscape is central. In this case study, we see the significance of the narrative amalgam. We witness the Basque landscape through his eyes, curated for the demonological audience but informed by the local accused and their witnesses, presenting a different but no less significant vision of the landscape to that which we saw in the trials of Zug. This chapter explores the sabbath landscapes described by de Lancre throughout the text, and we once more encounter three main landscape types: ruins, sacred sites, and the sea.

Finally, "Chapter IV: The Legacies of the Witches' Sabbath" brings our journeys across the landscapes of the witches' sabbath beyond the bounds of the witch craze by exploring how artists across time and mediums have depicted sabbath landscapes from the sixteenth century to the present. This final chapter presents new voices within the amalgam, demonstrating how different perspectives on space can create a cohesive narrative that spans and evolves across centuries.

Chapter I: The Wide World of the Witches' Sabbath

The shifting nature of witchcraft historiography has placed varying significance on the landscapes associated with the sabbath. From the nineteenth century, sabbath studies that portrayed these gatherings as real events often placed a greater level of importance on their setting compared to those who argued that the sabbath was a fantastical event, leading to a dramatic decline in analyses of these landscapes. However, following the last wave of sabbath histories in the late twentieth century, historians of witchcraft who discuss the sabbath have mentioned these spaces only in passing, using them as context for their examinations. Even so, traces of place can be found scattered throughout the literature, and each of these descriptions of the landscape provide a new perspective on the sabbath belief, often localized to the spaces where these narratives were constructed.

This chapter has collected decades of secondary literature and accounts from a pan-European context to be re-examined through a landscape-oriented lens. To better analyze and understand these narratives, they have been categorized by landscape type rather than individual case studies or geographic location, accounting for the expansive geographic distribution seen in the map in Figure 1. By collating this myriad of sabbath landscapes, this chapter examines how narratives of the witches' sabbath were localized, moulded to a myriad of local cultures and beliefs while maintaining common patterns. Each example of a sabbath landscape illustrates a sense of environmental and spatial awareness and local complexity, as people across early modern Europe brought the common fantasies of the witches' sabbath to their own world. This chapter provides fresh perspectives on the sabbaths explored by other historians of the early modern witch craze, particularly those on the German lands of the Holy Roman Empire where an overwhelming majority of witch trials occurred, recentring the

significance of the human relationship with the landscape in these fantasies to explore how people adapted sabbath beliefs to fit in their localized world.[1]

Figure 1: Localized sabbath landscapes in Europe described in this chapter.



Mountains

During the last golden days of summer, on a sunny day the Harz mountains are bathed in the warm glow that brings a reminder of both the heat of the day and the coming of fall.

[1] Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 20-21.

During these final few weeks, people flock to the Harz to escape, unwind, and enjoy the mountains and the natural world. At 1142m, the Brocken is the highest peak not only in the Harz, but in all of northern Germany, drawing tourists to the peak in droves. A steam train brings eager riders from half-timbered town of Wernigerode along the Brockenbahn railway to the summit, while more intrepid adventurers may journey by bicycle or on foot from the base to the Brocken's peak. Though the main trail following in the footsteps of the author Goethe is wildly popular, there are many routes to the summit. Among the quietest is the Steinere Renne trail that leads from the outskirts of Wernigerode through the Steinere Renne valley up the mountain. This trail, passing through forests, cliffs, and half-timbered hotels and guesthouses, takes the walker through a land seemingly forgotten by time. It is a place where the sound of vehicles is drowned by the wind tracing through the trees and the water coursing over stone. In the shadow of the Brocken, our only reminder of modernity is the occasional signpost, pointing the hiker toward one of the many Harz peaks and villages.

As a reminder of the impending autumn, mornings in the Harz often bring low clouds, that sometimes covers the peak of the Brocken. Wisps of fog filter through the forests of dead spruce that line the mountain slopes, an army of white skeletons felled by bark beetles standing broken amidst the resurgent wilderness. Between the trees, monolithic boulders rise along mountain ridges, piled upon one another like monuments. Following the Steinere Renne trail, you are alone in this wilderness under the grey morning sky, where the only manmade sound is the almost mournful whistle of the distant train, taking gleeful riders through another of the Brocken's landscapes far removed from the world of trees and stones leading up the mountain's east face. When the trail finally rejoins the main trail, it is almost a shock to find so many other hikers climbing the Brocken, just as the sun peeks from behind the clouds. Before, the mountain felt lonesome, a force of nature, an entirely unique landscape. Now, more layers have appeared.

However, the loss of isolation brings a new element to the mountain trail: hiking signs appear for the Hexenweg trail through the Harz, featuring the outline of a witch perched upon a broomstick. These signs are the first indication of the Brocken's dark past. Looming just below the clouds, half covered in mist, the radio and television tower that was erected atop the Brocken's summit comes into view, the world's oldest television tower erected for the Berlin Olympics in 1936, beckoning the hikers upward as they spiral closer to the peak. As the spruce trees grow ever smaller in the higher altitude, the trail finally crests the last rise, arriving at the Brocken's flat summit. The wind whistles across the bald peak, as the train riders mingle with the hikers at the cafés and biergartens, and inside the information centre. At the highest point on the mountain, a large boulder stands at attention with a plaque featuring the mountains name and altitude, surrounded by smaller plaques in every direction pointing to the cities and towns near and far. From here, the entirety of northern Germany stretches to the horizon, with the northern plains extending north and east, while to the west and south the Brocken towers above the other Harz peaks. It is as though the world converges upon the peak of the Brocken, and for centuries, the people of Germany believed it did. However, this convergence was not simply a collection of landscapes, hikers, and holidaymakers. From the seventeenth century to the present, the Brocken was best known as the site of Europe's greatest witches' sabbath, where the diabolical and the damned from across Germany would dance. The Brocken is a peak that is both emblematic of the sabbath mountain, and an example of how localization of sabbath narratives helped construct complex and shifting relationships with the landscape.

To understand the role of the Brocken in the imagination of the landscape, we must first understand where mountains belong in early modern witchcraft belief. The link between mountains and witchcraft belief has deep roots. As we saw in our Introduction, as early as the nineteenth century the Grimm Brothers discussed mountains extensively as sabbath

landscapes, laying the foundations for the study of these spaces. More recently in the mid twentieth century, Hugh Trevor-Roper turned his attention once more to the mountains while seeking explanations for the witch craze. Trevor-Roper was largely interested in the now debunked idea that witchcraft belief stemmed from high altitude air, rather than examining the deeper relationship between people living in alpine landscapes and the physical world that surrounds them.[2] As one of the most frequently recurring sabbath landscapes, mountains are an intrinsic feature of the sabbath fantasy. Repeatedly, across the continent from La Rhune, the first peak of the Pyrénées in the south to the Domen, the low mountain outside of the island of Vardø at the northernmost tip of Norwegian Finnmark, mountains loom throughout the records of early modern witch trials. It is in the mountains of Switzerland that the story of diabolical witchcraft was born, and it was in this same mountainous country that the last European witch was executed in 1782. Mountains run through the veins of early modern witch belief, appearing in fantasies even hundreds of kilometres from the nearest summits. As one of the most notable landscapes of the witches' sabbath, these mountains reflect humanity's complicated relationship with alpine spaces and the wildness of the natural world.

Humans have been settling in the shadow of mountains for our entire existence. The earliest evidence for habitation in mountain environments comes from approximately 100,000 years ago in the mountains of the Middle East. Drawn into the mountains in search of game and the protection offered by caves as temporary shelters, early humans settled in mountainous landscapes across the world until the advent of agriculture.[3] Though agricultural developments in the Neolithic drew human settlement to lower elevations for better access to rich soils and stable climates, evidence from Central European mountain landscapes points

[2] H.R. Trevor-Roper, *The European Witch-Craze of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries and Other Essays* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 106.
[3] Edwin Bernbaum and Larry W. Price, "Attitudes Toward Mountains" in *Mountain Geography: Physical and Human Dimensions*, eds. Martin F. Price et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 590-591.

toward the seasonal cultivation of crops and pastoral land use.[4] As we will see in the Swiss Alps and in the Basque Pyrénées, the pastoral transhumance in mountainous landscapes brought a seasonal rhythm to the mountains for thousands of years, into early modernity and beyond. Far above the altitude where crops and livestock can thrive, anthropologists and geographers have hypothesized that prehistoric humans may have associated the symptoms of altitude sickness with the boundaries between the human world and the sacred, while mountain storms evoked a sense of terror and awe in those who lived at their bases and upon their slopes. Agricultural societies even far from mountains relied upon the river systems that originated from mountain springs, giving them an extended sense of sacrality due to their life-giving nature.[5]

Mountains across Europe became places of devotion across the millennia. Most famously, Mediterranean cultures revered several mountain peaks that shifted and evolved in their significance across time as civilizations rose and fell. Mount Ida on the island of Crete, was likely a site of extensive worship during the Bronze Age Minoan civilization before becoming the birthplace of Zeus to the classical Greeks. The seat of the gods, once an idealized and mythic space, became associated with Mount Olympos in Thessaly, while the high peak of Mount Parnassos loomed over the temple complex of Delphi, where the oracle would announce the will of the god Apollo.[6]

The significance of these Greek mountains in the European imagination extended well into the early modern period. Johannes Praetorius describes them among other mythical mountains in his 1668 demonology about the Brocken, *Blockes-Berges Verrichtung*.[7] Such

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[4] Paweł Valde-Nowak, "The Mountainous Landscape as a Viable Alternative for the Neolithic," in *People in the Mountains: Current Approaches to the Archaeobiology of Mountainous Landscapes*, eds. Andrzej Pelisiak, Marek Nowak, and Ciprian Astaloş (Oxford: Archaeopress Publishing Ltd., 2018), 7-14.
[5] Bernbaum and Price, "Attitudes Toward Mountains," 590.
[6] Edwin Bernbaum, *Sacred Mountains of the World*, 2nd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 147-156.
[7] Praetorius, *Blockes-Berges Verrichtung*, 13-14.

comparisons point toward an association between the sabbath mountains and the sacred mountains of the pagan past in the early modern imagination. According to Praetorius, the sabbath was an extension of the unseen world intrinsically tied to mountain peaks, meaning that the Brocken was akin to a sacred peak despite a distinct lack of pre-Christian sources from Germanic Europe. The role of mountains in religious belief on the northern side of the Alps remains a mystery. The Celts who ruled over the Northern Alps worshipped a sky god living in the mountains, syncretized with Roman beliefs to become Jupiter Poeninus, from the Celtic word for mountain.[8] However, the arrival of Christianity and subsequent conversion of Germanic Europe resulted in the loss of pre-Roman beliefs in the European world north of the Mediterranean.

The Christian tradition that expanded into the Germanic world is steeped in tales of sacred mountains. The Near East, where the Abrahamic faiths originated, was historically populated with mountain deities and spirits, while Egypt, the closest major empire, tied spirituality to the mountains and made them sites of worship and contemplation.[9] In the Old Testament, the three key events essential to the covenants of Judaism occur on sacred peaks: Noah's Ark settles upon the slopes of Mount Ararat under God's rainbow, Abraham builds his altar to sacrifice his son on a summit of the mountains of Moriah, and Moses receives the Ten Commandments at the peak of Mount Sinai.[10] Likewise, in the New Testament, mountains serve a similarly significant purpose. On a hill overlooking the Sea of Galilee, Jesus delivers his Sermon on the Mount, and on Calvary or Golgotha, a small hill overlooking Jerusalem, he is crucified, buried, and resurrected.[11] Early Christians viewed

[8] Penn → Poeninus. Bernbaum, *Sacred Mountains of the World*, 169.
[9] Izaak J. de Hulster, "A God of Mountains? An Iconographic Perspective on the Aramean arguments in 1 Kings 20:23," in *Image, Text, and Exegesis: Iconographic Interpretation and the Hebrew Bible*, eds. Izaak J. de Hulster and Joel M. Lemon (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 230-233; Ashraf Alexandre Sadek, "A Foreshadowing of the Desert Spirituality in Ancient Nubia and Upper Egypt," in *Christianity and Monasticism in Aswan and Nubia*, eds. Gawdat Gabra and Hany Takla (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2013), 57.
[10] Genesis 8:4; Genesis 22:2; Exodus 31:18.
[11] Matthew 5:1; John 19:17, 19:41.

mountains as "places of miracles and divine revelation" and developed monasteries and hermitages among their peaks.[12] Some previously pagan sacred mountains became Christian shrines and monasteries, adding new layers of sacrality to the landscape.[13] Such Christianization of mountains is evident in the Pays de Labourd – the summit of La Rhune was home to both prehistoric dolmens and a small chapel, a permanent home for hermetic monks until the eighteenth century, indicating sacrality across time.[14]

However, it is this same Christianization that instilled a deep fear of mountainous landscapes. Keith Thomas centred his environmental study of the early modern world upon the concept that Europeans sought human order over the land in accordance with biblical expectations of human agency and dominance over the natural world.[15] According to Thomas's argument, mountains directly opposed this *mentalité*. The thin soils and inhospitable terrain of mountains made them unfriendly landscapes to the plough and the farmer. While the grasses of the mountains offered some grazing lands for pastoralists, the exposed rock and disorderly terrain were sterile to early modern eyes, deformed and broken parts of an imperfect world.[16] In some cases, anxieties surrounding these uncultivable landscapes were directly blamed on diabolical origins, as folklore about the Devil was attached to the foundations of the mountains.[17] These landscapes, once the bridge between the real world and the sacred, had gained new meanings as antithetical to humanity's God-given right to hold dominion over nature, as mountains could not be tamed.

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[12] Bernbaum, *Sacred Mountains of the World*, 125.
[13] Zbignew T. Fiema, "Reinventing the Sacred: From Shrine to Monastery at Jabal Hārūn," in *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies* 42 (2012): 27-37.
[14] Matthew Carr, *The Savage Frontier: The Pyrenees in History and Imagination* (London: Hurst and Company, 2018), 1-2.
[15] Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, 14-15.
[16] Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, 258-259.
[17] See: Jeremy Harte, *Cloven Country: The Devil and the English Landscape* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 2022).

Across time, mountains have served as an intermediary space between the seen and unseen world, whether as a sacred space, a place to communicate with higher powers, or as deviations of God's plan. The witches' sabbath has often been placed in such liminal spaces, a space between perception and imagination, a recurring trend we will see in our examination of caves and churchyards. Similarly, mountains have acted as a border between the real and the imagined, existing in both spheres at once. Like we have seen with the example of Mount Olympos in Greek mythology, two versions of a space can exist: one in the real world, a mountain that can be seen, perceived, and climbed, and one in the mythic world, where the Olympians held court and watched over humanity.

These two versions of Olympos were different places, imagined on the same space. Witchcraft is a similar blend between the realm of fantasy and reality, taking real tragedies of the early modern world and giving them fantastical explanations. Mountains in sabbath narratives blended the world of reality with the imagination, where an entirely imagined event could occur on a geographic feature that both existed in the real world and on an imaginary plane already predisposed to the diabolical. Removed from God's plan for humanity, viewed as disorderly, but steeped in sacred tradition as a link to the divine and unseen world, mountains served as the perfect location for the sabbath.

In some cases throughout Europe, the mountain itself wavered on the line of reality and fantasy. During the witch craze in Poland, both demonologists and the accused claimed witches travelled to Łysa Góra, or Bald Mountain, to attend the witches' sabbath. However, the term Bald Mountain had many meanings. Some believed that an actual Łysa Góra existed in the Świętokrzyskie mountains, where a Benedictine monastery once stood.[18] This Bald Mountain would fit perfectly within the model of sacred mountains and the intermediary

[18] Michael Ostling, *Between the Devil and the Host: Imagining Witchcraft in Early Modern Poland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 135.

between reality and the unseen world, yet Polish sabbath beliefs had added levels of complexity in the imagination of this landscape. In other cases, the name Łysa Góra was assigned to other, differently named, mountains or hills, or to an imagined high place somewhere "at the border."[19] Sometimes, Bald Mountain did not refer to a mountain at all, but was a symbolic term for the site of the sabbath, meaning that castles, barns, forests, and Jewish cemeteries could all be Łysa Góra.[20] Each of these visions of Łysa Góra present evidence for the role that localization played in the construction of the sabbath. While the concept of Bald Mountain remained a constant, its meaning was adapted and shifted to the places that made sense in that specific local context. In spaces lacking physical mountains, Łysa Góra could become any landscape, so long as the local accused believed it belonged in that place.

In other cases, sacred peaks remained constant with sabbath narratives. In the border region between Silesia and Moravia, a collection of boulders known as the Petrovy Kameny or "Peter Stones" on the side of the mountain Hrubý Jeseník was the location of a blended tradition. Local legend held that Saint Peter could appear to those in need of aid who prayed at these rocks, but in the late seventeenth century, was the centre of numerous sabbath narratives. Here the accused of nearby communities claimed the Devil would take them for the sabbath after signing their pact.[21] Karolina Wojtucka argues that the Peter Stones and Hrubý Jeseník were sabbath landscapes as the mountain stood at the Czech-Moravian cultural border *despite* the saintly name.[22] I argue that it is *because of* the holy associations that this

[19] Ostling, *Between the Devil and the Host*, 135.
[20] Ostling, *Between the Devil and the Host*, 135.
[21] Karolina Wojtucka, "Miejsca sabatów czarownic w epoce wczesnonowożytnej – ich znaczenie i topografia. Przyczynek do badań nad procesami o czary na Śląsku i Morawach//The Locations of Witch Sabbaths in Early Modern Era – Their Signficance and Topographic Specificity. Contributions to Research on Witchcraft Trials in Silesia and Moravia," in *Acta Universitatis Lodziensis. Folia Historica* 107 (2020): 142.
[22] Wojtucka, "Miejsca sabatów czarownic w epoce wczesnonowożytnej – ich znaczenie i topografia. Przyczynek do badań nad procesami o czary na Śląsku i Morawach," 142.

site became a sabbath landscape, combining the cultural borderlands with the margins between the seen and unseen world, all in a space that made sense to the local community.

With mountains playing such a major role in the human connection with the unseen world and the sacred, it is vital to understand why we place significance on these spaces in the first place. While storms and high-altitude symptoms may account for some of our associations with the borders with the unseen world, they are hardly a universal experience for those interacting with mountains. Instead, the significance of mountains in our relationship with the natural world partially originates in the simplest aspects of their physicality. We may view this through the perspective of Denis Cosgrove, who conceptualizes landscape as the world that we can see, defined by vision. Exploring the fundamental basis of landscape studies, Cosgrove argues that "[i]nsofar as human geography concerns the natural or physical world, geographical space remains space that can be seen, or at least *visualized*."[23] To see is to truly interact with space, an act of placemaking that actively develops landscapes. If we define and understand the world around us based on what we can see, then mountains and high spaces are central to our connection with space: "[t]hanks to their majesty and well-defined profiles, high mountain peaks are primary geographical objects on the landscape to capture the human gaze."[24] While the other landscapes we will examine through this study are reliant on the observer being in close proximity to these spaces, if not entirely within the space in the case of caves, valleys, and forests, mountains are highly visible from a great distance. On flat terrain, mountains loom over the horizon long before one can journey to their foothills, let alone enter the actual alpine terrain by ascending the mountain. From the mountainside or the summit, a mountain offers a vantage point over

[23] Denis Cosgrove, *Geography and Vision: Seeing, Imagining and Representing the World* (London: I.B. Taurus, 2008), 15.
[24] Denis Cosgrove and Veronica della Dora, "Introduction" in *High Places: Cultural Geographies of Mountains, Ice, and Science* (London: I.B. Taurus, 2009), 8.

the surrounding world below. Looking out over the world from a mountain is as close to flight as early modern Europeans would experience until the end of the eighteenth century.

However, the reliance on vision for the establishment of mountains as sites of the witches' sabbath has limits. In many cases, even though other peaks, often higher and more substantive, are within view, the sabbath narratives are set in other locations. Located on the northern shore of the Bodensee, the Imperial Free City of Überlingen is afforded a vista over the lake toward the Alps in the south, their high summits visible on the horizon. These prominent peaks, among the highest in Europe, would seem a natural choice for the city's witches' sabbaths given their visibility on clear days. However, the Alps do not appear in the Überlingen trials. Rather, between 1577 and 1608, numerous accused witches in Überlingen confessed to attending the sabbath atop the Heuberg, a low plateau of the Swabian Jura, approximately fifty kilometres to the north of the city.[25]

What sets the Heuberg apart from the Alps on the horizon is the lack of visibility from the town of Überlingen. The Heuberg sits at only 1000 metres above sea level, while the low escarpment rising from the shores of the Bodensee encircles Überlingen, blocking any line of sight toward the low, flat summit of the Heuberg. If vision is essential to the sabbath, why was the Heuberg the most common sabbath landscape in Überlingen? While Johannes Dillinger does not offer explanations for its frequency in his study of the Überlingen trials, we may hypothesize that ease of travel and proximity rather than vision might have played a more substantive role in the prominence of the Heuberg. Despite the vista of the Alps, the Bodensee presented a substantive barrier for communities on the northern shore such as Überlingen from access to the Alps. While boats were used to cross the lake for millennia, land routes between the north and south required extensive journeys along the shores. Close

[25] Johannes Dillinger, *Die Hexenverfolgung in Überlingen* (Meßkirch: Gmeiner-Verlag, 2023), 58-100.

to the western edge of the lake, the closest location to pass to the southern shore and the alps beyond was at Konstanz, where bridges over the Rhine allowed access to the southern edge of the lake. However, Konstanz was over fifty kilometres from Überlingen, with a far greater distance yet to arrive at the foothills of the Alps in the Swiss Cantons, while the route to the eastern tip of the lake was even farther.

The Heuberg, however, was among the highest points of the nearby Swabian Jura, a place which the people of Überlingen were far more likely to frequent. The journey between the city and the mountain, close to the distance between Überlingen and Konstanz, would have been more possible for common people living in the Imperial Free City, allowing the landscape to filter into their imaginations more easily. Flight, whether on a magical stool as in the case of Anna Radine, or riding a fox as claimed by Appolonia Müllerin, brought the invisible peak closer to the accused, breaking down the distances and allowing the Heuberg to infect the fantasies of the people of Überlingen for decades.[26]

However, the Heuberg was not purely a fantasy for the people of Überlingen. Rather, the Heuberg appears in fantasies across the southwest. The first mentions of the peak as the centre of the witches' sabbath came in the early fifteenth century when sabbath belief was in its infancy, first by the local poet Heinrich von Wittenweiler, then by the early demonologist Johannes Nider. By the mid seventeenth century, the Heuberg appeared in fantasies from Strasbourg on the Rhine to Rosenfeld over the northeastern edge of the Swabian Alps.[27] The presence of the Heuberg in the Überlingen confessions is likely a combination of travel proximity and cultural expectations. If the Heuberg was easier to access than the visible Alps,

[26] Dillinger, *Die Hexenverfolgung in Überlingen*, 62, 88.
[27] Edward Bever, *The Realities of Witchcraft and Popular Magic in Early Modern Europe: Culture, Cognition, and Everyday Life* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 96, 133.

and at the heart of centuries worth of sabbath narratives in this broad region, its presence in Überlingen is unsurprising.

The Heuberg's role in the sabbath fantasy spread far across southern Germany, but there were limits to its regional association with the sabbath. In many places, localization of sabbath narratives brought the witches' gatherings to landscapes far closer to home. In the Bishopric of Augsburg, some two hundred kilometres from the Swabian peak, the horse-herder and clairvoyant Conrad Stöcklin confessed to attending the sabbath atop the Heuberg. However, Wolfgang Behringer notes that this was an isolated case, likely stemming from the Bishopric's appointment of the executioner of Biberach, Wurttemberg – the execution then applied his own cultural expectation of where a sabbath should take place to a new region, as those who he had interrogated in the west had established the Heuberg as the central sabbath landscape in his mind.[28] Behringer's argument indicates the significance of the amalgam in understanding how placemaking occurred, as a foreign authority – not a demonologist, but an executioner – provided new perspectives of space for the accused to utilize in their confession. Further trials in southeastern Germany and Austria lacked a central "witches' mountain" but instead featured local landscapes. During Bavaria's largest and most serious witch panic in 1589, accused witches in the village of Schongau confessed to alpine sabbaths. Yet unlike their counterparts in Überlingen and other territories in the German southwest, their sabbath narratives were placed on the Peissenberg and the Auerberg, both under twenty kilometres from Schongau and a part of their everyday landscapes. Behringer speculates that this localization reflected a common belief in Bavaria; unlike the trial of Conrad Stöcklin, the

[28] Wolfgang Behringer, *Witchcraft Persecutions in Bavaria: Popular Magic, Religious Zealotry and Reason of State in Early Modern Europe*, trans. J.C. Grayson and David Lederer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 125.

Schongau witch trials were run solely by local figures who would have already associated these peaks with witchcraft.[29]

While the significance of the Heuberg in the German southwest and local peaks in the southeast suggests the hold of mountains on the imagination, to understand the deep connection between high spaces and the witches' sabbath, we must return to the Harz mountains of central Germany, and the peak that has spurred visions of the sabbath even into the present – the Brocken. We know little of the pre-medieval past of the Brocken; Edwin Bernbaum hypothesizes that, like many peaks in the pre-Christian Germanic world, the Harz range was full of sacred mountains vital to paganistic belief. The syncretization of Christian belief with local traditions slowly removed the sacrality from these summits but maintained the thin veil between the seen and the unseen world at the summit of the Brocken by the medieval period.[30] Without recorded evidence for the sacrality of the Brocken or other German mountains, we must turn to medieval literature to understand their role in the premodern German imagination.

German authors used both mountains and forests as "the space of lawlessness, the domain of robbers, giants, dwarfs and other uncanny creatures."[31] While in some cases, such as in Gottfried von Straßbourg's thirteenth century romance *Tristan und Isolde*, mountains are used as vantage points to gain perspective over the character's situation (conforming to Cosgrove's vision theory), in others such as the twelfth century epic *Herzog Ernst*, mountains are a serious threat to the wellbeing of the characters, acting as environmental dangers and obstacles to their success and survival.[32] In the field of visual arts, mountains increasingly

[29] Behringer, *Witchcraft Persecutions in Bavaria*, 136.
[30] Bernbaum, *Sacred Mountains of the World*, 163-164.
[31] Albrecht Classen, "Terra Incognita? Mountains in Medieval and Early Modern German Literature," in *Heights of Reflection: Mountains in the German Imagination from the Middle Ages to the Twenty-First Century*, eds. Sean Ireton and Caroline Schaumann (Rochester: Boydell & Brewer Inc., 2012), 35.
[32] Classen, "Terra Incognita?" 35-38.

appeared in paintings, drawings, and maps across Europe, indicating a growing awareness of mountain spaces and their significance in the imagination.[33] In the works of both Albrecht Altdorfer and Albrecht Dürer, mountains were a key aspect of the sixteenth century's shift toward landscape art as a subject rather than a background.[34] It was in this context that the first mentions of the Brocken as a sabbath landscape appeared.

The Brocken first emerged in the historical record as a mountain associated with witchcraft in the aftermath of the Reformation.[35] Prior to its inclusion in magical narratives, the Brocken was infrequently visited in the late medieval period due to its low economic value. While the other mountains in the Harz harboured mining resources essential to economic life in medieval Germany, the Brocken lacked any major mineral deposits but was rather covered by dense forests and swamps.[36] In the main wave of witch trials that swept across Germany in the last decades of the sixteenth century and the first years of the seventeenth century, the Harz region was not spared, and the tradition of the Brocken as the site of the sabbath began to gain traction, particularly by the mid-seventeenth century.[37] It was during this time that the sabbath atop the Brocken was first associated with Walpurigsnacht, the feast of Saint Walburga and the date of the old pagan fertility festival, a common thread throughout the stories of the Brocken's sabbaths.[38] Yet what is perhaps most fascinating about the Brocken's role in the trials as a sabbath landscape was the decidedly

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[33] For Italian works, see: Penny Snyder, "Mountains in Italian Renaissance Depictions of 'The Sacrifice of Isaac'," in *The Mountains in Art History*, eds. Peter Mark, Peter Helman, and Penny Snyder (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2017), 7-12. For mountains in artistic cartography see: Michael Ziegenbalg, "An Interdisciplinary Cooperation: Painters of Landscape, Cartographers, Surveyors of Land and Mountain in the Renaissance" in *Histoire & Mesure* 8, no. 3/4 (1993): 313-324.

[34] See: Christopher S. Wood, *Albrecht Altdorfer and the Origins of Landscape*, 2nd ed. (London: Reaktion Books, 2014).

[35] Eduard Jacobs, *Der Brocken und sein Gebiet – Urkundliche Beitraege zur geschiehtlichen Kunde des Brockens und des hohen Harzes des Volks- und Hexenglaubens besonders der Blocksbergsage, sowie der Naturansehauung am Harze* (Wernigerode: B. Angerstein, 1871), 187, 255.

[36] Ines Köhler-Zülch, "Die Hexenkarriere eines Berges: Brocken alias Blocksberg. Ein Beitrag zur Sagen-, Hexen-, und Reiseliteratur," in *Narodna umjetnost: hrvatski časopis za etnologiju i folkloristiku* 30, no. 1 (1993): 54.

[37] Köhler-Zülch, "Die Hexenkarriere eines Berges," 54.

[38] Durrant and Bailey, *Historical Dictionary of Witchcraft*, 199-200.

non-local nature of the sabbath narratives. The Brocken was predominantly declared a witches' mountain by those who lived far from its shadow – the peak simply does not appear in the trials of the neighbouring village of Wernigerode, which had largely ended by the middle of the seventeenth century as the Blocksberg myth gained traction.[39]

The Brocken's role as a sabbath landscape instead originated beyond the Harz region. In his nineteenth century examination of the peak, Eduard Jacobs found that the first mentions of the Brocken as a witches' peak came from literature, citing Franz Joel's 1580 *De Morbis Hyperphysicis*'s appendix: "de ludis lamiarum in monte Bructerorum que in Blocksberg vocant." From here, the association between the Brocken and the witches' sabbath appears to have spread first through learned circles in the early to mid seventeenth century before steadily making its way into the trials of northwestern Germany.[40] In 1663, Anna Roleffes (recorded in the trial as Tempel Anneke) of the village of Harxbüttel was accused of witchcraft and tried in the city of Braunschweig, over fifty kilometres from the foot of the Brocken. On the 27th of October, after months of torture and interrogation, Anneke confessed to travelling to the Brocken "yearly to Walpurgis Night on a male goat, which Tilke [the name she gave for the Devil] brought, and travelled there with the same."[41] While the distance between Braunschweig and the Harz was comparatively short at approximately sixty kilometres, the impact of the Brocken spread much farther. In October 1669, Anna Spielen of Gramsdorf, on the Baltic coast of Holstein near Lübeck was brought to trial and confessed to the crime of witchcraft. As part of her confession, Anna claimed that she had twice ridden to the Brocken on the back of a male goat.[42] In these two confessions, we see

[39] Jacobs, *Der Brocken und sein Gebiet*, 233-234.
[40] Jacobs, *Der Brocken und sein Gebiet*, 249-251.
[41] Peter Morton, ed., Barbara Dahms, trans., *The Trial of Tempel Anneke: Records of a Witchcraft Trial in Brunswick, Germany, 1663* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 116.
[42] Liv Helene Willumsen, *The Voices of Women in Witchcraft Trials: Northern Europe* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2022), 96.

repetition of almost the same story: the witches would ride upon the back of a male goat who would take them to the sabbath atop the Brocken. However, Gramsdorf is located over 250 kilometres from Braunschweig, or 300 kilometres from the foot of the Brocken, indicating that the sabbath narratives surrounding the Brocken, its sabbaths, and even the means of travel to the sabbath were constant across an immense region of northern Germany.

In the same year that Anna Spielen confessed to attending the sabbath atop the Brocken, Johannes Praetorius published his *Blockes-Berges Verrichtung*. As we have explored in our discussion of demonological texts, *Blockes-Berges Verrichtung* was among the last major demonologies, and signalled a shift toward a place-centric narrative for the genre. However, it also served to consolidate the Brocken as the site of the witches' sabbath, and, more importantly, with the title "Blocksberg," the common German name used to describe the generic witches' mountain.[43] Over the course of the early modern witch craze, numerous mountains across Germanic Europe associated with the witches' sabbath were called the "Blocksberg," including the Brocken.[44] In this way, the Blocksberg was akin to the Bald Mountain or Łysa Góra of the Polish tradition – a moveable and malleable space that could be adjusted to fit numerous mountains, hills, or other unrelated landscapes. Though the Brocken had already existed as a site of the witches' sabbath for much of the seventeenth century, it was Praetorius's text that cemented its status as the premiere mountain of the sabbath in the northern German tradition, as the archetype of the Blocksberg by popularizing the mountain and its story with the broader German audience. Many of Praetorius's observations and discussions about the Brocken became commonplace in the imaginations of this mountain into the nineteenth century.[45] But what specific feature of the Brocken made it

[43] See: Jacobs, *Der Brocken und sein Gebiet*, 233-239.
[44] Wojtucka, "Miejsca sabatów czarownic w epoce wczesnonowożytnej," 141.
[45] Nicklas, "Confluences géographiques et démonologiques en Germanie," 217-219.

the archetypical sabbath space, rather than any of the other witches' mountains in the Harz and beyond?

The answer to this question may lie in the combination of each mountain we have examined thus far. The approach toward the Brocken from the east, west and north points toward the significance of vision in the creation of landscape. The Brocken is the highest point in all northern Germany, towering over the neighbouring Harz summits, and a far cry from the flat plains of the northern countryside. Though the Brocken is neither steep nor particularly tall, it can be seen from kilometres away, a shadow on the horizon that rises from the flat terrain. The Brocken dominates the rest of the surrounding landscape, capturing the imagination of those under its shadow. The forests that cover the slopes stand in stark comparison to the fields of wheat and legumes below, dark and light, wild and cultivated. Yet, to people such as Anna Spielen, the Brocken was hundreds of kilometres away, meaning that this peak weighed more heavily upon her imagination than any regional location. However, the cultural significance of mountains and the Brocken's relative proximity compared to other mountain peaks makes it the perfect Blocksberg, akin to the Heuberg from Überlingen. Other scientific reasons add upon the foundation laid by vision, proximity, and ancient sacral traditions. The Brocken spectre, named after the mountain, is a scientific phenomenon in which the shadow of a person is magnified onto surrounding mist. Due to the properties of the mist and the refraction of light, the shadow appears distant, larger than life, and surrounded by an aura of rainbow light.[46] In Praetorius's text, the Brocken is frequently noted for its heavy fogs, through both his own reflections and through the works of poets.[47] Of particular note is Praetorius's description of an ascent of the Brocken from the

[46] See: Storm Dunlop, "Brocken spectre," *Oxford Dictionary of Weather*, 3rd edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023); Alan Beaton, Paul Norman, and Guy Richardson "Illusory Depth and Spectral Refraction: Unusual Views of the Brocken Spectre," in *Perception* 25, no. 3 (March 1996): 373-374.
[47] See: Praetorius, *Blockes-Berges Verrichtung*, 58-59.

neighbouring town of Wernigerode on the fifth of July, 1653. Here, Praetorius recounts: "Then, while we were enjoying the… countries and places lying in the valley, a cloud suddenly came roaring toward us, mixed with mist and vapour, overshadowed us, so that we, as it were in an instant, fell into darkness and saw nothing at all, even each other…"[48] Such poor weather conditions became both an impediment to vision, sparking anxiety and fear, and the canvas upon which a Brocken spectre may have been projected. These Brocken spectres may have inspired visions of witches' flights to the treeless summit of the Brocken, combining with the other layers of history and placemaking to turn the Brocken into a landscape of fear and the centre for the witches' sabbath in the mid seventeenth century.

Blockes-Berges Verrichtung was only the beginning of the Brocken's life in the German imagination. With place being continually emergent and constantly changing with additional interactions built upon one another, it is only natural that the sabbath beliefs by the time of its publication became the foundation of far broader beliefs. While the woodcut published as the title page of the book (Fig. 10) was among the most widespread interpretations of the witches' sabbath atop the Blocksberg, it was far from the last. Matthäus Merian the Elder created an idealized depiction of the inverted chaos of the sabbath in his 1626 engraving "Zauberey" (Fig. 11). In this print, which predates Praetorius by nearly fifty years, the scene is divided into two halves. The foreground, which we examined in Chapter IV, centres upon the debauchery of witches and demons amidst overgrown Roman ruins. The background shows a different scene. A procession of witches and demons appear to dance their way up and around the summit of a hill behind the Devil, while witches riding goats and pitchforks circle overhead. Labelled B. Berg, this representation of the Blocksberg resembles

[48] "*Dann / in dem wir uns mit Beschauung derer in dem Grunde herumb liegenden Fürstenhümer / Länder / und Oerter am besten ergötzeten / kam unversehens brausend eine Wolcke / mit Nebel und Dünsten vermenget / auf uns / und überschattete uns / daß wir / gleichsam in einem Augenblick / in eine Finsternüß geriethen / und gar nichts sahen / ja einander selbsten…*" Praetorius, *Blockes-Berges Verrichtung*, 8-9.

only the treeless summit of the Brocken, but consolidates its role nonetheless though naming convention, providing imagery to inspire Praetorius and the German imagination.

In the centuries that followed, the legacy of the Brocken as the pillar of the sabbath mountain tradition across Germany was further entrenched, long after the last German was executed for the crime of witchcraft. In the eighteenth century, attitudes toward mountains began to shift across Europe, as the concept of the sublime emerged and spread. Where once mountains were an aberration, an imperfection of God's creation, they were now viewed as dramatic and romantic visions of natural splendour, and the minuteness of the human experience in their shadow.[49] Suddenly, Europeans began to flock to the mountains, seeking their beauty. The Brocken was no different. Beginning in the eighteenth century, people began following in the footsteps of Praetorius, publishing travel guides to the mountains, taking readers deep into the Harz. These texts often included references to the history of the Brocken as a sabbath site, exploring the historic references and delving into new territory.[50] As noted by Karolina Wojtucka, "[b]y the end of the eighteenth century, topography, influenced by the Romantic trend, had become enchanted – many areas gained the epithet 'magical' or 'enchanted'…"[51] In the 1785 text *Abhandlung vom Brocken: und dem übrigen alpinischen Gebürge des Harzes*, author Christian Schroeder brings the reader deep into the Harz, extensively exploring the Brocken through scientific eyes. However, we catch glimpses of the mountain's diabolical past throughout the text. In his introduction, Schroeder explores the published history of the Brocken extensively, including the significant role of the *Blockes-Berges Verrichtung* in attracting attention to the mountain.[52] Likewise, already by the late eighteenth century, we see the impact of the sabbath narrative woven into the

[49] Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, 258-260; Bernbaum, *Sacred Mountains of the World*, 168-169.
[50] Köhler-Zülch, "Die Hexenkarriere eines Berges," 56-57.
[51] Wojtucka, "Miejsca sabatów czarownic w epoce wczesnonowożytnej," 139.
[52] Christian Frederich Schroeder, *Abhandlung vom Brocken: und dem übrigen alpinischen Gebürge des Harzes, 1. Und 2. Teil* (Wernigerode: Schmidt-Buch-Verlag, 2013), vii-ix.

toponyms of the mountain; Schroeder discusses such locations as the Hexenbrunnen and the Hexenkanzel, geographic features that became associated with the witchcraft tradition.[53] In his map included with the text, the summit of the mountain is labelled as the "Hexenaltar," neatly written in the author's hand. Over a century after Praetorius, the legacy of the witches' sabbath lingered even in the most scientific of texts, demonstrating how these layers of spatial narratives built upon one another.

From the end of the eighteenth century, the German writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe further popularized the notion of the Brocken as both a mythic space and the site of the witches' sabbath. The immense popularity of Goethe's work in the Germanic world and beyond has helped preserve the tradition of the Brocken as the Blocksberg witches' mountain and the most famous sabbath landscape in Europe, a movement that we will examine in our final chapter on the legacies of the sabbath landscapes. Though fears of the diabolical have long since been replaced in our understanding of mountains by a sense of majesty and the sublime, centuries of anxiety and fear in these landscapes is not so easily erased from our cultural memory. The Brocken, standing as a high sentinel over the northern German plains and towering over the other rolling summits of the Harz, commands the landscape for kilometres around it, drawing all eyes to its flat peak. Its forested slopes, muddy swamps, and tumbled stones tell the story of ancient mountain worship, of early modern desires for cultivation and order, and of the anxieties toward wild spaces. As the great barriers to human development, mountains like the Brocken were symbols of the minuteness of the human experience across time, whether this was viewed negatively as in the medieval and early modern period, or positively as in the ancient world and into the enlightenment and beyond. Commanding yet remote, mountains were the perfect setting for the witches' sabbath, combining a wide variety of emotions and conceptions surrounding high places to fit

[53] Schroeder, *Abhandlung vom Brocken*, 137,159.

perfectly within the sabbath narrative for people near and far. Despite their static nature, the human relationship with mountains is dynamic and constantly shifting, evolving across time and space. The Brocken as the heart of the sabbath fantasy is a snapshot in time of a specific moment in European history, where the lofty peaks of mountains elicited feelings of fear rather than awe in the minds of early modern Europeans.

Hills

In regions where mountains do not topographically appear, high spaces still play an important role in the narratives of the witches' sabbath. While some regions such as northern Germany were relatively flat but transposed their sabbath fantasy onto distant mountains, other sabbath narratives were more localized, placing the sabbath on nearby hills. Despite being a mountainous country, accused witches in Scotland rarely described the sabbath in the mountains. Most described the sabbath within the bounds of their local community – in the Forfar witch trials, the maximum radius for the sabbath was only fifteen miles from the home of the accused.[54] Such localization separated the Scottish witch trials from their counterparts in northern Germany, such as the trial of Anna Spielen of Schleswig-Holstein, who continued to use the Brocken in her sabbath narratives despite a rift of approximately 250 kilometres. With the vast majority of Scottish witch trials occurring in the lowland regions of the country, the high spaces of the sabbath fantasy became local hills. In the Crook of Devon trials of 1662, the accused claimed they visited the nearby hill Gibson's Craig or Cult Hill, engaging in a sabbath at its craggy peak among the remains of an Iron Age hill fort. Meanwhile in the same year, the accused in Bute confessed to dancing on the Hill of Kilmory, overlooking Loch Fad.[55]

[54] Laura Paterson, "The Witches' Sabbath in Scotland," in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 142 (2013): 391-392.
[55] Paterson, "The Witches' Sabbath in Scotland," 389.

Much like the mountains, vision would have played a role in their inclusion as sabbath landscapes. On relatively flat terrain, even low hills are prominent aspects of the landscape, drawing the eye upwards toward hostile terrain that often cannot be farmed. On a deeper level, Laura Paterson argues that these Scottish cases were examples of local syncretism with pre-existing fairy and supernatural beliefs. Like the pagan beliefs surrounding mountains that carried into the early modern period, local Scottish traditions concerning fairies and spirits were commonly associated with hills across the country. These spaces were often home to gatherings and festivities of the fairies and spirits, not unlike the witches' sabbath.[56] These concepts of supernatural landscapes, one local and one foreign, then blended in the spatial imaginations of the local people, allowing them to develop a new relationship with and understanding of their landscape. Such a link with the mythic and pagan past is evident on numerous hills across Europe.

Despite the common use of the Brocken and Heuberg in large parts of Germany, it was more common to localize the sabbath fantasy so that witches would travel to the hills far closer to home than the flat summits of the two most famous witches' mountains. Just outside the town of Eichstätt, the Galgenberg is a low hill that rises just under 300m above the old city in the Altmühl river valley. In 1623, Catharina Knelzin claimed that a few months before her arrest she had danced with an unnamed male and his female demon atop the Galgenberg.[57] During the denunciations of Anna and Jacob Melber four years later, Maria Richter and one Zachariasin, a local brewer, claimed that they had seen the pair eating and drinking with Anna's demon also on the Galgenberg.[58] This hill, which would have been within view of all in town, must have been a constant presence in the local imagination,

[56] Paterson, "The Witches' Sabbath in Scotland," 390.
[57] StAN Hexenakten 49: Denunciation 4, HA 49: 1d (Denunciationes).
[58] StAN Hexenakten 49: Denunciation 14, HA 49: 2 (Denunciationes); StAN Hexenakten 49: Denunciation 15, HA 49: 2 (Denunciationes).

where the proximity and visibility paired with anxieties over high spaces to create an intrinsic relationship with witchcraft. However, it was not the property of the high space alone that made this site a natural sabbath landscape – the Galgenberg was also the site of execution for Eichstätt's condemned witches. This relationship between the sabbath and the site of executions is one that we see across Europe, particularly in the crossroads that we will explore later in this chapter. Such a deep connection both to the fantasies of the witches' sabbath and the reality of the executions have tied the Galgenberg closely to the history of the witch craze – the mountain is today a popular local hiking trail and the site of the city's witchcraft memorial.

To the east, we return to the story of Swedish Blåkulla. Referred to as a mountain by some demonologists, and mistakenly identified as a house by Montague Summers, Blåkulla is an island in the Kalmar strait with a small hill. However, it is the human connection with this hill that makes it a vital sabbath landscape: "[t]he island known to medieval writers as Blåkulla is today a national park, and preserves among other things, a late medieval labyrinth…" which "often coincide with sites that hold the ruins of much older settlements or structures, for example, burial sites of the Viking Age or Sàmi seasonal settlement or cult sites."[59] Such labyrinths were often viewed as magical by nature throughout Scandinavia, and were often attributed to the witches' sabbath, localizing the broader sabbath belief. Across the Baltic in Lithuania, the hill of Šatrija in Samogitian played a similar role to both the Brocken and Blåkulla as a central sabbath location for all of Lithuania. Like Blåckulla and the hills of Scotland, Šatrija was also the site of prehistoric ruins and supernatural belief, indicating a localization of sabbath beliefs onto a site that already played upon the minds of those living

[59] DuBois, "Magic and Witchcraft Historicized, Localized, and Ethnicized," 86.

around it. From Scotland to the Baltic, these hills indicate a continuous association with high spaces and the sabbath, no less significant than their lofty mountain counterparts.

Cellars

Hidden under buildings both domestic and commercial, the cellar was a veritable cave of wonders in the early modern world. Filled with casks of alcohol and stores of food, they contained the material wealth of the household and the community. Like the Swiss *Allmend*, their centrality to survival and their use as a display of wealth made them the perfect target for diabolical attack. Across the early modern world, the cellar appears as a location intrinsically associated with magic and witchcraft. In both Luban, modern Poland, and in Kyritz, modern Germany, archaeological digs in late medieval and early modern cellars have uncovered witch bottles and other magical deposits, designed to protect the cellar from witchcraft.[60] In Salem, Massachusetts, John and William Bly testified that they had discovered rag and hog's bristle poppets filled with pins, buried in the cellar wall of Bridget Bishop's home.[61] The 1591 pamphlet "Newes from Scotland" paints an international picture of cellar magic. In this text, the author states that a poor pedlar travelling to the town of Tranent outside of Edinburgh was "in a moment conveyed at midnight from Scotland to Bordeaux in France (being places of no small distance between) into a merchant's cellar there…"[62] Here we see elements of the sabbath narrative – the magical transport, not unlike the stories described in Bodin and Rémy, and the arrival in the cellar, a secret and private location. Yet, according to the author, a sabbath did not occur nor did the pedlar steal any ale, wine, or food. A similar episode appears in Bartolomeus de Spina's demonology *Quaestio de strigibus*, in which a man follows his wife up the chimney en route to the witches' sabbath,

[60] See: Paweł Duma, "Magia ochronna przeciw czarownicom, złemu urokowioraz inne środki apotropaicznew świetle znalezisk archaeologicznych w Europie" in *Klio. Czasopismo poświęcone dziejom Polski i powszechnym* 53, no. 2 (2020): 67-82.
[61] Brian P. Levack, ed. *The Witchcraft Sourcebook,* 2nd edition (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), 291.
[62] Normand and Roberts, *Witchcraft in Early Modern Scotland*, 310.

but he is instead sent to a wine cellar.[63] However, this story is uncommon as magical transport to a cellar was almost always associated with the gathering of witches.

In early seventeenth Marchtal, Ursula Götz confessed to gathering with her fellow witches in the cellar of the local tavern keeper, where they drank ale in wooden tankards, while in Nördlingen, impoverished Barbara Stecher confessed to drinking the finest wine from the cellar of the paymaster's wife.[64] The cellar appears sparingly in the Zug trials as well. In the 1737 trial, Maria Anna Petermann confessed to raiding three cellars, including one at Kappel am Albis. Here at the furthest extent of Reformed power in Central Switzerland, two centuries after the fateful battle between the Catholic and Reformed armies, Maria Anna confessed to sneaking into the cellar of a poor institute, entering through a small hole with the Devil, where she and her fellow witches ate and drank wine in the company of Satan.[65] Meanwhile on the southwestern edge of the continent in Toledo in 1570, accused witch Juana la Izquierda confessed to raiding cellars to get drunk on wine during the dark and cold winter nights around Christmas.[66] On Europe's northeastern tip in Pärnu, Estonia, village healer Willem Sörtz was accused of witchcraft in 1641. The transcript of the trial notes that Willem had gathered with his fellow witches first in the cellar of one Claes Peter, gathering wine and beer, before heading to the Röhma bog to accommodate a larger dance and feast.[67]

Across Europe, the concept of witches raiding cellars with the help of the Devil regularly appears. Witches would gather beneath homes and inns in the cellar and descend into drunken revelry with their fellow witches. In the city of Eichstätt, invasions of the home

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[63] de Blécourt, "The Flying Witch," 92.
[64] Roper, *Witch Craze*, 118.
[65] StAZG A 105/6 fol. 144A.
[66] Fabián Alejandro Campagne, "Witch or Demon? Fairies, Vampires, and Nightmares in Early Modern Spain" in *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica* 53, no. 2 (2008): 386-387.
[67] Aarne Ruben, "Witch Hunts in and around Pärnu 1641-1642" in *Preternature: Critical and Historical Studies on the Preternatural* 8, no. 1 (2019): 70.

appear regularly across the trial records, but it was only in the cellar that the accused consistently confessed to gathering in large groups, with multiple cellars appears in the confessions of the accused.[68] What then made the cellar such an obvious location for witches to gather in Eichstätt compared to other household spaces? Jonathan Durrant argues that Eichstatt's large cellars created a unique communal context for these spaces – that cellar owners would invite guests and friends from the community to dine and drink in the cellar rather than in the home. These were spaces that were well-known and frequently visited by numerous members of the community, including accused witches.[69] So regularly used and so significant in the identity of the accused were they that often the gatherings held within were barely recognizable as witches' sabbaths, lacking the raucous sex and diabolical worship of other sabbaths, only using magic to gain entry into the cellar. Instead, they were reflections of everyday life in the city, where cellars played an essential role as a boundary zone between the public and private sphere.[70] Though specific to the Eichstätt trials, Durrant's argument can be applied to other regions across Europe, where the concept of the private cellar clashed with the idea of the communal resource.

Outside of Eichstätt, the reasons behind gatherings in the cellars were diverse. In much of southern Germany, cellar raids were so common that they often received their own sections in trial records, in which the accused would often recount flying into a cellar to feast and steal the wine of the wealthiest people in town. Lyndal Roper argues that these raids can be explained in two ways. First, that the wine and food represent a limited good within the community being transferred from the wealthiest to the poorest, a concept intrinsically like those surrounding cows explored in our chapter on the *Allmend*. Second, and perhaps most

[68] Jonathan B. Durrant, *Witchcraft, Gender, and Society in Early Modern Germany* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 138-140.
[69] Durrant, *Witchcraft, Gender, and Society*, 138.
[70] Durrant, *Witchcraft, Gender, and Society*, 141.

notably, cellar gatherings are described as a form of cultural memory, a reminder of the German Peasant's War of the early sixteenth century, in which roving bands of peasants would break into cellars and drink the wine of aristocrats and the clergy.[71] Accounts of these raids read similarly to the drunken revelry of the witches' sabbath. In one raid on a monastically owned farm cellar in Iphofen, the local innkeeper took advantage of the burning resentment and desire for good wine and broke into the cellar, where he and a collection of citizens "…feasted as excellently as ever the monks."[72] To the north in Ascherleben the following year, a group of peasants of both sexes stormed the abandoned St. Agneten monastery where they raided the cellar, drinking their fill and dumping the remaining wine.[73] Such events in the country's recent history would have had a lasting impression on early modern German's understanding of these spaces. For the upper status owners of cellars, they may have become sites of anxiety, where a private space previously only accessible to a select few could suddenly be invaded by outsiders, and carefully guarded goods could be consumed and destroyed by an outsider. If the immense cellars of monasteries and castles were invaded by outsiders, were their own cellars at risk of intrusion? Yet for the lower status people without access to the cellars, these spaces were home to coveted goods, a secret and near fantastical world of plenty far removed from the poverty and insecurity of early modern communities.

However, in regions with different magical belief, concepts of cellar raids remained far removed from the context of the Peasants War. Stories of werewolves span the continent, appearing in both upper strata demonologies and common trials alike.[74] The Baltic region

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[71] Roper, *Witch Craze*, 117-118.
[72] "…wie nur jemals die Mönche, schmauste." Heinrich Wilhelm Bensen, *Geschichte des Bauernkriegs in Ostfranken* (Erlangen: Palm, 1849), 195.
[73] K. von Zittwitz, *Chronik der Stadt Ascherleben* (Ascherleben: Verlag von Carl Lorleberg, 1835), 102-103.
[74] See: Nicole Jacques-Lefèvre, "Such an Impure, Cruel, and Savage Beast… Images of the Werewolf in Demonological Works" in *Werewolves, Witches, and Wandering Spirits*, ed. Kathryn A. Edwards (Kirksville: Truman State University Press, 2002), 181-197; Martin Rheinheimer, "Die Angst vor dem Wolf.

experienced a large number of werewolf trials across the early modern, particularly in Livonia (present day Latvia) where a "stable pattern" of recurring werewolf beliefs emerged.[75] The Catholic Bishop of Uppsala first claimed that groups of werewolves would gather at night to break into houses in the wide Baltic forests to access the beer cellars, where they would drink cups of beer until the barrels ran empty. All who wished to become a werewolf had only to join them in the cellar, accept a cup of beer from the wolves and join in a toast, a motif that appeared in werewolf trials across Livonia.[76] Carlo Ginzburg noted the links between these werewolf cellar gatherings and the witches' sabbath, claiming that this was "incontrovertible" evidence of a continent-wide myth of "the unquenchable thirst of the dead."[77] In his re-examination of Ginzburg's Livonian werewolf trial, Willem de Blécourt countered that these cellar stories instead represent "a Baltic version of the devil's pact and attendance at a sabbat [sic]… These suspects were replying to questions about how they had learned witchcraft and who their accomplices were. Their answers merely show that prosecution for witchcraft attracted local motifs that had the most affinity to it."[78]

Using this lens, we may examine the cellar as a sabbath landscape from a new light. The werewolf in the beer cellar is a localization of the cellar raid, much like the narratives in the regions where the Peasants' War raged. Building upon a pre-existing understanding of the cellar as a place vulnerable to magical interference or the site of magical practice, each iteration of the cellar gathering utilized these unique local beliefs. Adjusted for different audiences these sabbaths all explored a landscape where the common good was at risk, where

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Werwolfglaube, Wolfssagen und Ausrottung der Wölfe in Schleswig-Holstein" in *Fabula* 36, no. 1-2 (1995): 25-78.

[75] Peter Jackson, "Cycles of the Wolf: Unmasking the Young Warrior in Europe's Past" in *Transforming Warriors: The Ritual Organization of Military Force*, eds. Peter Halden and Peter Jackson (London: Routledge, 2016), 38.

[76] Willem de Blécourt, "A Journey to Hell: Reconsidering the Livonian 'Werewolf'," in *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* 2, no. 1 (Summer 2007): 61.

[77] Ginzburg, *Ecstasies*, 158-159.

[78] de Blécourt, "A Journey to Hell," 62.

the boundaries of the private and public had been breached, and where fears of the outsider "other" manifested across the varied continent.

Crossroads

The role of the crossroads in the human imagination has a long and complex history, defined by symbolism and metaphor. The origins of crossroads as meaningful and uncertain spaces cannot be measured. Long predating recorded history, human or animal paths through foliage have intersected one another, directing early hunter-gatherers either toward their quarry or to an empty stomach. The first recorded European folklore surrounding crossroads as culturally and religiously significant spaces comes from the classical Greek world. Hermes, the classical Greek god of travellers, was said to watch over travellers like a shepherd, meaning that many shrines to the god were placed along roads. Cairns and multiheaded statues in honour of Hermes were often erected at crossroads across the Hellenistic world, where the watchful eyes of the god could provide protection for travellers heading in any direction. However, the observance of Hermes-worship extended beyond just the crossroads and into other spaces that are associated with liminality. Statues of the deity, referred to as *herms*, were placed as boundary markers and as sigils to ward off evil spirits at the entrance to homes.[79]

Hermes was not the only Hellenistic god worshipped at crossroads. Hecate, a goddess associated with protection from danger during transitional periods, was often associated with crossroads. The three-bodied goddess was well suited to her connection with crossroads, able to look any direction from the heart of the intersection, guarding those who pass by. It can come as little surprise that her worship was often placed at crossroads, where venerations and sacrifices to Hecate were performed.[80] Sacrifices and curse tablet etchings were completed in

[79] Jennifer Larson, *Ancient Greek Cults: A Guide* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 146.
[80] Larson, *Ancient Greek Cults*, 165.

her name in at the crossroads.[81] Yet crossroads were not the only transitional spaces over which the goddess had dominion – with time, Hecate was often syncretized with Artemis and watched over women in childbirth, the liminal stage between pregnancy and motherhood, life and death.[82] In these two instances, we see the close relationship between the classical Greek religious belief and liminal, transitional spaces, centred upon the crossroads. Already by the sixth century BC, these spaces were associated with the actions of gods and goddesses, with layers of symbolic meaning and significance associated with them. The tie between Hecate and the crossroads is of particular note to this study and to the spatial conception of witchcraft. Though Hecate was the goddess of transitions and crossroads, she also held dominion over magic and sorcery.[83] Though this belief originated in Thessaly, it became common belief across the Hellenistic world, a belief that endured long after the Christianization of Europe.[84] For this reason, Hecate regularly appeared in demonologies throughout the early modern period, and in other stories of witchcraft, though her association with crossroads in this period was often overshadowed by her patronage of witches.[85]

While journeys upon the road would have had many dangerous points where divine intervention would be desired to keep safe, the emphasis on the crossroads points toward a greater association between the divine and these spaces. Bill Angus hypothesizes that this association comes from the nodal nature of the crossroads: "… the evidence of crossroads practice associated with gods and spirits both above and below the surface of the road also suggests a tradition of another axis, this one vertical. Both above and below the crossroads

[81] A. Heindrichs, "Hecate," in *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford Research Encyclopedias, 2015).
[82] Larson, *Ancient Greek Cults*, 165.
[83] A. Heindrichs, "Hecate," in *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford Research Encyclopedias, 2015.
[84] Larson, *Ancient Greek Cults*, 166
[85] See: de Lancre, *Tableau*, 46-49; Jessica Dell, "Divided They Fall: (De)constructing the Triple Hecate in Spenser's Cantos of Mutabilitie," in *Early Modern Literary Studies* 16, no. 2 (2012); Kara M. McCabe, "Staged Magic: Dramatizations of Early Modern Witchcraft," Doctoral Thesis (Tufts University, 2024).

are dimensions to which the place itself is thought to give access."[86] These crossroads were therefore conduits to the unseen world, places where the boundaries between the spiritual world were thinnest, a view shared across the premodern world. In the Bible, the Book of Ezekiel references the use of crossroads in Iron Age Mesopotamian divination: "For the king of Babylon stood at the parting of the way, at the head of two ways, to use divination: he made his arrows bright, he consulted the images, he looked in the liver."[87] In pre-Christian Scandinavia, crossroads were also used as sites to drive away evil from children by drawing them through dirt at the centre of the intersection, a practice called out as heretical in the thirteenth century Norse *Hauksbók*.[88]

However, the liminal and marginal nature of crossroads extended beyond the sacred, as they became places where the world of the living and the dead met in other ways. As early as the fourth century BC, crossroads were used as the sites of executions in Greece, while the Roman Empire frequently crucified criminals at crossroads.[89] In western Europe, gallows were often erected at crossroads from the medieval period until the nineteenth century. Their presence, along with other forms of judicial punishment such as pillories and gibbets, served as warnings to outsiders who may disrupt the social order.[90] Conversely, for those living in the community, death by hanging or other punishments at the crossroads was a form of social removal. By placing the site of punishment and execution at the crossroads, the community removed the perpetrator and therefore the threat to the social order to the very limits of their geographic space, cleansing the town or village of the societal decay. In Zug, this form of social cleansing was enacted in a multi-staged punishment leading to the stake in which

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[86] Bill Angus, *A History of Crossroads in Early Modern Culture* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 2023), 25.
[87] Ezekiel 21:21
[88] Stephen Mitchel, "Heresy and Heterodoxy in Medieval Scandinavia," in *Contesting Orthodoxy in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Heresy, Magic and Witchcraft*, eds. Louise Nyholm Kallestrup and Raisa Maria Toivo (Cham: Springer Nature, 2017), 40.
[89] Angus, *A History of Crossroads in Early Modern Culture*, 106.
[90] Angus, *A History of Crossroads in Early Modern Culture*, 111.

accused witches were branded first at the prison, then at the city hall, and again at the city gate before being led to the stake at the Schutzengel Church. This procession evoked the Via Dolorosa of the Christian tradition, using stages of pain and torture to cleanse the city of the sins of the convicted before leading them to their deaths.[91] By bringing the accused to the crossroads to face their punishment, their crimes were brought to the edge of civic control, but more importantly to a space that was both geographically and spiritually liminal, where the harms inflicted upon the community could no longer affect the populace. In one final act of social removal, the convicted person would be buried where they were executed: on unconsecrated ground. However, executed criminals were not the only pariahs buried at the crossroads – the victims of suicides were also buried at crossroads on unconsecrated ground, as a method of protecting the community from their grievous sin.[92]

The connection between crossroads and witchcraft in early modern Europe was built upon foundations spanning millennia. Crossroads were spaces that made for logical settings of witchcraft narratives across the continent, following the trajectory of temptation, fall, *maleficia*, and sabbath. Starting at the beginning of the witchcraft narrative, crossroads often featured as the site of diabolical meeting and temptation. Due to the thin layer between worlds and the latent uncertainty about these spaces, the crossroads were the ideal space to meet the Devil.[93] In Portugal, crossroads appear in the witchcraft narrative just after the temptation of the witch. It is in these spaces that the accused mentioned they would find their devils, who would inform them of the dates and times they were to attend the sabbath at Vale

[91] Larsen, "Mapping Maleficia," 86-87.
[92] See: Angus, *A History of Crossroads in Early Modern Culture*, 110; Vera Lind, "The Suicidal Mind and Body: Examples from Northern Germany" in *From Sin to Insanity: Suicide in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Jeffrey Watt (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 64; Craig M. Koslofsky, "Controlling the Body of the Suicide in Saxony," in *From Sin to Insanity: Suicide in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Jeffrey Watt (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 52.
[93] Edward Bever, "Popular Witch Beliefs and Magical Practices," in *The Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe and Colonial America*, ed. Brian P. Levack, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 57.

de Cavalinhos.[94] These diabolical encounters at the crossroads extended into the realm of early modern literature. In the sixteenth century version of the Doctor Faustus tale, the titular conjurer summoned the Devil and the demon Mephistopheles at the centre of a crossroads. In the 1592 English translation of the original German *Historia von Doktor Faustus*, the title character made "his way to a thicke Wood neere to Wittenberg, called in the German tongue Spisser Waldt… he came into the same wood towards euening into a crosse way, where he made with a wand a Circle in the dust, and within that many more Circles and Characters…"[95] This act signals the beginning of the protagonist's downfall, making the crossroads, notably amidst the already dangerous landscape of the forest, the first symbol of the path he chooses to follow.[96]

On the eastern peripheries of the European witch craze, the crossroads featured heavily in the narratives of *maleficia*. The town of Lukh in modern Ivanovo Oblast, Russia, oversaw a series of intensive witch persecutions between 1656 and 1659 that placed dozens of people on trial. One of the accused, Tereshka Malakurov, confessed that he had scattered salt around the crossroads to cause any who passed to fall ill, both physically and mentally, exhibiting symptoms of melancholy and demonic possession.[97] His confession was not unique in the Russian witch craze. Though Russia lacked the sabbath narratives common to the rest of Europe, the casting of salt – a common ingredient in Russian *maleficia* – at crossroads was common across the witchcraft trials in the country, demonstrating the widespread belief in crossroads as significant landscapes in witchcraft fantasies.[98] Fragmentary evidence from Romania paints a similar picture, including in one late trial from

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[94] Francisco Bethencourt, "Portugal: A Scrupulous Inquisition" in *Early Modern European Witchcraft: Centres and Peripheries*, eds. Bengt Ankarloo and Gustav Henningsen, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 417.
[95] H. Logeman, ed., *The English Faust-Book of 1592* (Gand: Librarie H. Engelcke, 1900), 4.
[96] Martin Puhvel, "The Mystery of the Cross-Roads," in *Folklore* 87, no. 2 (1976): 169.
[97] Valerie Kivelson, *Desperate Magic: The Moral Economy of Witchcraft in Seventeenth-Century Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), 155.
[98] Kivelson, *Desperate Magic*, 232.

1733, where a Roma woman confessed to practicing witchcraft with a Serbian woman at a crossroads, for which she was burnt at the stake.[99] In Poland, the borderland of central Europe, the crossroads were likewise the centre of magical narratives. One lady Michałowa of Lublin used a herb-infused bath to cure her child of illness, and upon the completion of the bath got a servant woman to throw away the bath water at the crossroads. The crossroad, being a liminal space, was supposed to magically send the illness into the wider world, dissipating the disease far from the community.[100] Such narratives of crossroads acting as sites of dispersion appeared across the country, often blurring the line between *maleficia* and beneficent magic. In 1665, one Jadwiga Głuchowa confessed to bathing her cow and then dumping the water at the crossroads. With the links between cattle and witchcraft being intrinsic, as we will explore in detail in Chapter II, it is difficult to determine whether this confession tells of Jadwiga using the crossroads to cleanse her cow of potential dark magic or to send harmful magic from her cow to the cattle of others living near the crossroads.[101]

Though the marginal and magical symbolism of the crossroads made for logical sites of diabolical temptation, the fantasy of the witches' sabbath was particularly well suited to these landscapes, as they appeared across the continent. In the Spanish Netherlands in the mid seventeenth century, crossroads were among the most common public locations for the sabbath, where witches and demons gathered to dance, play music, and feast.[102] Likewise, the Austrian tradition claimed that the crossroads were the site of the sabbath on Walpurgisnacht and other significant nights of the year.[103] Such belief in Austria was exemplified during the 1689 trial of Gregor Agricola, a local minister who was executed for witchcraft after

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[99] Ioan Pop-Curşeu and Ştefana Pop-Curşeu, *Witchcraft in Romania* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023), 89.
[100] Ostling, *Between the Devil and the Host*, 65.
[101] Ostling, *Between the Devil and the Host*, 130.
[102] Willumsen, *The Voices of Women in Witchcraft Trials,* 331.
[103] Christa Agnes Tuczay, "Witches and Devil's Magic in Austrian Demonological Legends," in *Cultures of Witchcraft in Europe from the Middle Ages to the Present: Essays in Honour of Willem de Blécourt*, eds. Jonathan Barry, Owen Davies, and Cornelie Usborne (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 30.

confessing to organizing "crossroads revelry" for witches and demons.[104] The Crook of Devon witch trials in Scotland combined the fear of the crossroads with the terror of the gallows, often placing their sabbath at the border between life and death.[105] In Germany, the crossroads appeared regularly in the sabbath narratives of condemned witches. The gallows outside of Augsburg and Obermarchtal were listed among the local sabbath landscapes.[106] During the Bamberg witch craze, Burgermeister Johannes Junius confessed to attending the witches' sabbath at the "Black Cross" in 1628.[107] While Junius confesses to also attending the sabbath in the city council chambers and on the high moor, it is at the crossroads that he meets Beelzebub for the gathering.[108] To the southwest of Gotha in the bailiff of Georgenthal, sixty year old Martha Lanz spoke of attending the sabbath at the crossroads by the outlying village of Herrenhof.[109] Though only two kilometres away from the centre of Georgenthal, Herrenhof and its adjacent crossroads were peripheral in a way that fit the image of the sabbath being held in secret, in a liminal space where it belonged. Here, accused witches like Martha Lanz could construct a narrative that blended the real and the fantastical in spaces where many symbols, emotions, and geographies converged.

The nodal and transitional nature of crossroads that made them the ideal landscape for the sabbath is also mirrored in urban environments in early modern Germany. While the combination of the darkness and isolation of rural crossroads could not be mirrored within cities, transitional spaces can be seen in every walled settlement at the city's gates. Like crossroads, they are a terminus point from which journeys of all directions can begin and end.

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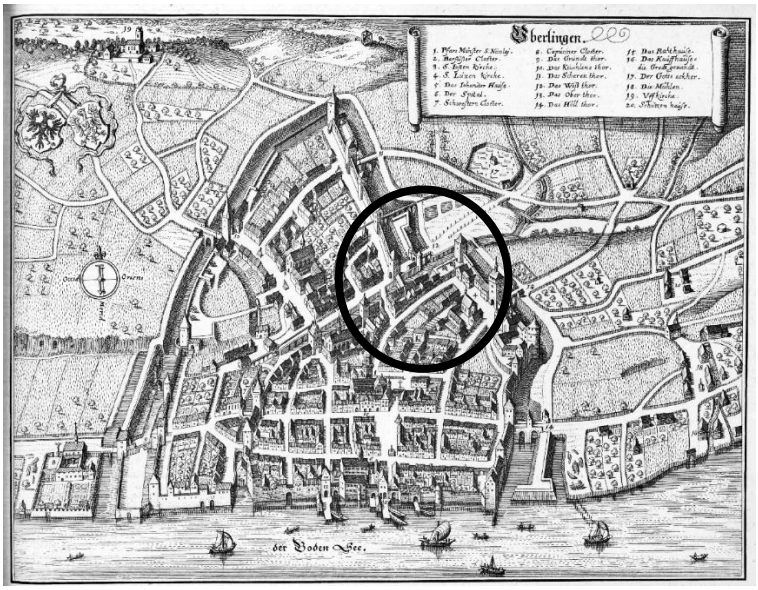
[104] Angus, *A History of Crossroads in Early Modern Culture*, 50.
[105] Paterson, "The Witches' Sabbath in Scotland," 397.
[106] Roper*, Oedipus and the Devil*, 206; Roper, *Witch Craze*, 109.
[107] George L. Burr, ed., "The Witch Persecutions" in *Translations and Reprints from the Original Sources of European History*, vol. 3, no. 4 (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia History Department, 1898-1912), 25. Though the Black Cross does not refer to any modern feature, Bill Angus argues that this location is a crossroad. See: Angus, *A History of Crossroads in Early Modern Culture*, 50.
[108] Burr, "The Witch Persecutions," 23-24.
[109] Dieter Schnabel, *Hexenwahn und öffentliche Hinrichtungen in Gotha und Umgebung, 16. bis 19. Jahrhundert* (Gotha: URANIA Kultur- und Bildungsverein Gotha e.V., 2015), 16.

Gates funnel people through a single space to reach any number of destinations inside or outside of the city, meaning they are landscapes that nearly anyone living within the urban space would interact with at some point in their lives, whether their work or their personal lives took them beyond the safety of the city's walls. They exist, like crossroads, in a liminal space between the inside and outside worlds, keeping the community in and the others out, blending two normally delineated spaces. Most pertinent to the era of witch trials, the early modern period saw an intense fascination with city gates, largely due to the immense scale of fortification construction and reconstruction leading to the creation of new gates and customs in these spaces.[110] Daniel Jütte notes in his study of threshold spaces that beginning in the fifteenth century, "[c]ontrol of the gates, moreover, was a crucial tool with which the city's leadership could exert influence over the social life and demographic composition of the city. In this context, the gate functioned as a kind of social filter."[111] Any sabbaths imagined at city gates was a direct attack on the social control over a city, and an inversion of their symbolic meaning.

The city of Überlingen, located on the shores of the Bodensee was surrounded by walls on all its land borders. The 1643 map of the city by the cartographer and artist Matthäus Merian der Ältere (Fig. 2) depicts the city as having six gates, leading in every direction beyond the borders of the city, each presenting a nodal terminus for the city like the rural crossroads. It was at the central gate, called the Wiestor, that Anna Straubin confessed to attending a witches' sabbath in in her 1585 trial.[112]

[110] Daniel Jütte, *The Strait Gate: Thresholds and Power in Western History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 211-212.
[111] Jütte, *The Strait Gate*, 225.
[112] Dillinger, *Die Hexenverfolgung in Überlingen*, 90.

Figure 2: Überlingen, Matthäus Merian der Ältere. The Wiestor is circled. Wikimedia Commons.



In a city with numerous gates, Anna's use of the Wiestor in her sabbath narrative may seem oddly specific, but the gate's unique design makes it the ideal setting when following the crossroads model. Unlike the other five gates, the Wiestor was composed of two separate gatehouses, one in the walls and one presiding over the defence ditch and the Nellenbach stream that ran through the city. Between the inner and outer gates was a small, walled courtyard. Anna claimed that she and the other witches of Überlingen had danced with the Devil in precisely this courtyard located between the two towers of the Wiestor.[113] Johannes Dillinger argues that the Wiestor sabbath, like other witches' gatherings at gatehouses across Southwest Germany, symbolized an evil that no longer feared authority, gathering and dancing in the most heavily guarded and trafficked areas of a city. The power of the Devil was so immense, that his minions no longer had to hide in their usual secretive and distant locations to dance.[114]

However, the specificity of the Wiestor points to additional layers in this narrative, that mirrors the crossroad narratives of other trials more closely. By using the space between

[113] Dillinger, *Die Hexenverfolgung in Überlingen*, 90.
[114] Dillinger, *Die Hexenverfolgung in Überlingen*, 90.

the two towers, contained within the gates, Anna constructed a sabbath narrative in the liminal area between the inside world of the city and the outside world beyond the wall and its defences. Like a crossroads, this courtyard at the Wiestor was a world between worlds, where a person was able to transition to a different place on their journey. It was this intermediary nature, combined with Dillinger's theory of fearless witches and a defiant Devil, that made the Wiestor an ideal sabbath landscape.

The history of crossroads in the human imagination is one of complex and multilayered relationships. Symbolically, crossroads represent uncertainty, the potential of both good and evil to come from any of the joining paths. These connecting spaces bring people together for good or for ill and join paths and destinations. However, this nodal nature historically acted as a connection between the seen and the unseen world. Revered as the sites of magic, divination, and divine intervention for thousands of years across Eurasia, the crossroads were spaces where the border between worlds was thin, and paths followed both the horizontal and the vertical axes. They were spaces that mythic figures could appear and magical practitioners could disperse magic for both maleficent and beneficent purposes. Perhaps most importantly, crossroads were spaces that existed as some form of border between the comforts of the familiar and the dangers of the unknown. These spaces were the edge of the community, where the condemned could be punished, executed, and then buried, both to remove the threat from the community and to warn outsiders against unwanted behaviour that threatened the social fabric. By placing the crime of witchcraft, particularly the sabbath, at the crossroads, accused witches joined murderers and suicide victims in polluting the landscape in the early modern imagination, turning the crossroads into fearful and spoiled locations. Here at the borders of the community and the space where worlds collide, the narratives of the witches' sabbath truly belonged, following the patterns of

liminality and marginality we have seen across the continent and turning the crossroads into a landscape of fear and uncertainty.

Communal Spaces

While our explorations of high spaces, cellars, and crossroads have taken us into the margins of the world, some regions of Europe featured the sabbath in much more public spaces. The use of communal buildings and landscapes appears extensively in the sabbath fantasies, particularly in Germany. In the Würzburg region, we see multiple instances of the sabbath occurring within the bounds of the village, often in a central location. Here, in the village of Michelau, the square in front of the church was used for the sabbath, which was notably "almost certainly the place where the village dance was held."[115] In the village of Gerolzhofen, Margaretha Schmidt described the sabbath at the fountain in the market, while Anna Grauch stated that the sabbath was held at the town hall of Reyschofen.[116] The trend of central civic spaces being the site of the sabbath was a tradition carried on in Eichstätt, where numerous witches' sabbaths were held at the city's central Rathaus (and particularly the shop beneath) and the adjacent Roßmarkt.[117] Both of these spaces would have been frequented by most people in the city and those from surrounding areas, who would have gathered in the market square to buy and sell goods regularly. Meanwhile, in Überlingen, Ursula Fürnabüechin claimed in her 1608 trial that she had attended the sabbath in one of the busiest areas of the city, between the Hafenstraße and the Bodensee where boats laden with fish and trade goods would have been moored, a centre for civic commerce.[118] In the village of Rhodt,

[115] Roper, *Witch Craze*, 109.
[116] Roper, *Witch Craze*, 109.
[117] StAN Hexenakten 49: Denunciation 2, HA 49: 2 (Denunciationes); Denunciation 3, HA 49: 2 (Denunciationes); StAN Hexenakten 49: 28.
[118] Dillinger, *Die Hexenverfolgung in Überlingen*, 99.

the public square by the church was imagined to be a sabbath site, mirroring the cases in Michelau and the Pays de Labourd, which we will explore in Chapter III.[119]

Despite the tendency to place the sabbath in the margins of the world, these cases from across Germany indicate a distinct pattern of the sabbath in places people would frequent. There are two clear visions of the sabbath in each of these examples – one in which the sabbath is in places of political significance as in Eichstätt and in Reyschofen, and another in which it takes place in areas frequented by the common people of the town. These categorically different communal landscapes can be explored through two different lenses. First, the public sabbath may be seen as an affront to governmental authority and the community's good. Such a lens follows Dillinger's theory regarding sabbaths at the Wiestor gates of Überlingen, where the sabbath represented the pervasiveness of evil and diabolical forces so powerful that secrecy was no longer necessary.[120] Scenes such as the dances at the Rathaus of Eichstätt are the geographical representation of the Devil's hold over civic power. The Rathaus was a space that all people in the city and surrounding area could see and associate with local authority, so placing the sabbath here was an inversion of expectations for this landscape.

This approach is applicable to smaller communal spaces as well, particularly in demonstrating a Devil who no longer relied on secrecy. However, this can also be blended with a more localized approach. In many of the cases described in Würzburg, the narratives of the sabbath appeared more closely linked to the inversion of the village dance than the complex rituals constructed by demonologists. Roper describes these village dances as "[taking] place in public areas, on flat ground; and this may explain why these witches did

[119] Rolf Übel, *Wegen vielgeübter Zauberei und Hexenwerk: Hexenverfolgung im Süden der Pfalz und im Nord-Elsass* (Landau: Verlag für Burgerkunde und Pfalzforschung, 2003), 103.
[120] Dillinger, *Die Hexenverfolgung in Überlingen*, 90.

not report dances on mountain tops: they were thinking of village festivities rather than wild sabbaths in desolate surroundings."[121] In this case, the sabbath was an inversion of everyday life, a diabolical version of their festivities. The markets, the public squares, and the busy streets all would have played roles in both their everyday lives and in the breaks in their routine, reflecting distinctly local relationships between these spaces and anxieties local people would have associated with them. However, the amount of time people spent in communal spaces may also have meant that these were simply the easiest places to imagine as sabbath landscapes when faced with the pain of torture.

Homes

While communal landscapes created a distinctly local and public anxiety within witchcraft narratives, narratives of the sabbath within the private sphere of homes helped develop new landscapes of fear tied to silence and secrecy. Following the catastrophic loss of the wine crops due to bad weather, Hänschen, the fourteen-year-old son of Bamberg's mayor Johann Morhaupt, claimed that he had signed a pact with the Devil and ridden upon a stick with his mother to the attic of his neighbour, Georg Eder, the secretary to the Prince-Bishop. Here he was baptized by the Devil, a ceremony that Hänschen claimed was witnessed by numerous families within the elite of Bamberg including many members of the cathedral chapter. The office of the Prince-Bishop subsequently arrested, tortured, and executed the families associated with Hänschen's narrative, extracting a shocking sum of 500,000 gulden in seized assets and enriching the prosecutors of the *Malefizkommission*.[122] Outside of the city of Landau, the house of one Neuferger in Edesheim was the site of the sabbath during the Edesheim witch hunts of 1592.[123] Margaretha Beckhin of Überlingen claimed to have hosted the sabbath in her own apartment.[124] In Scotland, the homes of the accused were sometimes

[121] Roper, *Witch Craze*, 111.
[122] Karin Dengler-Schreiber, *Bamberg: Kleine Stadtgeschichte* (Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet, 2020), 81.
[123] Übel, *Wegen vielgeübter Zauberei und Hexenwerk*, 183.
[124] Dillinger, *Die Hexenverfolgung in Überlingen*, 86.

discussed – in 1649, Agnes Hunter from Penston in Haddington travelled to the coastal village of Longniddry for the sabbath, while in 1661, Helen Guthrie of Forfar claimed that she had joined her co-accused Mary Rhynd in a sabbath in her house.[125]

Compared to the other landscapes of the witches' sabbath, the home may seem strange company. After all, in Yi-Fu Tuan's concept of centres and peripheries, where human comfort is intrinsically related to the physical distance from the self and the everyday, homes are as close to our bodies as physically possible, an extension of ourselves.[126] Using Tuan's logic, domestic spaces should never become a landscape of fear. Humans, in seeking the comfort of familiarity and closeness to the self, *should* gravitate to our homes, making them the centres of comfort and landscapes where the sabbath most certainly does not belong.

However, this does not reflect reality. Instead, homes were the centre of conflict and complexity across the continent. The early modern world was an uneven duality between urban and rural life - prior to 1800, approximately 85% of Europeans lived in small village communities, stratified by class and bound to agriculture.[127] The remainder, who lived in urban spaces lived similarly stratified lives, with a more diversified economy – in Germany, a prosperous merchant class brought deeper levels of income inequalities to cities and towns, where the homes of a wealthy Hanseatic league trader could coexist with impoverished paupers and the homeless alike, all within city walls.[128] Homes in these cities were blended spaces, where people lived, produced goods, and sometimes sold their wares, blurring the line between the domestic and the economic.[129]

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[125] Paterson, "The Witches' Sabbath in Scotland," 389.
[126] Tuan, *Topophilia*, 27, 99-100.
[127] Jane Whittle, "Introduction: Servants in the Economy and Society of Rural Europe" in *Servants in Rural Europe, 1400-1900*, ed. Jane Whittle (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2017), 2.
[128] Thomas A. Brady Jr., *German Histories in the Age of Reformations, 1400-1650* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 38-39.
[129] Lyndal Roper, *The Holy Household: Women and Morals in Reformation Augsburg* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 28-29.

Both rural and urban spheres relied upon neighbourly relations to be functional spaces. In rural communities, collections of households would rely on one another for labour and resources. The responsibilities of men in the male-centric agricultural world were shared and intertwined beyond the borders of the individual home. Farming was a social activity, relying on shared farming resources, some common land, and neighbourly good will to share in a common good, an ideal we will explore in detail in the case of the Swiss *Allmend*. From the smallest farming community to the largest cities of the continent, this reliance on the communal order developed a unique early modern sense of neighbourhoods and neighbourly relationships. The complex relationship between people and their neighbours was a constant and evolving process, as noted by Bronach Kane and Simon Sandall: "[l]ocal relations were enacted and maintained through the gradual sedimentation of daily experience, in the form of contact, cooperation and coexistence, as well as ambivalence, negotiation and conflict."[130]

The spatial element of the neighbourhood network is equally significant. The neighbourhood provided a sense of familiarity with the external spaces, while maintaining a level of privacy and secrecy regarding indoor space. It was a mix between the familiar and the unknown, the public and the private, and where ideas and imagination coalesced to form a reality filled with connection and conflict. City homes were particularly full of shared spaces. Due to the higher population density and need to concentrate housing within the bounds of city walls, urban buildings were typically multi-family in nature with a mix of both private and shared spaces. These shared spaces, such as staircases, courtyards, hallways, or sometimes kitchens and latrines, were not fully private but also not fully exposed to the public view, making them an intermediary space within the home. Though multifamily homes in urban spaces have existed since the first cities were constructed, these spaces in the

[130] Bronach C. Kane and Simon Sandall, "Introduction: Neighbourhood in late medieval and early modern Europe revisited" in *The Experience of Neighbourhood in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, eds. Bronach C. Kane and Simon Sandall (Abingdon: Routledge, 2022), 1-2.

early modern period tended to attract conflict and confrontation as cultural notions of privacy shifted over the centuries.[131]

With such a reliance on the communal good across these public and private spaces, any deviation from the community could then turn the domestic landscape into a space of suspicion and transform it into the locale of the witches' sabbath. While the local contexts for suspicion of specific homes are as varied as the communities and topographies of the continent, the fantasies of some domestic sabbaths can be immediately understood within their context. To understand how suspicions of the domestic led to anxieties of the sabbath, we may return to the first story of this section, that of Hänschen of Bamberg and the sabbath in his neighbour's attic.

During the sixteenth century, Bamberg came to be the centre of a religiously heterogenous Franconia, whose people were described by Marc Forster and William Bradford Smith as having "developed a confessional consciousness without being 'confessionalized.'"[132] Bamberg was a space of mixed belief, simultaneously the home of the Catholic Prince-Bishop and powerful Protestant families, where religious and divisions anxieties eventually led to one of Germany's most bloody witch hunts. According to figures from 1596, fourteen percent of Bamberg's citizens (288 of 2018 adults) were Protestant, many of whom were the elite residents of the city centre. The majority of the city's Lutherans were women, but ten of the twenty-seven city councillors were Lutheran, indicating the massive overrepresentation of Protestants in the city's upper social strata.[133] In the 1590s, Bamberg's Prince Bishop Neithard von Thüngen used his fiery hatred of Protestantism to

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[131] Eleonora Canepari, "Common Places: Sharing Spaces in Early Modern 'Ordinary' Houses" in *European History Quarterly* 51, no. 4 (2021): 470-471.
[132] William Bradford Smith, *Reformation and the German Territorial State: Upper Franconia, 1300-1630* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2008), 114; quoting Marc Forster, *The Counter-Reformation in the Villages: Religion and Reform in the Bishopric of Speyer, 1560-1720* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 4.
[133] Dengler-Schreiber, *Bamberg*, 77; Smith, *Reformation and the German Territorial State*, 137.

severely punish and ostracize the city's Lutherans. While mandates for religious processions through the city were enacted beginning in the 1560s to reinforce the visibility of the Catholic faith, these processions became increasingly targeted toward the city's minority protestant population in 1594. These processions increased with regularity over the following years. In 1596, eighteen processions were held between July and November alone.[134] Further, beginning in 1595, at the ringing of a specific bell, the city would have to halt all work and recite a prayer that would be theologically impossible for Protestants to repeat, under the threat of severe punishment.[135] In October of 1597, a year before his death, Bishop Neithard signed a decree forcing all Protestants to either convert or face banishment from the Hochstift, a decision that was only partially followed as Protestants continued to practice their faith at home. The era of confessional tolerance in Bamberg had come to an end, and while Protestants still lived within the bounds of the Hochstift, their presence was the source of increased levels of suspicion about the activities of heretics behind closed doors.

Hänschen's story is a natural progression in this narrative, illustrating how people feared what went on in the private domestic sphere. Bamberg's elite were predominantly Lutheran prior to the edicts of the Prince Bishop. Following the restrictions placed on practising Protestants, these families would have come under increasing suspicion, explaining why Hänschen saw members of the elite in the sabbath in the attic. However, more importantly, pushing Protestantism out of public spaces and into the privacy of the home therefore placed increased suspicion on domestic spaces belonging to Protestants in the city. The attic, already marginal within the house, was a logical site of suspicion and anxiety in the home of the Prince Bishop's secretary, arguably one of the most elite positions within the Prince Bishopric. This story of the domestic witches' sabbath is a key example of the

[134] Smith, *Reformation and the German Territorial State*, 132, 134.
[135] Smith, *Reformation and the German Territorial State*, 134.

localization of the witches' sabbath; Hänschen's narrative took a landscape that appeared in sabbath narratives across the continent and moulded it to fit Bamberg's unique context of confessional persecution.

Heaths, Moors, and Wetlands

While the concept of wild spaces may conjure images of dark forests and looming mountains, in the early modern imagination, the limits of the wilderness were far broader and often closer to home. According to Keith Thomas's exploration of the human relationship with the natural world in the early modern era, the biblical charge to "replenish the earth, and subdue it" governed the contemporary environmental *mentalité*.[136] This antagonism towards wilderness encompassed traditional landscapes of fear, but also the untameable heaths, moors, and wetlands that surrounded many communities in highlands and lowlands alike. Each of these landscapes are defined by their peaty soil and varied vegetation that make them unsuitable for agriculture. Heaths feature a traditionally sandy soil with a small layer of peat over it, with poor nutrient composition due to rapid soil drainage. Moors, which are traditionally situated at higher altitudes than heaths, feature deeper peat layers, with short scrub vegetation. Wetlands, here defined as fens or bogs, have similarly thick peat layers, but are found at lower elevations and are often overrun with large amounts of water either at the surface or just below due to poor drainage.[137]

The role of these landscapes in early modern magical fantasies was not relegated to the witches' sabbath alone. In England, there has been extensive debate regarding the presence of the sabbath in the common imagination – though the concept does not appear in English demonologies, versions of witches' gatherings appear in common narratives from the

[136] Genesis 1:28.
[137] A.G. Tansley, ed., *Types of British Vegetation by Members of the Central Committee for the Survey and Study of British Vegetation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911), 208-213.

country.[138] However, even with a reduced sabbath tradition compared to the continent, moors and wetland landscapes, a staple of sabbath landscapes from other parts of Europe, feature extensively in regional magical narratives. In the eighteenth century, the moors of Dartmoor in southern England were the centre of narratives about the mythic druidic past, tying the landscape to legends of magic.[139] The fenlands around the Wash estuary once encompassed 1300 square miles before their drainage from the seventeenth century onwards. This collection of marshes, mudflats, and tidal islands was long associated with magic and witchcraft, largely due to its marginal nature and its maintenance of older magical traditions in the face of Christianization.[140] Magical beliefs tied to the fens date back to the eleventh century and persisted through early modernity, as the fenlands were the site of the last stage of Matthew Hopkins great witch hunt in the mid seventeenth century. These trials were inherently tied to the localized magical belief surrounding the wetlands and the drainage attempts through the seventeenth century to turn the entire estuary into fertile agricultural land, thereby conforming to societal expectations of the landscape.[141] Though the fenlands lack a clear sabbath narrative in accordance with the complex English relationship with the sabbath, they provide evidence for the perception of wetland landscapes as diabolical and magical in the early modern imagination, within a regionalized perspective.

Despite lacking the near romantic vision of wilderness that so often appears in the sabbath narratives of mountains and forests, heaths, moors, and wetlands figure heavily into the imaginations of the witches' sabbath. In the Basque country, heaths rarely appeared in sabbath narratives, despite the Basque word for the sabbath, *akelarre*, directly translating to

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[138] See: Sharpe, "In Search of the English Sabbat," 161-183; Charlotte-Rose Millar, *Witchcraft, the Devil, and Emotions in Early Modern England* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017).
[139] Kelly, *Quartz and Feldspar*, 33-56.
[140] Todd Andrew Borlik, "Magic as Technological Dominion: John Dee's Hydragogy and the Draining of the Fens in Ben Johnson's *The Devil is an Ass*," in *Neophilologus* 105 (2021): 592.
[141] See: Francis Young, *Witches and Witchcraft in Ely: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge Print Solutions, 2013).

"the heath of the billy goat." However, this was not the case across the rest of the continent, where heathland, moors, and wetlands were common. In the Landau witch trials of western Germany, the most frequently recurring landscape was the Nußdorf heath, by a specific chestnut tree. Nußdorf, a small village located on the outskirts of the larger centre of Landau, was the centre of a major wave of witch persecutions beginning in 1584. In the first case with surviving documentation from 1585, one Valentin Mades confessed that he had followed a group of women to the witches' sabbath on the Nußdorf heath, where he witnessed his own wife, Dorothea, dancing for the Devil in the form of a red-dressed girl named Satana, who then made him renounce God and bound the pact with sex.[142] Valentin's confession was the first of many to involve the Nußdorf heath – the space recurred in a confession before the Bishopric of Speyer in 1592. Hermann Deidesheimer confessed to riding on the back of a calf with two other people to the Nußdorf heath, where he saw "…men, boys, women, and young girls, city people from Landau…"[143]

The trials in the nearby villages of Rhodt and Edesheim in the same year did not use the Nußdorf heath, but instead featured the heath outside of the hamlet of Burrweiler, only four kilometres from Rhodt rather than the six kilometres to Nußdorf.[144] Among the other landscapes of the Rhodt and Edesheim trials, we also see the inclusion of three wetland areas, the Ödesheimer Ried, the Edesheimer Ried, and the Knöringer Ried.[145] The inclusion of swampland comes as little surprise topographically, as the area sits in the lowland watershed between the Rhine and the Palatinate uplands. These stretches of bog in an otherwise fertile landscape marked a sharp contrast to the spaces that the locals would frequent in their agriculturally centred lives. Perhaps most notably, unlike other landscapes such as the

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[142] Übel, *Wegen vielgeübter Zauberei und Hexenwerk,* 50.
[143] "*… von mannen, knaben, frawen und jungfrawen gesehen, so mehretmals stadtleuth von Landaw gewesen…*" Übel, *Wegen vielgeübter Zauberei und Hexenwerk*, 103.
[144] Übel, *Wegen vielgeübter Zauberei und Hexenwerk*, 182.
[145] Übel, *Wegen vielgeübter Zauberei und Hexenwerk*, 181-183.

Heuberg to the south of the Palatinate in the Swabian mountains, these heaths and wetlands were located close to the homes of the accused, and thus they were not drawing sabbath stories from the wider region. Across the Palatinate and the borderlands of Alsace, such locally specific stories were dominant. In the region surrounding Riedseltz, now in French Alsace, the sabbath landscapes were exclusively located within the village of the accused or in its immediate vicinity.[146] Heaths, such as the one near the Gutleuthaus in neighbouring Hagenau, were a nearby and natural space for the accused to place their sabbath narratives.[147]

Beyond the Palatinate, heaths, moors, and wetlands appear in regional witchcraft narratives across the rest of Europe. To the south, in the town of Sulzheim outside of Würzburg, one accused witch confessed to attending the sabbath on the moor outside of town, next to the "witches' hedge," indicating a preexisting magical association with this space.[148] In Überlingen, Margareth Zellerin confessed to attending the sabbath in the marshes by the Bodensee between Meersberg and Überlingen.[149] To the north in the seigneury of Heusden, the Netherlands, five accused witches confessed to walking to a nearby heath where they danced in their sabbath rituals, demonstrating the importance of proximity in these narratives.[150] Across the sea in Scotland, the role of proximity remained a key part of the narrative toward agricultural wastes. As we explored in our discussion of hills, the Scottish witch trials rarely featured sabbath landscapes beyond a short radius of the accused's homes. The same remains true of moors, with multiple accused witches confessing to attending the sabbath at the moors located just beyond the bounds of their villages.[151] While removed from the specific terminology of heaths, moors, and wetlands, non-agricultural fields also appear in

[146] Übel, *Wegen vielgeübter Zauberei und Hexenwerk,* 151.
[147] Übel, *Wegen vielgeübter Zauberei und Hexenwerk*, 183.
[148] Roper, *Witch Craze*, 109.
[149] Dillinger, *Die Hexenverfolgung in Überlingen*, 78.
[150] de Blécourt, "The Flying Witch," 81.
[151] Paterson, "The Witches' Sabbath in Scotland," 391.

Scotland and subsequently in Vardø, Norwegian Finnmark. Cross-cultural encounters through witch hunting brought the term *ballvollen*, referring to the site of the witches' sabbath, into the northern Finnmark lexicon. This term, stemming from Scottish concept of witches gathering on fallow or non-arable fields to play ball games, quickly spread across the area, becoming a regional centre of sabbath belief on both sides of the North Sea. However, each specific example of the *ballvollen* or ball fields are on the immediate outskirts of the community.[152] On the eastern Baltic, we return to the story of Willem Sörtz from Pärnu, Estonia, who first raided a cellar before engaging in a larger sabbath at Röhma (now Rääma) bog.[153] While the old city of Pärnu was once separated from the bog by the Pärnu river and a short walk of two kilometres, the bog is now the border of the modern city, illustrating the proximity of these sabbath narratives.

These non-cultivatable landscapes appear in the sabbath narratives across the European continent, painting these marginal landscapes with stories of the diabolical. While the sabbaths on heaths, moors, and wetlands helps prove Keith Thomas's thesis of the significance of agriculture and the taming of the landscape in early modern place-construction, there are other intertwined patterns. Despite regularly appearing in sabbath narratives across the breadth of the continent, the non-arable landscapes we have explored only appear in fantasies associated with the local area. Standing in stark contrast with the sabbath narratives of the Brocken, where this chapter began, these landscapes were the product of very localized fantasies. The accused did not travel vast distances to meet the Devil on mythic mountain peaks that they had never seen, and likely never would. Instead, they populated their confessions with the places they encountered close to their homes, taking a broad and continent-spanning belief demonizing non-arable land, while localizing the

[152] Kruse and Willumsen, "Magic Language," 24-27.
[153] Ruben, "Witch Hunts in and around Pärnu 1641-1642," 70.

concept to their own communities. These heaths, moors, and wetlands were spaces that they encountered regularly, that they could see, touch, and visit in their everyday lives, that allowed them to return in their imaginations. By exploring these marginal spaces, we see the full story of localization in sabbath narratives across early modern Europe, clearly illustrating how people took broad concepts of landscape to construct narratives inherent to their local area. These environmental expectations were moulded to the local imagination, creating a myriad of sabbath stories set around marginal landscapes across Europe, but never deviating far from the lived landscapes of the accused.

Chapter II: The Sabbath Landscapes through Local Eyes – Zug, Switzerland

Beside the placid waters of the Zugersee, daily life in the Altstadt of Zug moves slowly and peacefully. People stroll along the tree-lined lakeside promenade, stopping to enjoy the vistas of the Alps to the south, where the northernmost peaks of Rigi and Pilatus dominate the horizon. Along the lake's shores, restaurants serve both locals and the tour groups that stop in Zug on the route between Zürich and Luzern, the two main urban centres of the central Swiss region. Rarely a destination itself, the relative quiet of the Zuger Altstadt is often punctuated only by soft conversation of the residents along its two remaining streets, and by the tolling of bells. This soundscape is a testament to the city's past. The city's clocktower, affectionately known as the Zytturm, is the most famous building of the Altstadt and a remnant from the original medieval walls, with its blue and white shingled roof visible from around the Zugersee. However, beyond the Zytturm, the bells of Zug's soundscape are also a memory of the city's religious past. Along the shore, the Liebfraukapelle is the oldest of Zug's churches dating to the earliest remaining part of the city, with early medieval frescos still visible upon its walls. Further from the lakeside, the Sankt Oswald church looms, and more distant still, the Sankt Michael church's spire overlooks the urban landscape of the Altstadt. These three churches, whose individually distinct but equally rich bells dominate the soundscape of the city, serve as a reminder of the city's history as a staunch Catholic canton at the borders of Protestant space during Switzerland's long and bloody era of Reformation.

While the reminders of the Reformation are clear across the Zug soundscape, the hints of Zug's dark history with witchcraft are best explored by foot. Walking north along the lakeshore from the Liebfraukappelle and the southern borders of the Altstadt, a small white tower peeks over the roofs of local restaurants. Its matching red tiled roof makes this building blend in with the rest of the Altstadt, however, painted neatly upon the white wall, the name

"Kaiben – Thurm" goes unnoticed by most passing by. However, the Chaibenthurm of the Zug Altstadt played a significant role in the history of Zug's witch trials, as the site where accused witches were held prisoner, and where their captivity in the dark wooden cells separated them from the landscapes they described in their confessions.[1] Between the Zytturm and the Chaibenturm, the Rathaus looks unchanged from the early modern era, when Cantonal politicians of the *Malefizgericht* sat in its upper floor and sentenced people accused of witchcraft to death. Beyond the borders of the Altstadt, following the shoreline and beside the city's train station, a cluster of modern corporate offices stand as a testament to the city's shifting identity as one of Switzerland's financial centres. However, hints to the area's past still exist. Among the corporate offices, a single oak tree of immense size towers over a courtyard, much older than the buildings surrounding it, while at the edge of the neighbourhood, the Eichwaldstraße wends around office space. This tree and this street are the legacy of the Eichwald or Meilacher forest, an ancient oak forest reserve that once loomed beyond the borders of the city for centuries. Under the shadows of the Meilacher's oak boughs, the imaginations of the people of Zug ran wild with narratives of the witches' sabbath. The forest stood on the borders of the Schutzengel Church, a small chapel along the northern shore of the Zugersee, where those found guilty of the crime of witchcraft were ultimately executed. This landscape, when traversed by foot covers only a short distance, but to the people of Zug of early modernity, this landscape was one that divided the holy and diabolical, and demonstrated the constant threat that witches' sabbath presented in the marginal spaces of their world, beyond the safety of the city walls.

The landscape of Zug is the landscape of the two faces of Switzerland. At the centre of the canton sits the Zugersee, a small lake in comparison to the neighbouring Zürichsee and

[1] Following the closure of the Chaibenturm as a prison, two of the cells were taken apart and reconstructed in the upper storey of the Zytturm clock tower, where tourists today can sit inside the cells.

Vierwaldstättersee, which forms the border between the two halves of Swiss topography. The Zugersee's southern shore touches the northernmost peaks of the central Swiss Alps in the neighbouring Canton of Schwyz. The canton itself is topographically divided in half along a north-south axis. On the eastern half of this divide stand the subalpine foothills. These low but steep highlands rise sharply along the eastern shore of the Zugersee, stretching from the Canton of Schwyz and the Vierwaldstättersee northward and into the Canton of Zürich before tapering into rolling hills. These mountains, which rise sharply behind Zug, reach a small valley behind the first peak of the Zugerberg. In this valley sits the Ägerisee, a smaller lake fed by streams from the high Alpine peaks before draining into the Zugersee through the Lorzentobel valley. In this highland region sizeable coniferous forests remain, covering the steep hillsides and creating a stark contrast with the agrarian terrain that composes much of the cantonal landscape. Here, the highest point in the Canton rises above the border between Zug and Schwyz: the peak Wildspitz. Standing at 1580m, Wildspitz is the highest point in the Canton of Zug, and while it is dwarfed by the massive peaks of the Alps to the south, it remains one of the northernmost sizeable summits of the mountain range in Central Switzerland.[2]

Zug's relationship with the mountains extends beyond the cantonal border to south. The Alps serve as the natural barrier between Northern Europe and the Italian peninsula. As a result of the immensity and density of the Alpine peaks, very few passes exist through their breadth. However, one of the largest and most navigable passes, the St. Gotthard Pass, became a highway for trade between the Italian and Germanic worlds starting in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries.[3] The path begins near the northern tips of Lago Maggiore and Lago Lugano, located just north of Milan, following the Valle Leventina to the

[2] Claudio Hüppi, *Zugerland: Ein Heimatbuch* (Zug: Offizin Zürcher AG, 1978), 7.
[3] Clive H. Church and Randolph C. Head, *A Concise History of Switzerland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 13.

St. Gotthard Massif. From here, the path traverses the St. Gotthard Pass before descending into the Urseren Valley in the Canton of Uri, southeast of Zug. The apex of the pass represents both the physical and linguistic divide between the Italian and Germanic worlds. From here, the path follows the Urseren Valley north until it drains into the Vierwaldstättersee. The fastest and most direct route between the pass's northern terminus and the urban centres of northern Central Europe passes directly through the Canton of Zug via Luzern, Schwyz, and Zürich. Following the topography of the canton, people and goods travelled along the shores of the Vierwaldstättersee toward the northern edge, which borders on the Canton of Zug. As such, Zug's location at the borders of the Alps was intrinsic to its development over the centuries.

The other half of the Canton, that to the west of the Zugerberg and the Zugersee, reflects a far different side of Switzerland. The high alpine peaks are replaced instead with the low rolling hills of the Swiss midlands, a stark contrast from the visage of the Alps towering on the southern horizon. Covering much of northern Switzerland before extending northward into Germany, the Swiss midlands provide the expansive towns with fertile land for crop-based agriculture. While Zug is divided physically by its two dominant landscapes of mountain and plain, these two halves can be further defined by their agricultural land usage. The eastern mountainous side of the canton follows the Alpine pastoral system, whereas the western plains are dominated by crop-based agriculture mixed with grazing lands. Perhaps the single most clear indicator of Zug's ties to the land comes from the sense of smell. Even in the twenty-first century, the entire canton, and in fact much of the country, has the unmistakably pungent odour of cattle. Switzerland's cattle-based culture has deep roots in the country's history. As early as the twelfth century, the Swiss Alps were dominated by pastoral communities, herding cows on their biennial transhumance between the fertile alpine

meadows and the sheltered valleys in accordance with the seasons.[4] While the modern transition of cattle dressed in floral decorations from lowlands to highlands in the spring is a charming and nostalgic source of festivities, this celebration of the changing of seasons reflects the reliance on cattle as a means of life in the Swiss Alps during centuries past. In many regions of Switzerland, including Zug's eastern mountains, the cow was the lifeblood of the pastoralist, and it was her wellbeing that guaranteed income and health for the family. The countryside surrounding Zug has been the home of pastoralists for centuries, shaping the *mentalités* of the people inhabiting this place around their cows. To the people of Zug, the cow represented life, wealth, and wellbeing. To lose a cow spelled economic ruin and death. As we shall see in our section on the sabbath in the *Allmend*, cows appear with striking regularity in the Zug trials, the victims of supposed poisonings at the hands of accused witches.

While Jonathan Steinberg notes that most Swiss cantons by the fourteenth century had specialized in either agriculture or pastoralism, Zug's unique geography presented an opportunity to focus on both.[5] As most other cantons were limited by their terrain, with the mountainous cantons focused mainly on their cattle and the production of cheese while the valley cantons focused on the production of cereals, Zug's topographical split led to a different division of food production than prevailed in many of the other cantons. While cattle grazing dominated these eastern highlands, the rolling hills of the Swiss midlands focused upon crop-based agriculture, particularly the cultivation of wheat around the town of Cham.[6] As such, the same anxieties surrounding the survival of crops existed in Zug as in other agrarian regions of Switzerland. The landscape and its relation to agricultural land use in early modern Zug lent itself to the witchcraft beliefs and narratives of the local population.

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[4] Jonathan Steinberg, *Why Switzerland?* Second Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 17.
[5] Steinberg, *Why Switzerland?*, 18.
[6] Hüppi, *Zugerland*, 23.

Fear of the weather magic of the alpine *Hexe* tradition filled the minds and *mentalités* of the farmers of early modern Zug, where a bad thunderstorm or hailstorm intensified by the proximity of the Alps could devastate the livelihood of Zug's farmers.[7]

The remainder of Zug's land is split between forests and human settlements. It has previously been noted that the steep slopes of the Zugerberg are covered in thick pine forests. However, a variety of forests exist in the canton to date. The region surrounding the northern village of Hünenberg in the seventeenth century was famous for its oak stands, where cows and pigs were once taken for foraging.[8] While many of the oak forests were cut down in the 1940s, the western half of the canton still possesses large areas of mixed deciduous forest scattered amongst the farmland.[9] Birch stands are common along the eastern slopes of the Zugerberg in the mid altitudes, with the upper slopes covered in mixed coniferous forests.[10] In an era dependent on wood resources for all aspects of life from cooking to construction, early modern Zug's best wood resources, such as the Meilacher oaks, were a carefully guarded resource. We will explore the connection between these wood resources in our exploration of the Meilacher and the sabbath later in this chapter.

Both the agricultural and forested landscapes of Zug are key resources servicing the patchwork of urban settlements across the canton. While the canton is structured around the city of Zug, several satellite urban areas exist throughout the region. Zug, serving as a regional capital, was by far the largest of these settlements. From the medieval period to the modern period, Zug consisted of three streets of tightly packed urban homes, hidden between the medieval walls and the lake. The main entrance in and out of Zug ran through the gates

[7] To this day, Catholic priests performing Sunday Church services at the Sankt Oswald Church in Zug ask God to protect the crops from hail, an apparently local addition to the Catholic tradition, demonstrating the deep roots of these syncretized beliefs and their continued role in the religious culture of Zug.
[8] Hüppi, *Zugerland*, 24.
[9] Hüppi, *Zugerland*, 24-25.
[10] Hüppi, *Zugerland*, 26.

built inside the Zytturm, the clock tower that still looms over the oldest part of the city, known today as the Unterstadt. However, across the age of witch hunts, the landscape of Zug had shifted dramatically since its medieval roots. In 1435, the lowest of the city's three streets collapsed into the Zugersee, submerging twenty-six homes beneath the waters of the lake.[11] By the mid-sixteenth century, the landscape of Zug had expanded westward up the low slopes of the Zugerberg, maintaining the two remaining streets of the Unterstadt while continuing to grow beyond the early medieval walls. A new curtain wall was erected around the city in the fifteenth century, enclosing both the Unterstadt and a number of other structures that had previously been located beyond the borders of the city walls such as the Burg, a medieval hill fort constructed in the tenth century, a Capuchin monastery, and the St. Oswald church founded in the early fifteenth century.[12] Within the second curtain walls was a mixed space of small agricultural and residential land. While Zug was the largest urban centre in the Canton during the early modern, it was not the only one. Smaller agrarian centres dot the landscape across fields and valleys, providing the resources required by the growing city.

Like many early modern towns of the Swiss lands, Zug maintained a high level of independence and self-determination over its administrative territory. This tradition of independence played an immense role in the early modern witch trials of Switzerland, where zealous cantons could perform extensive witch hunts with little to no oversight by a broader church or state. While the consequences of this civic independence carried into early modern witch hunting, their origins lie at medieval roots. Through the eleventh and twelfth centuries, much of the regional power of central Switzerland was controlled by an extensive series of churches, abbeys, and monasteries, with minor lords controlling small urban centres.[13] However, the thirteenth century brought a dramatic shift in the historical patterns of Zug and

[11] Hüppi, *Zugerland*, 129-130.
[12] Hüppi, *Zugerland*, 84, 202.
[13] Hüppi, *Zugerland*, 90-91.

the surrounding region with the opening of the St. Gotthard Pass around the year 1200. As noted by Clive Church and Randolph Head, the opening of the St. Gotthard "triggered economic growth and broader horizons in formerly isolated valleys, as became evident in their precocious emergence as privileged corporate communities headed by local noble clans in the 1200s."[14] Zug was far from an exception to this rule. The thirteenth century saw Zug's emergence as a local power during this period of economic expansion. By the time that the St. Gotthard Pass began to bring wealth through the region, Zug was firmly under the control of the noble Kyburg family, based out of Winterthur to the north.[15] The Kyburgs, along with the more famous Habsburg family, spearheaded urban development in the Zentralschweiz region, founding small towns and cities across the landscape to increase their own economic and social status.[16] The foundation of the Swiss Confederacy in 1291 used the new expanse of towns to their benefits, providing regional independence to small centres as a draw to join in confederation. While the rest of the central Swiss cantons joined in this collective alliance of small city states as a competitive social model against the burgeoning Kyburg and Habsburg power, Zug remained an outlier until 1352, when, following an eighteen-day siege by the combined forces of the Confederacy, Zug cast aside the noble oversight over their politics and joined the Swiss Confederation .[17] This decision asserted the importance of the urban administrative centre on both their geography and their politics. By the advent of the sixteenth century, the urban power of the Swiss Confederacy dominated the social and political landscape of the Swiss lands: Bern, Zürich, and Luzern, as the largest territorial

[14] Church and Head, *A Concise History of Switzerland*, 13.
[15] Hüppi, *Zugerland*, 102-104.
[16] Regula Schmid, "The Swiss Confederation Before the Reformation" in *A Companion to the Swiss Reformation*, eds. Amy Nelson Burnett and Emidio Campi (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 20.
[17] Hüppi, *Zugerland*, 110-111.

landholders of the Swiss cantons, oversaw territories substantially larger than their closest German counterpart in Nuremberg.[18]

The era of witch trials in Zug coincided with another cataclysmic event, one that would shake the foundations of the Canton, of Switzerland, and of the entire continent for centuries – the Reformation. The most dramatic events of the Reformation in Switzerland began on Zug's borders at the start of the sixteenth century under the leadership of reformist preacher Huldrych Zwingli. Born in 1484, Zwingli first served the Church as a village preacher in the Canton of Glarus. A voracious scholar, Zwingli built upon the works of Erasmus, who "electrified a young generation of scholars with his call to return to the sources of the Christian faith."[19] Following his rising career in Glarus, Zwingli accepted a position at the powerful Einsiedeln monastery across the cantonal border from Zug, where he further distanced himself from the practices of the Church by giving heterodoxic sermons and engaging in a number of illicit sexual affairs.[20] Upon Zwingli's arrival as a preacher at the Grossmünster in Zürich in 1518, the church was already experiencing shockwaves from Martin Luther's calls for reform north of the Swiss border, and Zwingli's style of preaching was similarly confrontational toward Catholic tradition.[21] In 1522 the increasing rift between Zwingli and the Catholic Church widened further, resulting in the Swiss Diet prohibiting "innovation" within the Church, but encouraging the independent cantonal enforcement of these rules. With the Cantons granted the authority to decide their confessions, Zwingli's concepts of reform spread across Switzerland. The major population centres of Zürich, Bern,

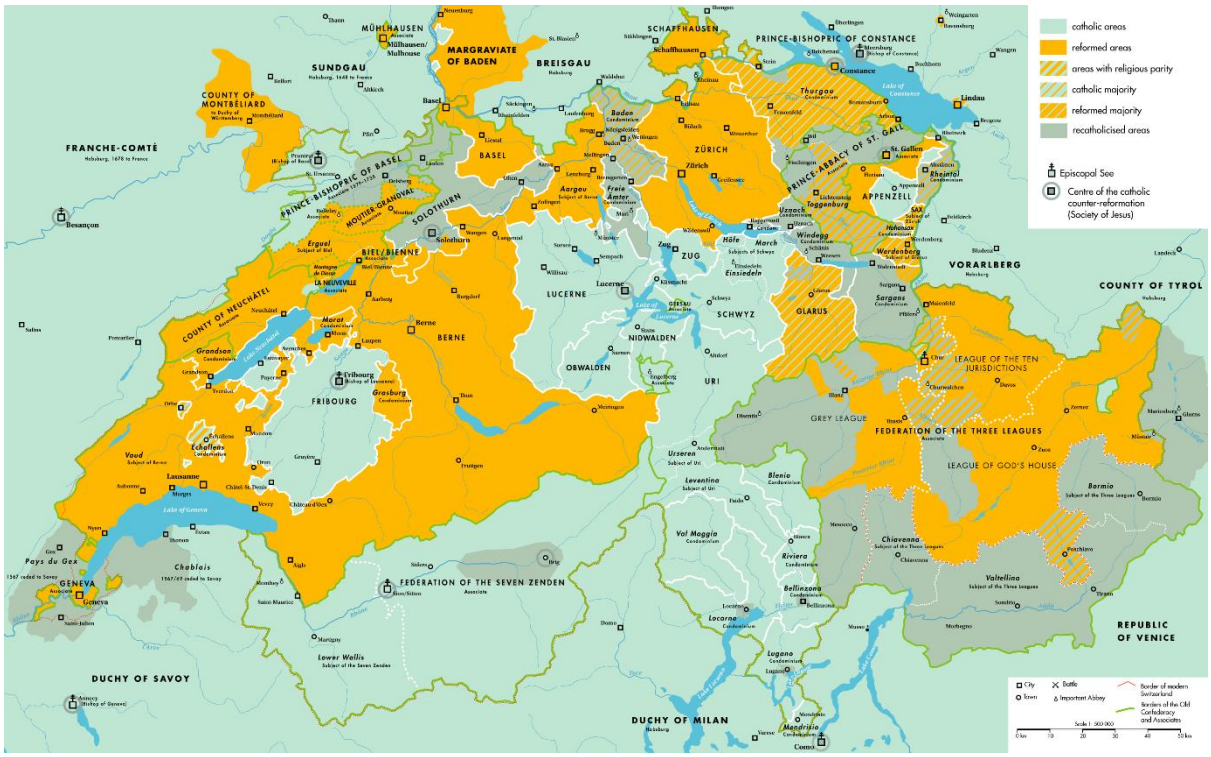
[18] In 1504, Bern oversaw 9,000km², Zürich, 1700km², and Luzern, 1485 in comparison to Nuremberg's 1200km² territories at the same time. Tom Scott, *Town, Country, and Regions in Reformation Germany* (Brill: Leiden, 2005), 238-240.
[19] Bruce Gordon, *Zwingli: God's Armed Prophet* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021), 35.
[20] Church and Head, *A Concise History of Switzerland*, 81; Gordon, *Zwingli*, 39-42.
[21] Church and Head, *A Concise History of Switzerland*, 81.

and Basel all adopted Zwingli's Reformist theological movement, while Central Switzerland, including Zug, remained Catholic.

By the 1530s, tensions had ebbed and flowed between Reformed and Catholic cantons, including a narrowly avoided battle in 1529 just outside of Zug.[22] Conflicts between Reformed and Catholic cantons in 1531 resulted in the Reformed cantons, those largely on the Swiss midland plains, banning the sale of grain to Catholic cantons, whose largely alpine geography forced them to rely on their midland neighbours for grain to supplement their pastoral lifestyles. This act prompted the central Swiss Catholic cantons, including Zug, to declare war on Zürich. In the resulting battle at Kappel on Zürich's border with Zug, the Reformists were soundly defeated. Against a better equipped and better prepared Catholic force, the Reformists were routed and Zwingli was killed, his body burnt to ash by the victorious Catholics.[23] Through the peace treaty of November 20, 1531, the Second Kappeler Landfrieden, the two faiths were acknowledged and their coexistence was deemed crucial in order to maintain the confederacy's political status quo.[24] However, the ensuing two centuries tested the cantons' resolve for unity numerous times.

[22] Gordon, *Zwingli*, 222.
[23] Gordon, *Zwingli*, 246-249; Church and Head, *A Concise History of Switzerland*, 86.
[24] Church and Head, *A Concise History of Switzerland*, 86.

Figure 3: Religious Divisions of the Old Confederacy During the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries - Map by Marco Zanoli, Wikimedia.



Under Jean Calvin, the Reformed Church solidified its hold on western Switzerland from Geneva, while in 1586 the five Catholic cantons of central Switzerland, including Zug, founded the mutual defence alliance known as the Golden League to circumvent old alliances from the pre-confessional era.[25] In addition to the Golden League, the Catholic Cantons, including Zug, entered into an alliance with Philip II of Spain who acted as the spearhead for the Counter Reformation, further cementing their role in the broader European Catholic sphere.[26] By the mid-seventeenth century, the confessional boundaries that existed across the Swiss confederacy had solidified, as seen in the map in Figure 3, and perpetually tested the strength of the confederacy. In 1656, the confederacy found itself at war once more in the First War of Villmergen. Sparked following the reveal and persecution of "crypto-Protestants" in Arth on the south-eastern shores of the Zugersee, the Catholics once more

[25] Church and Head, *A Concise History of Switzerland*, 90-91.
[26] Thomas Maissen, "Religious Stalemate and Confessional Alignments: Dynamics and Stagnation in the Confederation from 1531" *A Companion to the Swiss Reformation*, eds. Amy Nelson Burnett and Emidio Campi (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 609.

defeated the Reformed cantons.[27] Tensions remained high until the first years of the eighteenth century. In 1712 a final confessional war broke out on the borders of Zug as the Catholic cantons fielded an army against the Reformists; however, the superiority of the urban troops brought the Second War of Villmergen to a sudden and bloody end for the Catholics, with their first resounding defeat.[28] The resulting Peace of Aarau enforced religious parity at the cost of the Catholic supremacy brought about by the previous two confessional wars and brewed continued bitterness between the different faiths.[29]

Despite the religious maneuverings of the early modern period, Switzerland remained divided by faith, with its cantonal autonomy resulting in a confessional patchwork across the Confederacy. Catholics and Protestants lived side by side, with the interdependencies of the medieval alliances crossing over confessional lines. As noted by Church and Head, "[f]or clerical and secular authorities, the resulting mingling was a source of constant anxiety as they struggled to teach and discipline the general population. Yet it also meant that everyone in the Swiss lands had some experience with people of differing religious persuasion, often at very close range."[30] These anxieties would manifest across the era of Reformation in the witch trials of Switzerland, and under such circumstances, the borderland canton of Zug was particularly susceptible to the fears and anxieties surrounding social orthodoxy and order. With all three major battles of the long Reformation fought within a short distance of the Canton, Zug, while not a major actor in the Reformation and Counter Reformation, experienced the cataclysmic events of this era on its borders, and with a higher rate of encounters with Protestants over the permeable confessional border than their Catholic counterparts in the Alpine cantons.

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[27] Church and Head, *A Concise History of Switzerland*, 95.
[28] Church and Head, *A Concise History of Switzerland*, 96-97.
[29] Church and Head, *A Concise History of Switzerland*, 97.
[30] Church and Head, *A Concise History of Switzerland*, 91-92.

Against this backdrop of confessional conflict, Zug's history of witch trials unfolded. While early witch hunting began in Switzerland between 1395 and 1406 during the witch trials in Bernese Simmenthal, it was the events of the Reformation that brought the witch craze to fruition.[31] With the level of confessional anxiety and its proximity to Zug, it is of little surprise that the vast majority of Zug's witch trials were neatly bookended by the wars of the Reformation in 1530 and 1712. This extensive range means Zug's era of witch trials began early and ended late compared to much of the continent. Beginning in 1559, two decades after the Battle of Kappel, Zug saw at least 197 people placed on trial for witchcraft, the vast majority of whom were tried during this era of the long Reformation. According to the records held by Staatsarchiv Zug, only two witch hunts were held following the Second Battle of Villmergen: Zug's most famous trial held in 1737 that saw the execution of eight people, and the 1748 trial of nine-year-old Katharina Schicker, who was one of four people noted in Zug's historical record as acquitted of the crime of witchcraft and freed.[32] Zug was one of the last Swiss cantons to prosecute people for witchcraft. It was preceded by Geneva in 1652, Luzern in 1675, and Zürich in 1714. The last person executed for the crime of witchcraft, Anna Göldi, was tried and hanged under fifty kilometres from Zug in the Canton of Glarus in 1782.[33]

With the Canton of Zug overseeing all political matters within its jurisdiction since joining the Swiss Confederacy in 1352, the prosecution of witchcraft was part of a long existing and complex political system. The Canton of Zug was run by two separate systems of government: the *Landsgemeinde* and the *Gemeindeversammlungen*. The *Landsgemeinde* was the collection of representatives from Zug and the outlying communities within the canton, selected at community meetings, who would among them select the higher offices of

[31] Klaits, *Servants of Satan*, 37.
[32] "Anklagen und Hinrichtungen wegen Hexerei im Stand Zug 1559-1748," *Staatsarchiv Zug*, (April 7, 2015).
[33] Hauser, *Anna Göldi – geliebt, verteufelt, enthauptet*, 11.

city clerk, bailiff, governor, and Ammann, akin to a mayor. The *Landsgemeinde* were selected from the *Gemeindeversammlungen*, all landholding representatives from Zug, Ägeri, Menzingen, and Baar. On top of selecting the *Landsgemeinde*, the *Gemeindeversammlungen* would select thirty representatives to form the cantonal council of the *Stadt-und-Amt-Rat*: thirteen from Zug, and nine from Ägeri, Menzingen, and Baar respectively. This body, led by the Ammann selected by the *Landsgemeinde*, was responsible for the passing of laws and sentences for the entire canton. However, witchcraft trials received special treatment by the *Stadt-und-Amt-Rat*. From within this body twelve members were selected (six from Zug and four from each Ägeri, Menzingen, and Baar) to form the *Malefizgericht*, or Maleficence Court. This body, once more led by the Ammann of Zug, would oversee all cases of witchcraft brought before the *Stadt-und-Amt-Rat* and make decisions on the fate of the accused from the top floor of the Zug Rathaus in the heart of the Altstadt.[34]

As all legal decisions regarding the witch trials of Zug were made by the *Malefizgericht* and Ammann, the accused were held just adown the street in the Chaibenturm, however their cells were worlds apart from the wood panelled walls and ornate stained-glass windows of the Rathaus. In wooden cells so small that the accused could not stand, but were forced to lie in beds of straw, their only light came through the small opening in the door used for inspection and bringing food and drink to the accused. The Chaibenturm was also the site of torture and interrogation before the interrogator, scribe, and members of the *Malefizgericht*, and when the time came for execution following confession, the condemned would be taken outside of the Chaibenturm and be branded with hot pincers. From here, the condemned were led to the Zuger Rathaus where they were burnt again with “fiery tongs” while their sentence was read out to them, and then were branded again on their right foot at

[34] Peter Hoppe et al., *Universum Kleinstadt: Die Stadt Zug und ihre Untertanen im Spiegel der Protokolle von Stadtrat und Geminde (1471-1798)* (Zug: Historischer Verein des Kantons Zug, 2018), 24-25.

the city's Schantz path beside the main northern city gates.[35] Now, branded and humiliated before the city, the accused were taken by cart to the Schutzengel Church on the northern edge of the Zugersee, halfway between Zug and the smaller town of Cham, where they were executed. While Zug practiced numerous execution methods for condemned witches, live burnings were not uncommon.[36] It is not without some irony that this small church was situated next to the Meilacher forest, where so many of those accused had confessed to meeting the Devil for the sabbath, providing a spatial dimension to the narrative that ultimately brought them to the stake.

However, despite the dramatic rift between the two halves of Zug's witchcraft trials, the cases from the city provide a definitively local perspective to the amalgam. The interrogators, the scribes, the accused, the members of the *Malefizgericht*, and the Ammann were all local figures. The comparatively small footprint of Zug's borders ensured that all figures within the trial were familiar with the same landscapes and likely perceived them in similar ways. Our understanding of the sabbath landscapes of Zug is therefore informed by a range of different actors, learned, skilled, common, literate, and illiterate, who had a close understanding of the local landscape and were engaging in placemaking on familiar spaces.

Gastmälere – The Sabbath in the Zug Witch Trials

Among the nearly two hundred confessions provided by people convicted of witchcraft in the Canton of Zug between 1559 and 1738 were dozens of accounts of the witches' sabbath. The beginning of witch hunting in Zug coincided not only with the period of high confessional tension, but also amid the golden age of sabbath narratives in demonologies, as only the first two of Zug's recorded cases, Margareth Pamperli in 1559 and Adelheid Breiteger in 1572, came before Bodin's *Démonomanie*. These sabbath narratives

[35] StAZG A 105/6, fol. 219B.
[36] "Anklagen und Hinrichtungen wegen Hexerei im Stand Zug 1559-1748," *Staatsarchiv Zug*, (April 7, 2015).

were therefore the product of both shifting confessional anxieties and a developing concept of the witches' sabbath across the European social strata. Zug's sabbath narratives were therefore guided both by local and external factors, which in turn shaped the landscapes in which they were set.

Following the model of temptation and fall common in witchcraft confessions, the sabbath in Zug confirmed the pact with the Devil, coming after the initial meeting and seduction. In the 1691 trial of Katharina Moos, Anna Barbara Uster, and Barbara Gunz, the sabbath gathering occurred only after the accused were offered 400 gulden by the Devil to pay off debts, which they first declined but finally accepted, denying God and signing over their souls before having sex with him. The gold they received turned into acorns, a common trope in Zug's trials, and with the women tricked, the Devil owned their souls.[37] This concept of temptation through payment or comfort in the face of marital misery followed by the renouncing of God and the sealing of the pact through sex was extremely common. In seventeenth-century Zug, all but the children who confessed to witchcraft followed this model.[38]

Upon the completion of the temptation narrative, the accused then would begin to describe the sabbath. Guided by the Devil, the accused would make their way to the appointed location for the sabbath, often locally called the "*Gastmälere*," roughly translated as "Guest Banquet." Here they would feast and worship the devil, with an emphasis on eating, drinking, and dancing, akin to the peasant model of the sabbath seen across Germanic Europe.[39] In the mid seventeenth century desecration of the Host first appeared as an activity at the witches' sabbath, following Caterina Brandenberg's confession that she had desecrated

[37] StAZG A 105/4 fol. 283.
[38] Miriam de Sepibus, "Hexenprozesse als Mittel des sozialen Aufstiegs im eidgenossischen Stand Zug in der zweiten Halfte des 17. Jahrhunderts" (Dissertation, Université de Lausanne, 2012); Bart, "Zwischen Gott und Teuffel," 70.
[39] Roper, *Witch Craze*, 109-111.

the Host at a sabbath in 1642.[40] From this point until the end of the Zug witch panics, the desecration of the eucharist became a major element of Zug's sabbath belief, appearing in numerous confessions. Similarly, other sabbath beliefs common elsewhere in Europe did not appear in Zug until the peak years of the late seventeenth century, such as the ceremonial diabolical rites and the kissing of the Devil's anus.[41] At the end of the sabbath, the accused often confessed to receiving powders and ointments that they would then use to poison animals, kill children, make healthy people fall ill, and summon hailstorms to ruin crops. Lengthy lists of such deeds were included in nearly every trial, followed by their sentencing by the *Malefizgericht* to death, their execution to be held behind the Schutzengel Church near the Zuger *Allmend* field and the Meilacher forest.

Across the Zug witchcraft trials from 1559 to 1748, these sabbaths occurred at a wide variety of locations, ranging from those within sight of Zug to those removed by many kilometres. When viewed within the geographic and spatial context of the city and the Canton, these landscapes present a reflection of everyday life on the confessional borderlands during the long Reformation. Zug's case study shows how the sabbath landscape was a varied collection of spaces both within the borders of the canton and beyond. In the 1737 trial, the last which saw an execution and the only trial that contains a full transcript of the dialogue between the interrogator and the accused, the locations discussed across the trial reflected a strict adherence to the divide between Catholics and Protestants, with the accused discussing only a handful of locations in Protestant space across hundreds of pages of interrogations.[42] Similar patterns are visible in the discussions of the sabbath landscapes across two centuries of witch trials held in Zug. Only three specific sabbath locations are given within definitively

[40] Philippe Bart, "Hexenverfolgungen in der Innerschweiz 1670-1754" in *Der Geschichtsfreund* 158 (2005): 74.
[41] de Sepibus, "Hexenprozesse," 72.
[42] Aaron Larsen, "Mapping Maleficia: The Borders of Witchcraft and a Woman's World through the Witch Trials of Zug, Switzerland, 1737-1738," Master's Thesis (University of Northern British Columbia, 2021), 121-124.

Protestant regions, three cellars from the 1737 trial, and one unnamed forest in the Canton of Bern, also from the 1737 trial (see Table 3).[43]

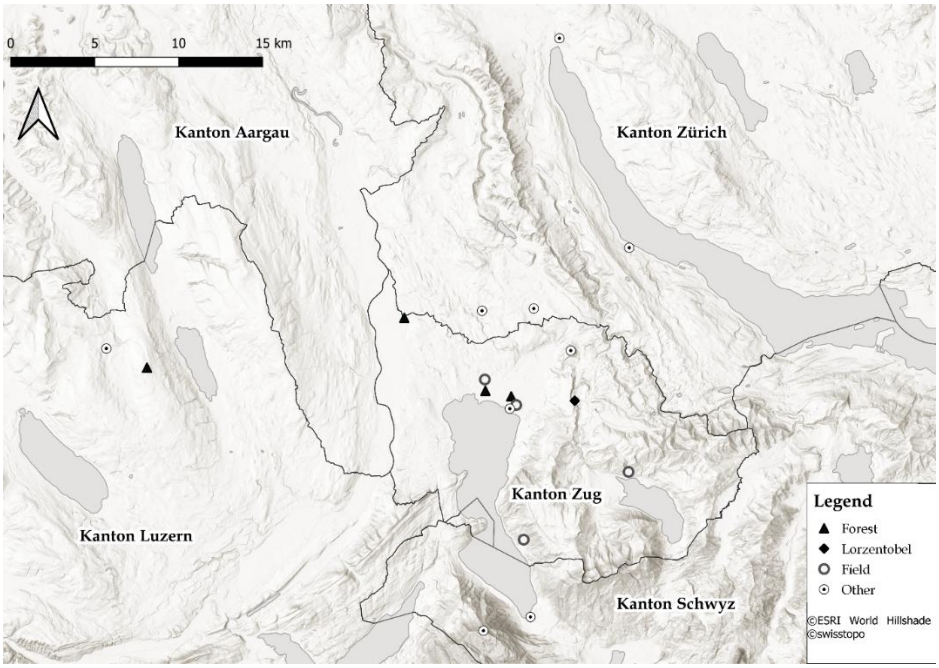
Examining the type of locations across confessional boundaries indicates both a richness of landscape at the foothills of the Swiss Alps. Removed from the oceanic landscapes of the Pays de Labourd, we see a set of landscapes that reflect life in everyday Switzerland in the early modern period, including forests, mountains, cellars, churchyards, valleys, and fields. These spaces, spread across trials and centuries, tell the story of witchcraft, the sabbath, and spatial anxiety in Switzerland. While each of these landscapes point toward a complex and multifaceted relationship between space, place, and the past, the three most common and distinctive landscapes have been selected for a deeper analysis: the Meilacher, the *Allmend*, and the Lorzentobel. Each of these three landscapes presents a different lens of analysis both in Zug in the era of witch trials, and of the broader European interaction with space across time. Table 3 presents a list of the sabbath landscapes from the trial documents held in Staatsarchiv Zug. This list reflects only specific landscapes, and those that can still be identified (using the same name or a similar phonetic spelling). For example, in the trial of Barbara Rottenschwyller (or Gottschwiller) from 1652, Barbara confessed to meeting for the sabbath on the Zuger Allmend as well as near Engen, a village on the borderlands with Reformed Zürich.[44] The *Allmend*, as a specific place that can be identified and geolocated, was included on the list. However, due to Barbara identifying only the area around Engen without any identifier of land use or topography this location was not included as it was not fit for deeper analysis of the landscape.

[43] StAZG A 105/6 fol. 29B, 137B, 143A, 144A.
[44] StAZG A 105/2 fol. 328A-328B.

Table 3: Landsapes of the Zug Trials, 1559-1748

Sabbath Sites	**Type of Location**	**Notable Examples**
Meilacher/Eichwald, Zug	Forest	StAZG A 105/2 fol. 192B, 324B
Zuger Allmend, Zug	Field	StAZG A 105/2 302A, 312A, 314A
Ägeri Allmend, Ägeri, Kanton Zug	Field	StAZG A 105/1 fol. 124A, 105/2 fol. 314A
Lorzentobel, Kanton Zug	Forest/Ravine/Caves	StAZG A 105/1 fol. 124B, StAZG A 105/2 fol. 324B
Baarberg, Kanton Zug	Hill	StAZG A 105/2 fol. 191B
Erlosen, Kanton Luzern	Hill	StAZG A 105/6 fol. 17B-18A.
Beromünster, Kanton Luzern	Church	StAZG A 105/6, fol. 8A-8B
Rossau, Kanton Zürich	Cellar	StAZG A 105/6 fol. 137B
Zürich, Kanton Zürich	Cellar	StAZG A 105/6 fol. 143A
Rigi, Kanton Luzern/Kanton Schwyz	Mountain	StAZG A 105/6 fol. 55B
Kappel am Albis, Kanton Zürich	Cellar	StAZG A 105/6 fol. 144A
Between Maschwand, Kanton Zürich, and Frauenthal, Cham, Kanton Zug	Forest	StAZG A 105/2 fol. 292A
Basel Vorstadt, Kanton Basel	Field	StAZG A 105/3 fol. 292B
Steinhauser Allmend, Kanton Zug	Field	StAZG A 105/3 fol. 302A
Stettler Allmend, Kanton Zürich	Field	StAZG A 105/3 fol. 307 A
Riedmatt, Kanton Zug	Forest	StAZG A 105/3 fol. 312A.
Walchwil Allmend	Field	StAZG A 105/6 fol. 39B.
Sélestat (Schlettstadt), Alsace	Cellar	StAZG A 105/6 fol. 138A
Horgen, Kanton Zürich	Cellar	StAZG A 105/6 fol. 138A
Schutzengel, Kanton Zug	Church	StAZG A 105/6 fol. 140B
Arth, Kanton Schwyz	Cellar	StAZG A 105/6 fol. 143A

Figure 4: Specific sabbath landscapes described in witchcraft confessions in Zug, 1559-1738.



Meilacher – The Forest

Of all the sites of the witches' sabbath in early modern Zug, there is none so prominent as the Meilacher forest. Appearing across the narratives of witchcraft over two centuries, the Meilacher was associated with witchcraft for nearly as long as witch trials were held in the city. The Meilacher was a large stand of oak trees,[45] situated on the northern shore of the Zugersee beyond the Chamerstrasse and the Schutzengel Church. Adjacent to the common grazing pastures of the Zuger *Allmend*, the Meilacher was a place that even the lowest class residents of Zug would know all too well due to its proximity to their vital herds of cattle. Like the *Allmend* where local cattle grazed, the Meilacher was a communal resource, an oak reserve owned by the local citizen's organization (*Bürgergemeinde*)[46] for

[45] Also called the Eichwald, the name Meilacher is likewise reflective of the oak trees that composed the forest. In the local Zug dialect of the seventeenth century, Eichel was the term used to describe oak, but often when compounded lost the middle consonants to be *eiel*, *eihel*, or *eÿel*. The 1630s saw the introduction of the initial M sound, turning *Eichelacher* into *Meilacher*. Beat Dittli, *Zuger Ortsnamen: Lexikon der Siedlungs-, Flur-, und Gewässernamen im Kanton Zug Lokalisierung, Deutung, Geschichten*, Band 3 (Zug: Balmer Verlang Zug, 2007), 280.

[46] The *Bürgergemeinde* is a unique branch of municipal governance in Swiss cities that roughly translates as a "Organization of Citizens." These organizations were (and still are) composed of the oldest and wealthiest families in each district who hold land and real estate, while maintaining some level of political sway in their respective territories. They are not governed under Swiss federal law, but rather under the much older cantonal

selected use by the community. While the forest's origins are clouded and lost, the first mentions in the historical record come from the 1591 ordinances surrounding trees and wood resources in the city, setting the boundary between the bridge over the Siebach stream and the edge of the Meilacher.[47] Omnipresent through the early modern era in Zug, its exact size during the two centuries of witch trials remains a mystery. We glimpse it only in the 1770s, on the Vogteienkarte of the local cartographer Franz Fidel Landtwing who completed the first accurate geographic survey of the canton. In Landtwing's map, the Meilacher takes up a small corner behind the Schutzengel, surrounded by the farmland of the *Allmend* on all sides. However, his map dates from nearly forty years after the last accounts of the sabbath (the final 1737-1738 series of witch trials) and so the exact proportions of the forest during this era are lost, leaving more questions than answers regarding its maximum size and significance. By the early nineteenth century, portions of the Allmend were subdivided and sold to individuals from Zug and the surrounding region.[48] The days of the Meilacher were numbered. In 1853, the *Bürgergemeinde* Zug signed off on the forests' demise, using the woods and funds from felling to pay for a new community hospital for Zug. The last indication of any forested land in this area comes from 1861, where a tiny sliver of forest appears on the Dufourkarte before being felled to nothingness.[49] Today, all that remains of the Meilacher is the "Eichwaldstraße," or Oak Forest Street that runs through what was once the eponymous oak forest.

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system that reflects the traditions of the early modern period. See: Martin Stuber and Rahel Wunderli, "Transformations of Common Pastures and Woodlands in Switzerland: A Historical Perspective" in *Balancing the Commons in Switzerland: Institutional Transformations and Sustainable Innovations*, eds. Tobias Haller et al. (London: Routledge, 2021), 17-18.

[47] "*von dem Brüglj Zú mahen Bim E[i]lacher*." Dittli, *Zuger Ortsnamen*, Band 3, 281. Ref. BüA. Zug., A 2.19 Bauamtsrechnung

[48] The 1804 map accompanying the Vermehsung und Taxirung von Gemeindeland document held by Stadtarchiv Zug illustrates how portions of the Allmend were portioned and divided for taxation. StadtA Zug, B.1-2.18.

[49] Dittli, *Zuger Ortsnamen*, Band 3, 280.

While the earliest mentions of the Meilacher come from the late sixteenth-century forestry ordinances, the first appearance of the forest as a sabbath landscape arrived in the 1615 wave of witch trials under Ammann Konrad Zurlauben of the locally powerful and wealthy Zurlauben family. Under his rule, fifteen people were executed for the crime of witchcraft, including his own relative Elisabeth Zurlauben, whose name was erased from the family tree and the church record, as was common practice in Zug for convicted witches.[50] Her trial and that of her co-accused Anna Brandenberg provides the earliest account of the Meilacher as a site of the sabbath. Following the model common in Zug's witch trials, Elisabeth Zurlauben's story begins with the story of her fall from grace.[51] In her confession, Elisabeth said that the year before she had been visiting her severely ill neighbour Elisabeth Heinrich and upon returning home, she was filled with grief for her neighbour along with envy and anger toward her brother-in-law, feeling "as though God had abandoned her."[52] Returning home, she discovered a young man in green clothing waiting for her, who promised to relieve her suffering.[53] Finally she gave in, promising him many things including that she would deny God and the Virgin Mary and then she took him to her bedroom for sex. He invited her as his lover to the "Gastmälere" four times, twice on the *Allmend* field and twice in the Meilacher. Here, there were great tables where Elisabeth found only bread and salt were missing. The sabbath would run from midnight until two in the morning before they dispersed.[54]

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[50] Victor Luthiger, "Ein Zugerisches Hexenurteil von 1615" in *Zuger Neujahrsblatt 1936* (Zug: Druck und Verlag Graphische Werkstätte Eberhard Kalt-Zehnder, 1936), 65; Thomas Brunner, *Das Rathaus in Zug* (Bern: Gesellschaft für Schweizerische Kunstgeschichte GSK, 2009), 32.

[51] The trial of Elisabeth Zurlauben and Anna Brandenberg is missing from the Hexenprozesseakten collection of the Staatsarchiv Zug, StAZG A 105/2, with no information about its current location. However, a transcription of the original document remains in the *Zuger Neujahrsblatt* of 1936, transcribed by Victor Luthiger. I have used this transcript and Luthiger's pagination.

[52] "*vermein dz. Gott Jr gar vergessen*…" Luthiger, "Ein Zugerisches Hexenurteil von 1615," 66.

[53] While black clothing and skin has traditionally been associated with the Devil in disguise in witchcraft narratives, Swiss trials are unique by often having the Devil adorned in green. See: E. William Monter, *Witchcraft in France and Switzerland: The Borderlands in the Reformation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976), 112.

[54] Luthiger, "Ein Zugerisches Hexenurteil von 1615," 67.

The other accused witch, Anna Brandenberg, repeated a similar story in her confession. Tempted by a young man clothed in all black who promised her money and an escape from her abusive husband, Oswald Vogt, Anna took the Devil named Peterchen, or Little Peter, to bed.[55] Anna confessed that her Peterchen had led her to the Meilacher for the sabbath six times, which she described as a cacophonous party: "There she thought she would get a lot of good food and drink with violin, drums, and pipes playing, and all kinds of good life; but afterwards she was never satisfied."[56] Their confessions then continued, naming their heinous crimes, the cows they had killed and the churches they had attacked, reflecting the anxieties of Zug in the seventeenth century before the scribe lists their sentences. Anna Brandenberg and Elisabeth Zurlauben were executed on 6 July 1615, to be taken from the Chaibenturm to the Schutzengel, bound and branded, then burnt alive "to powder and ashes."[57]

Anna's confession highlighted only the Meilacher, where witches from Zug, Luzern, and Bremgarten (a small village in the Protestant Canton of Zürich) all gathered for the feasting and music of the sabbath.[58] Likewise Elisabeth Zurlauben listed only two locations as sites of the sabbath: the Meilacher and the Zuger *Allmend* upon which the forest was located.[59] While other confessions from around Europe (including in Zug) listed multiple sabbath landscapes, the decision to name only the Meilacher and the surrounding *Allmend* lands demonstrates a popular consensus on the role of this site in the popular imagination of early modern Zug. While Elisabeth Zurlauben and Anna Brandenberg confessed separately to

[55] Luthiger, "Ein Zugerisches Hexenurteil von 1615," 65,70.
[56] "*…da sy vermeint vil guot eßen vnd trinck', Gygen, Thrummen, vnd pfyffen, vnd allerley guot Leben da sye, syge aber Allwegen dernach nüt vnnd kein ersettigung gsynn*." Luthiger, "Ein Zugerisches Hexenurteil von 1615," 71.
[57] Luthiger, "Ein Zugerisches Hexenurteil von 1615," 73.
[58] Luthiger, "Ein Zugerisches Hexenurteil von 1615," 71.
[59] Luthiger, "Ein Zugerisches Hexenurteil von 1615," 67.

the crime of witchcraft, in 1615 there was evidently a consensus that the singular site of the sabbath was within or near the Meilacher forest.

While Zurlauben and Brandenberg were the first to confess to attending the sabbath in the Meilacher forest, they were far from the last. In 1660, Verena Schicker confessed to attending a sabbath in the Meilacher (*eichelacher*). In her death sentence, the scribe notes that she would take the stick given to her by her personal evil spirit, anoint it with salve in the Devil's name, and then fly to a variety of places, including the Zuger *Allmend* and the Meilacher, where she danced and feasted on all manner of foods, except for bread and salt.[60] Notably, Schicker also mentions that in the Meilacher, they were made to read from a book, a detail also included in the confession of Margareth Bär, another convicted witch executed with Verena Schicker.[61] The confessions of Verena Schicker and Margareth Bär came amidst a wave of witchcraft executions in Zug under the eye of Ammann Georg Sidler, who led the Canton in the execution of fifty-nine individuals for the crime of witchcraft during his two separate terms as Ammann, 30 from 1650-1652 and 29 in 1660, respectively.[62] Through these trials the Meilacher appears numerous times in confessions, almost exclusively as a site of the sabbath. On rare occasions, the forest was used for other purposes to the witchcraft narrative in addition to the sabbath. Barbara Steiner opened her 1651 witchcraft narrative by claiming that "for approximately eight years had encountered a young black dog in the Eichwald," a common disguise of the Devil, while Elßbeth Muoss stated that she had poisoned cows under the Meilacher's boughs.[63]

The Meilacher played such a major role in the imaginations of the women executed in the 1737 trials that it was the second most common location mentioned by the accused across the

[60] StAZG A 105/2 192B.
[61] StAZG A 105/2 193A.
[62] Brunner, *Das Rathaus in Zug*, 32.
[63] "das vngnahr vor acht jare ire im Eichwaldt ein junger schwartzer hundt begegnet..." StAZG A 105/2 fol. 292B; StAZG A 105/2 fol. 307A.

trial, second only to the Kloster Maria Opferung, the site of a mass death of cattle and livestock that helped spark the trial.[64] While for many of the accused, the Meilacher was the site of the sabbath alone, for Teresa Bossard, the Meilacher was where her temptation ended and the sabbath began. Following torture, on 21 August 1737 Teresa began her witchcraft confession, beginning with her seduction by the Devil which culminated in her renouncing her faith, signing her name in the Devil's book and renouncing the saints in his name as part of a ceremony with other witches held in the Meilacher forest. Following her admission to Satan's legions, she and a group of her fellow witches travelled together to the Meilacher at night, flying on sticks gifted to them by the Devil to participate in his sabbath.[65] Amidst this mass trial that brought ten to the stand and seven to the stake, all but one convicted witch, Teresa's sister Anna Maria Bossard, included the sabbath at the Meilacher in their witchcraft narratives.[66] Among these sabbath narratives was that of Lisi Bossard, the seventy-year-old aunt of the four Bossard sisters, and one of the key individuals of the 1737 trial. On 16 August, days into the trial, Katharina Kalbacher claimed that Lisi had been attending the sabbath for fourteen years, "and was last together in the Eichwald [Meilacher] on the Sunday before St. Mary Magdalene Day."[67] While Lisi initially denies this claim during her confrontation with Katharina, she eventually folds under torture, confessing on 22 August to stealing the Host from the monastery of Einsiedeln and dancing on it with evil spirits in the Meilacher for forty years.[68]

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[64] Larsen, "Mapping Maleficia," 114-116.
[65] StAZG A 105/6 fol. 37B-38A.
[66] For Katharina Kalbacher, see StAZG A 105/6 fol. 4A; for Margareth Bossard, see StAZG A 105/6 fol. 29B; for Katharina Bossard, see StAZG A 105/6 fol. 34B; for Lisi Bossard, see StAZG A 105/6 fol. 43B; for Maria Anna Petermann, see StAZG A 105/6 fol. 131A.
[67] "die lisi seye 14 Jahr allezeit bey Ihnen auff den Fletzen gewesen Und zuletst am Sontag vor St. Maria Magdalena tag Im Eichwald gewesen bey sammen." StAZG A 105/6 fol. 18B. St. Mary Magdalene Day falls on 22 July, weeks before Katharina Kalbacher first stood before the Ammann and Stadtrat.
[68] StAZG A 105/6 fol. 43A-43B.

Across nearly a century and a half, the Meilacher forest provided a near constant setting for the witches' sabbaths, a core pillar of the witchcraft fantasy in Zug. The complex and multifaceted narratives of space set in the Meilacher forest reflect a broader vision of forests as sites of the sabbath across the European witchcraft beliefs of the early modern era both in Zug and beyond. Alongside the Meilacher in the Zug trials, Barbara Schmidin mentions a sabbath held in a little forest between the Frauenthal convent in the northwestern edge of the canton, and Maschwanden, a village over the confessional and cantonal border with Zürich.[69] Similarly, Margareth Meyer describes a sabbath in a forest behind Riedmatt, a small village on the northern shores of the Zugersee between Zug and Cham.[70] Returning to the demonologies explored in the introduction, both Bodin and Guazzo discussed forested landscapes as sites of the witches' sabbath in their respective demonologies, while also appearing in the encyclopaedic *Deutsche Mythologie* of Jacob Grimm as a key landscape of the Germanic sabbath tradition. From the earliest years of early modern witchcraft belief, when the sabbath fantasy was still in its infancy, we see forests in the works of artists including Albrecht Aldorfer, Hans Baldung Grien, and Jan Ziarnko (Figs. 12-14). Many pieces used specific imagery within the forest to elicit emotions from the viewer. For example, such as Grien's *Witches Preparing for the Sabbath Flight or The Witches' Sabbath* centres upon a mossy and sinister tree, a landscape sketching convention generally associated with the Danube school of printmakers.[71] This representation of a tree follows the concept of *Gesamteindruck*, an idea used extensively by contemporary German artists such as Cranach where the realism of plant depictions mattered less than the overall emotion they were meant to elicit.[72] In later cases, such as Vittorio Maria Bigari's *A Witches' Sabbath* (Fig. 16) from

[69] StAZG A 105/2 fol. 292A.
[70] StAZG A 105/3 fol. 312A.
[71] Deanna Petherbridge, *Witches & Wicked Bodies* (Edinburgh: National Galleries Scotland, 2013), 84.
[72] Niklas Groschinski, "Cranach's Animals: A Study of their Form and Function" Master's Thesis (Warburg Institute, 2022), 29.

the mid eighteenth century, leafy and peaceful forests are used paradoxically to frame chaotic sabbath scenes.

With such an omnipresence in the imaginations of the sabbath, it is evident that forested landscapes were essential to the witchcraft fantasy across Europe but found a particular niche in the Germanic speaking world. To explore the relationship between forests and the witches' sabbath, it is vital to understand the complex role that forests played in life across Europe in the late medieval and early modern periods.

While the dark forests of the witches' sabbath narratives paint forests exclusively as landscapes to be feared and avoided, the human relationship with forested spaces of early modernity was not just about fear. Rather, the pre-industrial epoch should classified as the wooden age, in which wood (and thus the forest) was our most essential resource as both energy source and raw material.[73] In his study of the seventeenth-century *Forstamt* (Forest District) Leonberg in the Duchy of Württemberg, Paul Warde argues that "[t]here was basically no item, or economic or social activity, in early modern central Europe that did not involve wood in its production, transportation or environment. Wood provided, literally, the framework for everyday life."[74] Wood was how early modern Europeans cooked their food, heated their homes, built their structures, and constructed their machines. While the first inhabitants of the continent had used wood resources since their arrival on the European continent thousands of years before, the mass cultivation of wood as a resource for both use and for clearance for agriculture existed in Europe since the Neolithic, cementing itself as the primary resource for almost ten thousand years.[75]

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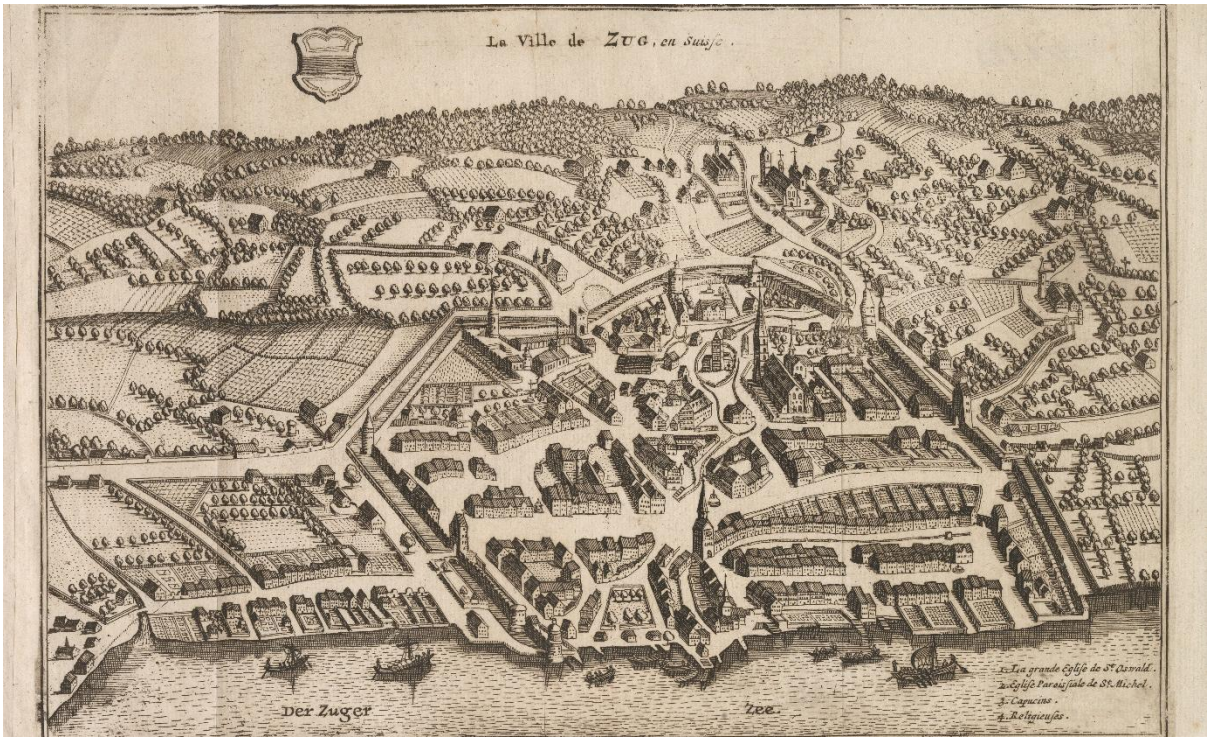
[73] Werner Sombart, *Der Moderne Kapitalismus* Band II.2 (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1902), 1138.
[74] Paul Warde, *Ecology, Economy and State Formation in Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 4.
[75] Michael Williams, *Deforesting the Earth: From Prehistory to Global Crisis - An Abridgement* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 42.

The primacy of wood in the pre-industrial epoch is made evident and measurable by the total space covered in forests. While data is not available about the total forested area of Switzerland until the nineteenth-century modern Confederation, we may turn to other European examples to understand its place in the world.[76] During its peak as a primary resource, wood power generated approximately twenty terajoules of heat energy in seventeenth century England, a number that equates roughly to 950 square miles, or 1.6% of the total land area of England and Wales. When combined with an approximation of total timber needed for construction purposes, only 4% of the land cover in England and Wales required sustainable forest cover, a number well below the 10% of the land covered in forests on the island in the preindustrial age.[77] The rest of the continent looked very different from the heavily deforested England - by the dawn of the early modern era, forest cover in central Europe remained static at approximately 40% according to modern pollen analysis, a decline of only approximately 20% over the previous two millennia of human expansion on the continent.[78] Swiss premodern deforestation has been viewed as a largely medieval phenomenon, with most of the process outside of the alpine valleys largely completed by the fourteenth century.[79] By the first nationwide land surveys in Switzerland from 1845 to 1848, the country had approximately 15% forest cover including both private and communal woodland, a percentage higher than England in the seventeenth century, but still lagging behind the European average.[80] The region around Zug, situated on the borders of the Central Swiss Plateau and the Alps was no exception. The earliest maps of Zug from the sixteenth and seventeenth century, such as the one seen in Figure 5, show the region west of the

[76] A.S. Mather and J. Fairbairn, 'From Floods to Reforestation: The Forest Transition in Switzerland" in *Environment and History* 6, no. 4 (November 2000): 400.
[77] Roland Ennos, *The Wood Age: How Wood Shaped the Whole of Human History* (London: William Collins, 2020), 173-174.
[78] Ennos, *The Wood Age*, 258.
[79] Albert Hauser, *Wald und Feld in der alten Schweiz: Beiträge zur schweizerischen Agrar- und Forstgeschichte* (Zürich: Verlag Artemis, 1972), 23.
[80] A.S. Mather and J. Fairbairn, "From Floods to Reforestation," 400.

Zugerberg as largely cleared of major forests and dotted with farms and villages, as it remains in the present.

Figure 5: Map of Zug, 1642, Matthäus Merian der Ältere. Staatsarchiv Zug.



The dawn of the early modern period saw sweeping changes to the way forests were viewed as resources. Wood, like many other essential resources to communal life, fell increasingly under the purview and direct control of government over the course of the late fifteenth and sixteenth century.[81] It was in this era that central Europe increasingly saw the creation of foresters and forest wardens to oversee the use of the forest and to regulate the extraction of resources.[82] The use of these administrative figures in the early modern German world demonstrate "…an attempt to reconcile competing claims and reduce the complexity and likely disputatiousness arising from everyday activities."[83] To reduce the likelihood of conflict over the resource and to extend state control beyond the borders of the city, the

[81] Warde, *Ecology, Economy, and State Formation in Early Modern Germany*, 163.
[82] Warde, *Ecology, Economy, and State Formation in Early Modern Germany*, 183-184.
[83] Warde, *Ecology, Economy, and State Formation in Early Modern Germany*, 83.

forester was tasked with maintaining the increasing levels of regulations over the wood resources of the managed forests and upholding the law. The level of power that the forester held over land that was essential for all aspects of life in early modern Europe could sometimes lead to conflict. Seen as an arm of governmental excess and the hoarding of resource, foresters were sometimes the target of serious legal complaints by peasants and citizens in Germany, including during the "Poor Conrad" rebellion of 1514, in which twelve out of fifty-four sections of the formal petition to the local authorities were directly connected to woodland and the responsibilities of the forester.[84]

The complex human relationship with forests spans millennia from prehistory to the present, a timeless bond that can be explored phenomenologically. While modern studies point toward a direct correlation between forests and both physical and mental wellbeing, these reactions are not universal and do not encapsulate the full phenomenological experience that forests can elicit – forests today can still be seen as places both loved and feared.[85] Sara Maitland paints this relationship with forests as a product of childhood, in which forests are a world where fairy tales inspire a lifelong sense of collective ownership and stewardship.[86] Tuan likewise rooted the emotional response to forests in childhood, but instead associated with a fear ingrained in the contrast between the cozy and bound world of the home and the forests' vastness, with "its breadth and the size of its towering trees being beyond the scale of a child's experience."[87] The forest is a space where vision is obscured by trees, where a child (or adult) can easily get disoriented and lost, a common fearful trope in the same fairy tales

[84] Warde, *Ecology, Economy, and State Formation in Early Modern Germany*, 176.
[85] See: Margaretha Häggström, "Being in the Forest – A Matter of Cultural Connections with a Natural Environment" in *Plants, People, Planet* 1, no. 3 (July 2019): 221-232; Margrete Skår, "Forest Dear and Forest Fear: Dweller's Relationships to their Neighbourhood Forest" in *Landscape and Urban Planning* 98 (2010): 110-116.
[86] Sara Maitland, *Gossip from the Forests: The Tangled Roots of our Forests and Fairy Tales* (London: Granta Books, 2012), 21.
[87] Tuan, *Landscapes of Fear*, 19.

that inspire a modern and recurring love of forests.[88] While some argue that this fear of getting lost represents a childhood anxiety around forested spaces, others see it as a deeper form of symbolism. Bruno Bettelheim argues that the unnavigable forest is a symbol of our own hidden and dark unconscious, where the wilderness is the chaos of our past self, a space where we must face our deepest fears (often symbolized by a witch) to emerge with a developed sense of humanity.[89] However, the fears that humans face in the forest are not solely relegated to the world of fantasy: forested areas with low visibility and high vegetation are favoured for violent criminal activity, leading to a dramatically reduced sense of safety for some in the forest, especially women.[90]

The emotions at the core of our relationship with forests have permeated our consciousness, influencing even the language associated with forested landscapes. Both the English term *forest* and the German *forst* share the same etymological roots, like the term *foreigner*, from the Latin *foranus*, meaning "situated on the outside."[91] Returning to Yi-Fu Tuan's concept of security being built upon the boundaries that humans construct, the forest is by this definition an inherently fearful landscape, a space where comfort fades beyond the bounds of direct human control.[92] Further analysis of etymology likewise points toward forests as places outside of human control, with the term *savage* used in the context of untamed wilderness stemming from the Latin *silva* for tree.[93] Such linguistic cues permeated common understanding and description of landscapes – the phrases wilderness and desert

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[88] Tuan, *Landscapes of Fear*, 21; See: Grimm and Grimm, *The Complete Grimm's Fairy Tales*, 53-59, 172-175, 221-234, 528-531.
[89] Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (London: Penguin Books, 1976), 93-96.
[90] Bonnie S. Fischer and Jack L. Nasar "Fear of Crime in Relation to Three Exterior Site Features: Prospect, Refuge, and Escape" in *Environment and Behaviour* 24, no. 1 (January 1992): 39-40; Skår, "Forest Dear and Forest Fear," 114.
[91] Tuan, *Landscapes of Fear*, 81; *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "forest (n.), Etymology," September 2023, https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/3752536072.
[92] Tuan, *Landscapes of Fear*, 206.
[93] *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "savage (adj. & n.1), Etymology," December 2023, https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/8040553981.

often meant forests rather than barren wastes in early modern writing.[94] Keith Thomas argues that such linguistic disdain for forested wilderness were compounded by biblical tradition. In Genesis 1:28 humanity is tasked to "replenish the Earth and subdue it" forging a disconnect between Christianity and the natural world that Thomas argues would cast a long shadow over early modern European relationships with the natural world, particularly forests.[95]

The basis of forests as landscapes of fear and dread has a long history in the European imagination. Radiocarbon dating and pollen analysis points toward a period of relative stasis in European forest distribution for the past four thousand years, meaning that European forests have maintained similar biomes for the entirety of recorded human history on the continent, and the distribution of tree species gained its current composition two thousand years ago.[96] By the classical era, deforestation had claimed some of the forests around the centres of empires, in particular around the Mediterranean. During the expansion into northern Europe, the Roman Empire was the first to write about the vastness of the Hercynian oak forest that covered much of Germany. To writers such as Tacitus and Strabo, "[t]he German forest was wilderness, the place of strange beings and wild beasts, and the abode of hostile Germanic tribal groups who were a match for the legions."[97] These were regions that seemed to the Roman mind impenetrable far from the cultivated heartland of the empire, a wild hinterland to the imperial heartland. The Roman reaction to the Germanic wilds would inform European imaginations of forested spaces for centuries to come. In England, Geoffery of Monmouth placed the site of Merlin's descent into madness in the forest of Calidon, becoming a wild man and reflecting the common experience of the mentally ill as wanderers

[94] Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, 194.
[95] Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, 14-15.
[96] Williams, *Deforesting the Earth*, 8.
[97] Williams, *Deforesting the Earth*, 70.

in medieval England's forests.[98] Dante Alighieri begins his famous fourteenth century *Divina Commedia* in a dark forest, a sight of confusion and fear symbolizing the fear tied to an existential crisis: "Midway along the journey of our life / I woke to find myself in a dark wood, / for I had wandered off from the straight path. / How hard it is to tell what it was like, / this wood of wilderness, savage and stubborn (the thought of it brings back all my old fears) …"[99]

While the disorientation and frightfulness of forests appears in the imagination across medieval Europe, it is perhaps most evident in the Germanic heartland, the home of the former Hercynian forest. In medieval German literature, "…we hear at times that individuals withdraw into the forest out of frustration with their previous existence or that they are forced to leave the court and find refuge in the forest because of profound conflicts with their lord or society at large… In other words, the forest can prove to be a meaningful space, not by itself as an ecotope, but as an alternative location, either life threatening or life preserving."[100] The fear and chaos inspired by forest landscapes is particularly evident in Konrad von Würzburg's thirteenth century *Partonopier und Meliur*. Here we see the protagonist, the titular Partonopier, left alone in the middle of the forest on a hunt when his bloodthirsty hounds abandon him for fresh prey. Von Würzburg underscores his hero's terror at being left in the forest alone, fearing a night alone in the "wild, uncanny forest" where mere moments before he had been heroically fighting wild beasts.[101] Such a contrast exemplifies the dualistic role forests played in the pre-modern European imagination.

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[98] Chris Philo, "The 'Chaotic Spaces' of Medieval Madness: Thoughts on the English and Welsh Experience" in *Nature and Society in Historical Context*, eds. Mikuláš Teich, Roy Porter, and Bo Gustafsson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 55, 75.
[99] Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, Vol. 1: *Inferno*, trans. Mark Musa (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), 67.
[100] Albrecht Classen, *The Forest in Medieval German Literature: Ecocritical Readings from a Historical Perspective* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015), 12
[101] Classen, *The Forest in Medieval German Literature*, 145-146.

By the time diabolical witchcraft first emerged in the western Swiss alps in the late medieval period, forests had been a complex and multifaceted landscape in the *mentalités* of Europeans for millennia. However, the era of witch trials also coincided with new developments in art amidst the Renaissance, including the rise of landscape art.[102] In late medieval German art, shifts toward landscape-centred art began in religious contexts, as previously gold backgrounds were filled with greenery, often reflecting naturally occurring combinations of plants mixed with symbolically important flora, pointing toward an increased spatial consciousness and ecological awareness.[103] By the early sixteenth century, trees and forests began to take over the German artistic world, as artists reimagined the Hercynian forest as part of central German identity, a common place that placed the tree at the centre of both real and imagined places.[104] In the early years of the sixteenth century, Albrecht Altdorfer pioneered new approaches in art that shrunk the human subject usually held at the centre of the piece in favour of the natural world, "pris[ing] landscape out of a merely supplementary relationship to subject matter."[105] Altdorfer's approach to landscape reflects shifting views of nature and landscape in the role in art, one that would continue to evolve over the course of the early modern era.

From this broad perspective, we can clearly see a complicated relationship between humans and forests in the early modern period. Forests were sites of intensive primary resource extraction at the heart of the wooden age. They were the settings for romance and wonder. They were symbols of our darkest fears. By combining this collage of emotions regarding the forest, we are afforded an understanding of why these landscapes were the ideal settings for the sabbath fantasy. The witches' sabbath needed a location that was accessible

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[102] Wood, *Albrecht Altdorfer and the Origins of Landscape*, 74.
[103] Ülle Sillasoo, "Landscapes, Vegetation, and Folklore in Late Medieval Art: An Iconographic Study Based on Selected Austrian and South German Panel Paintings" in *Landscape Research* 39, no. 4 (2014): 456, 474-475.
[104] Wood, *Albrecht Altdorfer and the Origins of Landscape*, 151, 189.
[105] Wood, *Albrecht Altdorfer and the Origins of Landscape*, 25.

yet removed from everyday life, a relatable place that existed on the margins of the world. After a thousand years of society-wide place-making, European forests were a perfect landscape to place the sabbath, hidden in plain sight in a space sure to evoke an instinctive fear of the unknown.

Returning to the case study of the Meilacher, Zug's oak forest presented a perfect storm of these pre-conditions for the witches' sabbath. While clearly bounded and small enough to be easily navigable, the Meilacher fit many of the other preconditions of the spatial anxieties of the time. Due to transportation constraints, communal forests such as the Meilacher needed to be close to the main population centre, bringing the population into close contact with the forest. Located just beyond the city walls, maps of the area from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries show that the Meilacher could have been seen from the edge of the city, with a full view from any of the hills on Zug's eastern side. The forest was a visible and looming presence from the city, akin to the mountains explored in Chapter I, never far from the imaginations of the people. However, the Meilacher was also a forest that served an important role in Zug as an oak reserve. Like many cantons in late medieval and early modern Switzerland, Zug's *Bürgergemeinde* was a major landholder of common space for the canton, controlling the use of collective resources for the population. Forests across Switzerland in the premodern era could generally be divided into three distinct categories: dominion forests, private forests, and communal/*Bürgergemeinde* forests.[106] Zug's forest resources were overwhelmingly community-centric. While no records exist prior to the year 1800 outlining woodland ownership in the canton, even after waves of late eighteenth and

[106] Stuber and Wunderli, "Transformations of Common Pastures and Woodlands in Switzerland," 26. For the German context on communal forests, see: Warde, *Ecology, Economy, and State Formation in Early Modern Germany*, 106-107.

nineteenth century privatization, 62% of Zug's woodland was owned by the community in the twentieth century.[107]

The Meilacher was communal, meaning that its use was carefully managed by the government of Zug. As a public good, forests were often the source of public debate and discussion over laws and infractions, with 220 cases appearing in the city council meeting minutes between the sixteenth and seventeenth century, many of which concerned the Meilacher.[108] In 1694, Baumeister Martin Brandenberg was brought before the council, charged with felling trees in the Meilacher without obtaining the permission of the *Bürgergemeinde*. For punishment, he was banned from harvesting wood from the Meilacher and all other local forests "without the permission of the staff leader and the council."[109] A 1657 incident involving three men of Zug damaging an oak tree in the Meilacher saw the removal of citizen status for the men along with a brief imprisonment in the tower.[110] Such incidents were not uncommon. Improper use of wood resources belonging to the *Bürgergemeinde* could result in steep fines, imprisonment, and the most serious punishment, revocation of citizenship rights, including the use of all communal resources.[111] However, not all interactions between the community and the forest were restrictive. As a public good, the forest required extensive care and management by the citizenry. In 1719, when the forest floor was becoming increasingly unnavigable with thorns and thistles, residents driving their cows through the Meilacher toward the neighbouring *Allmend* were asked to help clear the forest floor.[112] Likewise, the other cantonal oak forest reserves (such as those around

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[107] Daniel Schläppi, "Sorge um Wald und Bäume als Kerngeschäft vormoderner Politik und Verwaltung. Das Beispiel der Schweizer Kleinstadt Zug" in *Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture Online* 1 (2017): Holz in der Vormoderne: 14.
[108] Schläppi, "Sorge um Wald und Bäume als Kerngeschäft vormoderner Politik und Verwaltung," 29
[109] BüA Zug A 39.26.9.899. "*Künftig darf er weder dort noch in anderen Wäldern ohne Erlaubnis des Stabführers und des Rats Holz hauen*."
[110] BüA Zug A 39.26.3.1995.
[111] Schläppi, "Sorge um Wald und Bäume als Kerngeschäft vormoderner Politik und Verwaltung," 29.
[112] BüA Zug A 39.26.17.175.

Hünenberg to the northwest) were used as foraging grounds for cows and pigs by local farmers, meaning the Meilacher was also likely a site for woodland foraging next to the common pastures of the *Allmend*.[113]

While careful resource management through maintenance and punishment was a cornerstone of the *Bürgergemeinde*'s relationship with the forest, this level of micromanagement was not immune to anxieties surrounding resource scarcity. Early modern Europe was the site of extensive anxiety about wood scarcity, with people across the continent commenting on their fears that forests were in decline.[114] Though the ordinances of the city protected forests such as the Meilacher to a point, anxieties surrounding scarcity would sometimes boil over into complete bans on the extraction of wood from the Meilacher. In 1611 the citizenry was banned from the removal of any trees from all communal forests, including the Meilacher, for five years to help allow for new forest growth and regeneration.[115] Notably, this ban period overlaps with the first appearance of the Meilacher as a sabbath site in the trial of Zurlauben and Brandenberg. The links between *Bürgergemeinde* forestry bans and the appearance of the sabbath do not end in 1611. In 1737, the same year that saw Zug's final major witch hunt and the last discussions of the witches' sabbath in the Meilacher, the *Bürgergemeinde* banned all felling of trees within the Meilacher by any private individual indefinitely, granting full protection to the forest.[116] However, this ordinance did not last: in 1739, an enormous storm felled many of Zug's trees, including many of the Meilacher oaks, and the community were given permission to extract timbers from the forest once more.[117]

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[113] Hüppi, *Zugerland*, 24.
[114] Paul Warde, *The Invention of Sustainability: Nature and Destiny, c. 1500-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 65.
[115] Schläppi, "Sorge um Wald und Bäume als Kerngeschäft vormoderner Politik und Verwaltung," 21.
[116] BüA Zug A 239.26.25b.400.
[117] BüA Zug A 39.26.26.

How do these snapshots of the Meilacher demonstrate the power of landscape over the collective imagination? And why did the Meilacher assume the role of sabbath landscape as opposed to the other forests of Zug? I argue that the Meilacher was specifically imagined as the site of the witches' sabbath on the basis of exclusivity and proximity. The legally mandated status of the Meilacher forest blurs the line between public and private, collective and individual. The Meilacher was a coveted space of the best wood in the canton, under the direct control of the *Bürgergemeinde*, and thus off limits to all those who did not have the express permission of this select group of citizens to harvest its resources. Punishments for breaching this agreement between the people and the *Bürgergemeinde*, as seen in the records above, were serious, further cementing the forest as a separate, liminal space where the rules of society constricted. By the time of the 1737 trial, where the Meilacher appears most extensively as the site of the sabbath, such legal restrictions around the forest tightened even further, fully separating the Meilacher as a useable space from the populace of Zug for brief periods. Such a shift from the usual relationship between society and forest amidst the wooden age would have added even more complexity to the emotions already surrounding forested landscapes. In addition to the exclusivity based on resource restrictions, the closeness of the Meilacher to the city of Zug would have centred more thought on this landscape as opposed to others. The peripheral oak forest was a spatial pattern across Switzerland, where many of the native oak stands had been cut and burnt away to make pasture land in the medieval period.[118] As an oak reserve, the trees of the Meilacher were among the finest and oldest in the canton in comparison to the birch and conifer forests that dominate the slopes of the Zugerberg, while the main oak stands were (and remain) in the western edges of the canton surrounding the village of Hünenberg.[119] However, not only was

[118] Hauser, *Wald und Feld in der alten Schweiz*, 46.
[119] Hüppi, *Zugerland*, 24.

the Meilacher the closest forest in proximity to the city of Zug, but it was directly adjacent to the Zuger *Allmend*, the communal pastoral land. This landscape, which will be explored in the following section, was the heart of the community's wealth and wellbeing, the site where even the poorest could graze their cattle. With the Meilacher adjacent, separated only by a small wooden fence, the proximity of the forest to the cows would have amplified all anxieties surrounding the forest. The Meilacher, already a landscape of fear and anxiety due to the societal imagination of forests, had fully become the forbidden fruit, where the one resource essential to almost every single aspect of early modern life sat tantalizingly just out of reach. Separating this specific stand of trees placed the regulations of the *Bürgergemeinde* above God's command for human dominion over the natural world – it is little wonder that the Meilacher became the domain of Satan and the gathering place for his witches in the collective imagination.

The Allmend – The Field

While the centuries have changed the face of Zug, hints about its pastoral history remain. Walking through even the most modern of districts along the Chamerstraße on the Zugersee's northern edge, one is never far removed from cows. In front of some major landmarks, painted sculptures of cattle are used as decoration. The Bossard Arena[120] is plastered in the white bull logo of the local Eissportverein Zug ice hockey team, while across the street, the Stierenmarktareal still serves as a bull market every summer amidst great festivities. Even in the heart of the city on a hot summer day, the faint aroma of cows can be detected wafting in the from the fields surrounding Zug. Cattle still wander on the slopes of the Zugerberg, casually watching hikers and vehicles alike pass on their way to the higher altitude villages of Ägeri, Menzingen, and Allenwinden as they gorge themselves on the

[120] Named after the same family from which the Bossard women of the 1737 trial hailed, their fortunes changed in the nineteenth century, and they became among the wealthiest families in the city.

verdant subalpine meadow grasses, their cowbells dominating an otherwise quiet soundscape. The obsession with the cow extends far beyond the cantonal borders of Zug. There is perhaps no greater symbol of the entire Swiss Confederation than the cow, and signs of its supremacy in Swiss society permeate across the country. Locally made cheeses fill the dairy refrigerators of grocery stores, Swiss chocolatiers boast of the fine fresh milk that makes Swiss chocolate world renowned, and the iconic carved wooden cows of the Trauffer brand sit on the shelves of Swiss homes and souvenir shops as proud symbols of the country. Swiss tennis champion Roger Federer has been gifted two cows in his lengthy and successful career – he received a cow named Juliette after his Wimbledon win in 2003 and one named Desiree after enrolling in the Swiss Open in 2013.[121] Around the world the cow has been made a symbol of the rural ideal, of domestication and man's mastery over the natural world. Cows sit at the forefront of mythos and religions, of sport and culture worldwide.[122]

The symbiotic relationship between the Swiss and the cow spans across millennia. The first cattle arrived in the lands of modern Switzerland in the second half of the sixth millennium BC, swiftly taking over the lower slopes of the Alps and dominating the regional economy.[123] The first Neolithic cattle farmers of Switzerland used the animals primarily for meat before swiftly turning to milk and labour, sustaining their pile-dwelling communities such as the one at Riedmatt on the northern shores of the Zugersee, a short walk from the early modern *Allmend* cattle field.[124] Successive periods of cultural peaks and declines saw fluctuations in the size of both herds and the cattle themselves from the Neolithic through to

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[121] Bill Scott, "Farmyard fanfare for Federer," The Guardian, published 9 July 2003, https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2003/jul/09/tennis; Joe Strange, "New cow on the block! Federer honoured with bovine gift ahead of Swiss Open return (but why is he using a bigger racket?" Daily Mail, published 24 July 2013, https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/tennis/article-2376435/Federer-given-gift-cow-ahead-Swiss-Open-return.html.
[122] See: Hannah Velten, *Cow* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 2007), 31-155.
[123] José Granado, et al. "The mtDNA D-Loop Legacy of Cattle: Fluctuations in Diversity from the Neolithic to Early Medieval Times in Switzerland" in *Diversity* 15, no. 5 (May 2023): 687.
[124] Granado et al. "The mtDNA D-Loop Legacy of Cattle," 688.

the early Medieval period. Eras of greater population health and societal administration saw greater use of the species such as the era of Roman administration, followed by the subsequent collapse of cattle population health after the decline of the empire in the fifth century. The early medieval period saw one of the greatest drops in bovine population in Switzerland, as cattle experienced poorer health and subsequently poorer meat and milk yields. However, the eleventh and twelfth century saw a rapid return to the cow-centric economy as cattle populations recovered and animal sizes began to return to Roman levels.[125] This return of the cow to its position in Swiss society coincides with the beginning of the modern transhumance in the Swiss Alps.

The transhumance, the annual movement of livestock into the fertile alpine meadows of summer and return to low altitude barns for the winter, is a process seen around the world in alpine regions with distinct variations based on culture and geography.[126] Fernand Braudel described the transhumance of the Mediterranean world as a product of geography and ecosystem management, balancing the weight of agricultural demands on arable lands.[127] Following the seasons, herders utilize the opening and closing of high mountain areas to feed their animals, allowing for mixed land use and plant rejuvenation at lower altitudes aiding the long term health of the land. Evidence points toward this practice dating to the earliest adoption of animal husbandry in the Neolithic, but the history of the transhumance in Switzerland is far murkier.[128] Climatic fluctuations throughout the early medieval period prevented access to high alpine slopes, as glaciers in the Alps expanded and the tree line dropped as much as 300m below current levels, meaning that herders lost grazing access to

[125] Granado et al. "The mtDNA D-Loop Legacy of Cattle," 688-689.
[126] Christine Jurt, Isabel Häberli, and Ruth Rossier, "Transhumance Farming in Swiss Mountains: Adaptation to a Changing Environment" in *Mountain Research and Development* 35, no. 1 (February 2015): 57.
[127] Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, vol. I, trans. Siân Reynolds (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), 95.
[128] See: Louis Chaix, "Le bétail en movement, du néolithique à l'âge du fer: Aspects méthodologiques et données archéozoologiques" in *Transhumance et estivage en Occident: des origins aux enjeux actuels*, ed. Pierre-Yves Laffont (Toulouse: Presses universitaires du Midi, 2006): 31-48.

higher fields and pastures.[129] However, rapidly growing urban populations in the lower valleys and plains between the late twelfth and early fourteenth centuries placed increasing demands on agriculture. This population explosion coincided with a stabilizing climate, when winters were milder due to a strong westerly airstream allowing for access to higher grazing lands and the opening of new mountain passes such as the Gotthard.[130] Herders brought their cattle to higher elevations and new pastures, villages moved onto higher alpine slopes upwards of 2000m above sea level, and the Swiss landscape became dominated by cows at a level not yet seen.[131] The verdant high alpine meadows were only accessible during the short alpine summers, though, meaning that cattle needed to be brought to lower altitudes in the winter, where they were kept in common fields and barns nearer to urban centres and settlements.[132]

From this point, cattle became the dominant form of animal agriculture in Switzerland, extending into early modernity. While land use for crops expanded steadily, the change toward pasture and grazing land came rapidly, as farms began to expand and focus more heavily on the keeping of livestock over the medieval peasant farming system.[133] Privatisation of more lands through farmland expansion came with an increasing dependence on cattle - in the sixteenth century, on average each cow produced 600-800 litres of milk per year in Switzerland.[134] Per head, between cheese and milk, they produced nearly half of the total caloric intake of a farming family between 1650 and 1670, discounting the meat that the cow would provide upon its butchering.[135] This intensified dependence on the cow came with

[129] Paul J. Brändli, "Mittelalterliche Grenzstreitigkeiten im Alpenraum" in *Mitteilungen des Historischen Vereins des Kanton Schwyz* 78 (1986): 24.
[130] Bruce M.S. Campbell, *The Great Transition: Climate, Disease, and Society in the Late-Medieval World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 5; Church and Head, *A Concise History of Switzerland*, 13.
[131] Church and Head, *A Concise History of Switzerland*, 12.
[132] Steinberg, *Why Switzerland?,* 17.
[133] Brändli, "Mittelalterliche Grenzstreitigkeiten im Alpenraum," 33.
[134] Hauser, *Wald und Feld in der alten Schweiz*, 177.
[135] Hauser, *Wald und Feld in der alten Schweiz*, 191.

a need for common resources, where everything essential for the community's livestock could be found and shared as needed. As described in our discussion of the forest, the advent of early modernity brought an increased level of protection to common spaces in the face of this privatisation and population expansion. Rules and regulations by governing bodies such as the *Bürgergemeinde* were created to ensure that the community had access to the resources essential to life, such as the milk and meat providing cattle at the centre of Swiss society.

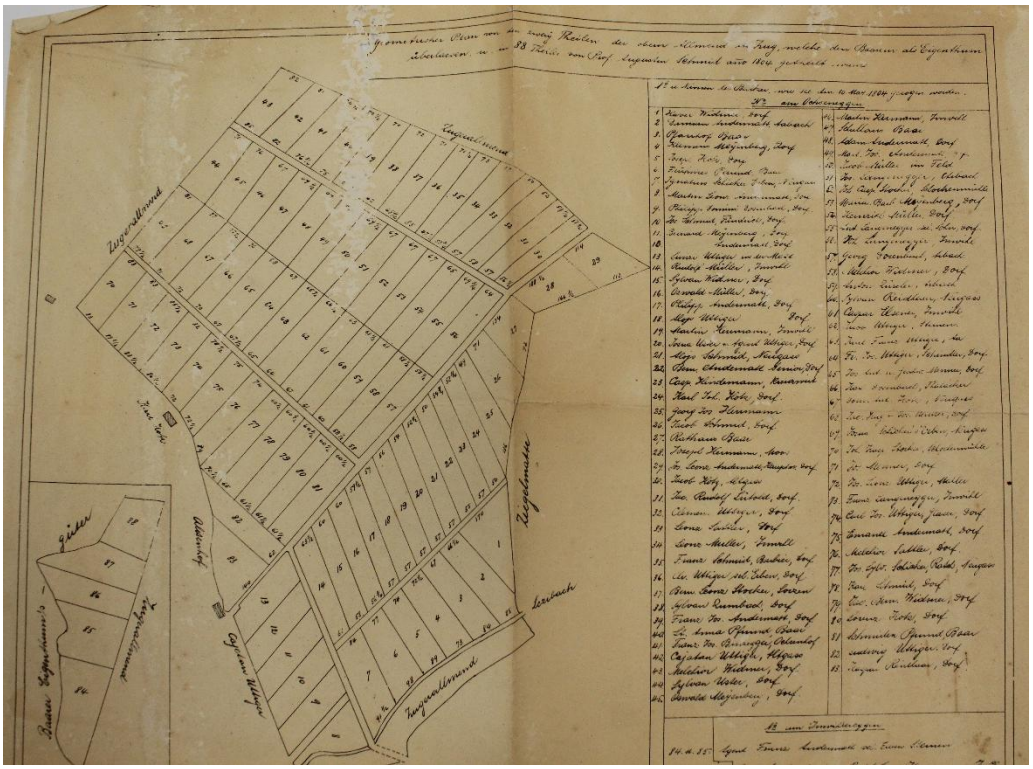
The *Allmend* was a parcel of common pastureland that any community member could graze their cattle upon, regardless of whether they owned private farmland. Here, even the poorest of Swiss families could keep their cows safe during the winter when the higher altitude meadows were closed by snow, or close to their homes in the city during the summer months where they could be cared for and milked at the owners' leisure. Much like the history of the transhumance, the origins of the *Allmend* remain clouded, with some nineteenth century romantic historians imagining the legal protection of common land as a leftover from the classical past, while others argued they were founded with the Germanic invasions. However, the first documentary evidence of the *Allmend* in Swiss society comes from the thirteenth century, coinciding with the sudden dominance of the cow, the steady privatization of land, and the expansion of the state in the high and late medieval period.[136] The increased demands of medieval society and the management of space created a landscape chequered with common lands surrounding most major settlements that remained for centuries. The Zuger *Allmend*, however, is no more. Parcelled off in the late eighteenth century for private ownership as seen in a map from 1805 (Fig. 6), the land is now covered by sports training facilities, an ice hockey arena, administrative buildings, and Staatsarchiv Zug, where the trial documents are held. Like the Meilacher, there are only a handful of remnants of the *Allmend*:

[136] Martin Leonhard, "Allmend" in *Historiches Lexikon der Schweiz*, last modified May 17, 2001, https://hls-dhs-dss.ch/de/articles/013704/2001-05-17/.

the Allmendstraße that took its name from the land, and the Stierenmarktareal, where prized cattle are still sold in an annual festival, located on the edge of the former *Allmend* lands.

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Figure 6: Divisions of the Zuger Allmend, 1805. Stadtarchiv Zug.



In the witch trial records of Zug, the memory of the *Allmend* lives on. The Zuger *Allmend* frequently appears as the site of the sabbath, exemplified in the major hunt of 1660 under Ammann Georg Sidler. After her temptation ten years before, Adelheid Wissmer of Honau, Luzern, recounted that the Devil "gave her a black salve in a paper, and anointed it on a little stick in the Devil's name and travelled to the smith at the *Allmend* and to the Meilacher for the sabbath."[137] Likewise, her co-accused, Anna Barbara Rudolff travelled far across the German speaking lands on her stick, from Swabia to Zug, before attending the sabbath atop the Baarburg, in the Lorzentobel, in the Meilacher, and on the *Allmend*.[138]

[137] StAZG A 105/4, fol. 27a. "…*item er hab ire nauch in einem papyr schwartz salbe gebe, damitt ein stöcklj ins Tüffelsn amen angesalbet vff allmendt zue schmidte vnd zue eichelacher vff Täntz vnd Gastmähler gfaren*."
[138] StAZG A 105/4, fol. 37b.

Meanwhile Anna Twerenbold of Hünenberg's sabbath narratives about the Allmend were much broader. Not only did Anna attend the sabbath on the Zuger *Allmend*, where she feasted on all things but bread and salt, but also on the *Allmend* lands of Immensee and Stettlen, in the cantons of Luzern and Bern respectively, along with the *Allmend* of Cham within the borders of the canton of Zug. At the sabbath on the Immenseer *Allmend* she confessed to poisoning a child with a salve, while the sabbath on the Chamer *Allmend* she saw a cow and its calf poisoned.[139] No *Allmend* was seemingly safe from hosting a sabbath, as fields both within Zug's cantonal borders and beyond were included in the confession narratives.

To understand the role that the *Allmend* fields played in the narratives of the witches' sabbath in Zug, we must first understand the role of cows in witchcraft narratives in Zug and beyond. In Zug, every trial from the seventeenth century onward featured the death of cattle as a key aspect of witch trials. Cows were the most prominent features of the accused's narratives of their crimes at the end of the trial, with dozens of cows sometimes listed in each trial, along with oxen, pigs, sheep, and sometimes chickens. The accused describe how the Devil provided them with powders or salves, sometimes made at the sabbath, which they would throw into the mouth and noses of the animals or smear over their bodies, poisoning them. These narratives were often, but not always, set on the *Allmend*. Between 1733 and 1737, 42 or 43 cows and bulls had fallen ill on the lands of the Kloster Maria Opferung, on the city's eastern border just beyond the city walls.[140] The intense anxiety surrounding this apparent attack on holy ground was one of the contributing factors to the 1737 trials and featured in the accused's confessions. Katharina Bossard confessed on 27 August that over the past years she had poisoned some of the livestock, and stolen forty or fifty coins from the Mother's room, a story embellished by her sister Teresa and fellow accused Katharina

[139] StAZG A 105/4, fol. 20a.
[140] StAZG A 105/6, this *foliant* was inserted into the front cover of the trial record, and therefore was not included in the total *foliant* page count.

Kalbacher who claimed to have poisoned over one hundred cows and stolen one hundred *gulden*.[141]

The relationship between cattle and witchcraft extends far beyond the borders of Zug. The alpine region, as the birthplace of diabolical witchcraft in the late medieval period, was one of the first regions to create links between cattle and witchcraft. Richard Kieckhefer notes that the earliest trials for magic in the mid to late fourteenth century prominently featured cows unable to produce milk.[142] During the Simmenthal witch trials in the diocese of Lausanne from 1395-1406, one of the earliest examples of diabolical witch trials, judge Peter von Greyerz prosecuted numerous people for the crime of witchcraft including one Stedelen, a man who confessed to being a chief witch. Stedelen confessed to a variety of crimes attacking fertility including pregnant cows, "none of which gave birth to any living thing for [many] years..."[143] Attacks on livestock continued in Swiss witchcraft narratives through the fifteenth century, including those held in Luzern, just over twenty-five kilometres from Zug.[144] However, cows were not exclusive to Swiss witchcraft narratives. In the *Malleus Maleficarum*, Heinrich Kramer dedicates a chapter to the harm that witches can inflict upon domestic animals, focusing on cows. Kramer describes instances across southern Germany from Ravensburg to Augsburg in which cattle were harmed by diabolical magic, both preventing the flow of milk and killing cows through touch and poison.[145] In the southwestern German village of Obermarchtal, Ursula Götz confessed to using a black salve given to her by the Devil to kill eighty-eight domestic animals, including cows, sheep, and horses. This trial, held in 1627 or almost one hundred and fifty years after the publication of

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[141] StAZG A 105/6 61B-62A, 68A-68B.
[142] Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 249.
[143] "*Simile fecit in eadem domo omnibus pecoribus fetosis, quorum nullum vivum partum edidit in eisdem annis…*" A brief account overview of the Simmenthal trials is included in Johannes Nider's Formicarius, with a transcription provided by Joseph Hansen. Joseph Hansen, *Quellen und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Hexenwahns und der Hexenverfolgung im Mittelalter* (Bonn: C. Georgi, 1901), 93.
[144] Stokes, *Demons of Urban Reform*, 17, 71-74.
[145] Mackay, trans., *The Hammer of the Witches*, 375-379.

the *Malleus Maleficarum*, points toward the longevity of livestock narratives in southern Germany.[146] Outside of the Germanic speaking world, cows remained the targets of witches. Polish witchcraft tradition held witches as milk thieves, whose primary form of *maleficia* was "drying up" their victims, taking life-giving milk from one person's cow and transferring it to their own.[147] Across the English Channel in Cheshire, witchcraft accusations involving cattle attacks predate any attacks against humans, as the first case of witchcraft brought before the Court of Great Sessions in 1590 centred around a woman accused of bewitching a cow.[148] Even across the Atlantic, in the relative isolation of Iceland, seventeenth century witchcraft trials featured attacks on livestock, far removed from the alpine origins of early modern diabolical witchcraft belief.[149]

With such widespread presence in witchcraft trials across time and regions, many historians have explored the role of cows within the early modern imagination that led to their extensive representation in trial records. In Michael Ostling's analysis of the Polish *mentalité*, cows represent the guardians of a "limited good", their milk required for survival but present in only limited quantities that had to be shared by the entire community. Milk theft and the killing of cattle was the transfer of this precious resource from one individual to another through magical means, unfairly balancing the limited good in favour of the witch.[150] This interpretation stands in contrast with the Freudian model proposed by Lyndal Roper and Deborah Willis, in which milk represents nourishment and fertility and the witch figure stands as an inversion of the natural and maternal world order.[151] However, neither of these

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[146] Roper, *Witch Craze*, 3, 158.
[147] Ostling, *Between the Devil and the Host*, 126-128.
[148] James Sharpe, *Witchcraft in Early Modern England*, 2nd edition (London: Routledge, 2020), 23.
[149] Rune Blix Hagen, "Witchcraft Criminality and Witchcraft Research in the Nordic Countries" in *The Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe and Colonial America*, 2nd edition, ed. Brian P. Levack (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 382.
[150] Ostling, *Between the Devil and the Host*, 124.
[151] Lyndal Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil,* 208; Deborah Willis, *Malevolent Nurture: Witch-Hunting and Maternal Power in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 39.

approaches provide a wholly satisfactory explanation of why the *Allmend* were such prevalent landscapes in sabbath narratives. The sabbath as described in Zug did not involve milk theft, and most of the crimes listed by the accused against cows were animal poisonings rather than milk spoiling. From a spatial view, the *Allmend* was not a location intrinsically associated with milking either, but rather with grazing.[152] Instead, I argue that we must view both the attacks on cows and the sabbath narratives set in the *Allmend* from a new perspective that fits within the context of the Zug trials: that the sabbath and poisonings were attacks on the health and well-being of the *collective* community.

To understand this approach, we must look at the symbolism and meaning behind the *Allmend* landscapes. At the heart of the Swiss *Allmend* system is the concept of the commons. Much like the Meilacher forest, the Allmend was a common space, administered by the local *Bürgergemeinde* or community organization. However, unlike its forest counterpart, the *Allmend* was not faced with such intense written regulations. Where the use of the wood resources from the Meilacher were restricted by the *Bürgergemeinde* to select members of the community who had previously obtained permission, the *Allmend* was free for all members of the community to graze their cattle, meaning the animals of the richest and the poorest members of Zug's community were held in the same space. The health of the entire community was dependent on the health of the cattle in the Allmend, rather than that of a single family or individual. The unexpected death of a cow on the Allmend would financially decimate an individual, but the concept of the mass death of the community's most valuable source of food and economic stability would be enough to spark mass anxiety. On a smaller community scale, we return to the example of the Kloster Maria Opferung in the early eighteenth century. In 1733, one of the Kloster's cattle fell ill, and by 1737, 42 or 43 cows

[152] While both barns and fields were used for milking across early modern Europe, the primary function of the Allmend was for grazing and reproduction. Markus Mattmüller, "Allmend" in *Historiches Lexikon der Schweiz*, last modified May 17, 2001, https://hls-dhs-dss.ch/de/articles/013704/2001-05-17/.

and bulls had fallen ill, along with sheep, pigs, and other livestock.[153] These cattle deaths became the heart of the 1737 witch trial that ravaged the city, resulting in eight executions, with many of the accused describing how they poisoned these cows. The example of the Kloster demonstrates the anxieties produced by attacks against privately-owned land and how it spilled over into a full panic including common lands, given the frequent inclusion of *Allmends* in the narratives of the accused in 1737.[154] When animals died inexplicably on the *Allmend*, where an entire community's cattle grazed, the level of anxiety was amplified on a city-wide level. If one person's cow was at risk of death by diabolical means, all cows grazing in that space were in imminent danger.

These fears about privately-owned cattle grazing on commonly held land coincided with changing attitudes and regulations about common space across Europe. The erosion of common lands in the face of private ownership has been a steady process seen across Europe since the end of the medieval period stretching to the present.[155] The transition from the late medieval period into early modernity through the fifteenth and sixteenth century saw the dramatic reduction of the commons across Western Europe in favour of more profitable private land use. The social rejection of common landscapes reached its zenith in the years immediately after the last witch trials, with some liberal reformers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries decrying the commons as "remnants of a bygone age, standing in the way of progress, enlightenment, and commerce."[156] However, these external attacks on the commons coincided with increased protectionism on a community level during the early modern period. Common resources were guarded more closely to prevent use by foreign

[153] StAZG A 105/6, this *foliant* was inserted into the front cover of the trial record, and therefore was not included in the total *foliant* page count.
[154] See: StAZG A 105/6 39B, 41A, 43A, 45B, 60B, 97A.
[155] See: Guy Standing, *Plunder of the Commons: A Manifesto for Sharing Public Wealth* (London: Pelican, 2019).
[156] Daniel R. Curtis, "Did the Commons Make Medieval and Early Modern Rural Societies more Equitable? A Survey of Evidence from across Western Europe, 1300-1800" in *Journal of Agrarian Change* 16, no. 4 (October 2016): 647.

parties or community members who did not receive the permissions to utilize them.[157] Village communities were tasked with maintaining the stability of these environmental resources across centuries, especially when agriculture was the primary form of economic activity in the region. The decline in the commons, and the erosion of the rules and regulations surrounding them, coincided with the divergence of economic interests and changes in demographics, as seen across Europe in the early modern period.[158] These rules were essential to the maintenance of the commons as a resource, however, much of the actual usage rights and agreements that governed the Germanic agricultural commons were unwritten conventions, meaning that much of our knowledge on how commons were managed and exploited is lost.[159]

Despite the lack of sources on commons management, evidence from Swabia points to an economically stratified model of land use. In the years following the 1525 German Peasants' War, Swabia saw a division of the population between the wealthier *Bauern* class and the poorer *Seldner* class. While both *Bauern* and *Seldner* classes were agricultural workers in rural regions, the *Bauern* held extensive economic and political power, often holding most offices in the *Gemeinde*. Using these positions in the local government, wealthier *Bauern* were able to control village resources in their own favour. The *Gemeinde*'s control over the commons then translated to greater rights for the local elites, allowing more *Bauern* owned cattle to graze on the common pastures compared to those owned by the *Seldner*.[160] If this same pattern were true in Swiss villages too, this may explain why we see a

[157] Curtis, "Did the Commons Make Medieval and Early Modern Rural Societies more Equitable?" 655.
[158] Esther Pascua Echegaray, "Communities and Sustainability in Medieval and Early Modern Aragon, 1200-1600" in *International Journal of the Commons* 5, no. 2 (August 2011), 543-544.
[159] Paul Warde, "Imposition, Emulation and Adaptation: Regulatory Regimes in the Commons of Early Modern Germany" in *Environment and History* 19, no. 3 (August 2013): 317.
[160] Govind P. Sreenivasan, *The Peasants of Ottobeuren, 1487-1726: A Rural Society in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 44-46. For more on Swabian land use, see: David W Sabean, *Landbesitz und Gesellschaft am Vorabend des Bauernkriegs: Eine Studie der sozialen Verhältnisse im südlichen Oberschwaben in der Jahren vor 1525* (Stuttgart: Gustav Fischer Verlag, 1972).

pattern of anxiety that extends across the social strata but predominantly affects the wealthiest cattle owners – the death of any cattle would have been devastating to any member of the community, but a larger cattle population held by members of the local government would have been at greater risk. During witchcraft trials, members of the *Bürgergemeinde* oversaw prosecutions, so narratives of cattle poisonings and threats to the *Allmend* were intrinsically terrifying to them and represented an unseen threat to the communal resources of the community they represented.

We have already explored internal restrictions in the *Bürgergemeinde*'s control over the Meilacher's wood resources. The grazing lands of the *Allmend* feature much less prominently in the written records compared to the hefty punishments meted out by the *Bürgergemeinde* for improper forest usage. City minutes from 1719 reveal that only a full meeting of the *Gemeindeversammlung*, or broad community meeting, could decide which community members were permitted to run horses on the *Allmend*.[161] The nut and fruit trees, particularly cherries, planted on the borders of the *Allmend* lands of Zug and the surrounding villages were collectively managed and their resources distributed.[162] Regulations regarding cattle, however, were much less common. Most ordinances contained in the Staatsarchiv and Bürgerarchiv of Zug regarding cows on the *Allmend* were focused on keeping cattle populations low, preventing citizens from holding multiple cattle on a single *Allmend* without express permission, or ensuring that cattle remain on the *Allmend* where they were born.[163] However, fierce competition sometimes erupted due to these regulations – in 1715, an extraordinary city council meeting was held when residents from Baar, Inwil, and Inkenberg, two small hamlets on the western slopes of the Zugerberg, were accused of improperly pasturing their cows on the Zuger *Allmend*, driving too many cattle to graze. While less issue

[161] BüA Zug A 39.26.17.142.
[162] BüA Zug A 39.26.2.460; BüA Zug A 39.26.36.168; BüA Zug A 39.26.36.1361.
[163] See: BüA Zug A 39.26.5.3101; BüA Zug A 39.26.5.3107; BüA Zug A 39.26.5.1258.

is raised with the Baarer cattle, the city of Zug specifically noted that "Inkenbergers and Inwilers were not 'incorporated' and therefore had no right to drive cattle to the Zuger *Allmend*."[164] While the issue was quickly resolved by the council (the Inkbergers and Inwilers were required to remove their cattle and would pay for the meeting of the city council if it happened again), these conflicts point toward the level of protectionism over shared community resources that can only come from increased levels of suspicion and anxiety over their overuse and eventual destruction.

Through the early modern era, common agricultural landscapes were under threat both external and internal. They were spaces that generated intense anxiety, with the health of the community resting upon the shoulders of the grazing cattle. Each *Allmend* was located close to the town, where it was convenient to tend all the cows under the careful regulation of the *Bürgergemeinde*. For these reasons, common fields were natural settings for sabbath fantasies in early modern Zug and beyond. The 1715 conflict over *Allmend* use shows the right to these commons lands was hotly contested by the residents of Zug from all classes, from farmers fighting for the rights to graze cattle on the land to the city council hosting emergency meetings to protect it from improper use. The *Allmend* was an exclusive community possession, where the feared "other" would spoil the richness of these community resources. Indeed, Daniel Curtis has argued: "…such was the passionate defence of communities' rights to common resources, and their fear of 'outsider' expropriation and interference, that commoners often resorted to violent suppression of non-entitled 'foreigners'."[165]

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[164] "*Es soll Folgendes geantwortet warden: Zug sei Meinung, dass der Inkenberger und die Inwiler nicht "einverleibt" seien und deshalb kein Recht hätten, Vieh auf die Zuger Allmend zu treiben*." BüA Zug A 39.26.15.1115.

[165] Curtis, "Did the Commons Make Medieval and Early Modern Rural Societies more Equitable?" 650.

The early modern European witch has traditionally been viewed through the lens of "otherness" by historians.[166] An intruder in the community, an agent of Satan in God's kingdom, and an inversion of life and faith, the witch represents the ultimate other in the fantasies of early modern Europeans. As we have seen, the cow and the witch were intrinsically linked in the imagination. When this pre-existing anxiety about cattle health and wellbeing mixed with an already heightened anxiety about the incursion of foreign others on the commons, the *Allmend* became a landscape of fear. Further, with the dramatic reduction of common lands across Europe during this era through privatization, common agricultural lands were already a landscape under attack. Communities reliant on these shared resources faced existential threats, permeating their understanding of these landscapes, and making them feel at risk of attack, either political or diabolical.

Such anxieties would have been most prominent among those who used and interacted with these landscapes most. In many parts of Europe, it was women who were responsible for the livestock. While men owned the cattle and the lands on which they grazed, women looked after their wellbeing and milked them, though they rarely owned the cattle themselves.[167] With women forming most people accused of witchcraft in the Zug trials, their everyday interactions with the *Allmend* would have factored heavily into the narratives in their confessions. The *Allmend* was a landscape they knew well, and recognized was essential to their daily lives and survival; yet they had little actual control over it. Common community institutions in Germanic Europe were notoriously restrictive toward

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[166] Charles Zika, "Towards an Alien Community of Dancing Witches in Early Seventeenth Century Europe" in *Feeling Exclusion: Religious Conflict, Exile and Emotions in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Giovanni Tarantino (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019), 207; Diane Purkiss, *The Witch in History: Early Modern and Twentieth-Century Representations* (London: Routledge, 1996), 97; E.J. Kent, "Masculinity and Male Witches in Old and New England, 1593-1680" in *History Workshop Journal* 60 (Autumn 2005): 86. Laura Kounine argues against the concept of othering the witch figure in her monograph, due to a traditional gender binary in these arguments. Kounine, *Imagining the Witch*, 86.

[167] Raisa Maria Toivo, "Witchcraft and Gender" in *The Routledge History of Witchcraft*, ed. Johannes Dillinger (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019), 226.

women. The economic and social restrictions of community associations permeated societies in which these institutions held the most power, like the *Bürgergemeinde* in Zug. Women's roles in community organizations and cities were tightly restricted. In Zug, we know that childless women who hailed from beyond the city limits lost their citizenship rights upon the death of their husband, while other regions in Germanic Europe communities passed membership solely along paternal lines, sometimes leaving out women regardless of their family's status within the community.[168] The decisions being made about the *Allmend*'s resources and its continued existence were therefore not being made by those who were using it, placing pressure and anxiety on the space for the women primarily constructing Zug's witchcraft narratives.

The *Allmend* fields as a sabbath landscape can then be seen to reflect the complex relationship that had developed between people, cattle, and the communal spaces over time and a culmination of many intertwined factors. Anxieties surrounding cows and communal health, the abuse and loss of common resources, and the intrusion of witches and "others" among the community were projected onto a landscape that was increasingly beyond the control of those who used it most. Placing the sabbath on the *Allmend* was a natural progression of these emotions, a landscape under threat and the centre of numerous anxieties for the community. The sabbath was the culmination of these fears on a landscape already under threat. Its presence on the *Allmend* was the ultimate menace above all others – placing the gathering of witches on this landscape threatened death for the cows that grazed these

[168] Thomas Meier, "Hintersassen, Gäste, Fremde, Bettler, Arme: Aspekte der Zuger Ordnungs- und Sozialpolitik in der Vormoderne" in *Universum Kleinstadt: Die Stadt Zug und ihre Untertanen im Spiegel der Protokolle von Stadtrat und Geminde (1471-1798),* eds. Peter Hope, Daniel Schläppi, Nathalie Büsser, and Thomas Meier (Zug: Historischer Verein des Kantons Zug, 2018), 233; Sreenivasan, *The Peasants of Ottobeuren*, *1487-1726*, 44, 55; Sheilagh Ogilvie, *A Bitter Living: Women, Markets, and Social Capital in Early Modern Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 332-333.

fields and ruin for the entire community. The sabbath hinted at the reach of witchcraft and the Devil over these vital yet fragile spaces, rather than the power of magic itself.

These attacks on cattle follow broader patterns of anxieties over crop and livestock health. Weather magic beliefs from the northern foothills of the Alps often featured intense hailstorms that ruined crops, while Ginzburg's sixteenth-century *benandanti* gathered on the fantastical fields of Josaphat or Jehosaphat among abundant flowers and roses to battle witches to protect the crops of the Friuli.[169] While the gathering of witches and *benandanti* occurred in a mythic space, the relationship between the field and the healthy harvest was clear. The nocturnal battles, which Ginzburg would tie to the origins of sabbath, point toward a link between the sabbath spaces and anxieties over crop health. These crop-centric narratives in fields continued even after the narratives of the *benandanti* shifted more closely toward narratives of the real world in the seventeenth century, placing the battle at the field of Santa Chatarina. These examples, removed from the setting of Swiss communal space, present a similar anxiety over the health of the community. However, unlike in the case of Zug where pastoralism dominated the landscape and translated into the sabbath narratives, the Friulian countryside was not dominated by crop-based agriculture. Instead, even on the richer soils of the Friulian plains that extended from the Dolomites to the Adriatic, pastoral lands were the dominant land use overseen by the local communities across the early modern period, specifically grazing lands for cattle.[170] If the Friuli region featured a similarly pastoral landscape and cattle-driven economy as Zug, why then did the Friulian version of the witches' gathering avoid common cow pastures in favour of the crops? The answer therefore must lie in localized concepts of the sabbath and local anxieties, rather than pure land use.

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[169] Stokes, *Demons of Urban Reform*, 14.
[170] See: Stefano Barbacetto and Claudio Lorenzini, "Contare I Fuochi E Gli Animali: Sul Peso Economico Dei Beni 'Comunali' in Friuli Al Principio Del Seicento," in *Quaderni storici, Nuova Serie* 52, no. 155 (August 2017): 349-381.

While cows were essential to life on both sides of the Alps, the Friulian anxieties about crops found their way into the sabbath narratives, whereas in Zug, crop fields were the targets of witches, while cattle-grazing fields were both targets and sabbath sites. The contrast between these two cases illustrates how both widespread rural anxieties and localized beliefs in the actions of witches created sabbath narratives pervaded the agricultural and pastoral landscapes of early modern Europe.

Lorzentobel – The Valley, the Cave, and the Unseen World

Setting foot on the path that leads down the Lorzentobel today, it is a place that feels both unchanged over the centuries and constantly changed over time. The mid-November sun catches on the Allenwinden church's spire at the beginning of the footpath, perched above the steep grazing pastures that have supported the village for centuries. The sky is blue for now, but the threat of rain clouds looms through the vivid autumnal trees along the top of the hill. The Lorze river, which is here still close to its source on the Ägerisee looks as tamed as the pastures beside it. The streambed here has been filled with paving stones, directing the flow of water over a series of manmade falls every few metres toward the dams that spot the canyon. The taming of the Lorze was a modern solution to a violent past as seasonal flooding was a common issue. For now, its calm flow scarcely resembles it former wildness, a tamed river at the head of a domesticated valley. However, as you descend through the start of Lorzentobel, the image of domesticity begins to fade and the narrow valley begins to descend once more into wilderness. The walls of the valley, too steep to sustain even the most surefooted cow, sheep, or goat, are covered in a thick forest, which even with many of the golden leaves of autumn already covering the forest floor remains a veritable sea of foliage. As the Lorze becomes faster, the walls of the valley become steeper, containing the sounds of the outside world above. The air becomes colder and wetter, breath becomes visible, and the only sound is the roar of the river. You are isolated, alone. Hints of the modern world remain.

The path below your feet, the occasional telephone line, the manmade falls. Two viaducts soar overhead, one new, one old, the people speeding by in their cars oblivious to the unseen world below. It is not just the viaducts, though, that separate the worlds, Above are brilliant green farms and wooden chalet homes. Above is the domesticated world, where the trees are planted in rows and the animals wear bells that ring across the landscape. Below is the last refuge of the wild world, a world of tree, rock, and water. As the valley reaches toward its terminus in Baar, the rock face of the valley becomes pockmarked with caves, the largest of which, the Baar Höllgrotten, has been a tourist destination since the nineteenth century. It is here that the heavens open and the long-awaited rain begins. But with the rain comes the Lorzentobel's most aesthetically chilling and mysterious moment. The long valley fills with a thick fog, hanging over the water, filling the valley with an aura of mystery and that anyone, even the Devil himself, could be hiding in the shrouded mist.

The Lorzentobel is the last of Zug's major sabbath sites, a landscape tucked away from everyday life. The Lorzentobel was not located on the city's close periphery, nor was it a location that was tightly controlled by the *Bürgergemeinde*, separating it from the city's two other main sabbath sites. Unlike the Meilacher, the Lorzentobel often served a double purpose, sometimes acting as the site of temptation and seduction, others as a site of the sabbath. In the 1737 trial, seventy-year-old Elisabeth (Lisi) Bossard confessed to meeting the Devil forty years before along the banks of the Lorze, seducing her and giving her a flying stick that would take her to the sabbath in the Meilacher.[171] Amidst the 1652 wave of trials, Maria Müller, Anna Staub, and Veronica Reidhaar confessed to a lengthy relationship with the Lorzentobel. Maria stated "firstly that she had met the Evil Spirt for three years in the Lorzentobel, wearing green spitzhosen, known as Little Hans…"[172] Anna Staubin likewise

[171] StAZG A 105/6 fol. 43B.
[172] "…*erstlich der Böß Geyst vor drüen Jahren im Lorzen thobel in grünen Spitzhoßen gekleidt, der sich hanßli genannt*…" StAZG A 105/1 fol. 124A.

claimed that this green clad Little Hans had given her a green salve, which she would use anoint her stick in the Devil's name and fly to the witches' sabbath at the Lorzentobel, where she would feast on all manner of foods except for bread and salt.[173] For Veronica Reidhaar, Little Hans appeared in blue and promised her gold in exchange for forsaking God and the Virgin Mary, a deal she accepted. In exchange, Little Hans gave her a small black stick that Veronica would anoint with salve to fly to the sabbath at the Lorzentobel.[174] In each narrative contained within this trial, two features remained consistent – the appearance of the Devil in the form of Little Hans and his association with the Lorzentobel.

The city's records point toward an extremely mixed usage of the Lorzentobel through the early modern period. Unlike the Meilacher, the *Bürgergemeinde* showed no reluctance to sell large quantities of trees for use by the citizenry. In 1701, Kaspar Weber was allowed to fell between 130 and 150 birch trees on the Lorzentobel to give to his son, a number incomparable to the tight restrictions placed on the Meilacher's oaks.[175] Decades later, in the 1750s, the forest became a bargaining tool between the cantonal communities surrounding the Lorzentobel. When Zug, Menzingen, Baar, and Ägeri each refused or debated paying for the maintenance of the Lorzentobel path and bridge, it was decided that the forest would become an "*allgemeinen*" or public forest, and that "with the wood from this forest, the costs for maintenance of the road or trail are to be paid in the future."[176] We know from the trial records that cows were poisoned by witches on the Lorzentobel indicating that the animals were present at the site, but the historical record of cattle grazing and crop raising at the foot of the Lorzentobel valley is sparse. We know grain was raised in the valley in 1642 due to a

[173] StAZG A 105/1 fol. 124B.
[174] StAZG A 105/1 fol. 125B.
[175] BüA Zug A 29.26.11.707.
[176] "*Mit dem Holz aus diesem Wald sollen künftig die Kosten für den Unterhalt der Strasse oder des Weges beglichen werden*." BüA Zug A 39.27.9.507; BüA Zug A 39.26.29.42; BüA Zug A 39.26.29.42; BüA Zug 39.26.28.2274.

vague note about grain stores from the area in a city council meeting, and an incident from the city council minutes of 1634 requiring Kaspar Landtwing to build a fence for his cattle in the Lorzentobel fields after one of his cows injured a cow belonging to Bartli Moos.[177]

Despite these distinctions from the other sabbath landscapes of the Zug witch trials, the Lorzentobel was a landscape that inspired a dark and evil association. Decades after the final witch trials, the Lorzentobel maintained this distinction. In 1761, Fidel Beat Zurlauben described the landscape as such: "the entire Lortzen Tobel [sic] is a terrible valley, so that at the bridge [over the Lorze], no men at the next houses or inn…"[178] The discovery of caves following the river's taming in the nineteenth century prompted further evil connotations. In 1863, miners collecting tuffaceous rock from the Lorzentobel's walls for use in railway construction discovered the entrance of a cave, a common feature on the porous and limestone rich topography. However, once drained of their immense subterranean lakes in 1885 through a manmade channel into the Lorzentobel, these were found to be an immense cave network. Opened to public tours in 1887, this subterranean world became known as the Baarer Höllgrotten, or the "Baar Hell Grottoes."[179] Emblazoned today with a cartoonish devil mascot, the diabolical connotations of the Lorzentobel run deep, through toponyms to marketing strategies. However, each of these place-centric associations points toward a historic *mentalité* toward the place that permeates across time, even centuries after the last executed witches of Zug claimed to meet the Devil in the valley.

With this longstanding association with fear and diabolism, the act of placemaking over centuries has made the Lorzentobel a landscape where the sabbath belongs. But where do these emotions stem from? And how has the topography of space and place created these

[177] BüA Zug A 39.4.11a.70.
[178] Kantonsbibliothek Aargau, *Zurlaubiana* MHT 1, 77b.
[179] Martin Arnold et al., *Naturdenkmäler der Schweiz: Das grosse Wander- und Erlebnisbuch* (Aarau: AT Verlag, 2013), 80.

diabolical associations? To answer these questions, we must explore the Lorzentobel as a palimpsest of sabbath spaces. The Lorzentobel is a space composed of numerous components, each adding their own emotional weight to the narrative.

First, we must return to the mountains and hills of Chapter I. Compared to the towering peaks of the Alps on the southern horizon, the rolling low mountains of Canton of Zug's eastern borderlands may seem insignificant. As noted in our first glimpse at the landscape of Zug, the Canton's highest point, Wildspitz (1580m) is dwarfed by Luzern's Pilatus (2128m) and Bern's Jungfrau (4158m), both visible from the shores of the Zugersee. The Zugerberg, the mountain that rises behind the city and separates it from Ägeri and the Ägerisee, is even lower, with its highest point being 1039m above sea level, only a slight rise over the lakeshore. When compared to Germany's Blocksberg, the mountains of Zug are substantially less prominent, seemingly only a steep highland overlooking the city and the lake. The Zugerberg is densely forested with mixed coniferous and deciduous woodland. Across the postglacial period, the Lorze river has eroded a narrow channel through the mountain toward the lake, cutting northward until turning west to the lakebed at the base of the Baarburg.[180] This steep mountain with a flat, plateau summit is lower than the surrounding mountains, but with its clearly defined slopes and notable silhouette looming over Baar and the northern borders of the Canton, the Baarburg stands in contrast to the steep forested ridge and highlands of the Zugerberg. These mountainous landscapes form the walls of the Lorzentobel valley, surrounding the river and enclosing the space.

However, these mountains are not the sterile peaks that we see elsewhere in the European sabbath narratives of Chapter I, nor in the artistic depictions of sabbaths at the

[180] It should be noted that the suffix, *-burg*, is usually attributed to castles and defensible locations in German. Its use on the name Baarburg, referring to a mountain (berg) rather than a castle, comes from deeper linguistic roots, dating to the early medieval era. This etymology may have partially caused the association with castle ruins and the Baarburg in later centuries. Dittli, *Zuger Ortsnamen*, Band 1, 124.

summits that we will examine in Chapter IV. The mountains surrounding the Lorzentobel have been inhabited across the centuries, by pastoral farmers whose cows have grazed along the slopes and by opportunistic nobility using the topography to construct fortified structures. Atop the Baarburg, archaeological evidence points toward a minor Iron Age fort and a Roman structure that had long since collapsed and been forgotten by the seventeenth century. The wooded summit was used for timber and cattle grazing through the medieval period, however, the 1667 map of Zug by Hans Konrad Gyger has sparked debate about the presence of visible ruins at the summit. Gyger clearly sketched a ruined building on the flat summit of the mountain (Fig. 7), despite no contemporaneous written record of any visible remains of the earlier buildings. Debates about the presence of ruins atop the mountain continued through the nineteenth century, appearing in multiple maps despite disputations from others in the community.[181] However, the potential exists that the depiction of ruins was an error on the account of the cartographer. A short distance down the Lorzentobel, on an outcropping over the valley stands the ruins of the thirteenth century Wildenburg castle. Originally constructed as a vantage point over the Lorzentobel bridge, the Wildenburg was abandoned by the early sixteenth century and had fallen into ruins shortly thereafter. While accounts differ about how the castle came to be abandoned, by the seventeenth century, the Wildenburg was a hulking ruin overlooking the Lorzentobel valley, abandoned for centuries and never to be reoccupied.[182]

[181] Dittli, *Zuger Ortsnamen*, Band 1, 124-127.
[182] Dittli, *Zuger Ortsnamen*, Band 5, 221.

Figure 7: The Baarburg (circled) as featured on the Gygerkarte of 1667. Staatsarchiv Zürich.



Though the Baarburg is low in both elevation and prominence, its unique plateaued summit sets it apart. Visually striking in comparison to the other mountains of the region while visible from most of the communities on the plain north of the Zugersee and west of the Zugerberg, the Baarburg would have been a notable landscape feature for people living in the early modern canton. Similarly, the ruins of the Wildenburg overlooking the Lorzentobel provide a sinister and hulking presence on the margins of the settled world, while also marginal in their reality, as they exist somewhere on the border between imagination and reality. The supposed ruins atop the Baarburg existed in the realm of fantasy, as this was a location where ruins "belonged." Each of these ruins, whether real or imagined, contributed to the sense of the Lorzentobel as a location symbolizing the ruin and decay of society. As we will examine in Chapter III's exploration of the Gallienne Palace of Bordeaux, such deterioration and devastation fit neatly within the narrative of the witches' sabbath as a

symbol of the devastation witches aimed to enact upon the world through their diabolical magic and rituals.

These factors blend seamlessly with our previous investigations of Zug's forests. While the Lorzentobel was not a forest reserve under the same level of protection as the Meilacher, many of the psychological aspects of forested space are still applicable to these forests. The mixed deciduous and coniferous forests on the slopes of the Zugerberg continue into the steep valley of the Lorzentobel, a tight maze of densely packed trees reaching to the skies. These forests exemplify the sense of disorientation described by Tuan as an essential component of landscapes of fear.[183] The breadth of the forest is amplified by the cover of trees, an endless maze of trunks for all those who enter rendering it difficult for humans to find their way out. The sense of claustrophobia amongst the trees is amplified in the Lorzentobel by the steep valley walls encasing the river on both sides. While the steepness of these walls constricts the landscape, containing the vastness of the forest to a small area on each side of the Lorze river, the steep valley creates a deep sense of claustrophobia for all who enter it, a stark contrast from the rolling hills of the Ägerisee and the northwestern side of the Zugersee. The valley is not a common landscape in narratives of the witches' sabbath. Henri Boguet describes a sabbath at the Valley of Sainte Marie in the French district of Saint Claude.[184] Vale de Cavalinhos (now Vale de Santo Antonio, renamed after the devastating eighteenth-century earthquake), just outside of Lisbon, Portugal, had long been associated with the Devil and dark magic. During the age of witch trials, it was believed that six hundred women would fly to the valley to practice diabolical baptism and the sabbath rites.[185] While one of the less frequent sabbath sites, the presence of valley landscapes is not unprecedented.

[183] Tuan, *Landscapes of Fear*, 21.
[184] Boguet, Discours des Sorcieres, 53.
[185] Bethencourt, "Portugal: A Scrupulous Inquisition", 417.

However, why these valleys are included among the collections of sabbath landscapes may stem from the claustrophobia they evoke.

To understand this claustrophobia, we return to the works of Denis Cosgrove's concept of landscape as intrinsically linked to vision.[186] If Cosgrove is correct, and vision is the essential sense for humans to interact with the world around them, how can we frame the placemaking of locations like the Lorzentobel where the key aspect of the landscape is the restriction of vision? Or is there a deeper form of place-making contrary to Cosgrove's theory? It is in this situation that the nature of the witches' sabbath best informs our understanding of space and place in the past. The Lorzentobel, with its thick forests, low mountains, and steep valley walls, is a landscape that makes vision difficult when within. The secretive nature of the witches' sabbath was uniquely suited to a location where vision was limited, hidden from prying eyes and associated with the deepest anxieties of individuals across the social strata. As we have seen across this thesis, the landscapes of the witches' sabbath were inherently non reliant on vision, yet placemaking was a constant process in the Lorzentobel and beyond. The witches' sabbath, secreted away in discrete locations and occurring purely in the imagination, directly opposes Cosgrove's concept of the visualized landscape - an invisible act, occurring on the margins of the visible world, in places where our ability to see is already restricted by the darkness of night. In this sense, the landscapes of the sabbath could be viewed as an *anti-landscape*, an inversion of everything that is supposed to define the act of place-making, just as the sabbath itself is an inversion of the village dance, the Catholic mass, and the early modern social order.[187] Each layer of the Lorzentobel contributes to this inverted yet continuous placemaking, from the slopes of the Zugerberg and

[186] Cosgrove, *Geography and Vision*, 15.
[187] For more on this concept of the anti-landscape in relation to caves and Cosgrove, see: Veronica della Dora, "Anti-Landscapes: Caves and Apophasis in the Christian East" in *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 29, no. 5 (2011): 761-779.

Baarburg with their real and imagined ruins, to the forests of the steep valley slopes along the Lorze. Even the low mists that hang over the Lorzentobel each time it rains adds a new layer of mysticism and invisibility to the landscape. These layers bring new associations, turning the Lorzentobel into a perfect palimpsest, "a conceptual model of a place as a multilayered structure that emphasizes the coexistence of multiple visions and impacts of different cultures on the landscape."[188] Each aspect contributes new meanings to this environment, contributing to the narratives of the witches sabbath and to the understanding of place.

However, the multifaceted sabbath landscape of the Lorzentobel, unlike many of the sabbath landscapes explored thus far, continued to experience unceasing placemaking even after the end of the age of witch trials. While so many other landscapes such as mountains and forests were lost in their dark and diabolical form amidst the shift to the sublime in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Lorzentobel retained its dark associations into the present, as seen in the naming and branding of the Höllgrotten. Despite being discovered and drained in the century after Zug's final witch trial, the Höllgrotten retained the diabolical moniker and imagery of a landscape long associated with the ultimate evil. There are likely several reasons for this continuation. First and foremost, it is the last of Zug's primary sabbath landscapes that still existed at the time of the caves' discovery: the Meilacher and the *Allmend* had been cast aside and torn down upon the advent of Swiss industrialization in the nineteenth century. The rich heritage of Zug's most common sabbath traditions were relegated to a single landscape, which retained all the elements of the palimpsest. Hundreds of years of folkloric associations remained attached to this specific location. Further, the discovery of the Höllgrotten is not an isolated incident signifying caves as a sabbath landscape. Caves were featured in numerous art pieces, including the Ashmolean's "Witchcraft" print by an anonymous German printmaker from 1630 (Fig. 17). In the Spanish

[188] Barney Warf, ed., "Palimpsest," in *Encyclopedia of Geography*, Volume 4 (Los Angeles: Sage, 2010), 2111.

Basque country, the *sorginak* supposedly gathered for their sabbath in caves outside of Zugarramurdi.[189] Likewise, Guazzo described two separate subterranean journeys to the sabbath in the Netherlands and in England, as we saw in our discussion of demonologies.

The link between caves and the supernatural is not confined merely to witchcraft beliefs in early modern Europe. Both modern humans and earlier hominid species have used caves as sacred and ritual sites since at least the Paleolithic period, with caves increasingly used as burial necropolises across the Neolithic.[190] In the early Christian world, caves gained new spiritual significance as the site of the resurrection of Christ, and locations where early saints and hermits could meditate and combat demons. As noted by Knut Bergsvik and Marion Dowd in their study of medieval cave usage:

> The medieval Christian relationship to caves was complex and ambiguous. On the one hand, crucial events in the New Testament took place in caves, which made them powerful reference points or symbols in the belief system. However, caves were also considered entrances to the underworld: places linked to dragons, the devil and to hell.[191]

In Germany, preliminary examinations of cave usage in the early medieval period points toward pagan magical belief surrounding caves in the pre-Christian period, though these practices are believed to have declined upon the introduction of Christianity, where caves became sites of hermitages and pilgrimages.[192] The sacred and supernatural qualities of caves transcend time and geography, playing a major role in human rituals and beliefs across millennia. Even in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, an era widely associated with the de-mystification of the world and the natural landscape, the relationship between humans and

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[189] Machielsen, *The Basque Witch-Hunt*, 40.
[190] Holley Moyes, "Introduction" in *Sacred Darkness: A Global Perspective on the Ritual Use of Caves,* ed. Holly Moyes (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2012), 10-11.
[191] Knut Andreas Bergsvik and Marion Dowd, "Caves and Rockshelters in Medieval Europe: Religious and Secular Use" in *Caves and Ritual in Medieval Europe, AD 500-1500*, eds. Knut Andreas Bergsvik and Marion Dowd (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2018), 6.
[192] Mechtild Schulze-Dörrlamm, "The Use of Caves for Religious Purposes in Early Medieval Germany (AD 500-1200)" in *Caves and Ritual in Medieval Europe, AD 500-1500*, ed. Knut Andreas Bergsvik and Marion Dowd (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2018), 220-221.

caves maintained a level of mystery. Empirical research on caves in the early modern period would prove Cosgrove's approach at first glance: visual culture had become an essential component of natural sciences, meaning that sites of low visibility presented challenges to the early cartographers and natural scientists who studied caves and the subterranean world. However, such lack of vision left much more room for imagination and ambiguity than other landscapes.[193]

Even into the age of scientific reason, when the Baar Höllgrotten were discovered, caves occupied a unique place in the human mind as an unseen and invisible world. This world was a liminal space, a place that existed as an intermediary between spaces, the natural and the supernatural, the land of the living and the underworld. Unlike what is claimed by Cosgrove, these spaces are defined not by what is seen, as the boundary between reality and fantasy is rooted in emotions and the imagination. To interact with caves is to interact with darkness, heightening the importance of the other senses, allowing them to shift and change our perception of these spaces through touch, sound, smell, and emotional feeling. Moving through cave environments, relying on the lack of vision and preconceived cultural motifs surrounding both caves and darkness, humans develop a sense of place within a cave, crafting a landscape devoid of vision and reliant on our other senses, where the imagination can run wild.[194]

Why then did the Baar Höllgrotten maintain their diabolical name, association, and iconography even centuries after sun set on the age of witch trials? It is because of this deep relationship between the realms of imagination and perception, vision and darkness, fantasy and reality that permeate cave landscapes. Sites such as the Lorzentobel, where narratives of

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[193] Johannes Mattes, "Mapping the Invisible: Knowledge, Credibility and Visions of Earth in Early Modern Cave Maps" in *The British Journal for the History of Science* 55, No. 1 (March 2022), 59.
[194] Agni Prijatelj and Robin Skeates, "Caves as Vibrant Places: A Theoretical Manifesto" in *Between Worlds: Understanding Ritual Cave Use in Later Prehistory*, eds. Lindsey Büster, Eugène Warmenbol, and Dimitrij Mlekuž (Cham: Springer, 2019), 19-22.

diabolism have permeated for centuries, are locations most fitting for new diabolical associations in local belief and folklore. However, this is not the only landscape where diabolical stories transcend time: across Europe narratives of the Devil in the landscape evolve organically, removed from the era of witchcraft trials, but remaining in locations where they seemingly belong. Where geographical features or historical narratives provide a precedent for evil narratives, dictated by the human interaction with these spaces, a landscape of fear evolves.[195] Between the sixteenth and the twenty-first centuries, the Lorzentobel valley developed a dark reputation among the people of Zug due to the nature of place as a palimpsest. Layer upon layer, feature upon feature, each human interaction with the Lorzentobel contributed to the creation of a sabbath landscape, combining features associated with the witches' sabbath across the European continent. With its claustrophobic forests, steep valley walls, and imposing curtains of fog, the Lorzentobel valley is a landscape defined by its lack of clear vision, where witches can gather in secrecy and inspire anxiety among the nearby residents of Zug. Deeply associated with the landscape, these narratives and emotions surrounding the witches sabbath and its diabolical basis took root through the centuries, surviving into the present. While few of the eager tourists who flock to the Baar Höllgrotten may realize, as they descend into the subterranean world into the gates of Hell they are participating in a centuries-old tradition. Following a small, cartoonish Devil figure, they are continuing the association between this landscape and the supernatural, taking in a world that was once invisible now lit by electric lights, creating their own narratives and stories in the darkest reaches of the Lorzentobel valley.

[195] See: Harte, *Cloven Country.*

Chapter III: The Sabbath Landscapes through Foreign Eyes – The Pays de Labourd and Pierre de Lancre

From the summit of La Rhune[1] mountain, the landscape of the Pays de Labourd stretches in all directions. Today, those who choose to hike to the summit rather than take the cog railway are whisked away from the drone of traffic and trains and are given a taste of the Pyrénées as they were hundreds of years before. As the trail wends away from the base of the mountain astride the Galardiko Erreka river, thick forests envelop the trail, mixing dense deciduous and thinner coniferous patches, dampening the sounds of modernity and lending to the feeling that one travelling through time. The boughs that reach over the trail create a portal, made ominous by low hanging fog on cloudy days. As the trail begins to approach its zenith, the forests clear, making space for extensive meadows, whose alpine grasses feed herds of wild Pottock ponies and flocks of sheep that curiously watch streams of hikers pass by en route to the summit. The soundscape is dominated by the clanging of bells around their neck, a reminder of the timelessness of the Basque transhumance pastoralism that has formed the way of life in the mountains of the Pyrénées for centuries.

At 900 metres above sea level, La Rhune is small in comparison to the highest Pyrénées peaks, but its location at the northwestern tip of the range provides vistas over the landscape as the forests make way for alpine meadows.[2] To the south and east, the Pyrénées mountains stretch to the horizon, with a similar mix of alpine grazing land and heavy native forests covering their slopes. Between the mountains, river valleys wind their way through the landscape as the mountain streams flow toward the Bay of Biscay on the western horizon. There, clusters of white houses with terracotta roofs denote the valley towns of the Labourd, such as Ascain, Urrugne, Sare, and Saint-Pée-sur-Nivelle. Toward the Bay of Biscay in the

[1] Larrun in the Basque language.
[2] The tallest of the Pyrenees mountains, Aneto, stands at 3404m, thousands of metres higher than La Rhune. Carr, *The Savage Frontier*, 16.

northwest, the entire coast of the Pays de Labourd can be seen from the summit of La Rhune. In the north, the faint line of the Adour River crosses the landscape with the administrative centre of Bayonne straddling its banks five kilometres from the seashore. Once separate towns, urban sprawl has joined Bayonne with the seaside resort town of Biarritz, now a bustling tourist centre for the western French Basque country. Further to the south, the conjoined towns of Saint-Jean-de-Luz and Ciboure sit on opposing sides of La Nivelle River, whose natural harbour is still used by modern mariners as it has been for centuries. Finally, at the southern tip of the Pays de Labourd coast, the town of Hendaye stands at the edge of the French frontier with Spain, with the Bidasoa River dividing the two nations as it did in the seventeenth century. This seaside is the only visible border exists between Spain and France. Though the summit of La Rhune divides the two countries, there is no indication of the border that crosses the peak. Rather, like the Basque people that live on both sides of the national boundary, the mountains surrounding La Rhune blend and make the border intangible beyond a line on the map.

Yet La Rhune also exemplifies the concept of the *amalgam*, illustrating how multiple perspectives on a space may create a palimpsest. To the local Basque population, La Rhune is the feature of the landscape that can be seen from nearly every corner of the Pays de Labourd, a historically sacred space and one that defines their relationship to the land and the sea. Yet in the summer of 1609, the foreign Bordeaux jurist Pierre de Lancre, also highlighted the peak as the site of the witches' sabbath, first gleaned from his interrogations amidst the great Basque witch panic before being recorded in his demonology, *Tableau de l'Inconstance des Mauvais Anges et Démons*. My use of the *Tableau* to examine the Basque sabbath landscapes may appear to follow the long tradition of using de Lancre as the sole authority on the 1609 witch panic and continue highlighting foreign rather than local perspectives – after all, de Lancre spends much of the text othering the Basque population. However, this chapter

highlights the significance of the amalgam in examining sabbath narratives for place. Pierre de Lancre could not have highlighted the sabbath landscapes of the Pays de Labourd as an outsider without local informants. Indeed, many of the locations described by de Lancre simply do not fit the stereotypical sabbath landscapes found in other demonologies.

Instead, de Lancre's writing is filled with evidence of this amalgam throughout his discussions of the sabbath landscape. While de Lancre himself claims that "the witches who confessed gave the locations of the sabbath, the squares, trees, bushes, rivers, fields, [and] houses…" he expands upon this evidence by providing specific examples of landscapes identified by the local Basque population.[3] When recounting the sabbath narratives of Necato, an accused witch of Urrugne, de Lancre notes that "three witnesses held that she had been at the sabbath at Lacoua on the coast of Hendaye, on the penultimate and final days of July, 1609."[4] Lacoua was a beach, and beaches do not appear as the stereotypical locations for a sabbath. Yet these three witnesses in the trial of Necato were not the only local informants who highlighted this coastline as a sabbath landscape to the Bordeaux jurist. Witness Jeannette d'Abadie admitted to attending a sabbath of twelve thousand witches on the Hendaye beach, while de Lancre notes that an unnamed child informant led him to some craggy rocks along the Hendaye coast, which he scaled twice to find evidence of the sabbath.[5]

De Lancre also mentions a windmill, a drawbridge, and seaside rocks, none of which are locations typically tied to the sabbath according to other demonologists, which therefore means they must have been among the places named by the accused witches and witnesses. He names the precise places where sabbaths were believed to happen, including the beach at

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[3] "*…les sorcieres qui cofessent, remarquent les lieux du sabbat, les places, les arbres, les buissons, les fleuues, les champs, les maisons…*" De Lancre, *Tableau*, 98.
[4] "*Trois tesmoins luy maintindrent qu'elle auoit esté au sabbat au lacoua en la coste de Handaye le penultiesme & dernier de Iuillet 1609*." De Lancre, *Tableau*, 108.
[5] De Lancre, *Tableau*, 134, 140.

Hendaye, the cemetery at Ciboure, La Rhune – he does not rest content with generic landscape features. De Lancre's reliance on Basque informants and accused to identify these landscapes illustrates the coproduction of the witchcraft narrative, taking local knowledge and filtering it through his own perspective.

The examination of the *Tableau* in this thesis therefore exemplifies the concept of the amalgam, where de Lancre took local knowledge of landscape, applied his own ideas on the sabbath and its links to place, and then curated a collection of these landscape narratives in his text for publication. While we must acknowledge the *Tableau* as the outsider voice of Pierre de Lancre, we also must understand the role local voices played in its construction of place. To understand how this amalgam of localness and foreignness developed and what it tells us about place in the *Tableau*, we must first understand the landscapes of the Pays de Labourd that Pierre de Lancre describes across the text.

The landscape of the Pays de Labourd is that of both the sea and the sky, where the Atlantic waters of the Bay of Biscay meet the peaks of the Pyrénées, and these two features dominate the landscape and the lives of the people living in the region. Geologically, these two features first appeared successively as a series of tectonic events between 370 and 11 million years ago, as the European and Iberian plates began their collision course centred upon the North Pyrenean Zone, in what would become the Pays de Labourd.[6] As the Iberian plate rotated into its modern position parallel to Europe, the Bay of Biscay opened and the point of rotation became the foundations of the Pyrénées as the land was tectonically uplifted. Due to this tectonic shift, the Pyrénées formed in a west to east fashion, with the northwestern slopes surrounding the Labourd region counting among the oldest in the mountain chain, towering over the Aquitaine foreland and allowing for the formation of east-west basins that

[6] Pierre Choukroune, "Tectonic Evolution of the Pyrenees," in *Annual Review of Earth and Planetary Sciences* 20 (1992): 152-153; Carr, *The Savage Frontier*, 14.

characterize the Northern Pyrenean Zone.[7] It was this combination of mountain, valley, and ocean that would dictate the lives and lived landscapes of the people of Labourd millions of years later.

Today the Pays de Labourd sits on the borders of land, sea, and sky. To the north, the continental Aquitaine basin extends into the distance, its gently hilled countryside extending toward Bordeaux and beyond. This flat and fertile land narrows into a small strip of arable land between the Pyrénées foothills and the ocean and into the pre-alpine mountain valleys approximately ten kilometres wide and thirty kilometres long. Here, bounded by the Adour River in the north and the Bidasoa River in the south, grain has been produced for thousands of years. Archaeological evidence points to the adoption of grain farming in the Basque country as early as 4000BC.[8] However, due to the region's topography, little fertile space is available for sustenance farming. Much older traditions exist along the slopes of the Pyrénées, where the land is unsuitable for crop growth. In the rocky alpine meadows intermingling with mixed deciduous and coniferous forests, the herds of pastoralists graze. The annual transhumance of these flocks of sheep up the slopes of the Pyrénées has provided a steady rhythm to life in the Basque country since the Neolithic period approximately 12,000 years ago, an uninterrupted interaction with the landscape that provided meaning and motion to people at the base of Pyrénées for millennia.[9]

Despite the presence of these sources of food tied to the landscape of the Pays de Labourd, in Pierre de Lancre's eyes, the lands of the Basque were "infertile" and "barren."[10] Instead, de Lancre traces the subsistence of the Basque people to the one final element of geological space in the Pays de Labourd: the sea. Across time, the same motif of the Basque

[7] Choukroune, "Tectonic Evolution in the Pyrenees," 144-145.
[8] Jean-Louis Davant, *Petite Histoire du Pays Basque* (Pau: Éditions Cairn, 2017), 13.
[9] Davant, *Petite Histoire du Pays Basque*, 13; Carr, *The Savage Frontier*, 19.
[10] de Lancre, *Tableau*, 30.

love of the sea has been by numerous authors. In his 1873 travel guide, Count Henry Russell confidently states that the Basques "love the sea beyond all things, and are first rate sailors."[11] The "inconstant" sea, which was to de Lancre's eyes a foreboding and terrifying landscape, was simply another of the three geographic features of the Pays de Labourd that could be used and conquered for subsistence by the local Basque population. For centuries, the Basque used the resources of their land to conquer the sea, building their fleets from the abundant forests of the Pyrénées foothills.[12]

In his 1857 examination of the Basque country, Michel Francisque noted the centrality of fishing and whaling to the Basque lifestyle dating to the thirteenth century.[13] Whaling as a means of subsistence dates to the eleventh century along the coast of the Pays de Labourd, with the rest of the Basque country following in the centuries thereafter.[14] The beginnings of trans-Atlantic movements by Europeans to the Americas in the waning years of the fifteenth century brought new opportunities to the people of the Pays de Labourd. Basque whalers first appeared on the coast of Newfoundland around 1530, and by 1610 had killed 25,000-40,000 whales, with a total harvest per season ranging between 300 and 500 whales.[15] This whaling industry was supported on the coast of Newfoundland and Labrador by immense fishing industries, evidenced by the scale of cod bone deposits at the Basque whaling site of Red Bay.[16] Due to the migratory whale behaviour in the north Atlantic, Basque journeys to North America followed seasonal rotations with voyages for cod fishing beginning in the summer that extended into the winter upon the arrival of the migrating

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[11] Count Henry Russell, *Biarritz and Basque Countries* (London: Edward Standord, 1873), 54.
[12] See: Jésus Altuna et al., *Itxaskaria: Los Euskaros Y El Mar* (Petronor, 1978).
[13] Michel Francisque, *Le Pays Basque: Sa Population, Sa Langue, Ses Mœurs, Sa Littérature et Sa Musique* (Paris: Librarie de Firmin Didot Frères, Fils, et Cie, 1857), 187.
[14] Alex Aguilar, "Basque Whaling in the North Atlantic Ocean," in *The Ocean Reader: History, Culture, Politics* edited by Eric Paul Roorda (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020), 123.
[15] Aguilar, "Basque Whaling in the North Atlantic Ocean," 123.
[16] Peter E. Pope, "Bretons, Basques, and Inuit in Labrador and Northern Newfoundland: The Control of Maritime Resources in the 16th and 17th Centuries," in *Études Inuit Studies* 39, no. 1 (2015), 18.

whales.[17] The immensity of this operation, given the small population of the Pays de Labourd made a massive impact on the society by the time of Pierre de Lancre's writings, and expanded the borders of the known world to the Basque country.

To the people of the Pays de Labourd, the sea was indeed central to life and existence. Such a tie to this third piece of the regional landscape is visible in the settlement patterns of the Labourd area. Along the narrow strip between the mountains and the sea, the main population centres of Hendaye, Biarritz, and the dual towns of Saint-Jean-de-Luz and Ciboure (which were connected across a narrow harbour by a drawbridge in the early seventeenth century) all were built along the Bay of Biscay coast.[18] Bayonne, though inland from the Bay of Biscay, is on the river Adour and has been used as a maritime centre since antiquity, indicated by the etymology of its name *Baya ona* from the Basque "good bay."[19] The wealth of the sea and its impact on Basque life in the Pays de Labourd can be seen in the population distribution of the region. In 1873, the Pays de Labourd was home to 47,000 people, of whom 27,000 lived in Bayonne, 4000 in Biarritz, 3000 in Saint-Jean-de-Luz, and 700 in Hendaye.[20] While over two centuries removed from the writings of Pierre de Lancre, who stated that the region had a population of 30,000, these demographic figures point toward a settlement pattern tied to the sea and the wealth it brought to the Basques of the Labourd.[21]

By the first decade of the seventeenth century, the ties to the "inconstant" sea had shaped the world of the Labourdin Basques, bringing the main population centres to its

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[17] Peter Bakker, "'The Language of the Coast Tribes is Half Basque': A Basque-American Indian Pidgin in Use between Europeans and Native Americans in North America ca 1549-ca 1640," in *Anthropological Linguistics* 31, no.3/4 (1989): 118.
[18] de Lancre, *Tableau*, 31.
[19] Russell, *Biarritz and Basque Country*, 20.
[20] Russell, *Biarritz and Basque Country*, 2, 16, 42, 86, 97. Russell indicates that by the time of publication, Saint-Jean-de-Luz's population had shrunk substantially in the past centuries, though no estimates are given about its previous population.
[21] de Lancre, *Tableau*, 38.

shores while simultaneously expanding the Basque world to the New World. This expansion of the geographic imaginations of the Basques across the Atlantic is evident throughout the *Tableau*. Citing a case before the Privy Council before the French King in 1609, de Lancre notes: "…when the Sieur de Mons argued a case before the Privy Council of the King against some people from Saint-Jean-de-Luz regarding some interests and damages that they claimed to have lost and suffered from having sent several ships to Canada, he was told that the Basques had always travelled to this area, long before anybody else knew about it, which meant that the Canadians did not use any other language with the French than Basque."[22] This case study recorded by de Lancre is reflected in the linguistic history of the Indigenous Peoples of Eastern Canada, as discussed by linguist Peter Bakker. Bakker notes that French missionaries in the seventeenth century often arrived in Indigenous communities to discover the local people speaking a form of hybrid dialect of Basque and one of the numerous coastal Algonquin languages, with evidence of the pidgin dialect still evident in the Mi'kmaq language in the twentieth century.[23] Further, in de Lancre's contextual description of the Labourd, he notes the significance of the Newfoundland voyages to the Basque region which inflamed tensions between Spain and France in the early years of the seventeenth century. De Lancre describes the Spanish authorities attempts to force all Labourdin sailors to dock at San Sebastian or Hondarribia as opposed to the harbours of Hendaye, Ciboure, or Bayonne in order to restrict the wealth of the Basque fisheries from flowing into the French controlled Pays de Labourd.[24] However, these attempts to control the trade with the New World led to conflict between the two states and the eventual resulted in Lord Espagnet, de Lancre's witch

[22] "*…qu'en l'an 1609 le sieur de Mons disputant au privué conseil du Roy contre quelques gens de Sainct Iean de Lus, certains domages & interests qu'ils disoyent auoir faicts & soufferts pour auoir enuoyé quelques nauires en Canada, il luy fut maintenu que de tout temps & auant qu'il en eust cognoissance, les Basques y trafiquoiet: si bien que les Canadois ne traictoient par my les François en autre langue qu'en celle des Basques*." de Lancre, *Tableau,* 29.
[23] Bakker, "'The Language of the Coast Tribes is Half Basque,'" 128.
[24] de Lancre, *Tableau,* 31-32.

hunting counterpart, to create a report for Henry IV of France outlining the need to build a new port at Socoa purely for the purpose of rerouting ships from Hondarribia and San Sebastian back into the Pays de Labourd, shifting the economic geography of the inconstant sea toward a direct path between the Pays de Labourd and the north eastern American continent.[25]

The landscapes of the Pays de Labourd leading into the seventeenth century were rich and varied, filled with small fertile valleys for farmers, alpine grazing land for pastoralists, and the expanse of the North Atlantic from the Bay of Biscay to the shores of Newfoundland for sailors and fishermen. The landscape that Pierre de Lancre beheld in the early years of the seventeenth century was one steeped in thousands of years of tradition already, whose borders were seemingly simply defined by the narrow strip between La Rhune and the Bay of Biscay but whose reality expanded into the mountains and across the sea to the New World. It is upon this spatial backdrop that the great Basque witch hunt is set, the stage where the deepest fantasies regarding the sabbath were played out under the supervision of Pierre de Lancre.

In early 1609, the rhythm of life between the mountains and the sea continued as it had for generations. Pastoralists herded their flocks up and down the Pyrénées slopes, crops were planted in the valley fields, and the men of the Pays de Labourd made the journey across the inconstant sea to the ripe fishing and whaling grounds of Newfoundland. However, the arrival of Pierre de Lancre and Jean d'Espaignet at Bayonne on the second of July 1609 signalled a great disruption of life in the Pays de Labourd, as the region was turned inside out in pursuit of witchcraft. However, the great witch hunt of 1609 was not the first instance of witch hunting in the region. The late sixteenth century and early seventeenth century saw a

[25] de Lancre, *Tableau,* 32-34.

series of small witch panics rock the Pays de Labourd. In 1576, one Marie de Chorropique was hanged and burned in Ustaritz by local Bailiff of the Labourd, Boniface de Lasse, after confessing to meeting the Devil in the form of a tall black man and causing another woman's arm to wither and die after touching it while leaving church.[26] While this sixteenth-century case was a local affair, later witchcraft trials in the Pays de Labourd involved a higher level of external intervention. Following its capture from the English in the mid-fifteenth century, the Pays de Labourd was placed under the governance of the *Parlement* of Bordeaux, founded in 1461. The *Parlement* acted as a branch of the French crown, extending the judiciary and legal power over the French southwestern frontier toward the Pyrénées and the Spanish border.[27] While Bayonne often served as a centre for local Labourdin affairs and legal matters, major judicial cases such as witchcraft were referred to Bordeaux. In 1605, twenty-two people from Saint-Jean-de-Luz were held in the royal prisons of Bayonne on witchcraft charges according to the local notary.[28] The affair lasted over two years, beginning with three Bordeaux jurists dispatched by the *Parlement* in September of 1605 who questioned and tortured the accused over the course of only five days before leaving Bayonne. Following their questioning, the accused remained imprisoned for over a year: five were freed at the end of October 1606 while the other twelve were taken to Bordeaux for further investigation, leading to a direct conflict between the *Parlement* and the governing bodies of the Pays de Labourd regarding their competence in judicial matters and the trying of witches in the Basque region.[29]

The years-long affair with the Saint-Jean-de-Luz witches and the resulting oversight by the *Parlement* of Bordeaux were the catalyst for the great hunt of 1609. In late 1608 or

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[26] Josane Charpentier, *Petite Histoire de la Sorcellerie au Pays Basque* (Pau: Éditions Cairn, 2019), 26.
[27] Robert Boutruche, *Bordeaux de 1453 à 1715* (Bordeaux: Fédération historique du Sud-Ouest, 1966), 81-83.
[28] Machielsen, *The Basque Witch-Hunt*, 49.
[29] Beñat Zintzo-Garmendia, *Histoire de la Sorcellerie en Pays Basque* (Toulouse: Éditions Privat, 2016), 101-113.

early 1609, Tristan d'Urtubie and Jean Paul de Caupenne, two gentlemen of the Labourd region, made a formal complaint regarding the pervasiveness of witchcraft in the Basque country before the court of Henry IV, demanding royal intervention to wipe out the "great inconveniences and vexations" caused by witchcraft among the people of the Labourd.[30] The king granted them their wish, and in early 1609 ordered the dispatch of two jurists from the *Parlement* of Bordeaux to deal with the scourge of witchcraft in the frontier region: Counsellor Pierre de Lancre and President Jean d'Espaignet. While the *Parlement* protested "declaring that two judges, operating on their own, should not be able to apply torture in their questioning of suspects and should not have the authority to apply the death penalty to those found guilty" the King rejected this appeal, and de Lancre and d'Espaignet departed for the Pays de Labourd from Bordeaux around 28 June 1609 for the Pays de Labourd.[31] The arrival of de Lancre and d'Espaignet in Bayonne in the summer of 1609 signalled the beginning of France's greatest witch hunt, one that would tear the Pays de Labourd apart and open a window into the microcosm of life at on the Basque frontier.

While the role that d'Espaignet played in the trials before his departure to settle the border dispute between Spain and France amid their hunt for witchcraft is debatable, it is Pierre de Lancre who remains the face of the Basque witch hunt and the heart of this study, for it is his *Tableau de l'inconstance des mauvais anges et demons* that dissects the original trial records and provides a glimpse of the sabbath fantasies at the heart of these narratives, following the loss of the trial records in a 1704 fire.[32] The subject of fierce historiographic debate, Pierre de Lancre has been labelled everything from "sadistic and cruel" and "libidinous and sensual," to absurd and punitive, with early witchcraft historian Hugh Trevor-

[30] Zintzo-Garmendia, *Histoire de la Sorcellerie en Pays Basque*, 113.
[31] Jonathan L Pearl, *The Crime of Crimes: Demonology and Politics in France, 1560-1620* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1999), 133.
[32] De Lancre briefly discusses the work of d'Espagnet in his contextual discussion of the Pays de Labourd, see *Livre* I, *Discours* II, Chapters 6-7.

Roper hailing him as "the gleeful executioner of the Pays de Labourd."[33] However, recent studies of de Lancre present a much more complex character. Thibaut Maus de Rolley and Jan Machielsen describe de Lancre as misunderstood, as previous historians "attributed to him whatever mindset they expected a wicked witch-hunter to possess."[34] Emma Wilby presents de Lancre and the Spanish Inquisitors operating across the border in Navarre as complex men and products of their time: "Any attempt to condemn de Lancre, Valle, and Becerra as 'sadistic' or 'narrow-minded' must also acknowledge that although their attitudes toward witchcraft may have been considered extreme to some of their contemporaries, when viewed within the context of early modern society as a whole they were not."[35] While the brutality inflicted by de Lancre upon the Basque population through the summer and autumn of 1609 cannot be understated, it is the complexity of his approach to witchcraft and demonology that brings the stories of the sabbath in the Pays de Labourd to life. Moreover, de Lancre cannot be judged within a vacuum – the commission led by the Bordeaux jurists coincided with a major witch hunt on the Spanish side of the side of the Basque country, culminating in an *auto de fe* held at Logroño in 1610 and extending years after de Lancre's departure.[36]

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[33] Josane Charpentier, *La sorcellerie en Pays Basque* (Paris: Librairie Guénégaud, 1977), 34; Julio Caro Baroja, *The World of the Witches* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964), 157; Trevor-Roper, *The European Witch-Craze of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries and Other Essays*, 139.

[34] Thibaut Maus de Rolley and Jan Machielsen, "The Mythmaker of the Sabbat: Pierre de Lancre's *Tableau de l'inconstance des mauvais anges et demons*" in *The Science of Demons: Early Modern Authors Facing Witchcraft and the Devil* ed. Jan Machielsen (London: Routledge, 2020), 285.

[35] Emma Wilby, *Invoking the Akelarre: Voices of the Accused in the Basque Witch Craze, 1609-1614* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2019), 22-23.

[36] The Spanish side of this witch panic will not be examined within the scope of this thesis beyond a brief description of the caves at Zugarramurdi as a sabbath landscape. For more on these trials, see: Gustav Henningsen, *The Witches' Advocate: Basque Witchcraft and the Spanish Inquisition (1609-1614)* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1980); Gustav Henningsen, *The Salazar Documents: Inquisitor Alonso de Salazar Frias and others on the Basque Witch Persecution* (Leiden: Brill, 2004); Lu Ann Homza, *Village Infernos and Witches' Advocates: Witch-Hunting in Navarre*, 1609-1614 (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2022); Lu Ann Homza, *The Child Witches of Olague* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2024).

Born in the area surrounding Bordeaux in 1556 as Pierre de Rosteguy, the descendant of Basque immigrants to the region, Pierre de Lancre was raised as a member of the burgeoning mercantile class. His father, Étienne de Rosteguy, purchased the title of de Lancre around the time of Pierre's birth and used his growing influence as the son and grandson of Bordeaux merchants to earn both Pierre and his younger son offices in the *Parlement* of Bordeaux.[37] Pierre de Lancre began work as a jurist in the *Parlement* of Bordeaux in 1582, followed by travels to Italy at the turn of the seventeenth century.[38]

The first of de Lancre's texts, *Tableau de l'incosntance et instabilité de toutes choses* or *Tableau of the Inconstancy and Instability of All Things*, was published in 1607 in Paris, with only a series of initials bearing the identity of the author: P.D.R.D.L.S.D.L., short for Pierre de Rosteguy de Lancre, Sieur de Loubens. Maus de Rolley argues that this anonymity was a presentation of modesty for de Lancre, however the careful manoeuvring he showed in the first edition of the text was lost by its second publication in 1610, in which de Lancre both signed his name to the treatise and chose to expunge his birth name of de Rosteguy from the page, his last remaining tie to his Basque roots and the full adoption of a new titled identity.[39] This change in identity evidences a dramatic shift for de Lancre following the great Basque witch hunt in 1609, in which he placed the inconstancy of Basque life under a microscope. To de Lancre, the shedding of his Basque name was the removal of himself from this frontier space at the edge of France and placing his identity and his authority firmly within the new elites of Bordeaux society.

When Pierre de Lancre arrived in Bayonne on 2 July 1609, he arrived as a man removed from his Basque roots, with no remaining traces of his local ancestry.[40] Unable to

[37] Maus de Rolley and Machielsen, "The Mythmaker of the Sabbat," 285.
[38] Pearl, *The Crime of Crimes*, 129.
[39] Thibaut Maus de Rolley, "Of Oysters, Witches, Birds, and Anchors: Conceptions of Space and Travel in Pierre de Lancre," in *Renaissance Studies* 32, no. 4 (2018): 530.
[40] Zintzo-Garmendia, *Histoire de la Sorcellerie en Pays Basque*, 227.

speak the Basque language and unfamiliar with local customs and beliefs, de Lancre was an outsider tasked with breaking down this foreign world to expose the Devil within. As Roper describes, "[t]he interrogator's role was like that of a priestly confessor" breaking down the walls of diabolical sin and bringing the broader community back into the light of God, and de Lancre was no exception.[41] Over the course of the summer and autumn of 1609, the pair of judges travelled the Pays de Labourd, conducting trials and interviews across all twenty-seven parishes of the region.[42] While many details regarding the commission were lost with the original trial records, we know that in his journeys to each of the twenty-seven parishes of the Pays de Labourd, de Lancre was met with a Basque population with already rich localized witchcraft beliefs. Local children began claiming that women came to their beds at night to carry them to the sabbath. Their terrified parents, fearful of both the seduction of the Devil and the wrath of the Bordeaux jurists, "tied them to their beds; or endeavored to keep them awake, terrified that once the children closed their eyes even for a moment they would be unable to resist Satanic abduction; or brought them to church in the vain hope of seeking protection."[43] Working amidst the local populace's terror, de Lancre would hear countless accounts of the sabbath, often held at a place called the "Aquelarre" (in the Basque language of Euskara, "Akelarre") which can be translated as "Heath of the Billy-Goat."[44] While the sabbath was not a new concept by 1609, this aspect of witchcraft belief piqued the interests of de Lancre.

Through the fantasies of the sabbath, de Lancre's pursuit of witchcraft shifted toward the elimination of the demonic sect responsible for the sabbath, at one point convincing the

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[41] Roper, *Witch Craze*, 57.
[42] Machielsen, *The Basque Witch-Hunt*, 113-116.
[43] Gerhild Scholz Williams, Introduction to *On the Inconstancy of Witches: Pierre de Lancre's Tableau de l'Inconstance des Mauvais Anges et Demons (1612)* (Tempe: Arizona Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2006), xxxvi.
[44] de Lancre, *Tableau*, 69.

court to allow for the execution of those accused of leading the sabbath, even if *maleficia*, the capital crime at the heart of the commission, could not be proven.[45] For de Lancre, each interview and interrogation gave him, as described by Maus de Rolley and Machielsen, "access to the demonic underworld in vivid detail that would otherwise have remained out of reach."[46] The complexities of de Lancre's character beyond the vicious and cruel judge described by previous historians can be noted in his obsession with the sabbath and the landscapes in which it was held. Belief in witchcraft was divided into two camps throughout the early modern period: those who believed witchcraft and *maleficia* to be real and those who believed that it was an illusion constructed by the Devil. While Pierre de Lancre did admit that the sabbath *could* potentially occur in the form of a dream or a vision, he was a firm believer in its existence in the world of reality, making the sabbath and the Akelarre where it was performed a tantalizing glimpse into the workings of the Devil in the real world.[47] Further, like the demonologists and witch hunters who came before him and after, de Lancre's accounts of the sabbath were a form of hypersexualized eroticism, with their orgiastic qualities both reflecting the subconscious desires of the confessor and entertaining the interrogator and reader with their forbidden titillation, though de Lancre's examples appear to be overly heterosexual compared to others.[48] These accounts, coming most often from teenaged girls in the Pays de Labourd, present an uncomfortable reality about de Lancre: as Machielsen has recently argued, his obsession with the sabbath can be tied to his own sexual desires and fantasies regarding the teenage witnesses, leading to his persistence on questioning the sexual nature of the sabbath.[49]

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[45] Pearl, *The Crime of Crimes*, 138.
[46] Maus de Rolley and Machielsen, "The Mythmaker of the Sabbat," 292.
[47] Wilby, *Invoking the Akelarre*, 18-19.
[48] Machielsen, *The Basque Witch-Hunt*, 141.
[49] Machielsen, *The Basque Witch-Hunt*, 141; Elspeth Whitney, "Sex, Lies and Depositions: Pierre de Lancre's Vision of the Witches' Sabbath" in *Crossing Boundaries: Issues of Culture and Individual Identity in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, ed. Sally McKee (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 1999): 239-262.

It was this fascination with the sabbath, in its erotic and entertaining form that helped drive the trials across the Pays de Labourd under de Lancre's supervision. Following their exposure to the tortures of *chevalet* and strappado, the accused would offer their confession in Euskara, which would then be translated into French by local cleric Lorenzo de Hualde, who would then translate de Lancre's questions back into Euskara for the accused.[50] So many people were accused and successively imprisoned that many of the accused had to be transferred to Bordeaux due to lack of prison space in the Pays de Labourd, in such numbers that a ruined chateau had to be converted into a prison to house the masses of accused.[51] With the original trial records lost, it is impossible to determine how many executions de Lancre oversaw during the summer and fall of 1609. For decades, historians believed that around six hundred people were executed during the great Basque witch hunt in the Pays de Labourd, but more recent scholarship points toward a number between fifty and eighty executions, which, even with the dramatic reduction in executions, remains France's bloodiest witch hunt of the early modern period.[52] In the *Tableau*, only eleven executed witches are named or have their towns listed, however, this number did not include the male priests who were executed for attending the sabbath.[53] Regardless of the final number of victims, in the mid autumn of 1609, the executions reached their climax. Upon their return from Newfoundland at the end of whaling and fishing season, the Basque sailors revolted, preventing executions in late September and forcing the commission headed by de Lancre to retreat from the Basque heartland of Saint-Jean-de-Luz to the capital of Bayonne at the edge of the Pays de Labourd.[54] This local interference signalled the late phase of the commission, culminating in

[50] Charpentier, *Petite Histoire de la Sorcellerie au Pays Basque*, 74; Scholz Williams, Introduction to *On the Inconstancy of Witches*, xxxiii.
[51] Pearl, *The Crime of Crimes*, 136.
[52] Pearl, *The Crime of Crimes*, 133.
[53] Machielsen, *The Basque Witch-Hunt*, 117-118.
[54] Charpentier, *Petite Histoire de la Sorcellerie au Pays Basque*, 110-112; Zintzo-Garmendia, *Histoire de la Sorcellerie en Pays Basque*, 224.

de Lancre and d'Espaignet's planned departure for Bordeaux on 1 November 1609, bringing their four month sojourn in the Pays de Labourd to a close.[55]

The conclusion of the witch hunt that ravaged the Pays de Labourd was likely a conscious decision by the *Parlement* of Bordeaux, following complaints by the Archbishop of Bayonne that de Lancre was neglecting the due process of law. Additionally, the Labourdin people made numerous appeals to the French crown against de Lancre and his intensive witch hunting, another potential reason for the *Parlement*'s actions in the removal of the commission.[56] It was in this context that Pierre de Lancre wrote the text that lies at the heart of this chapter: *Tableau de l'inconstance des mauvais anges et demons*. The *Tableau*, first published only three years after the conclusion of the trials in 1612, is a lengthy and multilayered exploration of demonology painted upon the backdrop of de Lancre's experiences in the Pays de Labourd. The text is of unique composition for a demonology: part demonology, part ethnography of the Labourd region, but entirely focused on persuading the imminent dangers of witchcraft within society. Given the complaints about de Lancre's behaviour by the Archbishop of Bayonne and by the people of the Pays de Labourd who petitioned Henry IV, the *Tableau* may be seen as de Lancre's response to the early recall of the commission by the *Parlement* and the justification for the severity of his persecutions. Like the other demonological authors we have examined, de Lancre's *Tableau* is rooted in the terror of witchcraft's reality and the titillating erotic entertainment that would draw in the reader with both disgust and delight. However, the nature of the *Tableau* as the justification for the intensity of the Basque witch hunt resulted in the text's deviance from the demonological standard from previous texts. Rather than focusing purely on the construction of the evils of witchcraft through theological and classical lenses mixed with judicial

[55] Machielsen, *The Basque Witch-Hunt*, 110.
[56] Scholz Williams, Introduction to *On the Inconstancy of Witches*, xxx.

experience as seen in previous demonologies, de Lancre's *Tableau* provides a methodical deconstruction of the Pays de Labourd and the imagined realm of the sabbath with a near ethnographic and sociological approach. The resulting text is an amalgam, where de Lancre takes elements of Basque belief and combines them with his own perspectives and fantasies. The *Tableau* is built upon these combined narratives gleaned from the knowledge of the informants and the confessions of the accused, ultimately filtered through de Lancre's foreign eyes. De Lancre's *Tableau* curates these sabbath narratives for its audience, presenting the information the author deemed significant, but built upon the foundations of the coproduced accounts of the sabbath.

The *Tableau de l'inconstance des mauvais anges et demons* is divided into six books, separated by topic. Each book is further subdivided by discourses and chapters focusing on different narratives regarding the context, the theology, and the trials themselves. In exploring the landscape narratives of the witches' sabbath in the Pays de Labourd, specific sections of the *Tableau* are particularly pertinent. Livre I, Discours II provides an in-depth exploration of the Pays de Labourd as a region and of the Basque people who inhabit these lands. Part travel literature, part ethnography, this section provides both explains the abundance of witches in the Pays de Labourd and sets the stage for the narratives of witchcraft that he provides for the rest of the text. Livre II consists of de Lancre's descriptions of the witches' sabbath as gathered from the accounts of local accused witches of the Labourd and cases formerly tried by the *Parlement* in Bordeaux. With meticulous attention to detail, de Lancre reconstructs the sabbath from the imaginations of both interrogator and accused, exploring the movement to, participation in, and results of the diabolical sabbath that haunted his fantasies. However, most importantly to this research, de Lancre describes in detail the locations and landscapes that the accused attributed to the sabbath. De Lancre continues these sabbath narratives in Livre III, Discours III and IV, Livre

IV, Discours I, and Livre VI, Discours III and V. Each of these sections of the text contain further details that bring the sabbath from the realm of fantasy and terror onto the page, with de Lancre's lurid details adding breadth and complexity to narrative and painting a picture of the landscape of the Pays de Labourd. The sabbath fantasies described by de Lancre do not occur in nameless places, but in specific churchyards, forests, and mountaintops, many visited by the Bordeaux commission during their months in the region. Through de Lancre's eyes and pen, we are granted a window into the Basque relationship with space and landscape in 1609. It is the *Tableau*'s interdisciplinarity and attention to detail paired with de Lancre's obsession with the sabbath that makes this document invaluable to a spatial study of the witches' sabbath. These fantastical narratives contain the traces of the real lived landscape of the Labourdin people, long after they and their recorded confessions were lost to the flames.

De Lancre's Mirror – The Sabbath in the Tableau

Before we explore the landscapes of Pierre de Lancre's *Tableau*, it is important to first understand the sabbath as de Lancre envisioned. According to de Lancre, the sabbath was practiced by individuals in nearly every parish of the Pays de Labourd, both during the day and the night, on every day of the week. However, he claims that the Devil preferred the "darkest of all hours" just after midnight, when he would issue his summons to the sabbath.[57] While some sabbaths were small in numbers, de Lancre claimed that there were four major annual sabbaths, held in public along the beach at Hendaye.[58] During the sabbath, de Lancre claimed that the Devil appeared in many different forms – sometimes a billy-goat, others a "great dark tree trunk" and other times a man in black.[59] At the sabbath, the Labourdin witches were said to lead children from their homes and present them before the Devil as an offering, who then asked the children to renounce God, the Virgin Mary, and the saints,

[57] "*c'est en la plus obscure de toutes les heures*…" de Lancre, *Tableau*, 63.
[58] de Lancre, *Tableau*, 64.
[59] "…*vn grand tronc d'arbre obscure*…" De Lancre, *Tableau,* 67.

especially St. Anthony.[60] After their renunciation, de Lancre claimed the Devil would make the children and witches kiss his face or his anus before he would sometimes reciprocate, then asks them to touch a book of diabolical writings in adoration.[61] As the final act of welcoming a child into the fold, the Devil would give children a toad to watch over and guard, at a stream or body of water that the witches could use to stir up a storm.[62]

The sabbath in de Lancre's writing was a form of inverted mass, but often featured extensive sexual narratives. In particular, de Lancre focused on the sexual acts of the teenaged girls who stood on trial, such as sixteen-year-old Jeannette d'Abadie from Ciboure, who confessed to having sex with the Devil at the sabbath and finding that the semen of the Devil was cold, while that of the other men at the sabbath was a normal temperature, subtly pointing toward the orgiastic nature of the fantasy.[63] Moreover, unlike the strictly religious inverted mass sometimes presented in sabbath narratives, de Lancre included many descriptions of music and dancing at the sabbath. At the sabbath described by d'Abadie, a "little blind man from Ciboure [would] sound his drum and his flute" while the Bordeaux witch Isaac de Queryan described dancing with a small group of witches to the drumming of a little devil.[64] Further, the sabbath was the centre of de Lancre's narratives of *maleficia*. Here the Devil provided his witches with powders and poisons, storms were summoned to sink the ships essential to life on the Basque coast, and where the damned would "resolve merely that everyone will do as much harm as they can…"[65]

Pierre de Lancre recorded over a dozen specific sabbath landscapes across the *Tableau*, with more yet described in minimal detail through the text. These landscapes, listed

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[60] de Lancre, *Tableau,* 70-71.
[61] de Lancre, *Tableau,* 71-74.
[62] de Lancre, *Tableau,* 72.
[63] de Lancre, *Tableau,* 90.
[64] *"…le petit aueugle de Siboro sonner du tabourin & de la fluste…"* De Lancre, *Tableau,* 90, 150.
[65] "*…où il se resout seulemét que chacun fera tant de mal qu'il pourra*…" de Lancre, *Tableau*, 134.

in Table 4, illustrate the breadth and variety of spaces described by de Lancre. While we may never know the full story of the sabbath landscapes in the Pays de Labourd due to the loss of the records, those described across the *Tableau* present a cross-section of both life in the Pays de Labourd and the imagination of Pierre de Lancre. The locations included in Table 4 do not present the complete story of the sabbath in the *Tableau* – locations that were either unnamed or could not be cross referenced with a modern place were excluded.

Though many of these landscapes originate in the confession narratives of the accused and their witnesses, they are also a carefully curated collection. As de Lancre wrote his *Tableau*, he chose specific landscapes – given the interrogation of 60-80 accused witches and 500 informants, it is unlikely that the small collection found in Table 4 covered every landscape described to the jurist across the summer and autumn of 1609. How then can we understand de Lancre's choices in which landscapes to include and which to omit?

In his recent study of the 1609 Basque witch hunt, Jan Machielsen has noted that de Lancre's text was dictated by a sense of wonder at the supernatural.[66] When applied to the landscapes of the sabbath, it is likely that the selection of landscapes described by the author were similarly dictated by the sense of shock and awe they produced. It is therefore essential to understand that our exploration of the Labourdin landscape is one that is coproduced through the interrogation process, where localized beliefs were filtered through the eyes of an outsider seeking to disgust and arouse the reader. Such a sense of wonder and shock would certainly explain some of these landscapes, such as the churches and cemeteries that the reader would assume to be sacred. Yet he also mentions other, more mundane landscapes such as the Labourdin beaches, the rocks at Biarritz, the windmill at Haitze, and the drawbridge between Saint-Jean-de-Luz and Ciboure, which must have been the result of the

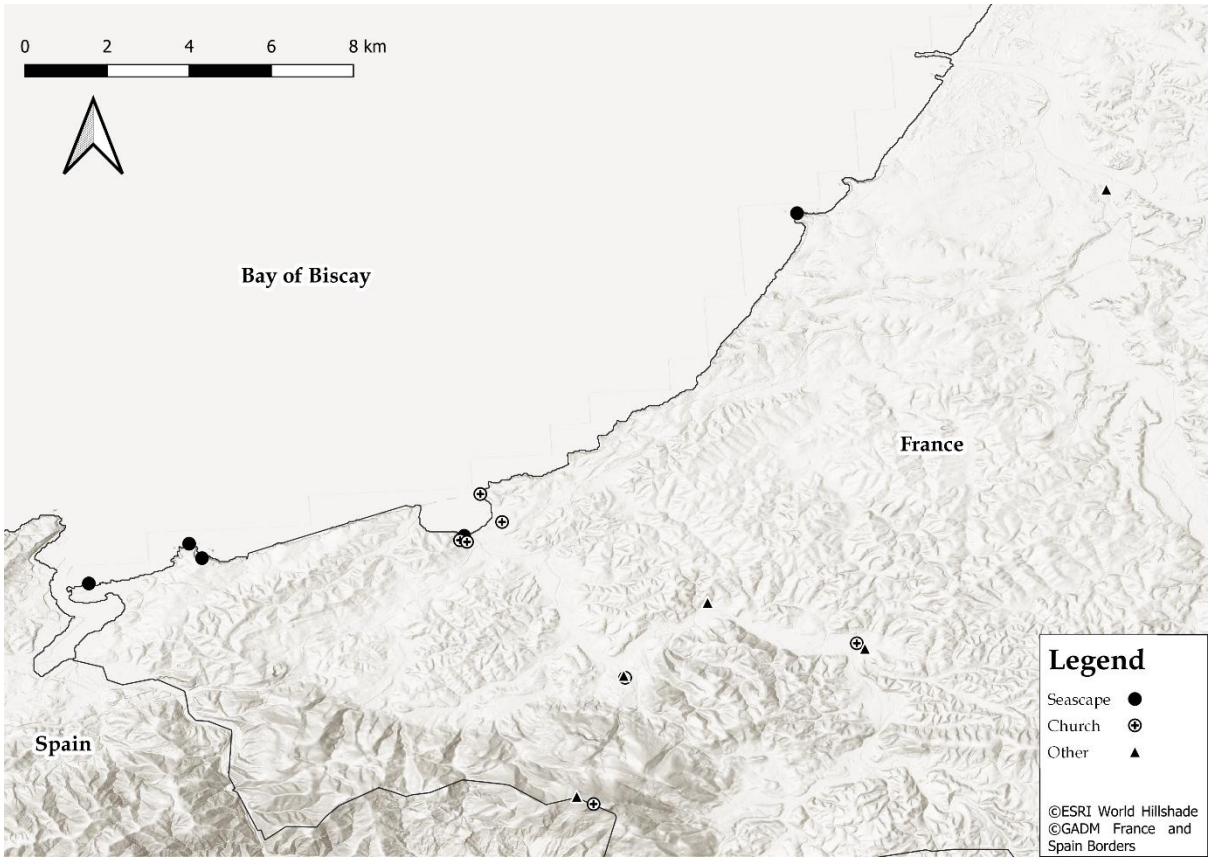
[66] Machielsen, *The Basque Witch-Hunt*, 6.

coproduction. Such sites were an odd choice for a sabbath landscape by de Lancre and a local curiosity; they were evidently full of meaning to the Basque population.

Table 4: Specific landscapes described in Pierre de Lancre's Tableau, 1613 edition

Name	**Type of Landscape**	**Page reference**
La Rhune	Mountain	59
Dordach Church	Church	59
Hotel in Saint-Pée-sur-Nivelle	House	92
Cemetery Saint-Pée-sur-Nivelle	Cemetery	92
Gallienne Palace Crossroads	Crossroads and Ruins	93
Ascain Churchyard	Church	93
Home of Maitre de Segur, Bayonne	House	94
Chateau of Sieur d'Amou, Saint-Pée-sur-Nivelle	House	94
Ascain Square	Public Square	123
The Homes of Saint-Pée-sur-Nivelle	House	123
Drawbridge between Saint-Jean-de-Luz and Ciboure	Seascape	123
Windmill, Haitze	Agricultural	129
Locoua, Hendaye Coast	Seascape	136
Barrendeguy	Forest	140
Archachon, near Bordeaux	Town	152
Newfoundland	Seascape	152
Ciboure Cemetery	Cemetery	153
Saint Jean de Luz Cemetery	Cemetery	153
Underalse, Hendaye Coast	Seascape	156
Coastal Rocks at Hendaye	Seascape	158
Coastal Rocks at Biarritz	Seascape	158
Sante-Barbe Cemetery, Saint-Jean-de-Luz	Cemetery	459
Parish Church, Ciboure	Church	464

Figure 8: Specific sabbath landscapes described in the 1613 edition of the Tableau.



Palais Gallien – The Ruins

To understand how de Lancre understood the sabbath landscapes of the Pays de Labourd, we must first examine his understanding of place within the sabbath fantasy prior to his arrival in Bayonne. The evidence of this perspective comes from de Lancre's accounts of trials in his hometown. Bordeaux, the thriving vacation destination for wine lovers and sunseekers is not the space where one would typically seek out ruins. Charming cafés and brasseries filled with locals and tourists alike dot the streets surrounding the old gates and the cathedral, the whitewashed walls reflecting and radiating the warmth of a summer day, combining to give a sense of life to the city. However, a short walk from the heart of the old city is a half-forgotten park. Surrounded by urban houses but removed from the buzz of the tourist heartland is a curious heap of stonework, fenced off and surrounded by houses. The tan and red brickwork, arranged in a semicircle of crumbling arches with patches of grass and

vegetation clinging to its rough façade. A collection of small metal signs, faded by the southern French sun, have been placed on the protective fence on the western side of the ruins, telling their story. Nearly two thousand years ago, this small section of arches formed a much larger complex, the amphitheatre of Roman Burdigala. Once the beating heart of the city's entertainment district with seating for nearly 20,000 spectators for gladiatorial fights and performances, the amphitheatre fell into disrepair in the aftermath of the western Roman collapse. Abandoned and forgotten, the amphitheatre became overgrown, a curiosity at the crossroads outside of the gates of the post-Roman city of Bordeaux. It was during this period that the ruins obtained a new name – le Palais Gallien or the Gallienne Palace, though it was no palace. For centuries, these ruins loomed over the city, untouched and unaltered until the French Revolution when they were largely destroyed when the stones were systematically removed for new building projects. Only the small quarter left in this park remains, a minor reminder of the city's ancient past. While today the Gallienne Palace is a forgotten corner of a bustling tourist city, in the first years of the seventeenth century, the landscape inspired different visions of the forgotten past. While today's small section of manicured ruins and carefully fenced off grass presents a modern, carefully curated ancient ideal, the Gallienne Palace of Pierre de Lancre's time was a hulking ruin, overgrown and abandoned while still filling its ancient footprint made for twenty thousand people. Such an immense presence at the edge of the city limits presented the Gallienne Palace as the symbol of decay and proof that even the mightiest empires could collapse into ruin.

While Pierre de Lancre's *Tableau* is predominantly the story of the Pays de Labourd witchcraft commission and his justification for its brutality, de Lancre frequently returns to stories of his home in Bordeaux to provide greater evidence for the Devil's widespread power. The records of witch hunting in early modern Bordeaux are notably scant – the

parlement was the last in France to issue a death sentence for *maleficia* in 1594.[67] Even among Bordeaux's most famous case studies of early modern diabolical fantasies, such as the case of the accused werewolf Jean Grenier, the documentary evidence is fragmented outside of Pierre de Lancre's retelling of the story in the *Tableau*.[68] Among the most regular stories that de Lancre explores in Bordeaux is the trial of Isaac de Queryan. Despite the text's focus on the Basque coast, de Queryan's narrative was so vital to de Lancre's work, that he is the only named witch in the author's foreword to the *Tableau*.[69] Likewise, he is one of only a handful of individuals whose full story is described in the book. According to de Lancre, Isaac de Queryan was a twenty-five-year-old man from the town of Nérac, a small town approximately one hundred kilometres to the south of Bordeaux. Accused of practicing witchcraft by poisoning the son of a prominent Bordeaux family, de Queryan constructed a fantastical story of magic and malevolence, confessing to travelling through the air, entering homes through their chimneys, and crafting poisons hidden in hazelnuts.[70] Yet de Lancre's interest in de Queryan was not focused on these elements of his confession. Instead, de Lancre concentrates on de Queryan's sabbath stories, going so far as to claim "[de Queryan] informed the court of so much that is true about the witches' travel to the sabbath that it is impossible to find a more persuasive example in any book dealing with this subject."[71] For de Lancre, this made de Queryan's confession an essential component to unravelling his true obsession – the witches' sabbath. Indeed, the trial of Isaac de Queryan may have been the spark for de Lancre's fascination with the topic. De Queryan was condemned and executed by decree of the *Parlement* of Bordeaux in 1609, likely before de Lancre's dispatch to the

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[67] William Monter, "Witchcraft Trials in France," in *The Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe and Colonial America*, ed. Brian P. Levack (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 223.
[68] See: Jan Machielsen, "The Making of a Teen Wolf: Pierre de Lancre's Confrontation with Jean Grenier (1603-10)" in *Folklore* 130, no. 3 (September 2019): 237-257.
[69] de Lancre, *Tableau*, iii.
[70] de Lancre, *Tableau*, 100, 146-153.
[71] "…*il informa tellement la Cour de la verité du transport, qu'il est impossible en tous les liures qui en traictent d'en trouuer vn exemple si formel*." de Lancre, *Tableau*, 100.

Pays de Labourd.[72] While the original records of de Queryan's trial were lost in the archive fire that also destroyed the records of the Labourdin accused, there is a chance that de Lancre was among the jurists who oversaw the trial and heard firsthand the fantasies of the sabbath constructed by de Queryan.

Though Isaac de Queryan confessed to attending numerous sabbaths in his travels across the French southwest, his most notable sabbath narrative is the one most frequently described by de Lancre through the *Tableau*.[73] According to de Lancre, in the same year as his execution "[h]e confessed that he had also been transported over the Porte Dauphin and that from there he went to the sabbath in the square of the Gallienne Palace."[74] Though the seventeenth century Porte Dauphine was torn down with the city walls, the Porte Dijeaux of modern Bordeaux stands in its place and acts as the start of the modern Rue du Palais Gallien, or street of the Gallienne Palace, which today connects these two landmarks that stand just a kilometre apart. Due to the short distance between these sites, de Queryan professed to walking between the landmarks. At the Gallienne Palace, he met a young nurse under employment of the same family he worked for "whom he had known carnally only once, in the stable" along with approximately twenty or thirty other men and women.[75] De Lancre notes that "[t]hey recognized each other, and she told him that he had arrived at the right place, and afterwards, they danced all together to the sound of a drum played by a little devil."[76] In another instance, de Queryan attended another sabbath at the Gallienne Palace, smaller in numbers, but was led by the Devil himself. At this event:

> "…he met eight or nine people and some women who were dancing, holding on to each other's clothes. He said that the large Devil was seated, that he had tablecloths

[72] de Lancre, *Tableau*, 100.
[73] See: de Lancre, *Tableau*, 146-148.
[74] "*Et confessa qu'il auoit aussi esté transporté par deflus la porte Daufin, & de là qu'il alloit au sabbat au carrefour du palais Galienne*." de Lancre, *Tableau*, 100.
[75] "*…laquelle il cognut charnellemet vn seule fois dans l'escuirie…*" de Lancre, *Tableau*, 148-149.
[76] "*Qu'ils se recognurent, & qu'elle luy dict s'ill estoit là, & aprés ils danceret tous ensemble au son d'un Tabourin, que sonnoit vn petit Diabloton*." de Lancre, *Tableau*, 150.

> spread, and that he ate some meat that he did not recognize, and that the little devils served him, that he drank good wine, that the large Satan was at the end of the table and that, after they had eaten some roast meat, he served them some apples and grapes. And on the way back he was made to jump over the same places."[77]

Though we can see de Lancre primarily focused on providing details on the events of the sabbath, deeper examinations of de Queryan's narrative are insightful to the Gallienne Palace's role as a sabbath landscape. As described de Lancre's recounting of the trial, Isaac de Queryan had only lived in Bordeaux for two and a half years after moving from Nérac.[78] Yet he selected the Gallienne Palace and constructed a narrative of the sabbath in this space, which proved credible to lifelong Bordeaux resident, Pierre de Lancre. It seems that the Gallienne Palace was a space that naturally attracted the fantasies of the witches' sabbath, but why? What about this space made it a natural fit for both de Queryan to use it in his testimony and de Lancre to describe it in his *Tableau*? And what does it tell us about de Lancre's perspectives on sabbath landscapes in his local world, before his departure for the Pays de Labourd? Our answer may lie in reasons both unique to the Gallienne Palace and to ruins across Europe.

As we saw in de Queryan's story, the ruins sat within walking distance of the Porte Dauphin of Bordeaux, a distance that is today just over a kilometre down the Rue du Palais Gallien. As we have seen in cases such as the Meilacher forest of Zug, proximity and visibility often played a major role in the construction of sabbath narratives. With the immensity of the ruins just a short distance from the safety of the city walls, the Gallienne Palace would have been easily visible from the edge of the city, a large and looming presence that would have been a major landmark for Bordeaux locals, while its situation outside the

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[77] "*…il rencontra huict ou neuf personnes & quelques femmes qui daçoient se tenant par leurs habits: que le grand Diable estoit assis: qu'il u eust des nappes mises, qu'il y mangea ne sçait quelle viande, que ;es petits Diables les seruvient, qu'il y beut de bon vin, le grand Satan estat au bout de table: & aprés qu'ils eurent mangé quelque viande rostie, il leur fut seruy des pommes & des raisins, & au retour, on le fit resauter par les mesmes endroicts*." de Lancre, *Tableau*, 152.
[78] de Lancre, *Tableau*, 148.

city walls made it a marginal space. Yet this marginality was not only geographical in nature. Bordeaux in the seventeenth century was a rigidly stratified society, whose urban organization deeply reflected status in the burgeoning city. The Saint-Seurin district, within which the Gallienne Palace lay at its edge, was home to the city's most "miserable and filthy," a distinction that lasted well into the eighteenth century.[79] The people who lived in and solicited out of the Gallienne Palace sat at the margins of society – the ruins were home to thieves and prostitutes across the early modern period.[80] Moreover, de Lancre states that the ruins sat at a major crossroads leaving the city.[81] Across Europe, crossroads were associated with magic and marginality, a concept we will explore in detail in Chapter V.

On a much broader level, the story of the Gallienne Palace is a story of the human relationship with ruins. Though the Gallienne Palace is the only ruined landscape described in the *Tableau*, we see the association between the witchcraft and ruins across Europe.[82] Artistic depictions of the witches' sabbath regularly feature ruined buildings. Matthäus Merian den Ältere's 1626 etching titled *Zauberey* (Fig. 11) features a Romanesque ruin in the foreground. A crescent moon peeks through the collapsed dome roof of the building while demons play music and dance within, and witches cast spells, make potions, and fly around the building's exterior. Meanwhile, Anton Joseph von Prenner's etching *Witchcraft Scene* (Fig. 19) places a collection of witches preparing for their diabolical flight in the ruins of an ancient city, while the skyline burns in the background. While rooted in the story of Saint Anthony, an Egyptian saint of the third and fourth century who experienced a series of visions during a sojourn into the desert seeking spiritual enlightenment, Pacot's army of demons haunting Saint Anthony swirl about with imagery reminiscent of the witches' sabbath. Pacot sets this scene in an

[79] Boutruche, *Bordeaux de 1453 à 1715*, 520.
[80] The modern sign at the ruins describes their use by thieves and prostitutes.
[81] de Lancre, *Tableau*, 64-65.
[82] Though the Roman Empire expanded into the Basque Country, they left few remains in the Pays de Labourd. See: Davant, *Petite Histoire du Pays Basque*, 14-21.

immense ruined building seemingly by the sea (Fig. 20). Despite the story of Saint Anthony's temptations not including any reference to ruins, the artist drew upon the imagery of a ruined landscape to present the horrors of the diabolical and the ruin brought by the Devil and his legions.

These images evoke a clear association between the Devil and the ruins of the world. Yet on a deeper level, the early modern period was an age of shifting perceptions of ruins across Europe. The centuries following the Western Roman Empire's collapse left the remains of great cities and engineering works falling to ruin across the continent,. The use of ruins as a symbol have a long history, dating back to classical empires who often used them as a symbol of destruction and defeat.[83] Medieval texts meditated on the temporality of even the largest and most wondrous of structures, symbolizing ruins as "defined by their relations to various temporal moments: moments of construction, occupation, destruction, contemplation, and composition."[84] While some medieval accounts point toward a curiosity regarding the Gallienne Palace, sometimes linking it to figures such as Charlemagne who occupied a major role in the medieval French imagination, their role in the veneration of the past was minimal, as they became quickly overgrown with vegetation and dismembered for building materials.[85]

By the end of the medieval in the early sixteenth century, attitudes toward ruins began to shift. In Rome, where desiccated remains of the ancient past filled four fifths of the city, ruins were predominantly perceived as a quarry for the construction of the new, Christian city centred around the papal seat at St. Peter's. Yet some dissident voices expressed a deeper

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[83] See: Martin Devecka, *Broken Cities: A Historical Sociology of Ruins* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2020).
[84] Joshua Davies, *Visions and Ruins: Cultural Memory and the Untimely Middle Ages* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), 21, 26.
[85] Philippe Araguas, *D'Ausone à Montaigne: Bordeaux au Moyen Âge la ville et ses monuments* (Saint-Quentin-de-Baron: Les Éditions de l'Entre-Deux-Mers, 2022), 15.

emotional connection to the ruins. The Roman artist Raphael stated in conversation with Pope Leo X that "I would be so bold as to say that all of this new Rome, however beautiful, however embellished with palaces, churches and other buildings, all of this is built with mortar made from ancient marbles."[86] Raphael's derision of the destruction of ruins points toward a deepening emotional connection to the ancient past, reflective of the Renaissance fascination with the classical period. Yet the artist's perspective on the preservation of the ruined world were not the only emotional connection to these spaces in the early modern imagination. They also served the purpose of religious symbolism. As noted by Christopher Woodward:

> "In Christianity the decay of the individual was a necessary prelude to the resurrection. Ruins were a perfect metaphor for this process, for the skull beneath the skin; the more magnificent the edifice, the more effectively its skeleton demonstrated the futility of mortal pride. Rome's ruins were a *memento mori* on a colossal scale."[87]

These ruined landscapes could therefore be seen as the ultimate symbol for the inevitability of death, the crumbling and decay of both the body and the world leading to the resurrection and the second coming. Their role as a *memento mori* made them a landscape of fear and anxiety, reminding all those around that even the mightiest could crumble. This association in the early modern imagination was not limited to the spaces of antiquity. In Britain following the sixteenth century dissolution of the monasteries, the hulking remains of immense religious complexes littered the landscape, acting a symbol of the heretical past, the remains of pre-Reformation sins, and their preservation was only ensured to use the ruins as "a constant warning against the yoke of oppression and error from which the nation had been liberated…"[88]

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[86] Christopher Woodward, *In Ruins* (London: Vintage, 2002), 8.
[87] Woodward, *In Ruins*, 89.
[88] Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape: Religion, Identity, and Memory in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 147.

Whether they were the remnants of ancient societies or a recent religious shift, ruins worked their way into the local imagination as landscapes of contemplation, fear, and anxiety, serving as a reminder of the inevitability of death and collapse, a beautiful and tragic reminder of a vengeful God. These factors, when combined with the unique context of the Gallienne Palace as a marginal space in a forgotten and poor district beyond Bordeaux's walls, present this space as a complex and multifaceted landscape. The association with thieves and prostitutes, the lowest ranks of human society to the likes of Pierre de Lancre, would have made this space a despised landscape to those who sought to combat crime and inconstancy. Moreover, to someone such as Isaac de Queryan, who was a member of the servile caste of society, these individuals would have been one step below him on the social ladder and therefore a symbol of the least desirable aspects of Bordeaux. By placing the sabbath at a landscape in which they were known to live and solicit, beyond the protective walls of the city, de Queryan created a narrative that could draw derision from his judges and that he would have believed himself. If the Gallienne Palace was a fitting home for the undesirables of Bordeaux to gather, then it was only natural to imagine gatherings of witches and demons within its shadowed and overgrown vaults. The Gallienne Palace and the sabbaths held within it present a fascinating case study within the context of the *Tableau*, illustrating Pierre de Lancre's preconceived notions of where the sabbath belonged and how his perception was applied to a local context. The ruins of Bordeaux serve as a starting point in understanding de Lancre's comprehension of sabbath spaces before he applied his foreign perspective to the amalgam in the Basque country.

Defiled Holiness – The Church, The Churchyard, and the Cemetery

The small town of Saint-Pée-sur-Nivelle is a reminder of the Pays de Labourd as it was in centuries past. Removed from the Labourdin coast, and in turn from the waves of tourists and sunseekers, life moves slower along the banks of the Nivelle. Small farms

surround the town, while the centre lacks the hustle and bustle of Saint-Jean-de-Luz or Biarritz. This town would never appear to be the beating heart of the Basque witch craze upon first glance. However, beside the town's main parking lot stands a simple memorial, a modernist metal sculpture of a stake piled with wood, accompanied by a small plaque describing the events of the 1609 witch hunt. A parking lot may seem an odd place for a memorial, but its placement is defined by what stands behind it. Hidden by thick vegetation are the ruins of the Chateau of Saint-Pée-sur-Nivelle, where Pierre de Lancre worked for part of his time in the Basque country.[89] Here, de Lancre stayed on the invitation of the Signor, eating, sleeping, and dreaming of the witches' sabbath occurring in the room where he slept.[90] While de Lancre's mission to seek out the inconstancy of witches took him across the Pays de Labourd from this space, his interactions with the sacred world were much closer to home. A short walk from the chateau is the Église Saint-Pierre, the town's medieval parish church where the residents attended mass.

Like most Basque churches, the Église Saint-Pierre is a tall stone building, dominated by an ornate and gilded Baroque altar. Unlike the bright and majestic Gothic churches that dominate much of the rest of the French religious landscape, the Labourdin churches are dark with small windows, allowing in little natural light. Three tiers of scaffolded wooden pews cover the whitewashed walls of the Saint-Pierre's nave. With modern electric lighting, the space feels shrouded in darkness and mystery, but in the early years of the seventeenth century, lit by only candles, the Église Saint-Pierre would have appeared unfathomably different from the churches de Lancre would have frequented in Bordeaux as an upper strata jurist with the *parlement*. Despite its proximity to the Chateau from which de Lancre centred his time in the Pays de Labourd, Pierre de Lancre specifically recorded this consecrated

[89] Machielsen, *The Basque Witch-Hunt*, 24.
[90] de Lancre, *Tableau*, 64.

ground as the site of the sabbath.[91] The Église Saint-Pierre was not the only holy space in which de Lancre describes the witches' sabbath. Across the *Tableau*, de Lancre extensively discusses sacred spaces as sabbath landscapes, ranging from churches and chapels across the region to consecrated cemeteries beyond the limits of the cities. As we saw in Chapter II, Pierre de Lancre was not the only demonologist to explore sacred spaces as sabbath landscapes, with both Henri Boguet and King James I describing their use in sabbath fantasies. However, the use of churches and sacred spaces across the *Tableau* is far more extensive and descriptive than any prior demonology, giving us a unique perspective into a world where anxieties over sacred spaces took root in the imagination.

The establishment of the first parish systems began under the Carolingian dynasty, meaning that in the ensuing millennium France became home to approximately 32,000 parish churches.[92] The church was the centre of each respective community, a spiritual and administrative heart in rural centres, governed by a Diocese, such as the Diocese of Bayonne which governed the Basque country. Compared to the rest of the country, the Diocese of Bayonne was relatively small. Where other diocese governed hundreds, or even over a thousand parishes, the Bishop of Bayonne oversaw only twenty-seven parishes in the main population centre of the Pays de Labourd.[93] Such a low number of parishes illustrates two key aspects of life on the Labourdin coast. First, this number indicates a concentrated population, bound to the seaside but growing increasingly thin inland. Second, the lack of parishes also dilutes both the spiritual and administrative power that the diocese and broader ecclesiastical

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[91] de Lancre, *Tableau*, 64.
[92] Joseph Bergin, *Church, Society, and Religious Change in France, 1580-1730* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 17; Andrew Spicer, "The Early Modern Parish Church: An Introduction," in *Parish Churches in the Early Modern World*, ed. Andrew Spicer (London: Routledge, 2016), 3-4.
[93] Bergin, *Church, Society, and Religious Change in France, 1580-1730*, 20; Machielsen, *The Basque Witch-Hunt*, 114.

structures held on the borderlands compared to other regions of France, with Bayonne situated at the edge of the Labourd.

Christianity arrived in the Basque Country in the mid fourth century, between the legalization of the religion and its adoption as the state religion of Rome. By the fifth century many of the urban centres of the region had undergone Christianisation, though in the countryside and in the Pyrénées, paganism was dominant until at least the seventh century.[94] The process of conversion was not a straight path, as vestiges of the pre-Christian faiths remained in local Basque folk rituals well into the medieval period.[95] By the early modern, exceptionalities remained within Basque religious life. We have already discussed the unique architecture of the Saint-Pierre church in Saint-Pée-sur-Nivelle; such a style was common across the French Basque country in parish churches, separating Labourdin religious spaces from those surrounding de Lancre's home in Bordeaux. Furthermore, continuing the local connection with the sea, Basque churches often feature votive ships, models of boats designed for directed prayers for safe voyages. While many of the examples in the Basque country are modern, this practice likely stems from the medieval period, with the oldest surviving Basque example (and the oldest in Southern Europe) being the fifteenth century Burgos ship.[96]

On both sides of the Franco-Spanish frontier, Basque women entered *seroras*, devotional communities for laywomen, which had fallen out of favour in other regions of Catholic Europe following the Tridentine push for cloistered monastic communities.[97] While

[94] Davant, *Petite Histoire du Pays Basque*, 24-26.
[95] See: Idoia Grau-Sologestoa, "Pots, chicken and building deposits: The archaeology of folk and official religion during the High Middle Ages in the Basque Country," in *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 49 (2018): 8-18.
[96] Christer Westerdahl, "Medieval Carved Ship Images Found in Nordic Churches: the poor man's votive ships?" in *The International Journal of Nautical Archaeology* 42, no. 2 (2013): 338.
[97] Amanda L. Scott, *The Basque Seroras: Local Religion, Gender, and Power in Northern Iberia, 1550-1800* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2020), 12.

religiosity for laywomen was not a new phenomenon in the region, largely due to the extensive presence of *beaterios* for women across the Basque region, the witchcraft commission arrived amidst a changing landscape for laywomen in the religious spaces. The *beatas* underwent a process of religious enclosure that began in the sixteenth century across the region, while the *seroras* maintained their open status.[98] The gendered differences in Basque worship also appear in the *Tableau*. De Lancre describes the role of *benedicta*, common women who extract alms and decorate the altar in large churches, and the common women of Saint-Jean-de-Luz who would offer "a candle attached to a small piece of cake in a rather suggestive shape, which is not appropriate for decent women."[99] De Lancre goes on to explain that within their numbers, the commission found two witches, whose churches they used for the sabbath.[100]

By the time that Pierre de Lancre and Jean d'Espagnet arrived in the Pays de Labourd in 1609, the religious landscape both illustrated the regional exceptionalism of the Basque frontier and the ways in which religion and the everyday lives of the Labourdin were interwoven. Across the *Tableau*, de Lancre describes religious spaces of the region as central to the fantasies of witchcraft. In his ethnographic exploration of the Pays de Labourd, de Lancre paid particular attention to witchcraft fantasies surrounding churches:

> "The pastors, preachers, and parish priests are already set in place by the Devil in practically all the most famous parishes, and so much so that Satan has begun to possess not only the priests but also some polluted and profane churches… And if they celebrate mass during the day in proper churches, they say it at night for the sabbaths. And all the secret acts that they perform in church during the day – such as confession, silent prayer, and the like – they always do in honour of and in service to the Devil."[101]

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[98] See: Nere Jone Intxaustegi, "'Beatas', 'Beaterios' and Convents: The Origins of Basque Female Conventual Life," in *Imago Temporis* 11 (2018): 329-341.
[99] "*…vne chandelle attachee à vn petite gasteau facit de forme la plus indecente…*" de Lancre, *Tableau*, 42.
[100] de Lancre, *Tableau*, 56.
[101] "*Les Pasteurs, les Prestres & Curés sont desia establis par le Diable presque en toutes les parroisses plus celebres. Tellement que Sathan commence à posseder non seulement les Prestres: mais bien encore certaines Eglises pollues & profanees… & s'ils disent la Messe de iour és vrayes Eglises, ils la disent de nuict à leur façon és Sabbats. Et tous les actes secrets qu'ils font de iour dans l'Eglise, comme confessions, prieres basses &*

Pierre de Lancre's fears surrounding diabolical intercession in the religious sphere point toward a distrust of Basque religion. Diabolical priests could "pollute" churches and then lead their flock into the arms of the Devil, a pattern de Lancre describes only in his studies of the Labourd, not those in his home city of Bordeaux. Though de Lancre only attributed these diabolical attacks on holy ground to the Pays de Labourd, examples appear across the continent. Perhaps the most famous example is that of the Devils of Loudun. Between 1633 and 1640, the Ursuline convent of Loudon saw a series of demonic attacks on nuns, in which they experienced uncontrollable screaming, fainting, and convulsions, heard whispers, and saw hallucinations, blamed on demonic possession.[102] In Zug, the 1737 witch trial was filled with references to diabolical attacks on sacred spaces, fitting the cities' location at confessional borderlands. Of particular note was the series of unexplained occurrences at the Kloster Maria Opferung that sparked the trial, in which forty-two or forty-three cows and bulls fell ill along with other animals, 150 gulden was stolen from a locked iron box, and 1100 fish preserved in the cellar were found spoiled.[103] These events were blamed on witchcraft, and appeared extensively in the confessions of the accused.[104]

Though diabolical attacks against consecrated ground appear throughout the continent, de Lancre's text is unique in its centring of the sabbath itself in sacred places across the Pays de Labourd. In his initial exploration of the sabbath, de Lancre notes that witches frequently gathered in the public squares in front of churches, such as the parish church at Ascain, "so that the Devil can place his throne right across from the grand altar where the Holy Sacraments are kept."[105] Moreover, de Lancre described the sabbath in

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métalles & autres choses semblables, ils les font tousiours à l'honneur & aduantage du Diable." de Lancre, *Tableau*, 37.

[102] Moshe Sluhovsky, "The Devil in the Convent," in *The American Historical Review* 107, no. 5 (December 2002), 1379-1380.

[103] StAZG A 105/6, lacking a page number as this was recorded by the scribe on a scrap of paper tucked into the binding of the trial documents.

[104] See: StAZG A 105/6 fol. 17B, 51A, 61A-68B 136A.

[105] de Lancre, *Tableau*, 64.

religious spaces associated with other sabbath landscapes, exemplified by his narratives of La Rhune. Decrying the pollution of churches, de Lancre claims: "[f]or we have verified that they celebrate the sabbath in the chapel of the Holy Spirit on the mountain La Rhune…"[106] The relationship between La Rhune and the sacred spanned eras - the summit was home to both prehistoric dolmens and the small chapel which served as a permanent home for hermetic monks until the eighteenth century.[107] This summit played an essential role in the religious life of people in the Pays de Labourd in the immediate leadup to de Lancre's commission. Amidst the 1607 Saint-Jean-de-Luz witch trials, the prosecution of vigilantism within the community was hindered by religious traditions. When a town meeting was called on June 4, 1607, the meeting was delayed as almost all the residents were out of town, climbing La Rhune to take mass at the Chapel Saint Espirit, a pilgrimage made annually the day after Pentecost.[108]

However, the sabbath narratives described in the *Tableau* were not limited to the interiors of churches. The churchyards and squares outside the walls of the church were also included among the sabbath narratives. In his initial exploration of the sabbath, de Lancre notes that in Ascain, the sabbath is held "…on the right side of the great [church] door… so that the Devil can place his throne right across from the grand altar where the Holy Sacrament is kept."[109] Here we see the continued interest in the eucharist within sabbath narratives, a common thread across the Catholic sphere, but moreover, the concept of proximity to sacred ground. These sacred spaces were not only limited to the inside and against churches but expanded into the realm of the dead. Across the *Tableau*, de Lancre

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[106] "*Car nous auons verifié qu'il tient le Sabbat en la chappelle du Sainct-Esprit sur la montagne de la Rhune…*" de Lancre, *Tableau*, 37.
[107] Carr, *The Savage Frontier,* 1-2.
[108] Machielsen, *The Basque Witch Hunt*, 54.
[109] *"…au droict de la grand' porte… afin le Diable plante sa chaire tout vis à vis du grand autel où on met le Sainct sacrement…"* de Lancre, *Tableau*, 65.

describes the sabbath occurring in the cemeteries of the Pays de Labourd. Jeannette d'Abadie confessed to ending the sabbath with the baptism of their toads in the cemeteries of the adjoining towns of Saint-Jean-de-Luz and Ciboure.[110] In Saint-Pée-sur-Nivelle, the Devil would host the sabbath in the cemetery of the parish church, right next to the chateau of the Sieur d'Amou, one of the lead local figures in the witch hunt.[111] Lastly, on the rocks overlooking the bay of Saint-Jean-de-Luz and Ciboure, the Sainte Barbe cemetery once stood high above the crashing waves. Here, de Lancre describes how witches would wear splintered crucifixes to match the grave crosses at this cemetery, marking their attendance at the sabbath.[112]

Within the borders of the Basque world, we have seen a uniquely syncretized Christian world, full of its own traditions and rituals, many of which would have appeared foreign to the commission from Bordeaux. Seroras gave women unique spaces within the religious sphere, mountain peaks maintained their ancient sacrality, and a divided and stratified society gathered in dimly lit, scaffolded churches, praying to votive ships for the safety of their sailors. Yet at the start of the Basque witch craze, these spaces began to form new meanings, directly related to fears over the witches' sabbath. Before Pierre de Lancre and Jean d'Espagnet even received their commission, the Basque population had already tied the religious landscape to narratives of the sabbath. As early as 1608, Labourdin mothers gathered their children in their local parish churches as a form of protection, using the holy spaces to shield their children from witches who might steal them away to the sabbath.[113] Yet even in this supposedly safe space, the children claimed they were whisked away by a witch to the sabbath. Perhaps unknowingly, these stories broke down the divide between the sacred

[110] de Lancre, *Tableau*, 131.
[111] de Lancre, *Tableau*, 91.
[112] de Lancre, *Tableau*, 459.
[113] Machielsen, *The Basque Witch-Hunt*, 45.

and the diabolical in these spaces, illustrating that even the holiest of places were vulnerable and under the control of Satan. Consecrated ground could then not only be entered by witches seeking to steal children but could be also then used for the sabbath itself.

The divide between the religious and material worlds in early modern Europe was not rigid, defined as "operating along a continuum, so that a person, institution, or movement could pass back and forth between one domain and the other."[114] Our examinations of sabbath landscapes indicate this continuum, where the spiritual battles occurred in the everyday world of people across early modern Europe. Sacred landscapes exist at the end of the continuum, as sites where everyday people could encounter the divine as part of their "lived religion" giving meaning, ritual, and community across the continent in a central space.[115] While these holy spaces are places to commune with the divine, in the Christian tradition they are also the bridge between the realm of the living and the dead. The remains of both holy individuals and the common people deemed fit for a Christian burial were laid in churches and consecrated graveyards, which "established a connection from this world to the divine hereafter and thus increased the sanctity of the church."[116] Despite changes to the veneration of the dead amidst the Reformation, churches and graveyards acted as a connected complex to "control and console the souls of the departed" and bring people to the margins of the living world.[117] This link to the dead and the unseen world fits both within the local and the broader imaginations of the sabbath seen in the *Tableau* and in explorations of the sabbath across Europe. Witches gathering in cemeteries to dig up the dead bodies of

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[114] Charly Coleman, "Resacralizing the Self," in *Sacred and Secular Agency in Early Modern France: Fragments of Religion*, ed. Sanja Perovic (New York: Continuum, 2011), 84.
[115] Sari Katajala-Peltomaa and Raisa Maria Toivo, "Religion as Experience" in *Lived Religion and the Long Reformation in Northern Europe c. 1300-1700* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 2.
[116] Koski, "The Sacred and the Supernatural," 62.
[117] Koski, "The Sacred and the Supernatural," 64.

unbaptized babies is a cornerstone story of the witch craze across Europe, dating to its origins with the medieval blood libel narratives that targeted Jews.[118]

Cemeteries fit particularly well with the trend of marginality in sabbath spaces. Situated both on the margins of holy space and the border of seen and unseen worlds, these landscapes are constructed as one of the ultimate marginal spaces. However, the specific example of the Sante-Barbe cemetery outside of Saint-Jean-de-Luz fits this trend on an even deeper level, only seen when visiting the space. De Lancre describes this site as "[sitting] high on a rock on the coast of the ocean" but this description fails to account for the marginality of this space, even in the modern world. While no longer used as a sacred landscape, the former Sainte Barbe cemetery is still a short distance from the edge of Saint-Jean-de-Luz, along the paved beachside promenade. The hill on which the cemetery stood, still known as La Colline Sainte-Barbe, looms over the city, rising above the waves of the bay, punctuated by a tiny white building at its summit. The hill can be seen from any seaside point along the bay, from the neighbouring towns of Saint-Jean-de-Luz and Ciboure, as well as at Socoa on the opposite side of the bay, where the fortified port commissioned by Jean d'Espagnet still stands. Seen from all sides, the Sainte Barbe hill stands as a reminder of the role that vision plays in the construction of a landscape, like the hills and mountains seen in Chapter I; however, at the peak of the hill, all of the senses come into play, breaking the dependence on vision and allowing us to understand the true marginality of this sacred space. With any wind, the waves crash against the broken rocks below sharp sea cliffs, sending a salty brine into the air. Untouched by trees as it would have been as a cemetery, the wind rips through the air over the landscape, deafening all standing atop the hill when paired with the waves, making it easy to imagine the forces of nature splintering the cemetery's sepulchres as

[118] See: Roper, *Witch Craze*, 69-81; Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society*; Hannah R. Johnson, *Blood Libel: The Ritual Murder Accusation at the Limit of Jewish History* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2012).

described by de Lancre.[119] The view from the top of the hill is an incomparable vista on the Labourdin coast. On the eastern horizon, the peak of La Rhune looms high over the city, a visible reminder of the role this peak played in both narratives of the sacred and the sabbath for those who lived in Saint-Jean-de-Luz and Ciboure below. The Sainte-Barbe cemetery was the definition of marginality, existing at the margins of all axes. Like all sacred spaces, it sat at the margins of the world of the living and the world of the dead. Within the human world, the Sainte-Barbe cemetery sat uniquely at the very edge of the land, where the Pays de Labourd met de Lancre's source of inconstancy – the sea.

Inconstancy – The Sea

Every summer, people flock to the Pays de Labourd to take in the surf along the Bay of Biscay. Surf shops are interspersed amongst the hotels and souvenir stalls of Biarritz, adding a modern draw to a resort town that has welcomed sun-seeking tourists since the nineteenth century. Even the sacred landscapes of Biarritz are not immune to surf-culture – Église Sainte-Eugénie de Biarritz, the city's early twentieth century Catholic church, features a wooden surfboard behind the altar and beside the crucifix, centring surf culture within ancient traditions. To the southwest of the city's famous surf beaches, the shoreline changes to one of jagged rocks, with the sharp cliffs of the coastline extending out to sea in the form of imposing sea stacks. The same waves that draw surfers to La Grande Plage crash against these rocks, though their ferocity is amplified. The sea, whipped into a foaming fury by the Biscay winds, thunders in a constant rhythm against the rocks. Upon these rocks, surrounded by the roaring surf, the power of the ocean is made clear as it swirls and crashes below. Furthest from the shore is the shrine of Rocher de La Vierge, a seaside rock with a life-sized statue of the Virgin Mary upon its peak. A narrow bridge spanning the thunderous sea brings people here, to this final holy outpost between the land and the water, where the wind whips

[119] de Lancre, *Tableau*, 459.

the sea spray into the air. It is here that the untamed qualities of the sea are most profoundly felt. The same wildness that draws thrill seekers to ride the waves of the Basque coast have long provided a rhythm to life along the Pays de Labourd, making the temperamental sea an essential part of the local landscape.

It was this ruggedness that prompted Pierre de Lancre to label the sea as the heart of the Basque inconstancy and made seascapes an essential sabbath landscape across the *Tableau*.[120] Throughout the text, de Lancre describes the witches' sabbath in spaces related to the sea, whether on its shores, on its waves, or across its breadth. On the beach near Hendaye, at the very edge of the frontier between France and Spain, Jeannette d'Abadie confessed to attending the sabbath of twelve thousand witches in a grand feast.[121] Similarly close to Hendaye, de Lancre recounts his own experience in hunting down the sabbath – on 19 July, 1609, de Lancre and a number of other men climbed a rock near Hendaye to find the location of the sabbath. There they found at its summit "the place where the pot had been kept, marked by the plate on which it had rested…" providing evidence enough for de Lancre to believe the sabbath was a real event, and that witches attended the sabbath each night, so as for them to take the pot away before de Lancre's arrival.[122] Though de Lancre does not give the exact location for this event, combining context clues in the text with a visit to the coast of Hendaye gives a sole likely candidate. While recounting this event, de Lancre describes his party's ascent of the rocks nearly triggering an international incident with Spain as their appearance "sound[ed] the alarm to those in [Hondarribia] when we saw horses and people appearing on the coast."[123] The only possible location where they could have been seen by the Spanish in Hondarribia would have been at the Domaine d'Abbadia, today a nature

[120] de Lancre, *Tableau*, 29-30.
[121] de Lancre, *Tableau*, 134.
[122] "*…on trouua la place du pot marquee par son assiette…*" de Lancre, *Tableau*, 140.
[123] "*... donner l'alarme à ceux de Fontarrabie, voyant tant de chevaux & de peuple qui paroissoit sur la coste.*" de Lancre, *Tableau*, 140.

preserve on a prominent point extending to the Bay of Biscay, defined along its coast by high cliffs and by two sea stacks, the Rochers des deux Jumeaux. This site would have been well within view of the Spanish frontier, while also featuring seaside rocks that would have been difficult for de Lancre and his party to scale.

The oceanic spaces of the Tableau were not limited to the area surrounding Hendaye. At Biarritz, one Marie de Marigrane claimed a witch took her to a small sabbath atop the seaside rocks near the city to summon a storm to harm vessels at the port.[124] This site was likely Rocher de la Vierge, or one of the adjoining rock formations. At the bay of Saint-Jean-de-Luz and Ciboure we see a number of sabbaths on the seascape – first at the drawbridge over the harbour between the two adjacent cities, and at the Sainte-Barbe cemetery we have previously explored.[125] These spaces present the oceanic world and the coasts of the Pays de Labourd as sites of fear and danger, where the largest of all Basque sabbaths could occur, and where de Lancre sought evidence for the sabbath's reality. To understand their role in the construction of the Basque sabbath, we must first understand the relationship between the Labourdin population and the inconstant sea.

As noted by Kären Wigen, "historians tend to view the ocean as a highway for intercontinental exchange, highlighting transoceanic interactions and the creole cultures they have spawned."[126] Such an approach highlights history's tendency to view the sea solely in relation to the land, an intermediary space between two set points of human interaction. Yet to place ourselves within the *mentalités* of those on the Basque coast in the summer of 1609, we must shift our perspective toward the sea. The coastline, the water, and the lands that exist beyond the horizon form a broader seascape with a unique relationship to those who make

[124] de Lancre, *Tableau*, 140-141.
[125] de Lancre, *Tableau*, 459.
[126] Kären Wigen, "Introduction" in *Seascapes: Maritime Histories, Littoral Cultures, and Transoceanic Exchanges*, eds. Jerry H. Bentley, Renate Bridenthal, and Kären Wigen (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), 1.

their livelihoods there. We have seen already the impact that the sea had on Basque life by the seventeenth century. Basque sailors were regularly making the journey between the Pays de Labourd and Newfoundland in search of whales and cod, the coastal population far exceeded the inland villages, and these port towns were in perpetual competition for business on the Franco-Spanish frontier. Yet once more, these narratives centre upon the land, with the sea as merely an intermediary. The Basque relationship with the ocean was far richer, as described by de Lancre.

De Lancre places the sea at the centre of his ethnographic study of the Labourdin people. He notes that: "They entrust all their good fortune and possessions to the waves that toss them about day and night. Thus their trade, their conversation, and their faith are all related to the sea."[127] The maritime world described by de Lancre is all encompassing. Where de Lancre saw agriculture as a form of constancy, the sea, on which the Basque population relied on for both food and trade, was his definition of inconstancy. When discussing the lower levels of agriculture in Labourd in comparison to the other regions of France, de Lancre states:

> "Now in the Labourd they nearly all throw themselves into this inconstant exercise of the sea, and they scorn the regular labour and the cultivation of the earth. And while nature has given everyone the earth for nourishment, they prefer (fickle and volatile that they are) the cares of the thunderous seas, to those of that sweet and serene goddess Ceres."[128]

The reliance on whales and cod was deemed unseemly by de Lancre when placed in comparison with the regularity promised by crop-based agriculture. The story that de Lancre

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[127] "*Logeant toute leur bonne fortune & conduite sur les flots qui les agitent nuict & iour: qui fajr que leur commerce, leur conuersation &leur foy est du tout maritime…*" de Lancre, *Tableau*, 30.
[128] "*Or en ce pays de Labour tils se iettent presque tous à cet inconstant exercice de la mer & meiprisent ce constat labeur & culture de la terre. Et bien que nature ait donné à tout le monde la terre pour nourrice, ils aiment mieux (legers & volages qu'ils sont) celle de la mer orageuse, que celle de cette douce & paisivle Deesse Ceres*." de Lancre, *Tableau*, 30.

paints of the Basque people is tied to the sea, describing in detail their commercial enterprises on the sea to the New World, and their interactions with the ocean on their own coast.

Yet it is not only the fishermen of the Labourd that de Lancre intrinsically links to the sea. Fitting with the jurist's belief that the entire population was particularly vulnerable to corruption by the Devil due to their inconstant nature, de Lancre also drew connections between Basque women and children and the sea. The Labourdin women were more likely to fall into Satan's grasps due to the men's long absence at sea, as de Lancre claimed that "[s]ince the men treat the women like half-year wives, most find on their return that the mothers have chosen another father for their children, having offered them as a gift to Satan."[129] Despite not being at sea with the men, de Lancre's text places women, one of the primary targets of his witch hunt, in direct relation to the sea and its inconstancy. Perhaps most damning of the Basque nature and the relationship with the sea, de Lancre associated its inconstant nature with the children of the region. One of the more memorable passages in the text is de Lancre's description of Basque children leaping from the bridge at Saint-Jean-de-Luz into the sea, which the author describes with a mix of wonder and suspicion, deriding the children's abandon with which they threw themselves to the mercy of the sea.[130]

The world described by de Lancre was one that had long intertwined with the sea, becoming an essential part of the Basque identity. Since the medieval period, maps of the region have labelled the Bay of Biscay as the "Basque Sea," illustrating a long standing relationship with the sea.[131] By the late thirteenth century, the ties with the ocean became a vital aspect of Labourdin identity, with the towns of Hendaye and Biarritz including whales on their town seals, reaffirming to themselves and the world beyond their relationship to the

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[129] "*…n'estant traictees en femmes qu'à demy , si bien que la plus part trouuent à leur retour que les meres ont choisi & donné à leurs enfans vn autre pere, en ayant faict un present à Sathan*." de Lancre, *Tableau*, 36.
[130] de Lancre, *Tableau*, 43.
[131] Mark Kurlansky, *The Basque History of the World* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1999), 45-46.

sea and its creatures.[132] The ocean also tied together the fortunes of the fishing communities. As early as the fourteenth century, collectives of Basque fishermen created fishing brotherhoods called *cofradías* in the Spanish Basque country, sealing in writing a much older tradition of mutual aid that spanned the region.[133] These *cofradías* played a major administrative role in Basque communities until the nineteenth century, settling disputes and providing a centralized market for the sale of cod and whale.[134] The fortunes of the voyage tied the community together, yet through the sixteenth century even kept communities across the Franco-Spanish border interwoven, as the crews of most Basque fishing ships were composed of sailors from both sides of the frontier.[135] The Basque relationship with the sea was brought to the rest of Europe through their trade as well as their shipyards – the carracks and the galleons that dominated the Atlantic in early modern trade and warfare were both the products of Basque shipbuilding innovations of the late medieval and early modern eras.[136]

The "Basque Sea" brought together the people living on its shores, forming a common and constant thread throughout early modernity. The reliance on its resources made the seascape central to the imagination of those across the Basque country. Yet this centrality came with a cost. Life at sea came with a high level of uncertainty. Basque accounts often featured apostrophic requests to God, asking for "the profits that God shall give us" as the chance of a profitable voyage came down to luck. Whether seeking cod or whales at sea, there was no guarantee that they would find success and return to ports across the Basque coast with a full hold of processed resources.[137] By the beginning of the seventeenth century,

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[132] Kurlansky, *The Basque History of the World*, 51.
[133] Andreas Hess, "'Working the Waves': The Plebian Culture and Moral Economy of Traditional Basque Fishing Brotherhoods" in *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 40, no. 4 (Spring 2010): 555.
[134] Hess, "'Working the Waves'," 564-565.
[135] Julian de Zuleta, "The Basque Whalers: The Source of their Success," in *The Mariner's Mirror* 86, no. 3 (August 2000): 264.
[136] de Zuleta, "The Basque Whalers," 261-262.
[137] Selma Huxley Barkham, "The Mentality of the Men behind Sixteenth-Century Spanish Voyages to Terranova" in *Decentring the Renaissance: Canada and Europe in Multidisciplinary Perspectives 1500-1700*, ed. Carolyn Podruchny (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 113.

more Basque ships were returning across the Atlantic with half empty hulls, as the intensive hunting and fishing on the coast of Newfoundland and Labrador had precipitated a calamitous population collapse of whales in the western Atlantic.[138] More disastrous than a failed fishing and whaling trip was one that ended in death. On an individual level, scurvy was a constant danger that could lead to illness or death, with Basque rations rarely including any food sources rich in vitamin C other than cod roe, which had to be taken raw often to provide any level of protection against scurvy.[139] Likewise, hostile interactions between Basque whalers and Indigenous Inuit populations moving into southern Labrador often led to death during their season across the Atlantic.[140] On a much broader level, seafarers faced the constant danger of shipwreck. While the total numbers and percentages of losses at sea from this period do not exist, we know the transatlantic voyages were fraught with danger. In the area around Red Bay, Newfoundland and Labrador, one of the busiest Basque whaling and cod fishery sites of the early modern period, a six-year excavation beginning in 1978 yielded the remnants of seven well-preserved Basque shipwrecks from the sixteenth century, including three large galleons.[141] Risks of shipwreck on these arduous voyages were so high that maritime insurance brokerage exploded in popularity across the Basque country, making insurance brokers one of the most profitable and celebrated professions from the mid sixteenth century onward.[142] The nature of early modern transoceanic trade brought an immense number of shipwreck tales back to Europe, where they served "to question imperial

[138] Selma Huxley Barkham, "The Basque Whaling Establishments in Labrador 1536-1632," in *Arctic* 37, no. 4 (December 1984): 518.
[139] de Zuleta, "The Basque Whalers," 268-269.
[140] Huxley Barkham, "The Basque Whaling Establishments in Labrador 1536-1632," 518.
[141] "Archaeology of a Sixteenth-Century Basque Whaling Boat: Red Bay National Historic Site," *Parks Canada*, last modified 18 April 2024, https://parks.canada.ca/lhn-nhs/nl/redbay/culture/basque
[142] Huxley Barkham, "The Mentality of the Men behind Sixteenth-Century Spanish Voyages to Terranova," 118.

expansion and transoceanic trade, comment on the Christian enterprise overseas, and symbolize the collapse of the dominant social order."[143]

These fears of shipwreck are among the clearest examples of the blending of the seascape with the terrors of magic in witchcraft narratives. To the north, witches in Denmark and Scotland were blamed for the near sinking of King James IV's ship on the North Sea, while an anonymous Italian printmaker in the sixteenth century imagined a vengeful witch on seaside rocks tipping a magical pot into the water, causing a storm and shipwreck (Fig. 18).[144] Fear of shipwreck permeates the *Tableau*'s description of seascape and provides an additional level of fear to this space. Marie de Marigrane's narrative of summoning a storm at a small gathering of witches on the rocks of Biarritz is emblematic of these shipwreck anxieties, populating her sabbath narrative with the terrors that storms and shipwrecks could inspire in this maritime society. Yet her example is not the only in the Tableau that points toward the fear of shipwreck and disaster at sea. Pierre de Lancre recounts the story of Marie de la Ralde, who claimed that she had travelled to Newfoundland "perched on top of a ship's mast, not daring to step on deck because the ship was blessed."[145] While de la Ralde went on to confess to spoiling the ship's rations and supplies, another fear of sailors, it was the blessing of the ship's deck that indicates the greatest danger in her story. With the dangers of shipwrecks and tempests adding a sense of danger and ruin to each voyage, the blessing of the ship would have been the only protection the sailors could have had against the terrors of the sea, a fact that permeated into Marie's imagination.

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[143] Carrie L. Ruiz and Elena Rodríguez-Guridi, "Introduction," in *Shipwreck in the Early Modern Hispanic World*, eds. Carrie L. Ruiz and Elena Rodríguez-Guridi (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2022), 11; see: Steve Mentz, "'We split!' Shipwreck in early modern European history and culture," in *The Routledge Companion to Marine and Maritime Worlds, 1400-1800*, eds. Claire Jowitt, Craig Lambert, and Steve Mentz (London: Routledge, 2020), 580.

[144] Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 166.

[145] "*…où estant elles se perchoyent sur le haut du mast du navire, n'osant entrer dedans, par ce que le nauire estoit benist*." de Lancre, *Tableau*, 90.

Another facet of Marie de la Ralde's story adds more complexity to the seascapes that permeated the sabbath narratives of the *Tableau* – Newfoundland. As we have explored, the New World, particularly modern Newfoundland and Labrador, had been at the heart of the Basque maritime economy since the first decades of the sixteenth century. Pierre de Lancre uses the Basque voyages to the New World as part of his explanation for the region's vulnerability to the Devil and discusses voyages to Newfoundland frequently throughout the text. Yet, despite the role that the New World played in life along the Labourdin coast, the stories that de Lancre records in the *Tableau* exclusively come from those who had *not* been on the voyage to Newfoundland. The timing of the *parlement*'s witchcraft commission meant that both cod fishing and whaling vessels had long since departed across the Atlantic, meaning that those left behind were the only possible victims of the witch hunt and de Lancre's interrogations. Moreover, though the complete record of those tried and executed across the Pays de Labourd was lost in the archive fire in Bordeaux, from what has been reconstructed in recent studies women and priests were the main victims of the witch panic.[146] With the transatlantic voyage and subsequently the Basque whaling and fishing ports along the coast of Newfoundland and Labrador being male-dominated, if not exclusively male, spaces, the women and priests left behind to construct the sabbath narratives only understood the New World through the stories of those who had been. Therefore, Newfoundland to those left behind was an extension of the seascape, a land in which they had no potential connection other than the sea that connected their shores. The far New World was as marginal of a space as one could find in the early modern Basque imagination. This combination of both the terrors of the seascape and the marginality of the New World come together in the *Tableau*'s use of Newfoundland as a sabbath landscape. In addition to Marie de la Ralde's confession, de Lancre uses the stories of Jeannette d'Abadie

[146] Machielsen, *The Basque Witch-Hunt*, xvi.

from the parish of Ciboure, who claimed that she could travel through the air to Newfoundland. In her sabbath story, de Lancre recounts that d'Abadie "said that in the New World she saw female witches from practically all the parishes of the Labourd, and that they went to stir up thunderstorms and windstorms so that ships would perish."[147] In her narrative of the Newfoundland sabbath, d'Abadie ties the seascape and its dangers together, using the New World as simply the staging ground for these distinctly maritime fears.

The significance of the seascape to the imagination of the sabbath was not simply relegated to the ocean and its dangers – the sea also changed how other terrestrial landscapes were seen and perceived. As an outsider, de Lancre would have experienced the sabbath landscapes across the Pays de Labourd solely from the land. His journeys around the region took him to each parish, but he does not leave a record of setting out onto the 'inconstant sea'.[148] However, as we have seen across our study of the Pays de Labourd, the sea was an essential part of the Basque economy and identity, and would have dramatically impacted the way the Labourdins imagined their entire world by shifting their perspectives. A landscape that looks one way from the land may appear entirely different from the water. From the sea, vision becomes the dominant sense for interacting with the terrestrial world and would define the relationship with the mountain we explored at the beginning of this chapter: La Rhune. This might seem like a curious concept, though investigation on the ground in the Basque Country proves that vision is at the centre of its inclusion in the sabbath narrative. From everywhere in Pays de Labourd La Rhune is visible, from the heights above Bayonne in the north to the border town of Hendaye in the south. The low summit looms on the eastern horizon from the former hub of Saint-Jean-de-Luz, and even the Chateau at Saint-Pée-sur-

[147] "*Qu'elle voyoit en Terre-neuue des sorcieres transportees presque de toutes les parroisses de Labourt, qu'elles y alloient exciter des orages &tempestes pour perdre des nauires*." de Lancre, *Tableau*, 91.
[148] For more on de Lancre's journeys across the Pays de Labourd and a map of his likely movements, see: Machielsen, *The Basque Witch-Hunt*, 115.

Nivelle, where de Lancre stayed for much of his foray into the Basque country, faced directly toward La Rhune. While covered in vegetation today, the tower where de Lancre visited with the Sieur d'Amou has windows opening directly toward La Rhune. Throughout his entire stay in the Pays de Labourd in search of the inconstancy of witches, La Rhune was a constant vision on the horizon. While the lines of sight toward the mountain extend across the entire Pays de Labourd, to see its true significance through the lens of the sea. As Basque seafarers traversed the Bay of Biscay en route to Newfoundland, the last vision of home that dipped below the horizon and the first taste of land after the return voyage would have been the peak of La Rhune. La Rhune was a landscape that defined the special relationship between the sea and vision, tying together the terrestrial and maritime worlds and making it the ideal setting for the witches' sabbath.

The Basque world was defined by the relationship with the sea. Its importance to Basque life and identity translated into their narratives of the witches' sabbath, providing a rich backdrop and an explanation for these stories made apparent in the narratives shared by Pierre de Lancre across his *Tableau*. Yet de Lancre's perspective as an outsider twists this relationship further, placing the sea at the root of Basque inconstancy, even using the seafaring livelihood of Basque men as an explanation for the spiritual vulnerability that led Basque women to these sabbath landscapes in the first place.[149] By combining the local Basque familiarity with the seascape and its dangers with its foreignness to Pierre de Lancre, we see how the seascape elicited anxiety through the narrative amalgam. Such a landscape inspired fear in both the local population and the foreign demonologist for separate yet similarly significant reasons, making the sea and the coast a natural setting for the witches' sabbath. The examples of sabbaths situated on the Basque seascape illustrate the significance of the narrative coproduction, in which the interrogator and the accused brought their own

[149] De Lancre, *Tableau*, 37-38.

notions of a landscape to create a single narrative, one ultimately deemed significant enough by the foreign jurist to include in his demonological magnum opus.

Chapter IV: The Legacies of the Witches' Sabbath

The path to Bald Mountain is long and twisted. The soft waves of the adjacent lake lap at its foot while the trailhead is indicated by a wooden signpost, pointing you toward its summit. Your path begins in a narrow cleft between cliffs, a great stone toppled over the path like an immense doorway, acting as the threshold of the mountain. Carved stone steps lead up the steepest part of the slope, old and worn by time, with the roots of wispy aspen and birch trees crossing the path, holding them steady against the strong winds that blow against the side of the mountain. On a narrow plateau along the slope, a small cluster of semi-ruined wooden huts stand under the mountain's summit, remnants of the human connection to the mountain. Beyond the decay, the rocks become increasingly craggy, jutting out from the mountain's face as the sun dips toward the horizon. As day turns to night, the path edges downward, into the mouth of a yawning chasm. The carved entrance suggests that this cave has been used extensively over time, though within its walls you are alone. The cave network under Bald Mountain is extensive, and features underground waterways, tight squeezes through narrow passages, and the remains of old mines, long abandoned. Following the main route through brings you back into the fresh air, face to face with an immense valley with a rickety bridge over its depths. As you cross the bridge and edge ever closer to the summit, the trees become withered and decayed, their boughs gnarled by the weather and the altitude. Higher and higher the path ascends, past standing stones from the ancient past, pointing toward a spiritual link to this place. Animal skulls begin to appear along the path, bringing forth a sense of anxiety. This is not a safe place. Upon the cusp of the summit, a bonfire blazes against the night sky. The summit of Bald Mountain is largely flat, but sloped toward an immense and gnarled tree, surrounded by bonfires. Walking to the highest point on the slope, you are met by the ethereal sounds of soft laughs and moans, eroticizing the landscape with a hint of wild pleasure with nobody in sight. At the base of the leafless tree, one larger

than anything that should exist in the world, sits a stone throne, its roots tangled with the seat. The magic emanates from this landscape, giving it a sense of mystery, power, and marginality, and offers a vista over the sprawling Continent.

Yet this is not the Bald Mountain of the Świętokrzyskie range, nor is it the mythic Łysa Góra that could appear anywhere in the Polish witchcraft fantasy that we explored in Chapter I. This Bald Mountain is a virtually constructed landscape, part of the expansive world of *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*, the 2015 video game by developer CD Projekt Red and winner of over 200 game of the year awards, widely acclaimed as one of the highest selling and top-rated video games of all time.[1] Inspired by centuries of Slavic folklore, The *Witcher 3* places the player in a fantastical world of monsters and myth yet draws upon historical narratives to create a living and breathing world. Among these folkloric inspirations is a storyline that involves a journey to the peak of Bald Mountain to intercept a witches' sabbath. For over fifty million players worldwide, this may be their only point of reference to the Bald Mountain myth of early modern Poland.[2] In a world of imagination, only inspired by folklore rather than tied to it, why did the developers of *The Witcher 3* choose to not only place the witches' sabbath at the summit of a mountain, but specifically named Bald Mountain? And what does this tell us of the impact that early modern imaginations of the witches' sabbath holds on us, even in the twenty-first century?

The story of the witches' sabbath began to fade into the realm of fantasy as the witch craze came to its end in the last years of the seventeenth century until Europe's final witch trial in 1782. Where once the concept of the night journey to the witches' sabbath dominated the terrors of early modern Europeans, by the mid eighteenth century many would dismiss the

[1] Paul Tassi, "The Witcher 3 Has Become The 9th (or 3rd) Best-selling Game In History," *Forbes*, last updated May 30, 2023, https://www.forbes.com/sites/paultassi/2023/05/30/the-witcher-3-has-become-the-9th-or-3rd-best-selling-game-in-history/.
[2] Paul Tassi, "The Witcher 3 Has Become The 9th (or 3rd) Best-selling Game In History," *Forbes*.

concept of the sabbath as "fantasies caused by mental or physical illness."[3] Though the decline of witch hunting has often been heralded as the triumph of the enlightenment ideals over the "medieval" superstitious past, such sweeping claims have been discarded in favour of a slowly shifting relationship between Europeans and the concept of magic.[4] Instead, witchcraft continued to plague the imagination of lower strata people, intellectuals, and theologians alike. While these shifts meant that witchcraft belief could no longer be prosecuted, it still played a part in the *mentalité* of people across Europe, with new beliefs built atop the early modern fantasies.

There is perhaps no space in which we can better see the continued role that concepts of early modern witchcraft and magic played in the centuries after the witch craze than in the realm of art. On canvas, print, stage, and screen, we are constantly faced with the legacies of the early modern witch, from children's entertainment to high literature. Among these are hundreds of depictions of the witches' sabbath, capturing the fantasies and terrors that the subject has evoked across the centuries. Our final chapter explores these depictions of the sabbath, both contemporary to the witch craze and those leading to the present, examining the landscapes depicted and deciphering the legacies of early modern narratives found in witch trials and demonologies across the continent. Through this analysis, we will trace the history of the sabbath landscape and its role in the common imagination, demonstrating the hold that these early modern stories like the legend of Bald Mountain have on modern culture, long after the last witch trials ended.

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[3] Marie Lennersand, "Responses to witchcraft in late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Sweden: The aftermath of the witch-hunt in Dalarna," in *Beyond the Witch Trials: Witchcraft and Magic in Enlightenment Europe*, eds. Owen Davies and Willem de Blécourt (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 72.
[4] For this historiographic shift, see: Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*; Owen Davies and Willem de Blécourt, eds., *Beyond the Witch Trials: Witchcraft and Magic in Enlightenment Europe* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2004).

To do this, I analyzed both large collections of witchcraft art and individual pieces. For etchings and prints, I selected the sizeable collections of the Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which have large sabbath art collections, including unique prints that were missing from other major collections. As witchcraft paintings are scattered in collections around the world, individual paintings were selected instead of a singular collection. Likewise, with folklore and fairy tales I used only a selection of stories from the two locales we studied in Chapters II and III: Zug and the Basque country, respectively. For films, I chose to only examine two productions from the 2010s as case studies rather than an overarching study of all sabbaths on film, which would have exceeded the bound of the thesis. For the same reason, I opted to examine only the Faust legend in literature. Due to the naming practices of works of art, not every piece depicting a witches' gathering is called a sabbath, and therefore it was essential to define the criteria for including these works in this study. To determine whether an art piece from these collections belonged, I approached each piece with the following questions. First: does this piece feature two or more witches, gathered to perform a magical or diabolical act? And second: does this piece feature a discernible landscape where the gathering is set? Using these two very simple criteria, we can create a database of sabbath landscapes across media, which can be seen in the appendix for closer analysis. While most of these sabbath depictions only feature one landscape, others may be identifiable as multiple landscapes, such as forested mountains, or ruins with hills in the background. These details are noted in the database. Other pieces have been examined and included in previous chapters, which will be denoted in the text and in the figure list.

Etchings and Prints

The explosion of print media coincided with the witch craze, so the depiction of witches and their diabolical sabbaths was a natural subject for early modern printmakers, as

made evident in the immense collection of witchcraft prints. These prints were predominantly the work of Northern European artists, whose extensive corpus of works make up the majority of all witchcraft prints from across the early modern era.[5] Artists such as Dürer and in particular his student Hans Baldung Grien (Figs. X) were among the first to depict the witches' sabbath, while centuries later they continued to make new prints of the fantastical world of the witches' sabbath in the years following the last witch trials in the mid to late eighteenth century.

The Douce Collection of the Ashmolean Museum is one of the largest collections of occult and demonological art in the world. Francis Douce was an English antiquarian of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, who donated his immense collections of texts, art, manuscripts, and other curiosities related to an immense variety of topics to the Bodleian Library in 1834.[6] Among Douce's collections were a plethora of books and artistic representations of witchcraft and demonology, a passion project of his throughout his life.[7] The prints in this collection contain dozens of depictions of the witches' sabbath in a variety of settings and landscapes. The Ashmolean Museum has collated all of Douce's witchcraft art into a single collection. The Douce Witchcraft and Demonology Collection can be narrowed down to thirty-four explicit sabbath scenes, with eight unique landscapes: forests, ruins, mountains, cellars, churches, homes, caves, and fields. While most of these pieces feature only a single landscape, others, such as Zauberey by Matthaus Merian den Altere (Fig. 11), feature both forests and ruins, adding complexity to the piece and providing it a double classification in this analysis. As seen in Table 6, these landscapes are unevenly distributed

[5] Guy Tal, *Art and Witchcraft in Early Modern Italy* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2023), 19.
[6] Over the proceeding 190 years, the collections have been subdivided between the Bodleian Library and the Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology, both institutions of the University of Oxford.
[7] Joby Topper, "Francis Douce and His Collection: An Antiquarian in Great Britain, 1757-1834," Master's Thesis (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2002), 42.

across different landscapes, with forests, ruins, and mountains included in almost half of all images in the collection.

The dominance of forest spaces in these images come as little surprise. As we have seen in our analysis of the secondary literature and demonological sources, forests are frequent settings for the witches' sabbath, and the source of repeated reference across time. From the first mentions in the sixteenth century in Jean Bodin's *Démonomanie* through the Brothers Grimm's folkloric collections and beyond, forests have so far played an essential role in our analysis of the witches' sabbath so far. As we saw in Zug, the Meilacher forest beyond the borders of the city was the essential sabbath landscape of the city, where anxieties regarding forests mingled with those surrounding the commonly held wood resources within. Across the Douce collection, forests are the most frequently featured landscape, both in depictions before and after the decline of the witch craze. Some of these prints used few trees in the background to indicate the presence of the forest, such as Jan Ziarnko's "Description et Figure du Sabbat des Sorciers" (Fig. 15), a piece originally produced by the artist for inclusion with Pierre de Lancre's *Tableau*. In many ways, the image is clearly related to de Lancre's vision of the sabbath, in particular the idea of the sabbath inverting the social order, mirroring and mocking the social conventions of courtly society.[8] However, despite including many references to de Lancre's text in the actions of the witches and the caption at the bottom of the image, such as the inclusion of children and their toads in the lower left of the image, the setting of the sabbath in a forested landscape is a curious choice for Ziarnko. As we saw in Chapter III, de Lancre described many landscapes of the witches' sabbath across the *Tableau*, but the forest was a rarity, appearing only once in the text with de Lancre describing the forest of Barrendeguy outside of Haitze.[9] Even the inclusion of the Devil's

[8] Linda C. Hults, *The Witch as Muse: Art, Gender, and Power in Early Modern Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 112; Petherbridge, *Witches & Wicked Bodies*, 65.
[9] de Lancre, *Tableau*, 112.

throne in the upper right side of the image directly contrasts with de Lancre's description of the sabbath. De Lancre explains that the Devil's throne was often placed in front of the altar of a church, representing the theological inversion of the witches' sabbath.[10] However, in Ziarnko's sabbath, the Devil's throne is flanked by trees on the right while smoke covers the left.

Considering Ziarnko's obvious understanding of de Lancre's text, it may seem strange that the artist did not choose to place his image in the seascapes and churchyards of the Pays de Labourd, which may have produced more uniquely Basque imagery. Yet it is perhaps this uniqueness that prompted Ziarnko's choice of a forest. While de Lancre's *Tableau* was produced for a relatively narrow, literate audience with a knowledge of both classical literature and ideals as well as demonological concepts of witchcraft, Ziarnko's print was accessible to a much broader audience. Ziarnko's illustration therefore needed to reflect concepts of the sabbath that were familiar to the wider audience. Unlike many of the landscapes of the sabbath described in de Lancre's *Tableau*, forests were not specific to the Pays de Labourd, but rather appeared in sabbath narratives across the continent. Further, Jan Ziarnko was born in Poland and travelled across Europe before settling in Paris in 1605, where he was commissioned to engrave the sabbath scene for Pierre de Lancre's second edition of the *Tableau*.[11] Therefore, Ziarnko likely drew inspiration from other sabbath stories from across Europe that he encountered both in his youth in Poland and his travels prior to the creation of this centrefold.

Likewise, mountains were as common in the sabbath art of the Douce collection as they are in early modern demonologies and in the imaginations of common people, such as

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[10] de Lancre, *Tableau*, 65.
[11] "Jan Ziarnko," *The British Museum*, accessed December 25, 2024, https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/term/BIOG51980; Petherbridge, *Witches & Wicked Bodies*, 65.

Łysa Gora, the Brocken, the Heuberg, or one of the numerous other high places described in localized sabbath narratives. Etched in 1742 by an anonymous German artist, "Witchcraft on the Brocken Mountain" (Fig. 21) was created nearly eight decades after the publication of Praetorius's *Blockes-Berges Verrichtung* and the etching that accompanied it (Fig. 10). Despite the span of nearly a century between the two pieces, we see several similarities between them, including the sabbath feast, the dance, and the adoration of the goat's anus. However, the depiction of the mountain itself is slightly different in each image, with the earlier piece featuring a rounded summit with few background details, while the 1742 print features several flat peaks and plateaus on the grassy summit with only a small, shrivelled tree, more akin to the actual summit of the Brocken in the Harz mountains.

From the examination of these two Blocksberg prints, separated by nearly a century, two important conclusions may be drawn. First, the eighteenth-century print was likely inspired by its seventeenth-century predecessor. Given the popularity of the *Blockes-Berges Verrichtung* at the twilight of the witch craze, the accompanying print was extensively shared across Europe and would have inspired other artists of the sabbath in a similar way that demonologists were inspired by and built upon the demonologies that came before, recycling motifs and details about the fantasy. Second, the distance in time and continuation of similar themes illustrate the longevity of sabbath narratives in the waning years of the witch craze. Despite the near complete ending of legal witch trials in the mid-eighteenth century, the witches' sabbath atop the Brocken was still a source for artistic inspiration as it was a century before. Even as the relationship with mountains began to shift from landscapes of fear to wonders of the sublime, fantastical imaginations of witches' sabbaths were still tied to their summits, particularly those such as the Brocken that broke beyond the localized sabbath landscapes to dominate the narratives in expansive regions of Europe. As the midpoint between the *Blockes-Berges Verrichtung* and the publication of Goethe's *Faust* in the

nineteenth century, “Witchcraft on the Brocken Mountain” demonstrates that the association between this landscape and the witches’ sabbath, along with the public fascination in them, never faded, but evolved over time.

Though the dominance of forests and mountains in the Ashmolean’s Douce Collection comes as little surprise due to their extensive representation in early modern trials and demonologies, the extensive collection of prints featuring ruins may seem surprising. As we saw in Chapter III, ruins played a minor role in the examined sabbath landscapes outside of Bordeaux’s Gallienne Palace. However, the Douce collection includes twelve prints featuring ruins, the third most frequent landscape in the collection. Pieces such as Claude Gillot’s early eighteenth-century engraving “Witches’ Sabbath at Night” (Fig. 22) illustrate a different vision of the witches’ sabbath compared to the Roman ruins described by de Lancre and explored in Chapter III. Rather than ruins predominantly used to evoke a sense of decay and collapse through Roman decline, Gillot’s ruins more closely resemble prehistoric standing stones. Though the presence of the prehistoric past in sabbath narratives explored in this text are exclusively limited to the English barrow described in the *Compendium Maleficarum* in our demonological overview, the imagery of the sabbath rites held within the bounds of the standing stones evokes aspects of the modern historiography. While the approaches of Margaret Murray and Carlo Ginzburg toward the sabbath have been respectively dismissed and debated, their description of witchcraft as a remnant from the prehistoric past evoke a similar imagery to that created by Gillot. Both texts and the print contribute to the legacy of the ruinous landscape and its associated symbolism across time, with Gillot’s “Witches’ Sabbath” appearing contemporaneous to the witch trials and the works of Murray and Ginzburg attempting to unravel the mysteries of the sabbath four centuries later.

The collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art are similarly dominated by forested landscapes in their depictions of the sabbath. Of the twelve works that clearly feature a witches' sabbath following the criteria of this study, nine are set in a forested landscape (see Table 7). Notable among these is the depiction of the Benevento walnut tree described in the demonologies of Bodin and Guazzo, "The Witches at the Walnut Tree of Benevento" by Guglielmo della Porta (Fig. 23). Sketched in pen and brown ink sometime between 1534 and 1577, della Porta's piece coincides with the publication of these texts in the mid sixteenth to early seventeenth centuries. Unlike other depictions of the sabbath, della Porta's is relatively tame – female figures dance to the right and appear to read on the left. There are no devils, no infants to be sacrificed, and seemingly no magical rites being performed.

Conversely, "The Round of the Sabbath or Witches' Sabbath" (Fig. 24) by early nineteenth century artist Louis Boulanger depicts the chaos of the sabbath. A tempest of whirling demons and nude female witches writhe orgiastically around a horned demon wearing the vestments of a bishop. Set within a church, this image calls back to the descriptions of sabbaths in holy places, prominently featured in the work of Pierre de Lancre as seen in Chapter III, and in King James' *Dæmonologie*. Boulanger's lithograph effectively presents the sabbath as an inversion of faith and a symbol of the power of witchcraft even in holy spaces, as we saw in de Lancre. However, with its creation decades after the last witchcraft execution in Europe, such imagery is instead evocative of the drama and emotion associated with witchcraft, while keeping it firmly rooted in the realm of fantasy. These two images, separated by three centuries of witchcraft art development, point toward a dramatic shift in the depictions of the witches' sabbath as more layers are added to the sabbath fantasy. However, perhaps more importantly, these two images symbolize the development of the sabbath fantasy across time. Where della Porta's depiction of Benevento from the early years of the witch craze is a relatively simple depiction of the sabbath at a location steeped in

magical tradition, Boulanger's "The Round of the Sabbath" is filled with complex imagery and ideas in a landscape that developed across the three-hundred-year witch craze. Like the demonologies of the fifteenth century compared with the last texts of the seventeenth century, these images represent a steadily progressing and evolving concept of the witches' sabbath, one that stretches across centuries of parasitic development.

Paintings

Removed from the realm of the black and white print and drawing, paintings brought the fantasies of the witches' sabbath into a colourful reality, although for a more limited audience than the etchings found in pamphlets and broadsheets. Witchcraft has long been an inspiration for painters. While a different medium from the dramatic oil on canvas works that defined early modern depictions, the first sabbath related art was the hand-drawn and painted illumination of two witches riding sticks on their flight to the sabbath featured in the French manuscript *Le Champion des dames* of 1451.[12] From these humble beginnings, the genre of witchcraft paintings exploded, with countless examples from early modern and modern painters alike held in collections around the world. The witches' sabbath has been a central pillar of witchcraft paintings, using the evocative and titillating imagery of impossible flight, macabre rites, and orgiastic rituals to draw the viewer into the world of magic. Through the centuries of sabbath paintings, we see an evolving sense of landscape, placing the sabbath in the spaces where contemporary artists felt it belonged. In these paintings, we see a developing sense of landscapes of fear and the macabre. We will closely examine three paintings from the seventeenth and late eighteenth century to explore and understand how the legacies of sabbath narratives found their way into the imagination of the landscape during and after the European witch craze.

[12] Sigrid Schade, "Witchcraft and Early Modern Art (1450-1550)" in *The Routledge History of Witchcraft*, ed. Johannes Dillinger (London: Routledge, 2019), 353.

While many examples of sabbath art were focused on eliciting a sense of fear and dread through the landscapes of their portrayed sabbath, Agostino Tassi's 1625 *Landscape with a Scene of Witchcraft* (Fig. 25) breaks the mould, presenting a gentle idyllic world with only a hint of the horrors of the diabolical. Such an approach to witchcraft is a stark contrast to the artist himself – known as a violent man, Tassi was tried for the rape of fellow artist Artemisia Gentileschi in 1612 and served a year-long prison sentence before the annulment of the verdict, and was accused of raping his sister-in-law and murdering his wife, though these accusations were not brought to trial.[13] The painting features a small witches' sabbath in a forest at the edge of a palatial building, with a crowd of people standing upon a balcony, seemingly looking down upon the scene. A singular witch sits at the foreground with a small dog before a fire, with the sole hint of the macabre nature of the scene being human skulls sat askew by her feet. Tassi's approach to the witches' sabbath closely mirrors the painting *Witchcraft Scene* of Angelo Corroselli (1585-1652), his contemporary, by contrasting a central witch figure with a sabbath occurring in the background of the image, a juxtaposed style popular with Italian artists of the time.[14] However, Tassi's sabbath scene is a stark comparison to Corroselli and many of the other paintings of the witches' sabbath, for the focus of the painting is on the landscape, rather than the gathering of witches.

Four witches, in various states of undress, gather around a fire beside a small pond, but the details of their actions are limited. Though unclear, the standing witch closest to the fire appears to be pouring water over the fire, an action that has often been linked with weather magic as seen in the woodcut of a sinking ship (Fig. 18), or in the trials of Switzerland and southern Germany, where hail summoning was a frequent act of *maleficia*

[13] Ian Chilvers, "Tassi, Agostino" in *The Oxford Dictionary of Art and Artists* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), https://www-oxfordreference-com.ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/display/10.1093/acref/9780191782763.001.0001/acref-9780191782763-e-2423.
[14] Tal, *Art and Witchcraft in Early Modern Italy*, 74-75.

described by accused witches.[15] Instead, Tassi's primary focus is on the forest in which they gather, and the tower that overlooks the scene. The painting presents an idyllic forest, bathed in the warm light of golden hour, far removed from the nocturnal landscapes of fear so often presented in both early modern and modern witchcraft art. Tassi challenges the viewer to imagine the scene of witchcraft as secondary to the landscape while also removed partially from his seventeenth century imagination of the witches' sabbath – the forest remains as the site of the sabbath in accordance with the fantasies seen in trials and demonologies alike, yet it lacks the dark and mysterious qualities seen in other depictions of forested landscapes. Instead, *Landscape with a Scene of Witchcraft* captures the natural ideal, with the sabbath scene adding a sense of marginality and wildness to the otherwise tame forest.

Approximately two decades later in 1646, fellow Italian artist Salvator Rosa's depiction of the witches' sabbath in *Witches at their Incantation* (Fig. 26) presents a stark contrast to the work of Tassi. Rosa, a Neapolitan painter with a penchant for eliciting conversation through his curious and often extravagant works, was no stranger to the depiction of witchcraft in his paintings through the baroque cult of *novità*, especially toward the end of his career.[16] Rosa was well versed in both classical and contemporary discussions of witchcraft, particularly those related to the witches' sabbath. Such a rich knowledge of the witchcraft fantasy is evidenced in Rosa's depictions of the witches' sabbath and brought a more northern European gaze to the fantasy, a direct response to Rome's attempt to prevent the excesses of northern witch panics from spreading to Italy. Unlike his fellow Italian artists such as Tassi, Rosa discarded the traditionally beautiful enchantress found in Italian works in favour of the "grotesque and fevered figures who fill the eery night-time scenes of Hans

[15] See: Stokes, *Demons of Urban Reform*, 14; Mackay, trans., *The Hammer of Witches*, 384; StAZG A 105/6, fol. 39B.
[16] Helen Langdon, *Salvator Rosa: Paint and Performance* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 2022), 10.

Baldung Grien's chiaroscuro woodcuts."[17] *Witches at their Incantations* was one of a series of such nightmarish depictions of witchcraft, bringing the horrors of the sabbath to Italian audiences.

Rosa's scene depicts a gathering of over a dozen witches and demons under a twilit sky. Across the painting we see actions that appear in demonologies and trials across Europe: witches cannibalising the corpse of a hanged man, a naked old hag brews a potion in a small cauldron, while a similarly decrepit witch holds a swaddled infant before a skeletal bird demon. Though the scene is set in darkness as the last light leaves the sky, we are given some hints about the landscape of the painting. On the left of the painting, craggy rocks sit behind a veiled white figure wearing a crown and a wreath of leaves taking part in a bizarre rite, pointing toward a hilly and rocky landscape like those we saw in Chapter I. At the centre of the scene, the corpse is hanging from a ruined and desiccated tree, its gnarled branches far removed from the gentle trees of Tassi's *Landscape*, while the background to the centre and right of the painting depicts shadowy and leafy trees, placing Rosa's sabbath in a forest clearing. These elements bring the painting in line with two sabbath landscapes that we have explored, as the hanged man is reminiscent of the belief that witches gathered at crossroads, the traditional site of gallows and gibbets across the continent, as well as the forest. By placing the cannibalism and hanging scene on the gnarled tree at the edge of the forest, Rosa constructs an image of the sabbath that combines both landscapes that are common in trials and demonologies across Europe for added emphasis, helping in his construction of a landscape of fear where such horrors belonged. The result of this combination is a complex witchcraft scene that elicits a sense of fear and anxiety, using the landscape to enhance the sense of macabre horror from the diabolical figures and actions in the foreground.

[17] Langdon, *Salvator Rosa*, 78.

The works of Francisco Goya serve as the absolute inverse of Tassi's idyllic landscape while using the landscape to produce a vision of the sabbath more desolate than Rosa. Counted among the most famous depictions of the witchcraft from the era immediately following the witch craze, Goya's series on "asuntas de brujas" or "the subject of witches" consisted of six paintings commissioned by the Duke and Duchess of Osuna in 1798, a decade after the last witchcraft execution in Europe.[18] The most famous of this series is *The Witches' Sabbath* or *El akellare* (Fig. 27), demonstrating the legacies that the Basque witch hunts of the early seventeenth century held on the Spanish imagination and language nearly two hundred years after their dramatic events. The scene is centred around a seated Satan in the form of a billy goat, giving credence to the title of "akelarre" as the heath of the billy goat. A collection of wrinkled hags gathers at the Devil's feet in adoration, presenting a bounty of infant corpses as offerings. Among the most famous depictions of the sabbath from the years following the witch craze, Goya's *Witches' Sabbath* was designed to be an antithesis to Enlightenment values and the demystification of the world, inspiring upper-status amusement at the superstitions of the common people in the last years of the eighteenth century.

The landscape of Goya's *Witches' Sabbath* stands as a stark contrast from the works of both Tassi and Rosa. Unlike the previous artists, Goya chose to not place his sabbath in a forested landscape, nor upon a heath as the painting's Spanish title of *El akellare* would suggest. Instead, the sabbath is located on a desolate hillside under a crescent moon, with the first light of the breaking dawn on the edge of the horizon. There are no trees or any form of vegetation, nor jagged rocks or ruins, in the image, making Goya's landscape more bleak than terrifying, using the witches, the infant corpses, and the smiling diabolical billy goat to elicit the horrifying emotions the sabbath was meant to produce. Instead, Goya combines

[18] Janis A. Tomlinson, *Goya: A Portrait of the Artist* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), 165.

both pre-existing concepts of the sabbath with new Enlightenment relationships with the natural world. The use of hills and mountains as sabbath landscapes can be seen across the continent from Iberia to Finnmark, as we saw in Chapter I, using their prominent topography and infertile soils as symbols of their diabolical nature. Goya's sabbath uses this association to evoke a sense of belonging, with the *akellare* trading the heath of the billy goat for high spaces.

However, the painting is also a product of its Enlightenment era creation. As we have seen across this thesis, the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century brought sweeping changes to the way Europeans understood and interacted with the environment. Where once mountains and forests inspired a sense of derision for their disorderly and anti-agricultural nature, a growing sense of the sublime turned these spaces into sites of wonder and beauty, where humans could interact with the beauty of Creation beyond the subdued Earth described in Genesis.[19] Dramatic mountains and forested landscapes became the sites of awe rather than fear. However, Goya inverts this expectation by continuing the legacy of sabbaths in high spaces while removing all colour and vegetation that evokes a sense of the sublime, instead producing a dark and bleak hilly landscape, drained of all brightness and life akin to the desiccated infant corpses presented before the Devil.

Across two centuries, these paintings present the ever shifting and evolving story of the sabbath landscape. While Tassi's unique approach to the sabbath in an idyllic landscape uses imagery not often associated with these narratives of fantasy and terror, the use of the forest as a sabbath space follows the works of other artists. Rosa's use of the same landscape inverted in darkness breaks from the Italian tradition of beautiful magic in art, following more closely in line with the macabre prints and etchings of Northern Europe. The forest

[19] Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, 14-15.

becomes a dark and mysterious landscape where unspeakable terrors can occur, yet as the witch craze ended, so too did the terror of forests in the face of the sublime. Goya's sabbath landscape is instead one of a bleak and grim nature, a stark contrast with the richly decorated landscapes before, making the sabbath belief itself the true terror of the painting. The legacies of the sabbath narratives through the witch craze and beyond can be easily traced through this series of paintings, illustrating the role that changing interpretations of landscape played in the imagination of the witches' sabbath.

Folklore and Fairy Tales

For many in the modern world, folklore and fairy tales are the first places in which they encounter the figure of the witch and the concept of magic. These texts and tales are deeply engrained in the socio-cultural fabric of modern society and occupy a unique space in the common perception of the past. Due to the usually timeless pre-industrial qualities of most folklore, it is often assumed that these stories are the direct product of time immemorial, an oral tradition passed directly through generations before they were recorded in the nineteenth century. However, fairy tales are more akin to the concept of place and texts like demonologies, and may be defined as constantly emergent, perpetually shifting with new additions over time through shifting contemporary values with each retelling.[20]

Perhaps the most famous of all collections of such stories, the *Grimm's Fairy Tales* were no exception for this contemporary revisionism. As we saw in our introduction's study of sabbath histories, the work of Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm was a product of a growing sense of German nationalism in the early to mid-nineteenth century and an attempt to create a literary and folkloric identity that spanned much of the German lands. While the brothers used older stories from their travels across Germany to fill out their book, their rewriting,

[20] Lutz Rörich, introduction to *Fairy Tales and Society: Illusion, Allusion, and Paradigm* by Ruth B. Bottigheimer (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), 4.

editing, and translation of these stories created a distinctly nineteenth-century text that reflected the beliefs and values at this specific time as opposed to the origins of the stories.[21] Due to the slow nature of change in storytelling traditions and the desire to present a fairy tale in a vision of the mythic past, we often encounter a story set in a quasi-medieval world, filled with feudalistic language and imagery, but featuring the values and ideals of the era in which they were recorded, often the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[22] As products of this era, we must therefore explore folklore and fairy tales surrounding witches and their sabbaths as nineteenth century legacies of the witch craze. By the time that these stories were codified, witchcraft trials had ended across Europe and witch belief remained in the common fantasy rather than the courtrooms and execution sites. Cultural memory and storytelling traditions allowed the vestiges of the sabbath tradition to remain in these fairy tales, a testament to the longevity of these narratives.

Folklore and fairy tales associated with witches and their sabbaths appear in all corners of Europe where early modern witchcraft belief could be found. Due to the immensity of this collection of folklore, we will specifically examine the folklore of Zug, Switzerland, and the Basque Country, the two case studies we explored in Chapters II and III. While this limited selection was made primarily to narrow the immense field of folklore, the choice to explore the folklore of these regions also helps to illustrate the role that early modern sabbath narratives played in the creation of a folkloric legacy. We see how the landscapes of witchcraft fantasies shifted over time, where certain spaces retained their diabolical nature in folklore while others were forgotten as the trials faded from public memory.

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[21] Bottigheimer, *Fairy Tales and Society*, 117.
[22] Maria Tatar, *The Hard Facts of the Grimm's Fairy Tales: Expanded Edition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 48-49.

The first Swiss folktales were recorded in the early years of the nineteenth century, within decades of the Grimm collections. The first collection related to the Zentralschweiz region, *Sagen, Bräuche und Legenden aus den fünf Orten Lucern, Uri, Schwiz, Unterwalden und Zug*, was published in 1862 by Alois Lütolf and covered the five central forest cantons of Switzerland. At the same time, locals with an interest in folklore collected stories from across the canton of Zug, handwriting extensive notes to be left in the Staatsarchiv. The first publication of folktales exclusively dedicated to Zug was published in 1938 by Dr. Hans Koch using these nineteenth-century notes, while a modern and updated collection of these stories was published in 2009 by local historian Maria Greco. *Zuger Sage: Sage, Legände und Gschichte us em Kanton Zug* [sic] is a collection of ninety-three folk tales from across the Canton of Zug, divided geographically to discuss the eleven main towns and villages of the area. These stories are deeply grounded in the landscape through narrative and through language, weaving stories of the cantonal landscape in the old Zuger dialect of Swiss German to preserve their authenticity as a previously oral tradition.[23] Through these stories, we can uncover the continuing legacies of the magical landscapes in Zug recorded long after the execution of Katharina Kahlbacher, Zug's last condemned witch.

While many of the stories collated by Greco feature gnomes (*Erdmanndli*), ghosts, and other fairy tale creatures, both the Devil and his witches appear regularly throughout the text. Most notably, some of these stories are clearly dated and are based on the actual witch trials overseen by the Canton, giving the reader some semblance of when the story was first developed. Perhaps most interesting is the inclusion of a folk tale about Elisabet or Lisi Bossard (here called the diminutive Bossi in the local dialect), the seventy-year-old woman executed in Zug's final witch panic in 1737. We have seen in Lisi's own words her

[23] Maria Greco, *Zuger Sage: Sage, Legände und Gschichte us em Kanton Zug* (Steinhausen: Verlag Victor Hotz, 2009), 137.

understanding of witchcraft and the landscapes of the sabbath in Chapter II, particularly her sabbath narratives set in the Meilacher Forest. However, this folktale goes beyond Lisi's story, constructing a narrative of her diabolical acts on 23 July, 1737, two weeks before she was accused by Katharina Kahlbacher and subsequently arrested.[24] Rather than recounting Lisi's encounters with the Devil in the Meilacher forest or along the Lorzentobel canyon as we saw in her stories in Chapter II, the story explores a fictitious argument that Lisi had with a group of young girls at a market in Brunnen, a village in the neighbouring Canton of Schwyz. Following an argument with these girls who called her "a shrivelled old woman," Lisi summoned a thunderstorm to soak the girls, turning the streets into a "raging torrent" and striking the chapel tower with a thunderbolt.[25] At first glance, this story provides little aid in identifying the legacies of the sabbath landscapes – it is a fictitious story that includes none of the landscapes described by Lisi or any of the other of the accused in the 1737 trial. However, it does include vital information about the resonance of the witchcraft narratives. The specific selection of Lisi Bossard as the story's antagonist and the date in the summer of 1737 demonstrates that these stories were recorded in a time where the cultural memory of the witch craze was still tangible, but far enough separated that there was nobody left who witnessed the original trial to question the authenticity of the story. Using this information, we may examine the rest of the local Zug legends for the remnants of the sabbath landscape and witness how their perception shifted across time.

Among this collection of ninety-three stories, almost a dozen are stories of witches and witchcraft, while more feature the Devil as the primary antagonist. However, only a single story features the witches' sabbath – the tale of the Menzingen witch. According to the story, an old witch once lived in the village of Menzingen at the summit of the Zugerberg,

[24] Greco, *Zuger Sage*, 131; Bart, "Zwischen Gott und Teuffel," 8.
[25] Greco, *Zuger Sage*, 131.

who loved to teach children magic tricks. One night, she took a local girl to the witches' sabbath, anointing her little stick with a sweet ointment before flying off with the girl in tow. At the sabbath, held at a "quiet place," the girl was ordered to take off her clothes, at which the girl exclaimed Christ's name, causing the scene to vanish. She was found the next day, naked, bloody, and trembling on the wooden roof of the Lorzentobel bridge.[26] In this story, we see many traditions of the sabbath both local to Zug and from across Europe. The girl and the witch anointing the little stick with ointment for flight to the sabbath was a common narrative across the trials in Zug, while the exclamation of the name of the Lord causing the sabbath to vanish appeared in stories across Europe, particularly in the demonologies of Guazzo and Rémy seen in the introduction. Moreover, the discovery of the girl atop the wooden bridge in the Lorzentobel canyon illustrates that this sabbath likely occurred nearby, demonstrating how this landscape remained at the heart of the sabbath fantasy long after the trials concluded. Lastly, the inclusion of the Lorzentobel bridge allows us to date the story, because it was built in 1742, as attested by the *Bürgergemeinde*'s request for the village of Menzingen to pay half the cost for its construction.[27] Our tale of the girl atop the bridge must therefore come from the years after this agreement was signed and the bridge was built. This story demonstrates how the diabolical nature of the Lorzentobel canyon remained constant in Zug between the last execution in December 1737 and the discovery and naming of the nearby Höllgrotten as the Devil's grottoes in 1881.

Despite the survival of only a single sabbath story in Zug's folklore, we see hints of the other sabbath landscapes in other tales of witches and Devils. As we saw in our examination of Zug, cows were an essential part of life in early modern Switzerland, both in their food resources and their symbolic significance, making them a primary target for

[26] Greco, *Zuger Sage*, 58.
[27] Dittli, *Zuger Ortsnamen*, Band 3, 234.

diabolical witchcraft and their pastures a key sabbath landscape. One folktale, recounting the exploits of the fictional witch Margareth Elsener, describes how she visited a farmer in Menzingen and caressed his prized bull, poisoning it with her touch.[28] In another story, set in 1574, the Devil and a group of demons haunted the Zuger *Allmend*, where the witches' sabbath was often said to take place. A conjurer from Chur was summoned to exorcise these demons and he, with two local men, tied the demons together with a rope and banished them across the Zugersee, sending them to haunt Pilatus, the mountain on the horizon.[29] The inclusion of Pilatus as the closest major mountain on the horizon likely illustrates the continued role of vision in the creation and understanding of a landscape, as the mountain can be seen from any location along the Zugersee's northern shore, where most major settlements of the canton are located. Meanwhile, another tale recounts how a convicted criminal was flogged behind the Schutzengel Church, the site of execution beside the *Allmend*. After receiving his punishment, he cursed the *Allmend*, causing the grass to whither until four stone crucifixes were erected around the field, giving the pasture protection from the curse.[30] These stories point toward the continued role that the *Allmend* and the cattle it housed played in the Zug imagination, even in the decades after the land was parcelled and privatized. The continued significance of the common pastureland demonstrates how this landscape survived in the cultural imagination. The significance of the *Allmend* in these tales is intensified by the omission of another landscape from the collection of folktales – the Meilacher forest, which appeared in almost every trial from Zug's witch craze, is not mentioned once in the collection of folklore. Despite the forest being cut down in 1853, much closer to the time when the stories were recorded than the last witchcraft execution, its resonance in the cultural imagination is significantly lesser than that of the *Allmend*. Such an omission illustrates how

[28] Greco, *Zuger Sage*, 60.
[29] Greco, *Zuger Sage*, 126-127.
[30] Greco, *Zuger Sage*, 125.

the continued significance of cattle in Swiss life in the nineteenth century far outweighed the anxieties around forested landscapes that permeated the early modern imagination.

In the Basque country, a rich oral tradition of fantastical storytelling has existed on both sides of the Franco-Spanish borderlands for centuries, often weaving pagan and Christian narratives to form a syncretized mythology of gods, devils, and monsters tied to the Pyrénées mountains and the sea.[31] Among the folk tales are stories of the *sorginak*, or the folkloric witch figure that haunted the Basque imagination both before and after the witch craze swept the region in the early years of the seventeenth century.[32] Among the modern collections of folklore is Juan Patlapin's *Sorginak: Sorcières en Pays Basque*, a collection of witchcraft fables and folktales from across the seven Basque provinces of France and Spain published in 2011. Patlapin's collection of stories is not tied to the Basque witch craze, nor to the nineteenth century folklore craze like Greco's collection of Zug legends. Instead, Patlapin includes legends from both an undetermined past and more modern folk tales set in the early twentieth century.[33] Such a broad range of stories allows us to see how the legacies of the Basque witch craze live on in the local cultural memory.

Nine of these stories are set in the Pays de Labourd. But only one refers to the sabbath. In the tale of the midnight ball at Fikozelai field, a servant girl from a farm in Sare was departing the village before dawn to go to a market in Navarre when she heard a txistu (a Basque flute) and a tambourine coming from the field of Fikozelai. Upon investigation, the girl discovered two women playing music and dancing. When they invited her to join, she suspected the women were witches and ran away as fast as she could, arriving safely at the

[31] Olivier de Marliave, *Pyrénées fantastiques: Au temps de la sorcellerie, des superstitions et des rituels* (Toulouse: Éditions Privat, 2020), 9-10.
[32] Juan Patlapin, *Sorginak: Sorcières en Pays Basque – Récits et legends des sept provinces*, trans. André Gabastou (Urrunge: Éditions Pimientos), 5.
[33] Patlapin, *Sorginak*, 103.

market in Navarre by dawn.[34] This story presents a unique perspective on the witches' sabbath when compared to the descriptions provided by Pierre de Lancre in his *Tableau*. The Devil is not present at this small sabbath, only two the two witches, playing music and dancing rather than performing elaborate inverted rituals. Moreover, the Fikozelai field is never mentioned by de Lancre, despite the commission spending time interrogating accused witches from the parish of Sare in the summer of 1609.[35] Given de Lancre's penchant for describing the sabbath landscapes in detail, Fikozelai field is either a recent addition to the cultural imagination of the sabbath landscape or did not interest de Lancre sufficiently to include in his *Tableau*.

However, of the landscapes de Lancre did explore, one does persist in the folkloric tradition – the bridge between Ciboure and Saint-Jean-de-Luz. In this tale, two men from the nearby village of Urrugne crossed the bridge between the two towns at midnight where they encountered an old beggar woman, asking for coins. When they did not spare her any money but instead wished God's protection on her, she murmured under her breath. When the two men arrived at their farm in Urrugne, they discovered their fields were strewn with stones, and deduced the old woman was a witch.[36] While this tale does not feature a sabbath, the specific inclusion of the bridge between Ciboure and Saint-Jean-de-Luz points toward a maintained tradition of this transitional space as a site of witchcraft.

Though the bridge is the only space specifically mentioned by de Lancre as a sabbath landscape that appears in this collection of folklore, the remnants of sabbath belief appear in other legends from around the Basque country. From the French province of Soule, we see the sabbath occurring in a private home, where a boy follows his bride and finds well-dressed

[34] Patlapin, *Sorginak*, 105-106.
[35] Machielsen, *The Basque Witch-Hunt*, 115.
[36] Patlapin, *Sorginak*, 109-110.

lords and ladies kissing the anus of a goat, a scene frequently described by de Lancre.[37] On the Spanish side of La Rhune in Navarre, we find legends of the sabbath landscapes, including the original *akelarre*, a meadow at the mouth of a the Alli cave.[38] In the local Navarre folklore, the caves, the meadow, and the nearby Akelar dolmen were all part of the mythic sabbath landscape, where witches would gather, dance, and worship the Devil.[39] These three landscapes fit in accordance with perceptions of the sabbath from the early modern period, showing the direct connection between Basque folklore and the trials that tore through the region on both sides of the border. Though folklore may be an imperfect record of the past due to its imaginative retellings reflecting the values of the era in which it was recorded, these collections of cultural memory may illustrate the legacies of the witches' sabbath across the centuries, curating the understanding of the landscape to fit contemporary attitudes and relationships with space.

Films

Since the earliest silent films from the first decades of the twentieth century, witchcraft and magic have been core topics of interest for filmmakers and audiences alike.[40] Like our early modern predecessors, modern audiences strive to experience what is perhaps the same macabre and titillating entertainment that was once offered by trials and executions, demonologies and folktales. From the horrifying and nauseating *Blair Witch Project* (1999) to the satirical and comedic *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (1975), the figure of the witch can be found in films spanning all genres, illustrating the continued role that witchcraft plays in the cultural imagination. Though many films may seem far removed from the realities of

[37] Patlapin, *Sorginak*, 135-136.
[38] Patlapin, *Sorginak*, 115.
[39] Patlapin, *Sorginak*, 117.
[40] See: Alexander Doty and Patricia Clare Ingham, *The Witch and the Hysteric: The Monstrous Medieval in Benjamin Christensen's Häxan* (New York: Punctum Books, 2014); Elizabeth Ezra, "Witchcraft and the Uncanny Origins of Cinema," in *Gothic Studies* 26, no. 1 (March 2024): 1-17; Richard Baxstrom and Todd Meyers, *Realizing the Witch: Science, Cinema, and the Mastery of the Invisible* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016).

the witch craze that spanned early modern Europe, the legacies of this era are woven through over a century of films, from the *Wizard of Oz* to *Harry Potter*. While witches and witchcraft are found in many films across genres, film depictions of the sabbath are far rarer. However, throughout this small collection of sabbath films, we see a common cinematographic and iconographic tradition in their depictions of the sabbath, deeply rooted in the early modern past. For our examination of the landscapes of the sabbath on film, we will consider two recent films: Robert Eggers's 2015 horror film *The VVitch: A New-England Folktale* (shortened to *The Witch*) and Pablo Agüero's 2020 historical drama *Akelarre* (retitled *Coven* or *Coven of Sisters* for English language distribution). These two films, both set in the early modern witch craze, seek to provide different perspectives on the imagination of witchcraft in early modern Europe, but their depictions of the sabbath feature a shared landscape despite their different settings and approaches.

Released to critical acclaim and the recipient of forty-three film awards in 2015, Robert Egger's *The Witch* has become a modern classic in the horror genre but is deeply tied to its early modern roots.[41] The film follows a family of New England settlers banished from the safety of their plantation community and forced to live in exile alone at the edge of a forest. As the months pass, a strange series of events begin to unfold: their crops whither, their toddler twins claim their jet-black goat Black Phillip whispers in their ear, and their infant son Samuel disappears. As the family descends into madness and hysteria, it becomes clear to them that their misfortune stems from a diabolical interference. As both adults and their five children fall victim one by one to the witch who resides in the woods and the Devil who lives among them, the audience is taken to the depths of despair, immersed in the horrific fantasies that plagued early modern Europeans on both sides of the Atlantic – and

[41] "The Witch" International Movie Database (IMDb), last accessed 30 December 2024, https://www.imdb.com/title/tt4263482/.

here the film evokes the fears of the early modern era. As the film reaches its tumultuous and gruesome climax, the film takes the viewer into the very heart of darkness: the witches' sabbath. In the final scene of *The Witch*, after signing a pact with the Devil, the teenage girl Thomasin, the film's protagonist, abandons the cultivated and human world of the farm and steps naked into the dark forest beyond. Here she finds a coven of witches performing a diabolical sabbath in the presence of the Devil in the form of the billy goat, Black Phillip. Illuminated by bonfire, they float into the trees, and Thomasin abandons herself to ecstasy as she too is raised to the treetops. As the film cuts to black, the last image we see is her naked form floating in front of a firelit pine, sealing both her pact with the Devil and the relationship between the forest and the terrors of witchcraft.

While the Devil and the titular witch are the primary antagonists of the film, Eggers gives the forest a character of its own throughout the film leading up to the sabbath. From the first scenes, the film adds a sense of gravity and unease toward the forest – the family falls to their knees in prayer at the site of their new home, facing toward the forest as the camera pulls back and the violins begin to wail. As the music reaches its horrifying zenith, the family is seemingly eaten up by the dark boughs of trees, swallowed by an unforgiving and haunted landscape. The use of filmic techniques and tropes such as these throughout *The Witch* instil a sense of anxiety every time the family enters the forest, becoming more fantastically horrifying until the final sabbath scene. However, the film's use of the forest is also reliant on our preconceived notions of forests as landscapes of fear and thus logical spaces for the witches' sabbath to occur. As we saw in our examination of the Meilacher forest in Chapter II, the use of the forest as a sabbath space was the result of a complex relationship between humans and the natural world in early modern Europe. Spurred by instinctive fears of disorientation and danger in addition to a cultural and religious understanding of forests as antithetical to God's will, forests evolved to become landscapes of fear, despite Europe's

reliance on forest resources in all facets of society. Egger's choice of the story of the film and the climatic sabbath revolving around the forest are a continuation of this trend, solidifying the forest's role in the modern conceptualization of the sabbath landscape.

The role of the forest in *The Witch* is centred upon logic: the story is fictitious but set in the heavily forested landscape of New England. The sabbath belongs in this location. In Pablo Agüero's *Akelarre*, however, we see the role that modern interpretations of the sabbath play in the creation of historical films. Filmed in Spanish and Euskara along the Basque coast near Guipúzkoa, *Akelarre* saw relative success in the Spanish film market before its wider release on Netflix under the title *Coven of Sisters*.[42] Set in 1609, the film tells the story of a group of five teen girls in the Spanish Basque country caught up in the witch craze. Though historical in nature, the film blends together the stories of the witch-hunts on both sides of the Franco-Spanish border, as the film's primary antagonist is the outsider judge sent to quell the witch panic in the Basque country, Rostegui, a clear play on Pierre de Lancre's full name. After they are accused of witchcraft, the five girls are arrested and brought face to face with the zealous Rostegui and his sceptical counterpart Salazar, representing a fictional version of Alonso de Salazar Frias, known as the witches' advocate and a known sceptic during the Logroño auto-da-fé. Rostegui, in accordance with de Lancre's own character, becomes obsessed with one of the girls, Ana, blending his eroticization of the girl with his desire to uncover the mysteries of witchcraft, most of all, the sabbath. In a desperate bid to bide enough time for their fathers to return from the New World, Ana encourages the other girls to construct wild enough tales of the sabbath to keep Rostegui engaged and delay their execution. In one final attempt to outlast the Inquisition, Ana offers to perform a sabbath for

[42] "Coven," International Movie Database (IMDb), last accessed 30 December 2024, https://www.imdb.com/title/tt4263482/.

Rostegui and the other authorities, an offer accepted by both the fictional Rostegui and the real de Lancre, as described in the *Tableau*.[43]

When the time comes to perform the sabbath, Ana and the other four girls lead the authorities into a clearing in the middle of a forest, encouraged by an all too willing Rostegui. In the light of the bonfire, the girls dance erotically, contort their bodies, and sing in Euskara, a language that the Spanish judges could not understand and sounded demonic to their ears. As the sabbath reaches its swirling zenith, Rostegui's obsession draws him into participating in the sabbath, the firelit forest swirling around him in his stupor. With the zealous judge incapacitated, the girls attempt an impossible escape, using the trees as cover, bringing the movie to a close at the nearby cliffs overlooking the Bay of Biscay.

As a work of historical fiction, *Akelarre* blends the history of the Basque witch craze with artistic licence. Given the state of relations between France and Spain in 1609, the real de Lancre and Salazar Frias would never have met, let alone engaged in a shared hunt in the Basque country, nor could Jean d'Espagnet, de Lancre's real partner, be portrayed as a witchcraft sceptic.[44] However, the film authentically portrays de Lancre's eroticization of teenaged Basque girls, his obsession with the witches' sabbath, and many other aspects of the Labourdin witch belief. While the sabbath the girls perform for Rostegui *looks* like the witches' sabbath described in the *Tableau*, Agüero makes one fascinating choice in his portrayal of the sabbath: its location. The girls select a clearing in a forest as their setting for the sabbath, close enough to the coast to attempt their escape at the first opportunity. While in the film, the forest feels like a natural and cinematic location for the witches' sabbath, it is not reflective of the description provided by de Lancre. As noted in our exploration of Jan

[43] Girls accused of attending the sabbath performed their dances for the jurist, which helped de Lancre reconstruct his vision of the sabbath. de Lancre, *Tableau*, 208.
[44] See: Machielsen, *The Basque Witch-Hunt*, 110.

Ziarnko's "Description et Figure du Sabbat des Sorciers" at the beginning of this chapter, de Lancre only mentions one forest in the Pays de Labourd as a sabbath landscape – the forest of Barrendeguy near the inland village of Haitze. Considering *Akelarre* was filmed on location in the Basque country, why did Agüero not follow the example set by de Lancre and film in one of the landscapes described clearly in the *Tableau*, despite closely following the text in so many other parts of the film? I argue that our answer lies in the modern perception of the witches' sabbath and the way some sabbath landscapes have lingered in our common imagination longer than others. Forests have inspired fears and fantasies for thousands of years. While shifting perceptions of the supernatural and our role in the natural world have broadly led to a changing relationship with space and place, our instinctive responses to forests have continued into the present, causing an anxiety response even in the twenty-first century. The early modern stories of the witches' sabbath held in forests survived into the modern world thanks to our intrinsic fears and supported by an entire corpus of literature and film, continuing the tradition of forests as landscapes of fear. The sabbaths in *Akelarre* and *The Witch* are held in forests not because the seventeenth-century characters believed it belonged there, but because the twenty-first century audience needed to believe. In these films, we see the legacies of the witches' sabbath, filtered through centuries of shifting understandings of space, place, and the world around us.

Literature

As we saw in Chapter I, the Brocken has been associated with the witches' sabbath for the last four centuries, but its notoriety as a witches' mountain largely stemmed from writers and demonologists from outside the Harz region. While the demonology of Praetorius was the first major text to draw attention to the peak, the most significant stories of the Brocken sabbath comes from the world of literature, most famously from the Faust story of eighteenth and nineteenth-century German writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. This work,

considered to be Goethe's masterpiece and a cornerstone of German literature, combined early modern concepts of both witchcraft and the Brocken as a sabbath space while adapting them for a modern audience steeped in the Romantic movement. Goethe's work has helped solidify both the Brocken in the modern understanding of the witch craze and mountains across Europe as the sites of the witches' sabbath well into the twenty-first century.

The story of Faust, alternatively referred to as Doctor Faustus in earlier versions of the tale, is a warning against pride and the extremes of the pursuit of knowledge. Though very loosely based on the real figure of Dr. Johann George Faust, a wandering astrologer and magician of the early sixteenth century, though the subsequent literary works bear little resemblance to his life or deeds.[45] The Faust myth centres around the title character's scholastic desire for magical knowledge, culminating in a deal with the Devil. Faust summons the demon Mephistopheles, who agrees to serve Faust for a period in exchange for the young man's soul, to which Faust readily agrees. Over the years, Faust and Mephistopheles embark on a series of magical escapades which vary in the retellings of the story, culminating in the character's inevitable death upon the expiration of his pact with the Devil.

While Goethe's version of the tale is among the most popular in the modern world, the Faust story originates from the long Reformation and the age of witch trials. The original *Faust-buch*, the *Historia von Doktor Faustus*, was published in 1587 by Johann Spies and was a piece of Lutheran propagandistic literature.[46] This original version prominently features the titular Doctor Faustus as a scholar in Wittenberg, the heart of the Reformation and the centre of Lutheran theology, with commentary and satire against other confessions found

[45] See: Frank Baron, "Faustus of the Sixteenth Century: His Life, His Legend, and Myth," in *The Faustian Century: German Literature in the Age of Luther and Faustus*, eds. J.M. van der Laan and Andrew Weeks (Rochester: Camden House, 2013), 43-66.
[46] David Hawkes, *The Faust Myth: Religion and the Rise of Representation* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 28-29.

sprinkled through the text. The book was rapidly translated and disseminated across Europe as a concerted effort to both spread Lutheran belief and as a condemnation of all magical practices, including those of upper strata scholars and other learned men.[47] Its publication coincided with the intensification of the witch-hunt in the German-speaking lands of the Holy Roman Empire, which peaked between 1560 and 1635.[48] While the story's primary theme alone presents clear links to demonological beliefs of the witch craze, we see other elements of the contemporary witchcraft beliefs through the text. As we saw in our exploration of crossroads, Faustus first summons the Devil for his pact at a crossroads outside of Wittenberg. As part of their adventures, Faustus and Mephistopheles steal wine from the cellars of the Duke of Saxon, the Duke of Bavaria, and the Bishop of Salzburg, and fly across the world in diabolical nocturnal flights, elements that we see in contemporary witchcraft narratives.[49]

However, in this first version of the Faust myth, we do not see any indication of either the Brocken or a witches' sabbath, key elements of Goethe's version of the text. Nor do these features appear in the *Dr. Faustus* stage adaptation written by Christopher Marlowe and first published in 1601.[50] We have seen in Chapter I that the Brocken would not become a major sabbath landscape until the seventeenth century, after upper strata writers and demonologists began to associate the peak with the sabbath despite little local interest in these narratives. The *Faust-buch* and Marlowe's play were both published before the first major Brocken narratives, so it may come as little surprise that the Faust narrative was missing this landscape. However, the lack of a sabbath narrative or indeed any traditional "witch" figures

[47] Hawkes, *The Faust Myth*, 29.
[48] Midelfort, *Witch Hunting in Southwestern Germany, 1562-1684*, 31-33; Behringer, *Witchcraft Persecutions in Bavaria*, 35; Willumsen, *The Voices of Women in Witchcraft Trials*, 66-67.
[49] Logeman, *The English Faust-Book of 1592*, 14-15, 48.
[50] Roma Gill and Ros King, eds., introduction to *Doctor Faustus: Based on the A Text* by Christopher Marlowe (London: Bloomsbury, 2008), 5.

is striking, given the publication of the text at the peak of the witch craze. The answer to this peculiarity may instead lie with the intent of the original *Faust-buch* published by Spies – the text was a warning against all types of magic, particularly the more socially acceptable upper strata magic performed by learned men in academic circles who Doctor Faustus symbolized. Diabolical witchcraft was assumed to be the ultimate evil in the late sixteenth century and hardly warranted a warning from the text. Instead, like the Brocken, scenes of the witches' sabbath in the Faust myth were a product of a later time, removed from their sixteenth-century origins in favour of the eighteenth and nineteenth-century writings of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.

Between December of 1777 and September of 1784, Goethe made the ascent up the Brocken three times, following in the footsteps of other during the German Romantic era seeking the sublime beauty of nature in the unique landscapes of the Harz.[51] His time on the mountain came just over a century after the dissemination of the Brocken sabbath narratives, in particular Praetorius's *Bloches-Berges Verrichtung*, a text that Goethe studied before his ascent and which popularized the landscape across Germany and beyond.[52] Despite his staunch opposition to being defined as a Romantic writer, Goethe was drawn to the romance of the natural world and how the human connection with it inspired reflection, epitomized in his relationship to the Brocken.[53] His experiences on the Brocken, encountering the landscapes of the witches' sabbath and the legends of Walpurgisnacht, led him to include the diabolical gathering on two separate occasions: first in the short ballad "Die Erste Walpurgisnacht" before the writer turned his attention to his own retelling of the early modern Faust myth. The ballad, first published in 1800, attempts to provide an imagined

[51] John Michael Cooper, *Mendelssohn, Goethe, and the Walpurgis Night: The Heathen Muse in European Culture, 1700-1850* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2007), 55.
[52] Cooper, *Mendelssohn, Goethe, and the Walpurgis Night*, 55.
[53] See: Angus Nicholls, "Goethe the Writer," in *The Oxford Handbook of European Romanticism*, ed. Paul Hamilton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 293-314.

genesis of the sabbath upon the Brocken, using the mountain as a sacred site for the paganistic worship of the *Allvater* deity Wodan in the early years of German Christianization.[54] In the poem, we see a group of German pagans defiantly practicing their religious ceremony using bonfires at the peak of the Brocken, with Goethe invoking both pagan narratives and contemporary Walpurgisnacht celebrations and traditions as he imagines this event.[55] While "Die Erste Walpurgisnacht" illustrates the first of Goethe's major sabbath texts set on the Brocken, it was his magnum Opus, Faust, that brought the narratives of the mountain to the broader audiences of the nineteenth century and beyond.

The first volume of *Faust*, published in 1808 and viewed as one of the great works of German literature, combined the Faust myth with elements of many other European texts from Homer to Rousseau making Goethe's *Faust* "not so much a German story as it is an embodiment of European or World literature."[56] Goethe's version of the Faust myth has become for many the quintessential version of the story, and by far the most popular. While many elements of the tale remained from the original version of the story, such as the lead's pursuit of knowledge, the deal with the Devil, and the nocturnal flights astride the demon Mephistopheles, Goethe adds additional complexity and new scenes to his version of Faust. Among these additions is a witches' sabbath observed by Doctor Faust and Mephistopheles at the summit of the Brocken on Walpurgisnacht.

In Scene XXI of the first part of *Faust*, the doctor and Mephistopheles arrive in the Harz mountains on the evening of Walpurgisnacht and find themselves at the base of the Brocken, where they are met by a Will-o'-the-Wisp. Mephistopheles commands the being to lead the pair to the summit of the Brocken to behold the Walpurgisnacht sabbath, with the

[54] Cooper, *Mendelssohn, Goethe, and the Walpurgis Night*, 63-64.
[55] Cooper, *Mendelssohn, Goethe, and the Walpurgis Night*, 64.
[56] J.M. van der Laan, *Seeking Meaning for Goethe's* Faust (London: Continuum, 2007), 13.

Will-o'-the-Wisp obliging. Goethe uses a dramatic storm to set the scene of the sabbath: "The evergreen palaces shaking! / Boughs are groaning and breaking, / The tree-trunks terribly thunder, / The roots are twisted asunder! / In frightfully intricate crashing / Each on the other is dashing, / and over the wreck strewn gorges / The tempest whistles and surges!"[57] Goethe's storm presents the landscape as a violent and dangerous space, even before the diabolical gathering begins. Amidst the storm, the witches appear for their sabbath. Once the witches settle upon the summit, Mephistopheles and Faust first observe the witches who begin dancing, eating, drinking, and courting one another, before Faust has Mephistopheles introduce him to the sabbath.[58] Faust joins their diabolical ranks in their celebration, conversing with the witches and participating in their dance without reaching the absolute summit where Satan holds court, before the scene changes and the Walpurgisnacht dream begins, bringing to an end the sabbath atop the Brocken.

While the sabbath in *Faust* occupies only a single scene in the play, it was the culmination of many years of planning for Goethe. The Walpurgisnacht celebration atop the Brocken is first alluded to in the *Urfaust*, the author's first attempt at the Faust retelling, first written in in 1775 and two years before his first ascent of the Brocken.[59] The first complete version of the sabbath scene was likely drafted in late 1797 or early 1798, a full decade before its final publication.[60] As one of the great dramatic scenes in Goethe's text, the Walpurgisnacht sequence pairs both the imagery of the witches' sabbath based on early modern ideals with the landscape of the Brocken, already steeped in sabbath narratives from centuries past. The Walpurgisnacht in *Faust* exemplifies how the sabbath's dizzying chaos and the evocation of a dramatic mountains landscape amidst a storm combined to present the

[57] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust*, trans. Bayard Taylor (Minneapolis: Lerner Publishing Group, 2018), 195
[58] Goethe, *Faust*, 200.
[59] Cooper, *Mendelssohn, Goethe, and the Walpurgis Night*, 58.
[60] Cooper, *Mendelssohn, Goethe, and the Walpurgis Night*, 58.

Brocken as a landscape of fear to the audience, cementing the beliefs found in trials and demonologies from the seventeenth century for a modern audience.

As Goethe's *Faust* gained in popularity across Germany and beyond, so too the legacy of the sabbath on the Brocken grew. While the Brocken was notorious across northern Germany as the site of the witches' sabbath by the mid-seventeenth century, it was Goethe's *Faust* that fully actualized our modern perception of this specific peak and mountains in general as the heart of the witches' sabbath. Each time an audience read *Faust* or experienced a performance, Goethe's work further cemented the mountain as a landscape of the witches' sabbath and a space to be feared in their imagination. In the centuries since the publication of *Faust*, the role of the author in the popularization of the Brocken legend has continued without any sign of abatement. Today, the Goethe trail is the most popular hiking route to the peak of the Brocken, following in the imagined footsteps of the author as he gained inspiration for his works on the Walpurgisnacht rites.[61] Each hiker scaling the Goethe trail to the summit of the Brocken is experiencing the legacies of the witches' sabbath through one of the great works of German literature, and are therefore influencing his or her own imagination of these sabbath landscapes, hundreds of years after the most famous Faust tale was published.

The Witches of Macbeth

Our story ends with one final case study, perhaps the most famous depiction of the witches' sabbath of all time – the three witches of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. The play, one of Shakespeare's most famous tragedies, was first performed in 1606 for the court of King James I, whose fascination with witchcraft and demonologies we have noted throughout this

[61] The actual route that Goethe took to the Brocken's summit is no longer known, and the Goethe trail approximates this route. See: K. John, T. Schwarzenberger, F. Knolle, "The Goethe Trail to the Brocken Summit," *Nationalpark Harz* (Accessed 25 September, 2024), https://www.nationalpark-harz.de/de/downloads/The-Goethe-Trail-to-the-Brocken-Summit?download=barrierearm

thesis. The play first appeared in Shakespeare's First Folio in 1623, though likely in an edited format from the version performed in the playwright's lifetime.[62] The story of greed, malice, and vengeance has become one of the central plays in Shakespeare's corpus of work, with countless versions of the play appearing on stage, screen, or depicted in the works of artists around the world. As some of the key scenes in the play, the appearance of the witches in their sabbath has been the subject of many of these interpretations. In these depictions of the witches, we see how artists across time have envisioned the landscapes of the witches' sabbath, providing us a window into the understanding of the sabbath across time and in different interpretations of Shakespeare's work.

Macbeth opens with three witches acting as the chorus, setting the scene and deciding the site of their sabbath and their meeting with Macbeth. When the first witch asks where they will meet again, the second witch responds "Upon the heath."[63] Their scene ends upon their departure for the sabbath, describing their flight "through the fog and filthy air."[64] Following our introduction to the titular Macbeth, Act I, Scene III begins upon the heath, the three witches gathered in their sabbath, describing their diabolical acts since they last met. Shakespeare's sabbath more closely resembles the sabbath in the common imagination as opposed to the complex inversion rituals seen in demonologies such as de Lancre's *Tableau*. Macbeth arrives on the heath, where the witches prophesize his ascent to kingship before vanishing. The witches do not appear again until Act III, Scene V, where they gather once more on the heath to meet with Hecate. The inclusion of Hecate illustrates the familiarity of seventeenth century audiences with classical concepts of magic, though Hecate's appearance at the heath indicates a disconnect from the association with the goddess, witchcraft, and crossroads that we saw in Chapter I. In their final gathering in Act IV, Scene I, the witches

[62] Kenneth Muir, "Introduction," in *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), xiii.
[63] William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, ed. Kenneth Muir (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 4.
[64] Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, 4.

are inside a house, akin to the sabbaths that we have seen across Europe, from the Pays de Labourd to Eichstatt and beyond. Once more, the witches practice their diabolical art of potion making over a boiling cauldron, again reflecting folk belief as opposed to inverted religious ceremonies, before prophesizing Macbeth's doom.

In the three scenes of witches' gatherings in *Macbeth*, we are greeted with familiar sabbath landscapes. Primarily, Shakespeare uses the wastes of the heath to evoke a sense death and desolation for his sabbath. We have seen heaths, moors, and wetlands, three core landscapes of early modern Europe, at the centre of sabbath narratives spanning the breadth of the continent. Shakespeare's use of this landscape indicates a familiarity with the sabbath landscapes and contemporary perceptions of witchcraft. Throughout the scenes featuring the witches, Shakespeare returns to concepts described in demonologies and in folk narratives of witchcraft as a writer evidently well-versed in the knowledge of early modern witchcraft, so his understanding of the sabbath upon the heath may not come as a surprise.[65] Even the gathering in the witches' home in Act IV, Scene I reflects a common understanding of the witches' sabbath, meaning that both Shakespeare and his audience felt the sabbath belonged in such spaces, lending the play a sense of believability. However, as different depictions of these scenes have appeared through the vision of artists around the world, the clearly defined landscapes of the play have shifted and changed in accordance with different interpretations of *Macbeth*. As the most famous sabbath scene in the play, we will examine the gathering from Act I, Scene III, upon the heath where Macbeth and Banquo meet the witches.

Over a century after the first performance of Macbeth and its inclusion in the Shakespeare's First Folio, we see the first meeting of Macbeth, his companion Banquo, and

[65] See: Ani Kojoyan, "Inter-Textual Relations between Reginald Scot's 'The Discoverie of Witchcraft' and Shakespeare's 'Macbeth'," in *Armenian Folia Anglistika* 9, no. 1-2 (2013): 166-172; Purkiss, *The Witch in History*, 210-214.

the three witches in Francesco Zuccarelli's 1760 painting *Macbeth Meeting the Witches* (Fig. 28), now held in the collections of the Folger Shakespeare Library. Despite the clear description of the sabbath occurring on the heath, Zuccarelli's interpretation places the scene instead amid a forest. The gnarled trees, dramatically bent in the wind and weather frame both the gathering of witches, the two figures meeting them, and the dramatic gathering of their soldiers bracing against the storm, while lightning crashes against a dark sky near a castle in the background. Zuccarelli's scene inspires a sense of drama and fantasy surrounding the witches' sabbath, though removing the painting from the source material. Rather than relying on the play, the painting instead evokes the imagery of other witchcraft paintings such as Tassi's and Rosa's, as well as the engravings of Grien and Ziarnko. In this painting we see the forest become the scene of magic and mysticism, akin to way it appears in nineteenth century fairy tales and the twenty-first century films of Eggers and Agüero. A similar scene is depicted in Daniel Niklaus Chodowiecki's illustration of the meeting of the hero and the witches (Fig. 29), in which the witches stand at the edge of a forest to greet Macbeth and Banquo. This illustration from 1784 points toward an eighteenth-century desire to place the scene in the forested landscape, deviating from Shakespeare's text.

The forest was not the only sabbath landscape depicted in the scene contrary to the word of Shakespeare in eighteenth and nineteenth century art. John Martin's nineteenth-century painting *Macbeth* (Fig. 30) paints a dramatic scene of the last moments of the witches' sabbath, in which the three witches ascend into a bolt of lightning, vanishing from before Macbeth and Banquo. However, unlike the ruinous heath, Martin placed the scene in a dramatic mountain landscape, where the tumbled peaks are illuminated with the unnatural reds and golds produced by the evening storm. Evocative of the Scottish Highlands, Martin's landscape more closely reflects the drama of the natural world seen in the sublime art of the nineteenth-century romantic movement, using the fearsome mountains to elicit a sense of

fearful awe and wonder in the eyes of the viewer. This piece breaks the mould of the terrifying sabbath space and illustrates the changing perceptions of mountains, the natural world, and the landscapes of the sabbath. In John Moyr Smith's 1889 illustration for *The Tragedie of Macbeth*, (Fig. 31), the sublime drama of Martin's scene is exchanged for a darker gothic aesthetic, with the entire scene shrouded in darkness, only lit by the flash of lightning overhead. However, unlike the other depictions of this meeting that we have seen thus far, the witches' sabbath is occurring in neither mountains, forested, nor heath landscape, but instead atop a prehistoric standing stone circle, closely resembling Stonehenge. The presence of the standing stones and the silhouette of the witches' cloaked figures and forked sticks evokes a sense of the ruinous and paganistic past, a trend that we explored in demonologies, folk belief, and art in Chapter III. Though removed from the play itself, Moyr Smith's illustration follows trends in sabbath landscapes that we saw throughout the early modern period, indicating the survival of these landscapes of fear long into the modern imagination.

However, not all artistic depictions of these scenes are so far removed from the source material. The nineteenth-century drawing *Scene from Macbeth, the Witches and Macbeth approaching* by George Jones (Fig. 32) returns the scene to the heath. The witches, shrouded in cloaks under a stormy sky, stand in the middle of the heath, a heavy fog partially obscuring the approaching Macbeth. The land is as desolate and grim as the landscape described by Shakespeare, more closely resembling the emptiness of Goya's *Witches' Sabbath* landscape. Raffaele Pontremoli's lithograph *Macbeth* from the mid-nineteenth century (Fig. 33) provides a detailed illustration of the meeting of the gathered witches and the two Scottish lords. While Pontremoli's depiction of the meeting is far more terrifying than Jones's mystical approach, as seen in Macbeth's frightened expression, the scene uses the same heath landscape as described in the play, the low scrub of the heath gathered at the witches' feet and around

Macbeth and Banquo's horses. A similar scene is found in the 1855 untitled print of Eduard von Eichens after the work of Wilhelm von Kaulbach (Fig. 34). In this print, much like the work of Pontremoli, a frightened Macbeth and Banquo meet the three witches, this time hovering mysteriously above the ground where they make their prophecy. As described in Shakespeare's original, the three witches meet the men on a desolate heath, with small rocks and tangled scrub the only decoration on the landscape. These scenes point toward a continued tradition that followed Shakespeare's original work and maintained the heath as a sabbath landscape in the public imagination.

In the twentieth and twenty-first century, the tragedy of *Macbeth* has remained at the forefront of the public's understanding of both Shakespeare and witchcraft and has been the subject of numerous film adaptations. Unlike stage performances, films allow greater artistic license to film on a chosen location and depict the scenes in a space the creator intends and are therefore key to our understanding of the modern relationship between landscapes and the fantasy of the witches' sabbath. Of the many films made of the story of Macbeth, we are examining three of the most recent: Rupert Goold's 2010 adaptation for BBC, Justin Kurzel's 2015 adaptation for wide release, and Joel Coen's 2021 adaptation, which garnered several major film award nominations, demonstrating the continued interest in retellings of this story.

Goold's adaptation of *Macbeth* takes the greatest imaginative license with the story, taking the story of Macbeth (played in this adaptation by Sir Patrick Stewart) into the setting of a twentieth century battlefield, establishing a Cold War Soviet environment throughout the film. The haunting aesthetic of Goold's film is established early in the production with the arrival of the three witches. However, unlike the early modern inspired witches we see in the paintings and prints of previous centuries, Goold's witches are instead dressed as battlefield nurses, their diabolical deeds: the mutilation of soldiers' bodies. Rather than the heath, Macbeth and Banquo encounter the gathering of witches in a dimly lit battlefield hospital, its

crumbling façade giving the sense of death and despair that the early modern heath would have once inspired. Goold uses imagery more familiar to twentieth century audiences – the horrific battlefields of modern warfare and the crumbling hospitals that are our contemporary realm between the living and the dead – to construct his landscape of fear where the witches' sabbath belongs. Kurzel's adaptation of *Macbeth* trades Stewart's modern Soviet-inspired general for a more traditionally medieval aesthetic with Michael Fassbender playing the lead character. While the militarism and brutality of war remains a common thread in both adaptations, Kurzel's film uses the scene of battle in combination with the witches' sabbath. As Macbeth fights a brutal battle in a raging civil war upon a heath, he gets his first glimpse of four witches rather than three, watching the battle unfold. After its conclusion, as he and Banquo gather the bodies of the fallen, they are met by the four witches draining the blood from the remaining corpses. After the witches make their prophecy, they do not fly but rather walk into the gathering mist, disappearing. While the scene takes place on the heath as described by Shakespeare, Kurzel instead chooses to focus on the battlefield aspects of the landscape, even choosing to describe the space differently by replacing the word "heath" for "battlefield" in the witches' chorus introduction in his adaptation of Act I Scene I. Like the work of Goold, Kurzel's *Macbeth* uses the imagery of death to construct his landscape of fear. Coen's vision of the project presents a more symbolic interpretation of the story of Macbeth. In the 2021 *Tragedy of Macbeth*, Kathryn Hunter plays all three witches, contorting her body and speaking to herself amidst a desolate sea of sand, punctuated only by rag-covered poles and a small puddle of water. When Denzel Washington's Macbeth appears before her, the witch begins her prophecy, her reflection in the water doubled, forming the three witches in reflection before they all materialize as the scene ends. Unlike the heath of Kurzel's film and the military hospital of Goold's film, Coen instead depicts the site of the

strange and unnerving sabbath in a deserted waste of sand, made to look even more desolate through the film's monochromatic colouring.

While all three of these interpretations of *Macbeth* feature entirely different landscapes to depict the same scene, each choice was made to elicit a similar response from the audience. The landscapes of the sabbath in *Macbeth* are filled with the sense of dread and desolation that the seventeenth-century audience would have associated with the heath. We are confronted with a reminder of our mortality in the adaptations of Goold and Kurzel, and with a sense of emptiness and marginality in the mist shrouded worlds of Kurzel and Coen. Each film uses the same emotions that landscape narratives of the sabbath would have inspired in the early modern period. The audience experiences a sense of marginality in all three of these scenes, much like the spaces described in accounts of the witches' sabbath in the early modern world.

Through the depictions of the sabbath in *Macbeth* across time, we may see how artists across time interpret and imagine spaces where witches and their gatherings belong. From the haunting heath described by Shakespeare, through the dark forests, paganistic ruins, and immense mountains depicted in paint and in print, to the crumbling military hospitals and deserts depicted on film, we may trace the legacies of the witches' sabbath across time. Each depiction presents a new opportunity for us to understand and evaluate the human relationship with the world around us, and how these landscapes of fear transcend the borders of time and geography to elicit a sense of dread and fear in audiences across centuries.

Conclusions

I am five years old, and it is spring. The long winter months in northern British Columbia, Canada, have finally come to an end, and with it my Kindergarten school year. We are on an end-of year-field trip to the local park with our partnered class of Grade 3 children who are giants to us and full of unfathomable knowledge. Being in the north, much of the region around the city of Prince George bears the scars of the last Ice Age, and Moore's Meadow Park is no exception. Prince George is mostly located within a bowl, the former lakebed of a glacial lake. Moore's Meadow is a kettle, the remnant of a gravel-covered iceberg that sank to the bottom of the lake, before being covered with a layer of silt and glacial detritus, then melting after the glacial lake drained thousands of years ago. What remains is a large depression in the otherwise flat lakebed. Now surrounded by subdivisions, Moore's Meadow is a final outpost of wilderness. Bears and moose are common visitors to the park, whose twisting paths lead through gnarled pines, firs and birch stands. The entire park stretches over a kilometre in length, and the trails criss-crossing the area go on for many kilometres. Silence holds an eerie pall in the middle of a city. To the five-year-old mind, this forest is as enchanted and spooky as one can imagine.

We are walking along one of the paths skirting the top of the depression, my teacher leading a troop of thirty or more primary children. This particular trail runs beside houses that sit on the edge of the park, their back yard fences separating the calms of suburbia from the wilderness of the meadow. On one side of the trail are wooden fences towering above our kindergartener heads. On the other side, the dark, enveloping branches of the trees block most of the sun's light and encroach upon the path. The silence is palpable. I am walking beside my "big buddy," a girl of about eight years of age, practically an adult in the eyes of a child, and we are far enough down the line of children that my teacher's voice and presence gives

way to the feeling of being on our own. It is an empowering feeling to be five and feel alone in the forest. Yet, at the same time, there is a sense of unease permeating this marginal space between suburbia and the wild. In front of me, an older child leans over to his partner, one of my classmates, and points to one of the houses on our left. Just loud enough for me to hear, the boy tells my friend, "My brother told me a witch lives there."

Decades later, I still recall the deep-seated dread that fell over me when I heard those words. I looked over to the house with fear. A fence surrounded the yard, with peeling paint on the side facing the park. The yard itself was full of pine trees, shading the path and providing privacy from passers-by. Unlike many of the other houses in my working-class suburban neighbourhood that featured white or grey vinyl siding, this "witch's house" had dark wood siding, giving the home a more rustic appearance, out of place in my mind and seemingly in my neighbourhood. Where the other houses backing onto the trail were light, this house was dark. Not only did the older child *say* it was a witch's house, but it *looked* like the witch's houses of my illustrated fairy tale collections.

While decades have passed, I can still remember the scene I imagined that day, where the evil witch looked out from her house to watch other green-faced hideous hags flying into her forested yard on their broomsticks to gather around a cauldron. Though I did not realize it at five years old, this was the first time I vividly imagined a witches' sabbath.

As if on cue, a large black dog came bounding from the side of the house toward the fence, barking at the walking children. I gripped my buddy's hand and hurried past the witch's fence. I did not dare look back, lest I catch a glimpse of this hellhound again, or worse, the witch herself.

The memory of the witch's house played into my psyche for many months, as I pictured the house, the dog, and the imagined witch at the darkest times of the night, when I

was left alone with my overactive imagination. While I never saw her, she was always there, old, hideous, and looking to the skies as her companions flew to her forested yard and into my imagination. I never went back down that path for many years. When I was a teen and spent much of my time wandering the neighbourhood with my friends, we passed this spot frequently. The house had long been renovated, the enormous black dog was long gone, and many of the pine trees in the yard had been removed during the Mountain Pine Beetle epidemic that plagued northern British Columbia in the mid-2000s. Yet this specific place, on the borders between peaceful suburbia and the wild and dark coniferous forests always triggers this memory of childhood terror, even into the present.

Over two hundred years after Europe's final witch trial, the landscapes of the witches' sabbath have become deeply entrenched in our collective *mentalités*, informing our interactions with the world around us. The imagery of the sabbath and the spaces where these narratives were set have become so deeply intertwined in our cultural imagination, that a five-year-old child may draw the connection between marginal forested spaces and the witches' sabbath, despite a gulf of hundreds of years and thousands of kilometres from the landscapes where the sabbath was first imagined. The narratives of the witches' sabbath were moulded by early modern Europeans to fit an immense variety of spatial and cultural contexts, and it was this malleability that allowed sabbath beliefs to flourish in all corners of the continent. From the earliest visions of the witches' sabbath in the foothills of the Alps to the digital world of *The Witcher 3*, humans have constructed their sabbath narratives in spaces they felt it belonged, based upon layers of cultural belief and environmental interactions. Like the demonologies of the early modern period, each new iteration of the witches' sabbath parasitically builds upon previous narrative while adding new beliefs that fit a new context. At the heart of each new narrative of the sabbath, we see a reflection of the fears and anxieties that plagued the imagination. By examining the landscapes of the witches'

sabbath, we are given a glimpse into the relationship between people and place, across time and space.

This thesis first investigated the landscapes of the European sabbath as it emerged in the past two centuries of secondary literature on the witch craze. While landscapes were often listed with the sabbath narratives, historians have usually offered little analysis of why these landscapes were selected as sabbath spaces, or how narratives of space differed across the continent. Thinking about these histories through a space-centric analysis revealed that frequently only specific sabbath landscapes that supported a particular argument were discussed, such as Grimm's supposedly encyclopaedic list featuring only natural sites to support his Wild Hunt hypothesis. Next, we turned to the role of upper-strata demonologies in the development and popularization of sabbath landscapes across the continent in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Building upon one another in a parasitic fashion, and drawing on the confessions of accused witches, these accounts perpetually added new landscapes and new interpretations of space to the sabbath narratives spreading across Europe, though accounts of marginal spaces dominated the texts. These demonologies also reflected a changing relationship with the environment and the natural world through the early modern era so that by the late seventeenth century, they had shifted toward an overwhelming interest in landscape, an interest which by the eighteenth century had become a preoccupation with landscape itself, aside from the sabbath.

We then turned to the wider world of the witches' sabbath, exploring how societies localized sabbath beliefs to fit their own local landscapes. From Portugal to Estonia, we saw how sabbath belief was adaptable for almost any context. Mountains such as the Brocken, the Heuberg, and Łysa Góra presented different versions of sabbath landscapes, moulded by local expectations and understandings of landscape, yet spread across vast regions of Europe. Other spaces, such as the cellars of Eichstätt reflected the specific relationship with large

cellars in the city, and a more widespread belief in cellar raids of witches and werewolves. In other instances, the accused described public spaces in their hometowns, a space that they as residents knew and interacted with on an everyday basis, bringing the sabbath fantasy directly to their local context. This examination brought renewed focus to sabbath histories explored by other historians, but with a new, landscape-oriented lens.

Our two case studies explored the landscapes of two places over a thousand kilometres apart and found sabbaths intrinsically tied to life in both respective contexts. In Zug, Switzerland, we began our examination of local perspectives with the most prominent sabbath landscape found in the local witchcraft narratives – the Meilacher forest. Across Europe we see the narratives of the witches' sabbath set in forests. Such tales of diabolical gatherings in forests reflect our intrinsic and instinctive fears of forested landscapes. Yet the early modern relationship with forests was far more complex. Wood was an essential resource for life in early modern Europe, and forests were often heavily regulated and maintained spaces. In Zug, the *Bürgergemeinde* enforced a strict level of control over the Meilacher forest's oak resources. This forest was a heavily controlled space, located just beyond the city walls but tantalizingly out of reach for many of the citizens of Zug. While part of the city's commons, the Meilacher was a marginal space not open to all, that combined local anxieties with broader fears associated with the forested landscape. The sabbath landscapes of Zug continued to follow the trend of the commons in our exploration of the *Allmend* fields. We traced the ties between the Swiss and their cattle across time, finding the essential role that cows played in Swiss society by the time of the witch craze. The cattle and the landscapes on which they grazed essential to the community's collective health. Witchcraft fears in Zug often centred on their cattle, with cow poisonings being the most frequent form of *maleficia* described by the accused, and the common *Allmend* field where they grazed was regularly cited as a sabbath landscape. The local anxieties over cattle

health mixed with an intense sense of protectionism over the commons, turning the Allmend into a site of fear, where the sabbath acted as a threat to the livelihood and health of the whole community. Lastly, beyond the borders of the city and hidden along the slopes of the Zugerberg, the Lorzentobel canyon combined a variety of fears into a single landscape. With its steep valley walls lined with coniferous trees, and the intense fogs that could appear suddenly, the Lorzentobel was a landscape defined by its obstructed vision. Here, people's fears were magnified by all that they could not see, allowing them to construct a diabolical association with this landscape, one which continues into the twenty-first century.

In our next case study, we examined the trials in the French Pays de Labourd through the records left in Pierre de Lancre's demonology, *Tableau de l'Inconstance des Mauvais Anges et Démons*. This foray into the Basque country shifted our approach from examining the relationship between solely the accused and the landscape; instead, the sabbath landscapes are filtered through the eyes of Pierre de Lancre, an outsider. As such, they reflect both the local Basque understanding of their world and the jurist's perception of a foreign space through the *amalgam* that resulted from confession. Most of de Lancre's book centres on the Pays de Labourd, but the author also brings his examination of the sabbath back to his hometown of Bordeaux, where he draws attention to the Gallienne Palace. This ruined amphitheatre offers a glimpse into how people imagined ruins in the early modern world. Rather than a historical marvel, we saw ruins associated with fear and marginality, from those who frequented them to their placement outside of the city limits. Ruins served as a *memento mori* for all of society, and a symbol of the ruin that the Devil and his witches could wreak upon society. In the religious landscapes of the Pays de Labourd, we saw a fine line between the sacred and the diabolical. These often-foreign spaces inspired unease in the Bordeaux judge, as they were viewed as places where the thin veil between the living and the dead was thinnest. Such ties to the spiritual world tie the *Tableau* with broader European associations

between the sabbath and the Wild Hunt, the mythic journeys of the dead through the countryside that historians and folklorists have debated as the sabbath's origins. We then saw the intrinsic ties between the Basques and the sea, and how this relationship informed the imagination of the witches' sabbath. Life along the Labourdin coast entirely was reliant on the sea, and so it infected the fantasies of the local population, while for de Lancre, the sea embodied the inconstancy that he sought to stamp out. Through these explorations of landscape, we see how the nature of confession as a coproduction of different voices constructs an intertwined narrative. While the *Tableau* is written through foreign eyes, de Lancre's understanding of the sabbath landscape relies upon the combination of local knowledge from the informants and the accused as well as his own preexisting notions of where the sabbath belonged and how landscapes elicit emotions.

Finally, we explored the legacies of the witches' sabbath, and how sabbath landscapes were depicted in art from the age of the witch craze to the present. In every form of art, we see the remnants of early modern sabbath belief. However, different depictions across mediums put different landscapes in the spotlight – Goethe sealed the fate of the Brocken as the sabbath peak in his *Faust*, while *The Witch* and *Akelarre* both illustrate a dominance of forested spaces in twenty-first century films. In our final case study of the witches of Macbeth, we saw how centuries of artists have interpreted the marginal spaces associated with the witches' sabbath in numerous ways that reflect their audiences' understanding of marginality. Each piece of sabbath art was both a reflection of our relationship with the landscape and a means of preserving early modern perceptions of space, reinforcing our fantasies of where the witches' sabbath belonged.

We have seen the landscapes of the witches' sabbath as they appeared across many mediums, from the confessions of the accused to the demonologies of the upper strata, into the works of art that have spanned centuries and informed our interpretation of space. While

we have explored these landscapes from a qualitative perspective, can the spatial elements of the sabbath fantasy be quantified? Throughout this thesis, we have seen 245 landscapes featured in trials, demonologies, secondary texts, and art across time. Broken down into landscape types as shown in Table 5, we can see the distribution of sabbath landscapes across different mediums. At 21.63% of all sabbath spaces, mountains appear most frequently across the narratives and interpretations, followed closely by forests at 15.10%. From the Brocken of the Harz to Bald Mountain in *The Witcher 3*, millions of people have imagined and encountered these highest sabbath spaces, allowing the witchcraft fantasies to permeate our relationship with the mountain landscape. Likewise, forests have permeated the fantasies of the sabbath from the earliest gruesome images of Hans Baldung Grien to the atmospheric horror of Robert Egger's *The Witch*. These two landscapes dominate our imagination of the witches' sabbath, yet they do not tell the full story of sabbath landscapes.

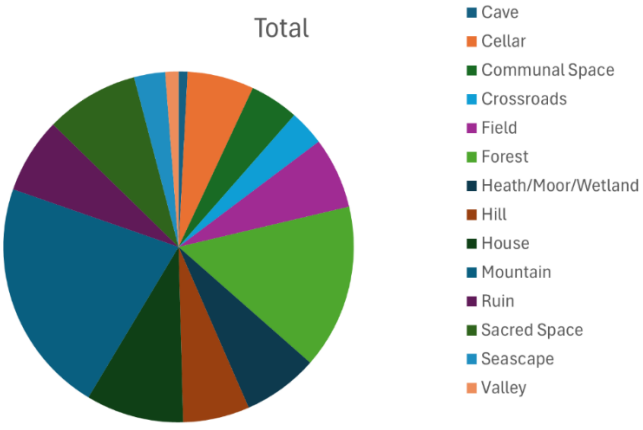
Table 5: Breakdown of Landscapes Explored in this Thesis.

Landscape Type	**Percentage of Total Landscapes**
Cave	0.82%
Cellar	6.15%
Communal Space	4.51%
Crossroads	3.28%
Field	6.56%
Forest	15.16%
Heath/Moor/Wetland	6.97%
Hill	6.15%
House	9.02%
Mountain	21.72%
Ruin	6.97%
Sacred Space	8.61%
Seascape	2.87%
Valley	1.23%

Rather, Table 5 demonstrates the rich variety of other landscapes that have been associated with the sabbath across time, with a relatively even distribution. Spaces such as

hills and cellars feature with equal prominence across the sabbath scenes we have explored in this thesis. While outliers such as caves, valleys, and seascapes exist, we have seen that in certain places such as the Basque coast or near Zug's Lorzentobel and Höllgrotten they were no less essential to local imaginations of the sabbath than forests, mountains, or other landscapes. Instead, from quantifying the landscapes of the sabbath explored in this thesis in conjunction with our qualitative study, we are granted a clear understanding of the landscapes of the witches' sabbath across time and space. We see how each landscape played its major or minor role in the development of the sabbath fantasy, and though forests and mountains play a significant part in the imagination of the witches' sabbath, they account for less than half of the total landscapes explored in this thesis. Moreover, the same trend can be seen even just in the artistic depictions we have examined, where we continue to see a broad distribution beyond forests and mountains. The landscapes of the witches' sabbath are not a monolith. Instead, they are a combination of hundreds of contexts and spaces across a vast continent, where local traditions and beliefs created their own symbolic landscapes that inspired complex emotions.

Figure 9: Breakdown of Landscapes Explored in this Thesis



This thesis is a study of landscape history, not primarily of witchcraft history, and it uses the sabbath as a lens to understand the human relationship with space, place, and landscape in early modern Europe. As such, it contributes to several different fields. For the

field of landscape history, the sabbath provides an unprecedented opportunity to explore how early modern Europeans blended the lines between real and imagined landscapes, illustrating the complexity in their perception of the world. Where often landscape historians have explored concepts of power, faith, and identity through the interaction with space, this thesis charts a new course by navigating the world between fantasy and reality.[1] It also provides a link between the fields of landscape history and the history of emotions. While previous historians such as Laura Kounine and Charlotte-Rose Millar have used witchcraft to broadly explore early modern emotions, this work has argued that emotions have a relationship to the spaces in which human beings feel them, that is, that emotions can be associated with particular places and not just interactions between people. This study of the landscapes of the witch craze has demonstrated how sabbath narratives can be used to understand the extensive ties between the emotion of, in this case, terror, and the early modern landscape.[2]

This thesis has crossed hundreds of years and the breadth of Europe, exploring numerous examples of sabbath landscapes from the witch craze and beyond. However, this work is only a first step into landscape-centric analyses of the witches' sabbath. As we saw in the historiography, historians have only briefly examined the sabbath landscapes, with little analysis of these spaces or the broader implications they have on our understanding of early modern *mentalités*. Our study has explored only a handful of the total examples of sabbath landscapes found across Europe. While we have sought to explore how different regions localized their sabbath fantasies, we could not examine every location within the scope of this study. Patterns in the landscapes can be seen in our examples, but the variety of landscapes across the continent are as vast and varied as the visions of witchcraft that haunted the early

[1] See: Stephen H. Whiteman, ed., *Landscape and Authority in the Early Modern World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2023); Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape*; Maitane Ostolaza Esnal, *Landscape and Identity in the Modern Basque Country*, *1800-1936* (New York: Routledge, 2023).
[2] See: Kounine, *Imagining the Witch*; Millar, *Witchcraft, the Devil, and Emotions in Early Modern England*.

modern imagination. We saw how distinct and different the sabbaths of Zug were compared to those of the Pays de Labourd – such a drastic difference must then appear in other regions of Europe that were not examined in this thesis. Future studies on the landscapes of the sabbath in other regions of Europe may highlight patterns and beliefs that we did not see in this study, broadening our understanding of the early modern world and the perception of landscape. Our journey through the landscapes of the witches' sabbath has taken us across a world where the line between fantasy and reality blurred, illuminating the relationship between people and place in early modern Europe. Beneath layers of fantasy, these sabbath landscapes reflect a deeply human story, where our interactions with space are influenced and shaped by our fears and anxieties, shifting our relationship with the world around us.

Art Plates

Figure 10: The Witches of the Blocksberg, Anonymous German printmaker. Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology. [1669]. 17.9cm x 12.8cm.

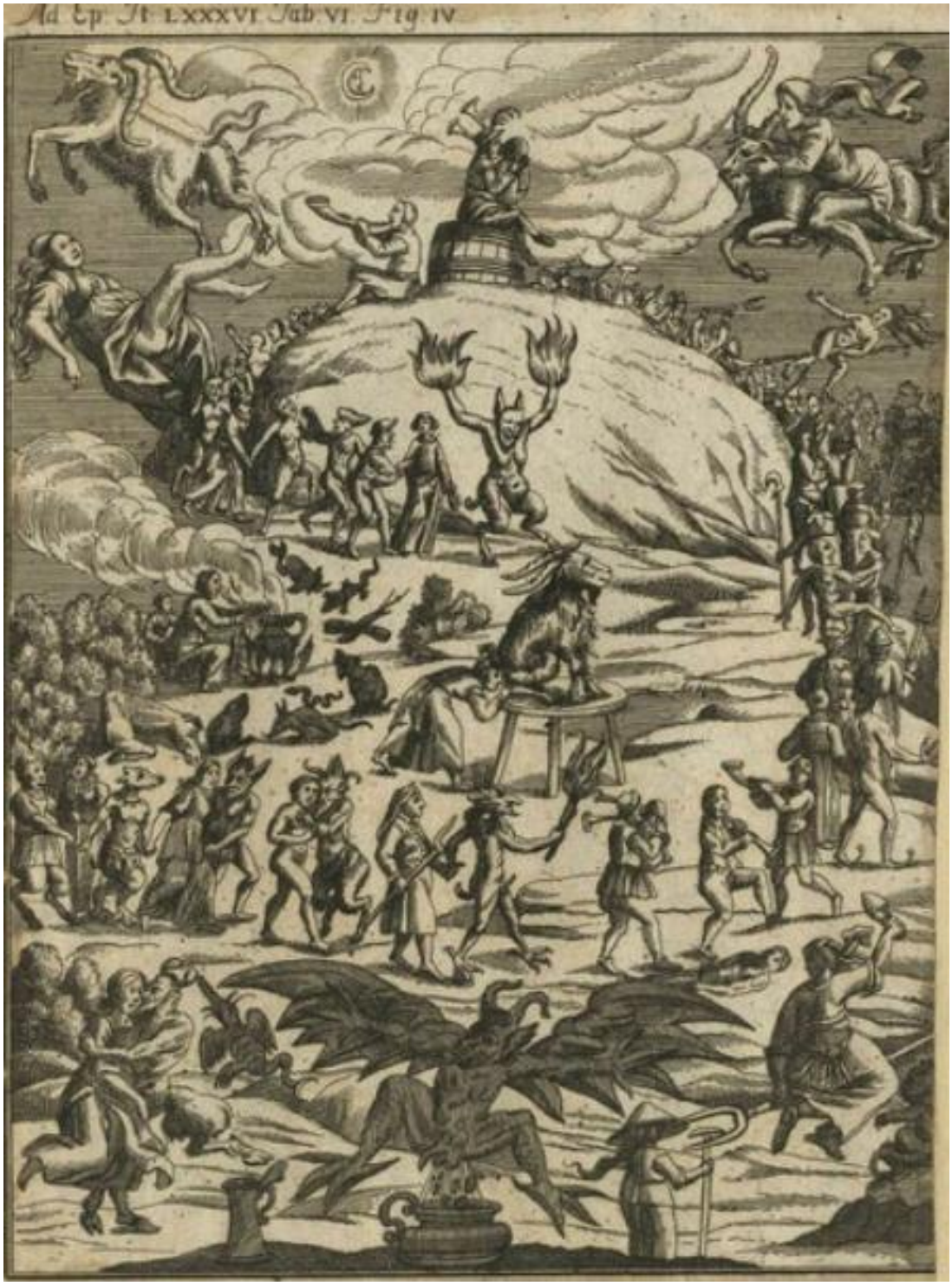


Figure 11: Zauberey, Matthäus Merian den Ältere. Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology. 1626. 22.3cm x 31.8cm.



Figure 12: Witches Preparing for the Sabbath Flight, Albrecht Altdorfer. Musée de Louvre. 1506. 17.9cm x 12.4cm.

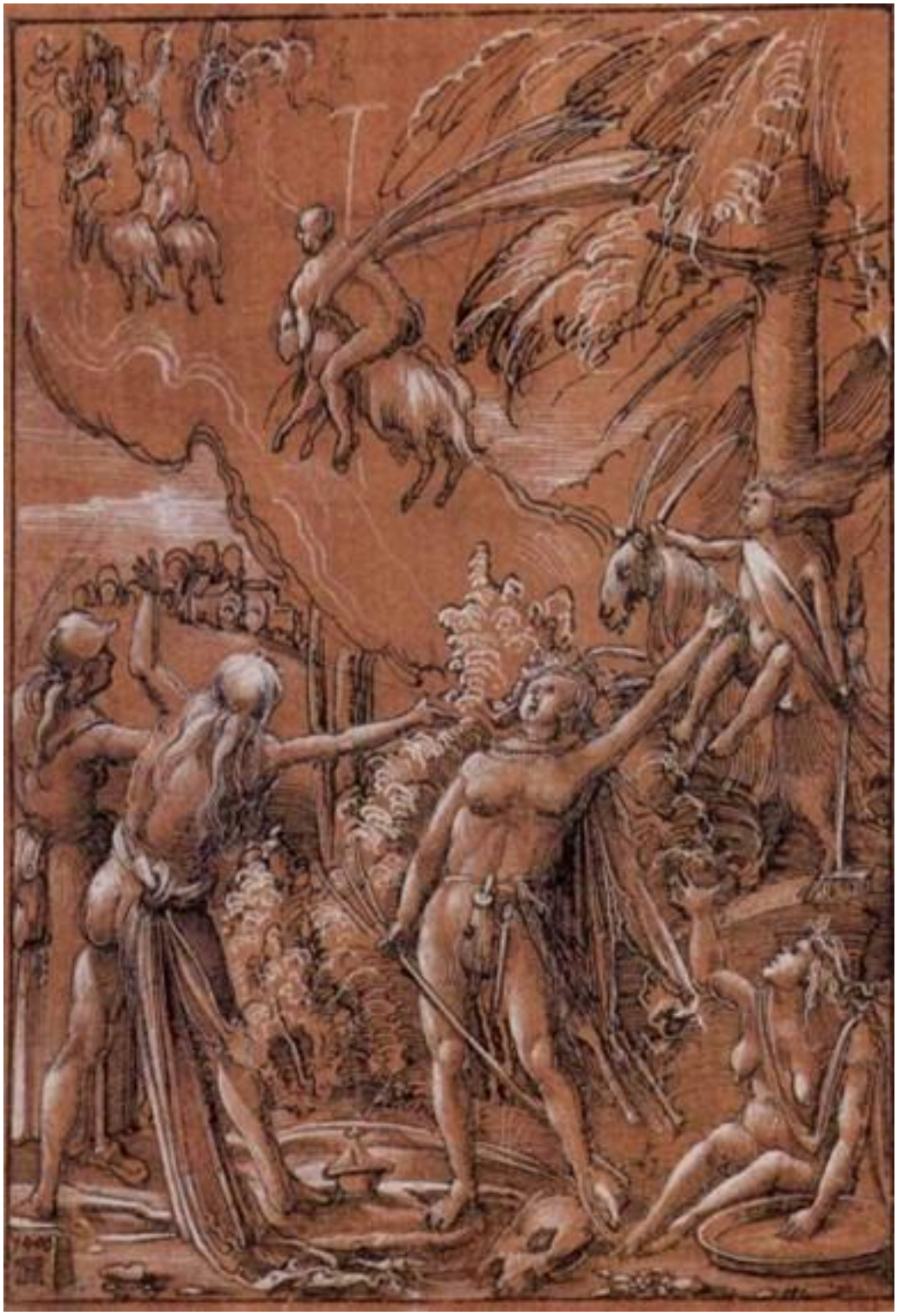


Figure 13: Witches Preparing for the Sabbath Flight or The Witches' Sabbath, Hans Baldung Grien. The Metropolitan Museum of Art. 1510. 38.9cm x 27cm.



Figure 14: The Three Fates, Hans Baldung Grien. The Metropolitan Museum of Art. 1513. 21.8cm x 17.3cm.



Figure 15: Description et figure du sabbat, Jan Ziarnko. Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology. 1613. 24.4cm x 30.8cm.



Figure 16: A Witches' Sabbath, Vittorio Maria Bigari. The British Museum. 1707-1776. 28.8cm x 40.5cm.



Figure 17: Witchcraft, Anonymous German Artist possibly after Andries Jacobsz. Stock after Jacques de Gheyn II. Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology. Circa 1630. 23.3 x 27.6cm.



Figure 18: Magic Woman, Anonymous Italian Artist. Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology. 1555. 5.7cm x 9.2cm.

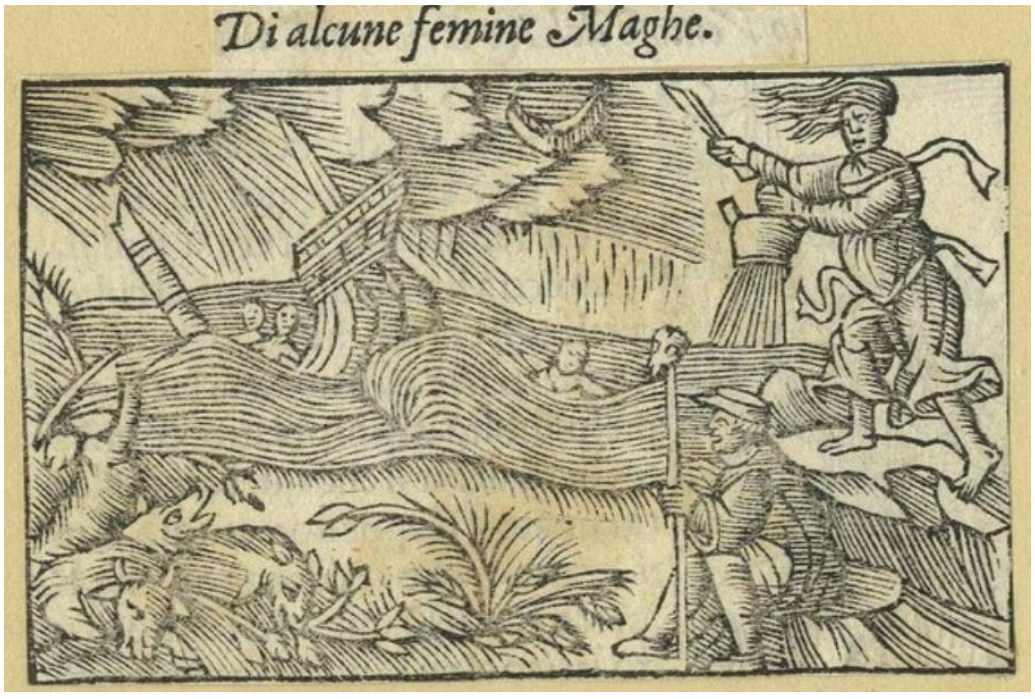


Figure 19: Plate 21: Witchcraft Scene, Anton Joseph von Prenner, after Jan Verbeeck. Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology. 1728. 15.8cm x 22.4cm.



Figure 20: The Temptation of St Anthony, Pacot after Jacques Callot. Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology. 1701-1715. 35.5cm x 46.1cm.



Figure 21: Witchcraft on the Brocken Mountain, Anonymous German Printmaker. Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology. 1742. 15.6cm x 13.1cm.



Figure 22: Witches' Sabbath at Night, Claude Gillot. Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology. 1710-1722. 24.2cm x 33.3cm.



Figure 23: The Witches at the Walnut Tree of Benevento, Guglielmo della Porta. The Metropolitan Museum of Art. 1534-1577. 6cm x 18.1cm.



Figure 24: The Round of the Sabbath, Louis Boulanger. The Metropolitan Museum of Art. 1835. 20cm x 26.9cm.



Figure 25: Landscape with a Scene of Witchcraft, Agostino Tassi. The Walters Art Museum. 1620-1644. 63.2cm x 74.5cm.



Figure 26: Witches at their Incantations, Salvator Rosa. The National Gallery. Circa 1646. 72cm x 132cm.



Figure 27: El akellare, Francisco Goya. Museo Lázaro Galdiano. 1797-1798. 43cm x 30cm.



Figure 28: Macbeth Meeting the Witches, Francesco Zuccarelli. Folger Shakespeare Library. 1760. 81.7cm x 143cm.



Figure 29: Illustration to the first act, forth [sic] scene to Macbeth, Daniel Nicklaus Chodowiecki. Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology. 1784. 9.2cm x 5.9cm.

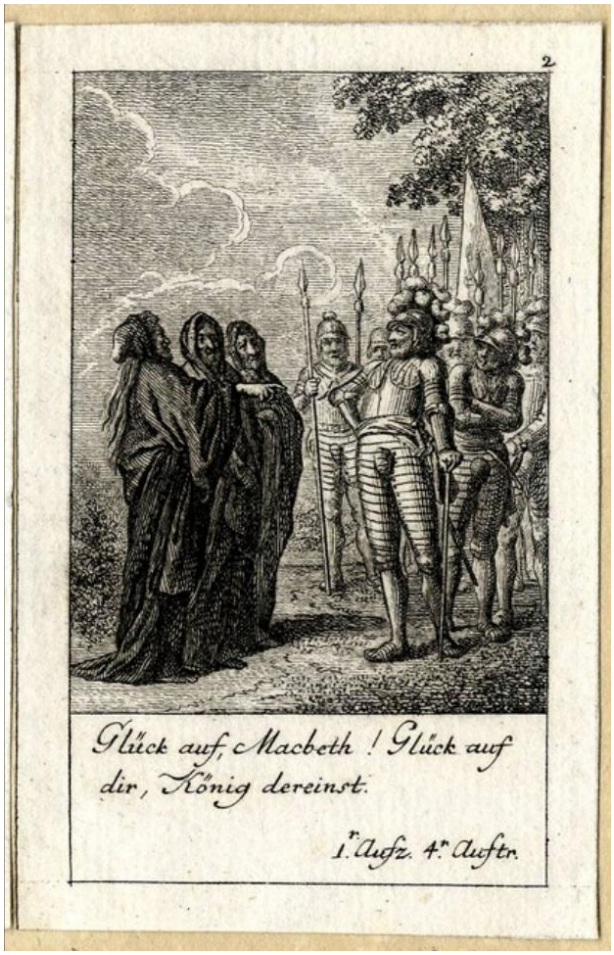


Figure 30: Macbeth, John Martin. National Galleries of Scotland. Circa 1820. 50.1cm x 71cm.



Figure 31: The Tragedie of Macbeth, John Moyr Smith. The British Museum. Circa 1889. 12.2cm x 24.7cm.



Figure 32: Scene from Macbeth, the Witches and Macbeth approaching, George Jones. Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology. 1830-1860. 11.4cm x 16.7cm.



Figure 33: Macbeth, Raffaele Pontremoli. The British Museum. 1840-1870. 26cm x 17.5cm.



Figure 34: Untitled, Eduard von Eichens after Wilhelm von Kaulbach. The British Museum. 1853-1855. 50.8cm x 62cm.



Appendix

Table 6: Sabbath Prints, Etchings, and Drawings from the Douce Collection of the Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology

Title	**Artist**	**Landscapes**	**Accession Number**
Witches' Sabbath: a scene of execution and torture	Anonymous French Artist	Forest/Ruin	WA2003.DOUCE.5818
The Witches' Sabbath	Anonymous French Artist (possibly Claude Gillot)	Forest/Ruin	WA2003.DOUCE.5819
Scene of witchcraft: a young lady is shown the image of a young man in a mirror	Pierre-Charles Tremolière	Cellar	WA2003.DOUCE.5820
Temptation of St Anthony	Formerly attributed to Jheronimus Bosch	Church	WA2003.DOUCE.5824
Temptation of Saint Anthony	Anonymous French or Anonymous South Netherlandish	Forest	WA2003.DOUCE.1880
The Temptation of St Anthony	Pacot after Jacques Callot	Ruin	WA2003.DOUCE.1897
Plate 21: Witchcraft scene	Anton Joseph von Prenner after Jan Verbeeck, formerly attributed to Pieter Bruegel the Elder	Ruin	WA2003.DOUCE.1832
Abomination des sorciers	Jaspar de Isaac	Home	WA2003.DOUCE.1828
The witches' banquet	Jan Ziarnko	Forest	WA2003.DOUCE.1829
Witches' Sabbath	Anonymous French Print Maker after Laurent Bordelon	Forest/Mountain	WA2003.DOUCE.1831
St James and the Magician Hermogenes	Pieter van der Heyden after Pieter Bruegel the Elder	Ruin	WA2003.DOUCE.1836

Zauberey	Matthäus Merian the Elder after Michael Herz	Ruin/Mountain	WA2003.DOUCE.1837
Witchcraft	Anonymous German Artist possibly after Andries Jacobsz. Stock after Jacques de Gheyn II	Mountain/Cave	WA2003.DOUCE.1827
A Scene of Witchcraft	Anonymous German Printmaker	Ruin	WA2003.DOUCE.1830
The Witches	After Hans Baldung Grien	Forest	WA2003.DOUCE.1994
Witches' Sabbath	Claude Gillot	Forest/Ruin	WA2003.DOUCE.1993
Witches' Sabbath at night	Claude Gillot	Forest/Ruin	WA2003.DOUCE.1991
Witches' Sabbath	Claude Gillot	Forest/Mountain	WA2003.DOUCE.1990
Plate 28: Superstition	Romeyn de Hooghe	Ruin/Mountain	WA2003.DOUCE.1975
Witchcraft on the Brocken Mountain	Anonymous German Printmaker	Mountain	WA2003.DOUCE.1977
The Witches of the Blocksberg	Anonymous German Printmaker	Mountain	WA2003.DOUCE.1976
Scene of Witchcraft	Anonymous German Printmaker after Franz Ernst Brückmann	Forest/Mountain	WA2003.DOUCE.1978
Scene of Witchcraft (ii)	Anonymous German Printmaker after Franz Ernst Brückmann	Forest/Mountain	WA2003.DOUCE.1979
Witches' Sabbath	Anonymous German Printmaker	Forest	WA2003.DOUCE.1985
De Priape et des Sorcieres	Anonymous French Printmaker	Forest/Church	WA2003.DOUCE.1969
Pandaemonium	John Sturt	Field	WA2003.DOUCE.1966
Divination	Hans Weiditz after Francesco Petrarch	Forest	WA2003.DOUCE.1965
An Incantation	Possibly Anonymous Dutch Printmaker	Ruin/Cellar	WA2003.DOUCE.1964

Witches	Anonymous Italian Printmaker	Field	WA2003.DOUCE.1962
Medicine and Witchcraft	Possibly Anonymous German Printmaker, possibly Anonymous French Printmaker	Mountain/Church/Field	WA2003.DOUCE.1960
Witches Preparing for the Sabbath	Anonymous Souther Netherlandish Printmaker after David Teniers the Younger	Home	WA2003.DOUCE.1920
Scene of Witchcraft	Anonymous British Printmaker	Field	WA2003.DOUCE.1916
Scene of Witchcraft (ii)	Anonymous British Printmaker	Field	WA2003.DOUCE.1917

Table 7: Sabbath Prints, Etchings, and Drawings from the Metropolitan Museum of Art

Title	**Artist**	**Landscapes**	**Object Number**
Lo Stregozzo	Agostino Veneziano	Wetland	49.97.146
Witches Preparing for Sabbath	Andries Stock after Jacques de Gheyn II	Forest/Mountain	2001.648
Witches in a Hay Loft	Thomas Rowlandson after George Murgatroyd Woodward	Home	59.533.1519
Witches' Sabbath	Salvator Rosa	Forest	12.56.13
The Witches at the Walnut Tree of Benevento	Guglielmo della Porta	Forest	87.12.37
Witches' Sabbath (recto); Figures Gathered Around a Tree (verso)	Salvator Rosa	Forest	1976.331.2
Macbeth and the Witches (Shakespeare, Macbeth, Act 1, Scene 1)	William Woollett after Francesco Zuccarelli	Forest/Mountain	41.91.222
Departure for the Sabbath	Baron Dominique Vivant Denon after David	Home	1993.1080

	Teniers the Younger		
The Pit of Acheron or the Birth of the Plagues of England	Thomas Rowlandson	Forest	59.533.37(a)
The Round of the Witches' Sabbath	Louis Boulanger	Church	64.605.5

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