

Abraham of Worms

Rick-Arne Kollatsch, 1 Oktober 2021

Abraham of Worms (in German: *Abraham von Worms*) is a designation that has become customary for the fictitious Jewish author and first-person narrator of a 17th-century German-language magic text. The first-person narrator calls himself *Abraham, ein Sohn des Simon, des Sohnes Juda, des Sohnes Simons* (Abraham, a son of Simon, the son of Judah, the son of Simon). The designation using the place of Abraham's origin, the city of Worms, Germany, emerged secondarily. Precisely datable, it appears for the first time in the Latin form *Abraham Judae[us] Wormensis*¹ in a manuscript catalogue printed in 1710.² The earliest evidence of the more common Latin form *Abraham Wormatiensis* is found in a writing of the jurist and historian Peter Friedrich Arpe that was published in 1717.³ The German form *Abraham von Worms* can be proved for the first time in the *Biblisches und Emblematisches Wörterbuch* (biblical and emblematic dictionary) of the theologian Friedrich Christoph Oetinger; the *Wörterbuch* appeared in print in 1776.⁴ The today's prevalence of this designation in the German-speaking countries, however, relies on the first print of the magic text, that was released in 1853 by the publisher Johann Scheible in Stuttgart, Germany. The print was given an unhistorical title, in which the alleged author of the magic text is named as *Abraham von Worms*.

The content of the magic text of Abraham of Worms

The magic text does not originally have a title, but begins with a title prologue. Later copyists, editors and publishers regarded the absence of a title as defect and added self-invented ones; therefore the magic text occurs under several different titles in manuscripts and modern prints.

The fictional situation of the text is as follows: The 79-year-old Jew Abraham of Worms composes a written instruction as a magical legacy for his young son Lamech, so that Lamech will be able to undergo independently a magician's initiation if Abraham dies before Lamech reaches the required age of 25. As an adept like his father, Lamech will then be able to practice the *wahre Magie* (true magic) for the benefit of man and all creatures. This fiction constitutes the link between the four parts (called *books*), in which the magic text is divided.

¹ *Wormensis* is not a spelling mistake, but the non-humanistic alternative form of *Wormatiensis* 'Wormsian, of Worms'.

² Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg Sup. ep. 4° 6, foll. 208^r–211^v. – The catalogue was reprinted around 1712 with expanded content (Stadtarchiv Leipzig Tit. XLVI Nr. 152 Vol. IV, foll. 47^r–48^v). For the relationship of the two catalogues see Rick-Arne Kollatsch, *Anmerkungen zu Daniel Bellingradt, Bernd-Christian Otto: Magical Manuscripts in Early Modern Europe*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.17613/374m-sc59>

³ Peter Friedrich Arpe, *De prodigiosis naturae et artis operibus Talismanes et Amuleta dictis cum recensione scriptorum huius argumenti liber singularis*, Hamburg 1717, p. 13. – Arpe enters into the particulars of *Abraham Wormatiensis* in his *Feriae aestivales. Sive scriptorum suorum* [i. e. Arpe's] *historia. Liber singularis*, Hamburg 1726, pp. 118–120.

⁴ Friedrich Christoph Oetinger, *Biblisches und Emblematisches Wörterbuch, dem Tellerischen Wörterbuch und Anderer falschen Schrifterklärungen entgegen gesetzt*, s. l. 1776, p. 58. – Oetinger already used the designation *Abraham von Worms* probably in sermons in 1759–65 (Karl Christian Eberhard Ehmann [ed.], *Des Württembergischen Prälaten Friedrich Christoph Oetinger sämtliche Predigten, zum ersten Mal vollständig gesammelt und unverändert herausgegeben. Zweiter Band. Das Herrenberger Predigtbuch*, Reutlingen 1853, p. 249).

In the first *book*, Abraham describes his life and especially his journey of almost twenty years in search of the *true magic*. Born around 1359, Abraham is introduced to Kabbalah by his father, but not to magic. After the death of his father, he goes to the apprenticeship of an old rabbi in Mainz, Germany, and then starts a journey in 1387, which takes him via Bohemia, Austria, Hungary, Greece, Egypt and Palestine to the wilderness of the *ödes Arabien* (barren Arabia). Back in Egypt, he hears about an hermit named Abramelim⁵ and learns the foundation of the *true magic* from him. Via Constantinople, Italy and France, Abraham returns home to Worms in 1404. After he has undergone the magician's initiation, he begins to practice the *true magic* in 1409. He frees a lot of people from disease and bewitchment and performs magical services for the emperor, popes and the Bishop of Worms. Abraham's story follows a chronology that can be traced back to the year.

The second *book* of the magic text contains 154 recipes of the *vermischte Kabbala* (mixed Kabbalah), arranged thematically into ten chapters. With the recipes, one is said to be able to cure diseases, create love and hate, make childbirth easier to women, protect from water flood, conflagration and other dangers, win lawsuits, make oneself invisible, etc. The recipes are based on the same pattern: One has to apply a Bible verse to an object (less often: to speak a Bible verse) and to perform a (symbolic) act coherent with the purpose of the recipe. Anyone can use the recipes without having undergone the magician's initiation; the only condition is that one has not offended in the last seven months against the literal sense of the commandments that are on the second tablet of the Decalogue. The recipes are called *mixed Kabbalah* because they are said to have emerged from the mixture of the Kabbalah with *zwölf Geschlechter der Magie* (twelve kinds of magical arts).

The third *book* of the magic text explains the course of the 18 month lasting magical initiation and presents the personal requirements of the initiand as well as the necessary utensils and premises. The initiation is divided into three six-month periods. With each period, the initiand has to withdraw further from his daily life and devote himself more and more to prayers and the study of the Bible and other sacred scriptures. The first period of the initiation begins on the day after the Passover and lasts until the Feast of Tabernacles in the same year, the second period lasts from the Feast of Tabernacles to the Passover of the following year, and the third period from the Passover again until the Feast of Tabernacles. The initiation ends with the invocation of the good spirits and the personal guardian angel on the first three days after the Feast of Tabernacles and the invocation and subjugation of the evil spirits on the three following days. For the purpose of this subjugation, the third *book* lists the names of all evil spirits: the four overlords, the eight underlords, and the 417 ordinary spirits subordinate to the underlords.

Noteworthy is the distinction that the magic text makes between Kabbalah, *mixed Kabbala*, *true magic*, other magics, and sorcery: Kabbalah, as the *göttliches Geheimnis* (divine secret), is based on the commandments of the first tablet of the Decalogue; it is passed on from the

⁵ The name is probably a combination of *Abram*, the name borne by the arch-father Abraham before Yahweh made his covenant with him, and *Elim*, the name of an oasis where the people of Israel stopped after the exodus from Egypt, cf. Rick-Arne Kollatsch (ed.), *Des Abraham von Worms Buch der wahren Praktik von der alten Magie. Ein als jüdisch fingierter Magietext des frühen 17. Jahrhunderts. Band 1 – Edition*, Hamburg ²2021, p. XCIII, <http://dx.doi.org/10.17613/8dq6-6m31>

Jewish father to the firstborn son and is reserved for free conjugal children. The *true magic*, which is described in the third *book* and which is called the *göttliche Weisheit* (divine wisdom), can be practiced by anyone who succeeds in completing the 18-month initiation; it is based on the commandments of the second tablet of the Decalogue. Unlike the *mixed Kabbalah* which is contained in the second *book*, the *true magic* requires to fulfill the commandments not only in the letter, but in the spirit. It also demands that the magician leads a life in accordance with Jewish customs, but without having to convert to Judaism. The other magics, to which for instance astronomy belongs, are pure natural arts, with which supernatural effects could only be achieved if a Kabbalist »mixes« them with Kabbalah, so that the *mixed Kabbalah* emerges which can be used by everyone. Finally, sorcery is when one tries to use the *true magic* or the other magical arts with the help of the devil for *leichtfertige, böse und schädliche Sachen* (frivolous, evil and harmful things).

The fourth *book* of the magic text acts only as an appendix to the third; it contains 257 magical letter squares, which come into effect as an indispensable tool in the subjugation of evil spirits at the end of the magician's initiation and can also be used in the adept's later practice. The letter squares are arranged thematically into 30 chapters, and each square serves a specific magical purpose that an evil spirit has to perform. The squares are composed of several sequences of letters; most of these sequences are arranged according to the pattern of the well-known *Sator square*, some, however, according to other varying symmetries.⁶ The letter sequences mostly do not have any lexical meaning, but at least one in each square is a word of a natural language, usually of Hebrew or Greek. The word is used to designate the magical purpose that the letter square serves, and sometimes also the evil spirit that is responsible for the purpose.

Presumed time of origin, authorship and earliest evidence of the magic text

The Hebrew and Greek words that appear in the letter squares of the fourth *book* of the magic text are taken from a German-Hebrew-Greek-Latin-French dictionary⁷ published in 1595 and 1596 in two editions of the same type, as can be seen from characteristic factual and typographical errors that have been uncritically adopted into the letter squares.⁸ Furthermore, since the oldest complete textual witness is found in a manuscript compiled with prayers written around 1608/09, the time of origin of the magic text can be narrowed down to the period from 1595 to about 1609.⁹ Repeated allusions to the apocryphal writings of the *Wisdom of Solomon*, the *Book of Sirach* and the *Book of Tobit*, factual errors as, for instance, the distri-

⁶ Rick-Arne Kollatsch, *Übersicht der 257 magischen Buchstabenquadrate aus »Des Abraham von Worms Buch der wahren Praktik von der alten Magie«*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.17613/3hfq-9a74>

⁷ *Sylvae quinquelinguis. Vocabulorum et phrasium, cum solutae tum ligatae orationis, ex optimis & probatis Latinae & Graecae linguae auctoribus, pars prima. Nuper ab Henrico Decimatore Gifhornensi in lucem edita; Hebraicis postea vocabulis a M. Valentino Schindlero professore aucta; nunc vero in gratiam studiosae iuventutis, adiecto vbique idiomate Gallico, satisque magna atque locuplete, tum Graecarum tum Latinarum phrasium segete inserta, plus tertia parte auctior atque emaculatio prodiens, labore indefesso M. Zachariae Palthenii Fridbergensis*, Frankfurt on the Main 1595 and 1596

⁸ For proof, see the notes on the fourth *book* of the magic text in Kollatsch, *Buch der wahren Praktik*, pp. 138–173, <http://dx.doi.org/10.17613/8dq6-6m31>

⁹ Kollatsch, *Buch der wahren Praktik*, pp. XVII–XX, <http://dx.doi.org/10.17613/8dq6-6m31>

bution of the Ten Commandments to the two tablets of the Law according to Christian rather than to Jewish tradition, and in particular sayings quoted from the Luther Bible in the recipes of the *mixed Kabbalah* and elsewhere in the text point to a Christian, most likely a Lutheran, as the author of the magic text.¹⁰

The earliest indubitable evidence of the magic text is found in a letter from Prince August of Anhalt dated 9 June 1624, which speaks of the *Cabala mixta*, the *mixed Kabbalah*.¹¹ In printed literature the text is first mentioned by the historian Peter Lambeck in 1659.¹² There is some evidence that the magic text of Abraham of Worms is also meant by a *Caballistisches buch* (Kabbalistic book), about which Prince August of Anhalt and Duke August the Younger of Braunschweig-Lüneburg exchanged letters of 24 February and 29 March 1614,¹³ as well as by a *Wormbser buch* (Wormsian book), which Prince August of Anhalt repeatedly sought in correspondence with the Augsburg physician Karl Widemann in 1611/12.^{14 15}

Historical manuscripts and modern editions of the magic text

The magic text has survived in at least 28 historical manuscripts which are now preserved in 20 European libraries; most of the manuscripts are German, five are French according to two independent translations, one text witness is Italian and a fragment Hebrew.¹⁶ The oldest complete manuscript and, moreover, the one with the best text quality is Cod. Guelf. 47.13 Aug. 4^o, kept by the Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel, Germany; this manuscript is decisive for research into the historical magic text. The other surviving manuscripts – with the exception of three copies of Cod. Guelf. 47.13 Aug. 4^o and possibly a fragment of a manuscript¹⁷ that has an unclear relationship to the history of the text – are more recent redactions that changed to a greater or lesser extent the text that Cod. Guelf. 47.13 Aug. 4^o has.¹⁸

Several editions of the magic text have already been published in print:

- *Die egyptischen großen Offenbarungen, in sich begreifend die aufgefundenen Geheimnißbücher Moses; oder des Juden Abraham von Worms Buch der wahren Praktik in der uralten göttlichen Magie und in erstaunlichen Dingen, wie sie durch die heilige Kabbala und durch Elohyim mitgetheilt worden. Sammt der Geister- und Wunder-Herrschaft, welche Moses in der Wüste aus dem feurigen Busch erlernet, alle Verborgenenheiten der Kabbala umfassend. Aus einer hebräischen Pergament-Handschrift von 1387 im XVII. Jahrhundert verteutscht und wortgetreu herausgegeben.*

¹⁰ Kollatsch, *Buch der wahren Praktik*, pp. XV–XVI, <http://dx.doi.org/10.17613/8dq6-6m31>

¹¹ Niedersächsisches Landesarchiv Abteilung Wolfenbüttel 2 Alt Nr. 30, fol. 19^r

¹² Peter Lambeck, *Liber primus prodromi historiae literariae; nec non libri secundi capita quatuor priora, cum appendice, quae sciagraphiam continet, sive primam delineationem praecipuarum personarum ac rerum, de quibus, volente Deo, reliquis triginta duobus ejusdem libri capitibus plenius & accuratius agetur*, Hamburg 1659, p. 50

¹³ Niedersächsisches Landesarchiv Abteilung Wolfenbüttel 2 Alt Nr. 30, foll. 10^v, 13^r

¹⁴ Landesarchiv Sachsen-Anhalt Z 70, A 17a Nr. 100, foll. 108^r–108^v, 110^r, 112^r, 2^v, 134^r

¹⁵ Carlos Gilly, *Cimelia Rhodostaurótica. Die Rosenkreuzer im Spiegel der zwischen 1610 und 1660 entstandenen Handschriften und Drucke*. Amsterdam 1995, p. 18

¹⁶ Rick-Arne Kollatsch, *Historische Handschriften von »Des Abraham von Worms Buch der wahren Praktik von der alten Magie«*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.17613/kfhy-m385>

¹⁷ Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel Cod. Guelf. 764 Novi

¹⁸ Kollatsch, *Buch der wahren Praktik*, p. XIII f., <http://dx.doi.org/10.17613/8dq6-6m31>

The edition was released in 1853¹⁹ by the publishing house Johann Scheible in Stuttgart with the fictitious imprint *Köln am Rhein, bei Peter Hammer. 1725*.²⁰ The source of the edition is an 18th-century manuscript that is either identical to one now kept in the Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica in Amsterdam²¹ or that was very close to it.

- Samuel Liddell Mathers, *The Book of the sacred magic of Abra-Melin the mage, as delivered by Abraham the Jew unto his son Lamech, A. D. 1458*, London 1898
Mathers' edition is an English translation of French manuscript of the 18th century. In the French manuscript, the magic text is heavily redacted and noticeably corrupted. The manuscript comes from the library of the bibliophile Antoine René de Voyer de Paulmy d'Argenson²² and belongs today, as in Mathers' time, to the inventory of the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal in Paris.²³
- Will-Erich Peuckert (Hrsg.), *Von schwarzer und weißer Magie. Berichte aus einem vergessenen Jahrhundert*, Berlin o. J. (According to Deutsche Nationalbibliothek: 1928), S. 15–40
The edited text is part of a popular-scientific anthology and reproduces a fragment of the magic text that was in the *Stadtbibliothek* (City Library) of *Breslau* (Wrocław) at the time. The wording largely corresponds to that of the manuscript fragment, the location of which in the text history of the magic text has not yet been clarified. For the anthology, the text was redacted by Peuckert and shortened. The whereabouts of the Wrocław manuscript fragment are unclear.
- Robert Ambelain, *La magie sacrée d'Abramelin la Mage*, Paris 1959
Ambelain's edition translates the text of the manuscript used by Mathers into modern French.
- Johann Richard Beecken, *Die heilige Magie des Abramelin. Die Überlieferung des Abraham von Worms. Nach dem hebräischen Text aus dem Jahre 1458*, Berlin 1957
The edition by an unknown person calling himself Beecken is not, as claimed, a translation from the Hebrew. Rather, Peuckert's edition, which only is a reproduction of a fragment of a manuscript, was completed with an abridged translation of Mathers' edition, without informing the reader about the sources of this work.
- Jürg von Ins, *Das Buch der wahren Praktik in der göttlichen Magie. Vergleichende Textausgabe mit Kommentar*, München 1988
The source of the edition is a typescript that von Ins assumes originated from Carl Gustav Jung. As far as can be seen, it is an erroneous copy of the edition published by Scheible.

¹⁹ Emil Weller, *Die falschen und fingierten Druckorte. Repertorium der seit Erfindung der Buchdruckerkunst unter falscher Firma erschienenen deutschen, lateinischen und französischen Schriften. Erster Band*, Leipzig 1864, p. 73

²⁰ The publisher subsequently organised another edition, which is expanded by two appendices unrelated to the magic text. Kollatsch, *Buch der wahren Praktik*, p. IX, <http://dx.doi.org/10.17613/8dq6-6m31>, assumes that Scheible released the expanded edition shortly after the first one appeared. More likely, however, it was published in the 1860s or 1870s.

²¹ Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica Amsterdam Ms. M316

²² Antoine René de Voyer de Paulmy d'Argenson, *Mélanges tirés d'une grande Bibliothèque. P. De la lecture des livres François. Suite de la huitième partie. Livres de Philosophie, sciences & arts du seizième siècle*, Paris 1781, pp. 99–100

²³ Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal Paris Ms. 2351, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b52508378q.image>

The typescript text was »text-critically« edited by von Ins in a procedure that is opaque to the reader; in the end, the edited text turns out to be an arbitrary blend of the typescript text, Scheible's original, Mathers' and Ambelain's translations, Beecken's plagiarism, and an 18th-century manuscript that is kept by the Leopold-Sophien-Bibliothek in Überlingen, Germany.²⁴

- Georg Dehn, *Buch Abramelin, das ist: Die egyptischen großen Offenbarungen oder des Abraham von Worms Buch der wahren Praktik in der uralten göttlichen Magie*, Leipzig 2001

The edition comes at the end of a series of new editions that Dehn organised from the Scheible edition, and is therefore based on this text version like its predecessors. As an innovation, Dehn made occasional arbitrary textual changes based on the Wolfenbüttel manuscript Cod. Guelf. 47.13 Aug. 4° as well as on a translation he had a rabbi make of the Hebrew manuscript fragment of the magic text. Dehn calls the resulting unhistorical mixed text a *critical reconstruction* of the original text the alleged Jew Abraham of Worms composed. An English translation was published in 2006 and reprinted in 2015 under the title *The Book of Abramelin. A New Translation* (Lake Worth 2006/2015).

The only edition of the magic text that conforms to standards of edition scholarship is:

- Rick-Arne Kollatsch, *Des Abraham von Worms Buch der wahren Praktik von der alten Magie. Ein als jüdisch fingierter Magietext des frühen 17. Jahrhunderts*, 2nd, revised edition, Hamburg 2021

The source of the edition is the oldest complete witness of the magic text, Cod. Guelf. 47.13 Aug. 4°. The historical edition follows the *Leithandschrift* (lead manuscript) principle.

Scientific research into the magic text

18-century scholars consider the Jew Abraham of Worms to be a historical person, even if they express doubts about the magical tasks that he claims to have performed. This explains the appearance of Abraham of Worms in encyclopedias of the time such as Christoph Hendreich's *Pandectae Brandenburgicae*²⁵, Johann Christoph Wolf's *Bibliotheca Hebraea*²⁶, Christian Gottlieb Jöcher's *Allgemeines Gelehrten-Lexicon* (general encyclopaedia of scholars)²⁷

²⁴ Leopold-Sophien-Bibliothek Überlingen Ms. 167

²⁵ Christoph Hendreich, *Pandectae Brandenburgicae, continentes I. bibliothecam, seu magnam, & si additamenta accesserint, maximam auctorum inpressorum & manuscr. partem: quibus adduntur auctorum quorundam vitae, delectus; nomina plurimorum anonymorum, pseudonymorum &c. explicata. Idque in omnibus fere scientiis, & orbis terrarum linguis. II. Indicem materiarum praecipuarum, in iis contentarum: utrumque ordin. alphabetico*, Berlin 1699, p. 22

²⁶ Johann Christoph Wolf, *Bibliothecae Hebraeae volumen III. complectens accessiones et emendationes, ad volumen primum totum, et partem secundi, quoad de scriptis anonymis exponit, pertinentes*, Hamburg 1727, pp. 25, 67–68 and *Bibliothecae Hebraeae volumen IV. et ultimum complectens accessiones et emendationes inprimis ad volumen secundum tum vero ad totum opus pertinentes una cum indicibus auctorum et rerum*, Hamburg 1733, pp. 736, 757–759

²⁷ Christian Gottlieb Jöcher (ed.), *Allgemeines Gelehrten-Lexicon, Darinne die Gelehrten aller Stände sowohl männ- als weiblichen Geschlechts, welche vom Anfange der Welt bis auf ietzige Zeit gelebt, und sich der gelehrten Welt bekannt gemacht, Nach ihrer Geburt, Leben, merckwürdigen Geschichten, Absterben und Schrifften aus den glaubwürdigsten Scribenten in alphabetischer Ordnung beschrieben werden. Erster Theil A–C*, Leipzig 1750, col. 38

or Johann Heinrich Zedler's *Großes vollständiges Universal-Lexicon aller Wissenschaften und Künste* (great complete universal lexicon of all sciences and arts)²⁸. With recourse to 18th-century sources, also in the 19th century Abraham's historicity is initially still not doubted: The 179th volume of the *Oeconomische Encyclopädie*, published in 1842, mentions Abraham of Worms in the article on talismans,²⁹ and in 1853, the editor of Oetinger's sermons refers without hesitation to Zedler's *Universal-Lexicon*³⁰ in order to introduce the reader to the person of Abraham of Worms in the name index of his edition.³¹ As a supposedly historical person who had spent time in Regensburg, Abraham of Worms also finds its way into historical works such as the *Reichsstadt Regensburgische Chronik* (chronicle of the imperial city of Regensburg) by Carl Theodor Gemeiner.³²

A more critical examination of the historicity of Abraham of Worms begins at the end of the 19th century. In 1893, Moritz Steinschneider rejects a Jewish authorship and calls the author of the magic text a *Christian impostor*.³³ The discussion in the 20th century swings around the contrasting positions of granting the magic text a certain factuality with regard to a Jewish and late medieval origin or locating it as a non-Jewish and early modern fiction. In the first instance, Gershom Scholem believes that the *astonishing single knowledge of Hebrew* that the magic text shows and its strong *historical connections* suggest a late medieval Jewish author.³⁴ Continuing to emphasise the author's *particularly good knowledge of Hebrew*, he later on suspends a decision about the authorship but refers to the *fundamental juxtaposition* of Kabbalah and magic in the text, which could speak for an author influenced by Giovanni Pico della Mirandola's Christian Kabbalah.³⁵ In 1974 he finally rejected a Jewish authorship.³⁶ Yacov Guggenheim takes up Scholem's reference to Pico della Mirandola, but reverses the relationship: It is not the author of the magic text that drew from Pico, but Pico from the magic text or

²⁸ Johann Heinrich Zedler (ed.), *Nötige Supplemente zu dem Großen Vollständigen Universal-Lexicon Aller Wissenschaften und Künste, Welche bishero durch menschlichen Verstand und Witz erfunden und verbessert worden. Erster Band, A–An*, Leipzig 1751, col. 229

²⁹ Johann Wilhelm David Korth (ed.), *Dr. Johann Georg Krünitz's ökonomisch-technologische Encyclopädie, oder allgemeines System der Staats-, Stadt-, Haus- und Landwirthschaft, und der Kunstgeschichte, in alphabetischer Ordnung*, volume 179. Berlin 1842, p. 554. – The article of the Krünitz is essentially an excerpt from an anonymous translation of Arpe's writing mentioned in footnote 3; the translation was released with the fictitious imprint *Germanien, im Jahr 1792* under the title *Geschichte der Talismannischen Kunst von Ihrem Ursprunge, Fortgange und Verbreitung. Ein Beitrag zu den geheimen und höhern Kenntnissen der Menschen*.

³⁰ Or Jöcher's *Gelehrten-Lexicon*, the articles in both encyclopaedias about Abraham of Worms are identical.

³¹ Ehmann, *Herrenberger Predigtbuch*, p. 674

³² Carl Theodor Gemeiner (red.), *Stadt Regensburgische Jahrbücher vom Jahre 1430 bis zum Jahre 1496, aus der Urquelle, den Königlichen Archiven und Registraturen zu Regensburg*, Regensburg 1821, p. 259

³³ Moritz Steinschneider, *Die hebraeischen Uebersetzungen des Mittelalters und die Juden als Dolmetscher*, Berlin 1893, pp. 907–908

³⁴ Gerhard Scholem, *Alchemie und Kabbala*. In: *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums*, volume 69, Frankfurt on the Main 1925, pp. 95–96

³⁵ Gershom Scholem, *Von der mystischen Gestalt der Gottheit. Studien zu den Grundbegriffen der Kabbala*, Zürich 1962, p. 309. – Scholem's article on Abraham of Worms in Fred Skolnik, Michael Berenbaum (eds.), *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, volume 1, Detroit 2007, p. 310 has a similar tenor; Scholem additionally notes here that the magical elements of the text are, however, essentially Jewish in origin.

³⁶ Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalah*, Jerusalem 1974, p. 186

another text close to it.³⁷ For Harold Jantz, on the other hand, who approaches the magic text from a literary-historical perspective, it is clear that at least the first *book* could not have been written by a medieval Jew because it belongs according to *style, attitude, kind of content* to the *tradition of carefully calculated probability reproduction* that was preceded by a longer literary development; the other *books* of the magic text, however, could come from a Jewish grimoire. Jantz therefore attributes the magic text to the late 17th century.³⁸ Carlos Gilly points to the proximity in content between the first book of the magic text and the fictional travel story by Christian Rosencreutz as well as to the presumed temporal proximity of the origin of both texts;³⁹ for him, the author was a Christian Hebraist of the early 17th century.⁴⁰ In contrast, Raphael Patai thinks he can deduce a 15th-century Sephardic alchemist as the author of the magic text from the Hebrew words that the letter squares of the fourth *book* contain.⁴¹ Research in the 20th century is hampered by the fact that it only has the Scheible edition and Mathers' translation at its disposal, which are based on 18th-century manuscripts. These manuscripts have a text that historical redactors edited and whose readings not infrequently are corrupted due to copyist errors. Thus, for example, the sayings of the *mixed Kabbalah* of the second *book*, which are originally taken from the Luther Bible, only can be recognised in full extent in the oldest surviving complete witness of the magic text, the Wolfenbüttel manuscript Cod. Guelf. 47.13 Aug. 4^o, as well as three historical copies received from it. An editor noticed the origin of the sayings and disguised them by rearranging sentences and replacing words with synonyms. As a result, all other surviving textual witnesses that contain the second *book* with the *mixed Kabbalah* have the edited biblical sayings. Patai erroneously thought that he had detected occasional Spanish plural *s* in the Hebrew words of the letter squares of the fourth *book*, and this led him to assume a Sephardic as the author of the magic text. In fact, these supposed plural *s* are only due to the progressive corruption of the text that occurred in the course of copying.

Overall, the magic text of Abraham of Worms only receives marginal attention in scientific literature. The *separate investigation* requested by Scholem in 1962⁴² is still pending, but the research situation is no longer as *meagre* as Jantz called it in 1983.⁴³ Gilly has made significant contributions to the clarification of the manuscript tradition of the text and to its early modern attestation.⁴⁴ The reference he made in 1995 to the Wolfenbüttel manuscript Cod. Guelf. 47.13 Aug. 4^o⁴⁵ induced the edition of the text witness a quarter of a century later. With this edition, the Christian and early modern origins of the magic text should be beyond doubt.

³⁷ Yacov Guggenheim, *Meeting on the Road: Encounters between German Jews und Christians on the Margins of Society*. In: Ronnie Po-Chia Hsia, Hartmut Lehmann (eds.), *In and Out of the Ghetto. Jewish-Gentile Relations in Late Medieval and Early Modern Germany*, Melbourne 1995, pp. 134–136

³⁸ Harold Jantz, *Geschichte und Fiktion. Einige pseudohistorische Werke des 17. Jahrhunderts*. In: *Daphnis*, volume 12, Amsterdam 1983, pp. 75–76

³⁹ Gilly, *Cimelia Rhodostaurotica*, p. 19

⁴⁰ Carlos Gilly, *Adam Haslmayr. Der erste Verkünder der Manifeste der Rosenkreuzer*, Amsterdam 1994, p. 134

⁴¹ Raphael Patai, *The Jewish Alchemists. A History and Source Book*, Princeton 1995, pp. 271–288

⁴² Gershom Scholem, *Gestalt der Gottheit*, p. 309

⁴³ Jantz, *Pseudohistorische Werke*, p. 73

⁴⁴ Carlos Gilly, *Haslmayr*, pp. 134–135, 146–147

⁴⁵ Gilly, *Cimelia Rhodostaurotica*, p. 18

History of reception

The historical manuscripts and modern editions testify to a constant interest in the magic text of Abraham of Worms over the centuries. The Scheible edition and its reprints may have played a certain role in the folk magic of the 19th and early 20th centuries in German-speaking countries. When the physician Julius Beer dropped the name of Abraham of Worms in a satirical article in a medical newspaper in 1864 without further explanation, he evidently expected that the readership would know Abraham.⁴⁶ In a »witch doctor's« library, which was temporarily confiscated by the police in 1895, the Scheible edition of the magic text was found,⁴⁷ but only as one of 56 printed titles.⁴⁸ In 1918, the authorities of the Grand Duchies of Mecklenburg-Schwerin and Mecklenburg-Strelitz deemed it necessary to place a reprint of the Scheible edition on the index of *Schundliteratur* (trash literature), along with numerous other titles.⁴⁹ To what extent the Scheible edition and its reprints had an impact on German-speaking occult societies of the 19th and early 20th centuries must remain open at present. That it found renewed attention in the second half of the 20th century is certainly due above all to Mathers' edition.

Their effect can be traced more clearly. In Mathers' edition, the magic text operates under the name of Abraham's Egyptian teacher *Abramelin* (deformed from *Abramelim*) and only secondarily under the name of his disciple Abraham.⁵⁰ In Mathers' French source, the *mixed Kabbalah* of the second *book*, which is particularly interesting for folk-magical use, has been omitted, and the presentation of the magician's initiation of the third *book* (in Mathers' translation: of the second) is significantly edited compared to the original and the Scheible version. For example, the initiation period is reduced from eighteen to six months, which certainly makes the attempt to undergo the initiation seem more acceptable. Mathers co-founded the *Order of the Golden Dawn*, a Rosicrucian-esoteric society. A member of the society was William Butler Yeats, and according to Jantz, Mathers' edition of the magic text had an influence on Yeats' poetry.⁵¹ Also a member of the *Golden Dawn* was Aleister Crowley, who adopted elements of the magic text, particularly the invocation of the personal guardian angel, into his own occult system and claims to have successfully undergone the magician's initiation in

⁴⁶ Julius Beer, *Trichinen in der Berliner Therapie. I. Ein neuer Wunderdoctor in Berlin*. In: Alexander Götschen (Hrsg.), *Deutsche Klinik. Zeitung für Beobachtungen aus deutschen Kliniken und Krankenhäusern*, No. 13, 26 March 1864, p. 23

⁴⁷ Paul Beck, *Die Bibliothek eines Hexenmeisters*. In: Johannes Bolte (Hrsg.), *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Volkskunde*, volume 15, Berlin 1905, p. 413

⁴⁸ Stephan Bachter, *Anleitung zum Aberglauben. Zauberbücher und die Verbreitung magischen »Wissens« seit dem 18. Jahrhundert*, Hamburg 2005, pp. 53–54

⁴⁹ *Regierungs-Blatt für das Großherzogtum Mecklenburg-Schwerin*, No. 173, 3 October 1918; *Großherzoglich Mecklenburg-Strelitzscher Offizieller Anzeiger für Gesetzgebung und Staatsverwaltung*, No. 140, 18 October 1918. – Also listed as *Schundliteratur* is the *Geheime Kunst-Schule magischer Wunderkräfte* (secret art school of magical miraculous powers), which contains an excerpt from the *mixed Kabbala* of the second *book* of the magic text. Both »trash books« come from the E. Bartels publishing house in Berlin-Weißensee.

⁵⁰ In the French manuscript that Mathers used, the reference to Worms is confused and Abraham's place of origin is therefore unclear; thus Mathers, who was unfamiliar with the Scheible edition, lacked the basis for forming a similarly catchy designation for Abraham as the Scheible edition has with *Abraham von Worms*.

⁵¹ Jantz, *Pseudohistorische Werke*, pp. 72–73

1906.⁵² Presumably through Crowley, Fernando Pessoa became known with the magic text.⁵³ Crowley is likely to have been the most important stimulus for the subsequent dealing with the magic text in occultism and esotericism, not only in English, but also in German-speaking countries.

The traces of the magical text in today's esotericism can hardly be overlooked. No esoteric encyclopaedia of magic can do without Abraham of Worms and the spirits listed in the third book of the magic text, a incense mixture named *Abra Melin* can be bought on the Internet (an incense is an indispensable ingredient of the magician's initiation), and Abraham repeatedly makes an appearance – or other reminiscences of the magic text appear – in esoteric fiction or fiction dealing with esotericism.⁵⁴ Mostly, such quotations have the character of mere set-pieces; a deeper knowledge of the magic text is not likely to be connected with them. In Dan Brown's *The Lost Symbol*, a protagonist anoints himself with *Abramelin Oil, the sacred oil of the great Magi*,⁵⁵ and in Umberto Eco's *Foucault's Pendulum*, a master and an initiate of the Order of the *Templi Resurgentes Equites Synarchici* speak a *Satan Adama Tabat Amata Natas* in an alternating conversation,⁵⁶ which is presumably not taken directly but possibly through the mediation of other texts from a letter square of the magic text of Abraham of Worms.

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⁵² Marco Pasi, *Varieties of Magical Experience. Aleister Crowley's Views on Occult Practice*. In: Henrik Bogdan, Martin Starr (eds.), *Aleister Crowley and Western Esotericism*, Oxford 2012, pp. 67–68

⁵³ Marco Pasi, *The Influence of Aleister Crowley on Fernando Pessoa's Esoteric Writings*. In: Richard Caron et al. (Hrsg.), *Ésotérisme, Gnosés & Imaginaire Symbolique. Mélanges offerts à Antoine Faivre*, Leuven 2001, pp. 705–708

⁵⁴ cf. e. g. Uwe Westfeling, *Der schwarze Engel*, Cologne 2011; Martin Calsow, *Der Lilith-Code*, Berlin 2012; Thomas Finn, *Schwarze Tränen*, Munich 2014; Mária Szepes, *Der rote Löwe*, Munich 2017

⁵⁵ Dan Brown, *Das verlorene Symbol*, Cologne 2009, p. 400

⁵⁶ Umberto Eco, *Das Foucaultsche Pendel*, Munich 2012, p. 752