CHAPTER 2

Emphasis Added: Friedrich Heinrich von der Hagen’s Romantic Philology, Typeface Change and the *Heldenbuch an der Etsch* 1836–1900

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The theory of a copy text for the famous collection of 13th-century courtly texts, the so-called Ambraser Heldenbuch (produced 1504–1515/16) called the *Heldenbuch an der Etsch* began with the German Romantic philologist Friedrich Heinrich von der Hagen’s reading and reproduction of a 1502 entry in Emperor Maximilian’s 1 memorial book. Von der Hagen expressed his interpretation both in his own words and in the text of the memorial book entry via an editorial intervention on the level of typography in the editio princeps. This paper examines the complex co-texts and context of von der Hagen’s editio princeps of Maximilian’s memorial book entry and traces the term’s path to scholarly acceptance from its first occurrence in 1836 until 1900 with an eye towards demonstrating how one seemingly small change can influence scholarship and even editions of related works for years to come.

The term *Heldenbuch an der Etsch* refers to a hypothetical no longer extant or currently unidentified source text for the famous *Ambraser Heldenbuch*. The nature of the term’s referent – its contents, provenance, material and linguistic features – has been a topic of scholarly debate since the term first appeared in Friedrich Heinrich von der Hagen’s 1836 article on his favorite topic, the *Nibelungenlied*.\(^1\) The *Ambraser Heldenbuch*, a codex commissioned by Emperor Maximilian I and produced by one Hans Ried between 1504 and 1515/16, transmits twenty-six 13th-century Middle High German texts including the *Nibelungenlied*.\(^2\) The *Ambraser Heldenbuch*’s rediscovery in 1816 was welcomed by Alterthumsforscher of all stripes, who set to work situating it in and integrating it into emergent networks of newly rediscovered texts and manuscripts. Its contents were quickly determined to represent *late* transmissions of texts that originated in what was then already considered the *Blütezeit* of Middle High

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2 Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. Ser. nova 2663.
German poetry. The dominant theory of history was one of decline and decay and any clue as to the history of the Ambraser Heldenbuch and/or of any of the texts it transmits had the potential to change the research narrative. Soon after the theory of a source text called the Heldenbuch an der Etsch was introduced, “die Frage nach dem Heldenbuch an der Etsch” became unavoidable and was addressed by “fast alle[n] Herausgeber[n] einzelner Werke aus dem [Ambraser] Heldenbuch.” Disagreement regarding the term’s referent, however, long distracted from the question of its origin.

Just shy of one hundred years after the first occurrence of the term Heldenbuch an der Etsch, Albert Leitzmann first raised the possibility in his 1930 monograph on the transmission of Erec that the distinguishing toponym Heldenbuch an der Etsch, constructed in the form of, for example, Brandenburg’s Frankfurt an der Oder was generated by a debatable parsing decision on the part of von der Hagen. In his 1987 study on the medieval reception of Helmbrecht, another text transmitted in the Ambraser Heldenbuch, Ulrich Seelbach observes that the reading of the four words Heldenbuch an der Etsch as a distinguishing toponym was expressed and perpetuated by a typeface change introduced to the editio princeps of one of the historical documents included in von der Hagen’s 1836 article. The term is derived from a 15 April 1502 entry in Maximilian’s personal memorial book that records a letter the emperor sent regarding the production of the Ambraser Heldenbuch. The memorial book entry, however, is, as Martin Schubert has recently noted “im Grundsatz interpretationsbedürftig.” It is syntactically ambiguous, pending further research on the terminology used in Maximilian’s chancellery in the early 16th century for the reproduction of texts, semantically inaccessible,