

Foreword

Towards Third-Generation Editing: Bridging Scholarship and Readership through Hölderlin

Kiyoko Myojo

In recent years, our research group has embarked on a new initiative under the theme of “third-generation editing.” In essence, this approach seeks to bridge the divide between academic scholarship and general readership. If the first generation of editing aimed to disseminate works to the public, and the second generation focused on scholarly editorial practices, what, then, might a third generation entail?

Critical and facsimile editions — the hallmarks of second-generation editing — offer a wealth of vital information on the textual genesis of literary works. Yet these editions remain largely inaccessible to non-specialists. The challenge we face is how to communicate their value to a broader audience.

Our inquiry began with translation. Questions that never arose in first-generation translations present formidable hurdles when working with second-generation texts. One such question is how to select and incorporate textual variants — painstakingly detailed in critical editions — into a coherent translation. In Japan, several translations of scholarly editions, including critical and facsimile versions, already exist. However, few have addressed the complex editorial decisions involved in such translations. This lack of clarity has meant that translations of critical or facsimile editions deprive readers of insights into an author's writings.

It is indeed a challenging task for translators to explain and justify their editorial practices. But we think it is worth the effort. Not only is it more honest (telling readers how a translation departs from the manuscripts), but it can help non-specialist readers gain some awareness of textual issues that are normally only visible to specialists.

As readers will see, the results presented here represent only an initial foray. Each contributor notes the many challenges involved; at this stage, we are just beginning to chart the intricacies of the task through direct engagement. The goal of bridging scholarship and general readership remains distant. But precisely because we are aware of the journey ahead, we have chosen to share these interim findings and gradually bring key issues to light.

Our group is investigating third-generation editing not only in the case of Hölderlin, but also with authors such as Kafka, Musil, Shakespeare, Pascal, Dante, and other classical figures whose works have already undergone second-generation scholarly editing. To avoid misunderstanding, let me stress that third-generation editing does not aim to negate or surpass the achievements of the second generation. On the contrary, our purpose is to recognize and support those efforts while exploring complementary directions.

Traditionally, second-generation editing has focused on producing complex scholarly

editions — voluminous, critical works marked by textual rigor and philological depth. In recent years, however, we have seen a global shift toward digital editions: lighter in format, yet often containing even greater quantities of data and metadata. This trend is likely to accelerate, and with it, the need to develop thoughtful approaches for accurately conveying these new editions to university students and literature enthusiasts becomes ever more pressing.

What do scholars — especially those working in philology — actually “read”? What does it mean to read a literary text with an awareness of its genesis, to experience its depths and complexities? We hope to share these scholarly pleasures and insights with as many people as possible.

Finally, this research is supported by a Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (A) from the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS), for the project “The Third Generation of Editing: Textual Scholarship Research with the Aim to Regenerate the Classics and to Revitalize Literary Studies” (Project No. 22H00008, FY2022–2026; Principal Investigator: Kiyoko Myojo). We gratefully acknowledge their support here.