Dante's *Commedia* as an Italian National Edition

Frameworks, scholarship and projects

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Résumé : This chapter analyses two initiatives in the framework of Italian National Editions with regard to Dante's *Commedia*, namely its critical edition and the critical edition of its historical commentaries. It comprehends an overview of their historical development since the late 19th century and an assessment of their most debated aspects.

Mots-clés : Dante, Commedia, textual scholarship, historical commentaries

For many decades, the Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities and Tourism (hereinafter, MiBACT) has been supporting and partially funding the publication of critical editions of the written works of Italian authors. Not only are they classical literary authors but they also contribute to many other fields of knowledge (e.g., politics, religion, science and philosophy) and belong to different periods, from Antiquity to the present day [1]. Thus, these editions are entitled to be called *Edizioni Nazionali* (hereinafter, also National Editions). The beginning of this cultural project dates back to the period of the Italian *Risorgimento* and it even precedes the establishment of Italian political unity.

Since that time, the inclusion of Dante among the selected authors has never been questioned. Indeed, Dante is considered by both specialists and common readers to be the founder of the Italian language and his *Commedia* is definitely to be included in the Italian as well as in the Western literary canon. Moreover, its broad reception

1. See the dedicated Website : `http://www.librari.beniculturali.it/opencms/opencms/it/ednazionali/`. These projects are still ongoing. The referred results are updated to the beginning of 2018. The cited Websites have been last accessed on 3rd March 2018.

in the 20th century demonstrates interest in various aspects of the work, which, in turn, makes use of the reading text established by philological research. Dante's case is also interesting from a transnational perspective as his editions have crossed Italian borders and have been translated into many languages. All these aspects are broadly related and intertwined with the work on the edition. However, the publication of a critical edition always comes with an explicit and pronounced philological interest.

As is known, the edition of Dante's *Commedia* has not yet attained a definitive textual form and it probably never will. As will be shown in this book, this is due to a number of different reasons, from the identification of the *stemma*[2] to the analysis of manuscripts from different traditions[3], collections[4] and periods[5]. Moreover, the history of the *Commedia*'s National Edition(s) includes the development of critical approaches and of publishing processes throughout the 20th century. Indeed, two different projects that are included in the National Editions are relevant for Dante's *Commedia*, namely, its critical edition (which resulted in the notorious and influential *Edizione Nazionale* by Giorgio Petrocchi), and the publication of its numerous historical commentaries (*Edizione nazionale dei commenti danteschi)*. These have been, respectively, proposed and initiated by two groups of scholars affiliated to the Società Dantesca Italiana since 1913 and to the Centro Pio Rajna since 2001. In fact, these editions should be considered both within the framework of the National Editions as well as that of the proposing societies.

The first part of this chapter (*Frameworks*) focuses on the role of three actors : the institution of National Editions and the two research societies noted above. The second part (*Scholarship*) further highlights the role of individual scholars and the methods adopted in transversal collaborations and by research groups. The latter aspect is extremely relevant because it is connected to further independent research projects on Dante's text. The third part (*Projects*) presents the two aforementioned initiatives, stresses the role of these projects in the discussion on and around the *Commedia*, and presents an overview of their chronological development. However, to a certain extent, these three lines overlap. First, the frameworks also comprise various different projects. Second, singular projects are embedded in both the relative research institutions and in the ministerial support system and, at the same time, in the publishing process. Finally, it is the scholars (or the teams of scholars) themselves that determine the scientific core of the projects and the methods they use.

1 Frameworks

The *Edizione Nazionale* of Dante's work and the *Edizione Nazionale dei commenti danteschi* will be considered in this chapter in respect to their common entanglement with ministerial support. For this reason, in order to outline the way in which they are related to other National Editions, the first step in the analysis of Dante's *Commedia* as an Italian National Edition is dedicated to this institutional context. One of the fundamental characteristics of this endeavour is the notable absence of any direct

2. See the contribution of Marco Giola in this volume.
3. See the contribution of Elisabetta Tonello in this volume.
4. See the contribution of Amandine Postec in this volume.
5. See the contribution of Sandro Bertelli in this volume.

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political participation. That means that in every project there is a proponent subject responsible for indicating works that need a first or a new critical edition, while MiBACT's role is to approve them on the basis of scientific criteria and to provide economic support for the chosen projects.

The inclusion in the National Editions does not try to explicitly measure the relevance of the works to be published, which is always guaranteed by the proponents, but is intended primarily to verify the scientific adequacy of the projects. In section 1.1 this context will be described and assessed and its latest development considered. The proponents are in these cases two learned societies, each with a focus on literary research. The Società Dantesca Italiana is the first, presented in section 1.2. It has a long tradition and has been influential in the definition of the editions of every text of Dante published in the 20th century. The second society, the Centro Pio Rajna, was established more recently. This society still has a fundamental core in philological work but, as can be seen in the presentations of its projects, it adopts a different research approach, which will be outlined in section 1.3. In particular, its *Edizione nazionale dei commenti danteschi* represents the whole tradition of the *Commedia*'s exegesis and includes essential previous archival work on compiling the inventory of the manuscripts. These frameworks have introduced the necessity and the advisability of teamwork on these projects. This aspect reflects the current development of academic work and represents a suitable example of how different types of skills are needed to carry out complex and ambitious projects.

1.1 The National Editions

As already noted, every editorial project that, following ministerial approval, has been named *Edizione Nazionale*, has been independently initiated and provided with a detailed editorial plan. Both the writings of single authors or groups of works that have arisen in a homogeneous context have been considered worthy of a complete and critical edition. Most of the projects submitted for ministerial selection are from scholars affiliated to an academic or scientific institution. But any group of researchers may apply for funding. This procedure is highly relevant since it enables even minor literature to enter this kind of publication project and it explains the inclusiveness of the final results. Each edition proposes a fragmentary perspective within Italian literature. A look at the editions in question shows several different fields of application, encompassing not only literature but also music, theatre, politics and even the sciences. Since the relationships between various disciplines were extremely different during the medieval and early modern times, these are represented by the plurality of authorial voices that have been taken into consideration for the National Editions. This, in turn, means that critical editions do not exclusively cover the field of work of philological research. On the contrary, the ministerial investment aims at providing proper basic instruments for different kinds of textual research.

Since their inception, National Editions have been increasingly numerous and diverse. This numerical and typological growth is due, on the one hand, to the accumulation of long-term projects and, on the other hand, to the widening interests that are in-

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trinsic to a polycentric culture such as that of Italy [6]. This allows scholars to look at the edition of Dante as a specific case of much greater public support for multiple endeavours. Nonetheless, it would not be obvious to question the margins and borders of such a wide range of literary, scientific personalities and works included in the plan [7]. Various dialectal and regional traditions have, thus, been considered by some proponents of editions and are represented in the National Editions. Indeed, the institutional label, "national", suggests that these editions and, as a consequence, the authors and writings involved therein, are or should unanimously be considered relevant at a national level. To some extent, much of the funding is actually connected with the broader interest in a topic that goes beyond academic objectives and has representational purposes. Representativity is not lacking in the project of editing Dante, which has been considered the central project of the National Editions given that Dante is the national author *par excellence* and that the philological study of his texts is very complex and exemplary.

The starting point and the initial aim of the National Editions was the definition of a common culture and tradition. It is, therefore, useful to observe the tension between an outdated terminology, based on the nationalisms of the 19th century, and the current national level of funding distribution, which provides a pragmatic reason to maintain the label. A relevant element that defines the National Edition is the broad range of different editions that have been included therein (and thereinafter named and funded by the Italian central administration). This was demonstrated in the catalogue edited in 2002 by Mario Scotti and Flavia Cristiano, *Storia e bibliografia delle Edizioni Nazionali* (updated to the year 2000), and *Bibliografia delle Edizioni Nazionali*, edited by Silvia Chessa and Kathyrn Paoletti in 2003 [8]. The edited texts are written by geographically, culturally and thematically various authors. This means that scientific proposals mirror both the well-known topography of Italian authors scattered across the actual national territory, as well as the multiple subjects and themes involved. The most recent evolutions and the latest funding initiatives point in the same direction [9]. Moreover, an element common to many editions and many cases is the central definition of National Editions as *Opera omnia* – as was also the case in the edition of Dante. The reason for this systematic inclusiveness is that these types of editions aim to offer a complete range of texts, whereas the crucial factor is the publication of some unknown or unavailable works, especially those of the best-known authors.

The MiBACT Web page offers a detailed list of funding allocated over the last four years. It includes both new projects and the accomplishment or continuation of old ones. During these years, eleven new editions have been initiated. They have been dedicated to Verdi's correspondence (2015), Grazia Deledda (2015), don Lorenzo Milani (2015), Alcide De Gasperi's correspondence (2016), Luigi Einaudi (2016), Aldo Moro

6. See Colbertaldo 2015.

7. Two tables are available at the following links : One is dedicated to the editions initiated before the reform of 1997 (`www.librari.beniculturali.it/opencms/opencms/it/ednazionali/pagina_0001.html`) and the other to the editions initiated after that date (`www.librari.beniculturali.it/opencms/opencms/it/ednazionali/pagina_0002.html`).

8. See Scotti, Cristiano 2002 and Chessa, Paoletti 2003.

9. For an overview of the history of Edizioni Nazionali until 2015, see Colbertaldo 2015.

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(2016), Luigi Pirandello (2016), the operas of Domenico Cimarosa (2017), Giuseppe Tartini (2017), Federigo Tozzi (2017) and Cesare Zavattini (2017) [10]. Moreover, in the same years, many editions obtained financial support to continue existing and active projects. The economic resources invested in editions established before 1997 – the date of the above-mentioned law that regulated the institution and funding distribution – vary from 1 500 € (for Giovanni Pascoli's works in 2015) to 40 000 € (for the edition of Pietro Aretino's and Giovanni Verga's works in 2017). For the new (after 1997) established editions, the funding ranges from 4 000 € (*Antichi volgarizzamenti dei testi latini nei volgari italiani* in 2014, Antonio Labriola and Ugo Foscolo in 2015, Leon Battista Alberti, Galileo and Antonio Labriola in 2016) to 51 674 € (for Aldo Moro in 2017).

Overall, beyond each and every single case, the selection of these editions is definitely as comprehensive as possible. Funding competition is based on economic, scientific and academic factors. This is demonstrated by some of MiBACT's recent administrative orders [11]. The current criteria for evaluating edition proposals encompass the following aspects : (1) digitization (2) economic sustainability (3) (inter)national public interest and (4) lack of a previous publication (or of an adequately *critical* publication) of the texts [12]. This last point (the lack of and, thus, necessity for a publication) gains particular consideration since it is strictly connected to the publishing market and to aspects of the research involved. This criterion states that the character of these editions must, essentially, be scientific. An edition must ultimately cover a *desideratum* of philological research to be awarded this title and, thus, included in this group. In turn, thanks to this criterion, these publications can be the first step towards academic – or even public – recognition. In this regard, it is relevant to underline that the various types of critical editions funded by the MiBACT are all characterized by the independence of each and every editorial group also in terms of editorial guidelines. However, more generally, it remains a complex task to compare or evaluate different editions, as was discussed in a recent meeting of an Italian observatory on critical editions (a body founded in Milan to balance the need for an objective evaluation of different international editions labelled "critical") [13]. Of note is the diffused notion (which from the report of this meeting seems to be shared by the participating scholars) [14] that a singular normative definition could never be valid for very different projects.

The three remaining criteria (digitization, sustainability and public interest) also offer a useful insight into the typology of editions supported. Digitization is becoming

10. See the Website http ://www.librari.beniculturali.it/opencms/opencms/it/ednazionali/.

11. Circolare del 10 febbraio 2016, n. 101/2016 (« Interventions in the field of the National Committee for celebrations, anniversaries or cultural events and National Editions » [author's translation]), *Gazzetta ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana*, Serie Generale, 40 (18-02-2016) and Circolare del 27 settembre 2017, n. 103/2017 (« Interventions in the field of the National Committee for celebrations, anniversaries or cultural events and National Editions » [author's translation]), *Gazzetta ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana*, 214 (14-10-2017).

12. Circolare del 27 settembre 2017, n. 103/2017 (« Interventions in the field of the National Committee for celebrations, anniversaries or cultural events and National Editions » [author's translation]), *Gazzetta ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana*, 214 (14-10-2017), p. 20-23, in particular, p. 22 : « [. . .] criteri saranno : [. . .] la pubblicazione di opere inedite, ovvero, seppur già edite, che non abbiano goduto precedentemente di apparato critico o con apparato critico non più adeguato. »

13. See Bianchi 2018.

14. *Ibid.*

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increasingly crucial and is at the core of the funding schemes' priorities. With regard to editions of Dante, this found an early specific application in the Dartmouth Dante Project. Nonetheless, digitization poses some copyright and sustainability issues that the scientific community will have to seriously face over the next decades. This is not, however, essential for the considered editions, which were founded earlier. The criteria of economic sustainability and public interest are related to the librarian and the academic market. Through these parameters, National Editions enable the cooperation of scholars, publishers, universities and independent research societies.

1.2 The Società Dantesca Italiana

The Società Dantesca Italiana (hereinafter, SDI) was officially founded on the 31st July 1888 in Florence. It has been influential in the history of research and scholarship on Dante's work and has brought together a lot of (Italian and also international) Dante scholars. Moreover, the SDI played a central role in establishing the project of the critical edition of Dante's *Opera omnia* and served as a coordination hub throughout its evolution. The National Edition was initiated for the first time in 1913 but the SDI had already established a plan for a critical edition in 1889. Indeed, during those years, the preparation and publication of critical editions of Dante's works was already one of the SDI's main goals and a committee was entrusted with the challenging task of planning editions of the *Commedia* and of Dante's *Minor Works*. The scholars involved were Adolfo Bartoli, Alessandro D'Ancona and Isidoro Del Lungo [15]. The official acknowledgement thereof had the value of further confirmation and financial support for the project.

It is noteworthy, indeed, that the foundation of the SDI was preceded by other international societies dedicated to the study of the work and the biography of Dante [16]. In a profile of the SDI outlined on the occasion of its centenary (in 1988), Francesco Mazzoni underlined two fundamental aspects of the SDI at the national level as compared to the international and regional levels. On the one hand, it is important to recall that prior to the SDI, other societies (for instance, the Deutsche Dante-Gesellschaft, the Oxford Dante Society and the Dante Society of America) had already been founded and were active [17]. On the other hand, Mazzoni stressed that the centrality of Florence for Dante had played a central role in determining the location of the SDI, for example, in comparison to Milan, where another similar initiative had taken place some years before [18]. Nonetheless, the national dimension of the project in the era of the *Risorgimento* cannot be overestimated. It is, indeed, fundamental to the linkage between political unification and the Italian linguistic tradition. The consequences of its connection to Italian identity and its transformations throughout the last century involve the whole history of the SDI. There exists a tension between the political

15. See Mazzoni 1995, in particular, p. 23.

16. See *Ibid.*, in particular, p. 14.

17. See *Ibid.*, p. 19 : « The idea that abroad one could look at Dante with such a reverential enthusiasm convinced Negroni to stop the delay [...] » [author's translation].

18. See *Ibid.*, in particular, p. 18 : « Negroni [...] knew that in 1880 Emilio and Attilio De Marchi and Ambrogio Bàzzero had tried to gather (a group of) experts of literary and scientific culture in Milan (linked to the Accademia scientifica e letteraria, e.g. the University) in order to build a Società Dantesca [...]. But Negroni wanted it to be founded in Florence, linked to Istituto di Studi Superiori [...] for it to be settled in Dante's birthplace » [author's translation].

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and official aims of the society and the responsibility for the publication of a reliable edition and, in general, for the study of his literary production. This tension is, unsurprisingly, less present in comparable foreign societies that have the same focus on Dante's work.

A comparison with the Società Dante Alighieri highlights the main academic objectives of the SDI. Indeed, the former, founded in 1889 by a group of intellectuals coordinated by Giosuè Carducci, has branches all over the world and pays homage to the author in its title. However, it mainly pursues dissemination objectives, embracing Italian culture in a broader sense (literature, art, music, cinema, theatre, but also the food and fashion industries) [19]. The existence of these two societies, both founded in the 1880s, explains the duality of the interests connected with the origins of Italian literature. With regard to the SDI, the reference to Dante is extremely narrow, and the focus is on textual and philological issues.

As has been highlighted, the SDI's most important activity was the critical edition of Dante's texts, which was soon recognized as the National Edition. In addition, the *Commedia* has been involved in by a long-term project that includes collateral but nonetheless essential activities, such as the census of the manuscripts, the reconstruction of the *stemma codicum* and the discussion of linguistic characteristics of the surviving copies. The first volume published as Dante's National Edition dates back to 1913, and the project was refounded in 1964. These two dates have become particularly relevant to the study of Dante's works. Moreover, in 1921, on the occasion of the sixth centenary of Dante's death, the so-called *Edizione del Centenario* (Edition of the Centenary) was published by the SDI under the direction of Michele Barbi. This edition does not belong to the National Edition and it is not up to philological standards. The editors were aware of its provisional character. Nevertheless, it constitutes the earliest organic attempt to collect Dante's *Opera omnia* after accurate textual examinations. As a consequence, it has played a very important role in the establishment and diffusion (i.e., also translations) of the text of the *Commedia* [20].

The salient feature of this National Edition is the permanent coordination by the SDI, which has guaranteed a certain degree of continuity to the project. The SDI, which is still active and in charge of this edition, appointed an expert committee for the direct management of the Edition and, throughout the years, sought eminent scholars in order to complete these editions to the "best academic standard". Within the framework of the SDI and that of the National Editions, scholars such as Michele Barbi, Giuseppe Vandelli, Mario Casella, Gianfranco Contini and Giorgio Petrocchi have provided a decisive impetus to the research on Dante's poetry as well as to the evolution of textual criticism. Indeed, such a long-term project reflects the evolution of the state of the art of philological research, not only entailing substantial changes to the paradigms but also changes in interests during different decades. The consideration of this chronological development is still an essential part of the work for every scholar that deals with the textual issues of Dante's tradition [21].

19. See the Website https ://ladante.it/chi-siamo.html.
20. See Mazzoni 1995.
21. See section 2.1.

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From the perspective of textual criticism, the *Rime* and the *Commedia* have been unanimously recognised as the most complicated of Dante's texts to edit [22]. They both gained great attention in the SDI framework and then in the National Edition. The *Rime* was a field of methodological confrontation in the flourishing Italian philology of the first half of the 20th century and, to some extent, it still maintains this function. Indeed, in 2002, Domenico De Robertis' new edition in three volumes updated and replaced Barbi's renowned 1921 edition. Moreover, within the SDI framework, in the 1980s Robert Hollander (current Honorary President of the Society) and his group at the University of Princeton initiated and realized the Dante Dartmouth Project, which is a digital open-access collection of a number of commentaries on Dante's *Commedia*. As Francesco Mazzoni pointed out in his profile of the SDI on the occasion of its centenary (1888-1988), since 1968 there has been a shift in the academic humanities that has forced scholars to focus more on didactic issues than on research. In Mazzoni's opinion, this development reinforced the connection between universities, academies and cultural institutions [23].

Last but not least, another important objective of the society is the publication of the « Bullettino », which began in 1889. Its goal is the recording of all of the bibliographical items related to Dante studies. This project has recently developed into the *Bibliografia Dantesca Internazionale*, which is a digital database that collects all of the publications related to Dante's writings and sorts them using multiple criteria (subject, author, keyword). On the homepage of the project, the SDI announces that the bibliography will soon be integrated with the bibliography of the Dante Society of America (which, since 1953, has been an appendix of the annual journal *Dante Studies*) [24].

1.3 Centro Pio Rajna

The Centro Pio Rajna – Centro di studi per la ricerca letteraria, linguistica e filologica – (hereinafter, CPR) was established in Rome on 10th November 1988 [25], exactly one century after the foundation of the SDI. The CPR has a range of focal interests within Italian literature and one of the most relevant is, again, the study of Dante's work. Nonetheless, its projects do not overlap with the objectives of the SDI. Supported by the Italian Ministry for Universities and Scientific and Technological Research, its first important goal consisted in the census and the edition of commentaries on Dante. Later, during the 1998-2000 triennial, the society was awarded of a prestigious Italian academic research funding for Projects of Relevant National Interest (PRIN) [26]. In 2001, the project was split into two parts : one part, the *Edizione nazionale dei commenti danteschi*, was established under the direction of Enrico Malato [27] and the other, the census, was supported by the Fondazione Roma–Arte–Musei [28]. The Roman

22. See the Website http ://dantesca.org/cms/edizione-nazionale/.
23. See Mazzoni 1995, p. 30-31.
24. See the Website https ://dantesca.it/bibliografia/intro.html.
25. See the Website http ://www.centropiorajna.it/.
26. See the Website http ://www.centropiorajna.it/promozione*censimento.html.
27. This will be analysed in section 3.2 as it has been considered worthy of inclusion in the National Editions.
28. See the Website http ://www.centropiorajna.it/promozione*censimento.html.

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publisher Salerno Editrice published the *Censimento dei commenti danteschi* in three parts between 2011 and 2014 [29].

Then, in 2004, another project was announced and initiated by the CPR – and was again directed by Enrico Malato – namely, the *Nuova edizione commentata delle opere di Dante,* dedicated to a new commented edition of Dante's works [30]. The objective of the CPR is to propose an edition of Dante's *Opera omnia* by 2021 :

> There exists a need for an edition that offers to the average, not unprepared, reader, reading texts that are quite stable and trustworthy, equipped with a commentary that is able to adequately elucidate all the significances and the historical, literary and ordinary connections of those same texts. Moreover, it is necessary to offer a clear path through the forest of critical proposals [...] giving a selection of plausible solutions instead of other inaccurate or unreliable ones [31].

To a certain extent, this demonstrates the productivity of the first project as it reaffirms the necessity for interpretation as an exegetical exercise and as a didactic tool. In this respect, this project is a follow-up to the *Edizione nazionale dei commenti danteschi.* Indeed, it has grown out of the necessity for an update of the newest commentaries based on the in-depth study of this seven-centuries old tradition. At the same time, it returns to the core project of a complete edition of Dante's works, drawing on previous textual work. Its objective is to offer an eminent critical text for every edited work, sometimes intervening with textual revisions, especially where the most updated research has shown better options.

The initiative emulates the equivalent edition of the last century, when the collection of Dante's works, in the best textual form available at that time, allowed a group directed by Michele Barbi to publish the above-mentioned *Edizione del Centenario.* The fundamental difference between the two editions clearly reflects the state of the discipline at the respective times. The reputation of different editions of the last decades can be observed *via* Enrico Malato's editorial proposal since he refers precisely to the texts he considers to be more widely accepted. In particular, to mention just Dante's main works, the project expects to comment on the following versions. For the *Commedia,* it considers an integrated version of Petrocchi's National Edition. It reproduces Barbi's *Vita nova* and *Rime* but takes into account the influential *Vita nova* edition by Guglielmo Gorni and Domenico De Robertis' edition of the *Rime* (this was to have been edited by Corrado Calenda and Furio Brugnolo but, in fact, it was edited and published in 2015 by Donato Pirovano and Marco Grimaldi) [32]. *Il Convivio* is

29. See Malato, Mazzucchi 2011 ; Malato, Mazzucchi 2014 and Perna, Nocita 2013.

30. See the Website http ://www.centropiorajna.it/nuova*edizione.html. It is worth mentioning that, in the meantime, another commented edition in two volumes of Dante's *Minor Works* has been published under the direction of Marco Santagata for the prestigious collection, "I Meridiani" by Mondadori : Giunta, Gorni, Tavoni 2011 and Fioravanti, Quaglioni, Villa, Albanese 2014.

31. Malato 2012, p. 15 [author's translation] : « *Al problema di un'edizione che offra al lettore medio, non sprovveduto, dei testi abbastanza stabilizzati e attendibili nella lezione, corredati di un commento in grado di approfondire adeguatamente tutte le valenze e le correlazioni storiche, letterarie, dozzinali, ecc., dei testi medesimi, si aggiunge quello di orientare lo stesso lettore nella selva delle proposte critiche* [...]*, offrendo una selezione di ciò che può ritenersi plausibile, contro altre ipotesi giudicate improprie o inattendibili.* »

32. See Pirovano, Grimaldi 2015.

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based on the text of Franca Brambilla Ageno, edited for the National Edition with an updated commentary based on the contributions of Giovanni Busnelli, Giuseppe Vandelli and Cesare Vasoli. Moreover, it takes into account Pier Vincenzo Mengaldo's *De Vulgari eloquentia*, published by Antenore in 1968, and Prudence Shaw's *Monarchia*, published in 1995 as an update of Pier Giorgio Ricci's National Edition [33].

Summing up the brief description of these projects, the CPR's main focus primarily lies in a balance between textual criticism as a tool to establish a reading text and exegesis as a way to facilitate comprehension by a wider audience.

2 Scholarship

Independently of the National Editions, the connection between the literary canon and critical editions is seldom symmetrical. On the one hand, the inclusion of the canonical texts (on a linguistic, national or international basis) is determined beforehand by many different factors, such as scholastic syllabi and, above all, by the interests of the reading audience. They are particularly relevant given that they change throughout the centuries [34]. On the other hand, for the editor and the publisher, a decision to edit and publish a literary work is often related to the importance that scholars attribute to it.

At least since the Romantic rediscovery of Dante, his work has benefitted from worldwide consideration and reception. For this reason, the critical edition of his writings and, above all, of the *Commedia*, can be considered as the necessary complement to his fortune. While many scholars are now working on the text of the *Commedia* as well as on its interpretation from several different perspectives, we can clearly identify some leading influential Dante scholars prior to the 1960s. That said, it is noteworthy to point out that, from the early years, the complexity of Dante scholarship has always shown the importance of teamwork. Indeed, to some extent, even the foundation of research institutions such as the SDI and the CPR, has reflected the necessity for a common effort.

The SDI's first objective coincided with the purpose of the Italian National Editions, namely, to define a critical text of Dante's work and, subsequently, to publish a version free of the traditional corruptions both including its detailed critical apparatus and in a popular, jargon-free form. The common interest in having a verifiable (and, consequently, amenable to criticism and/or corrections) reading text is inherent to the strict connection between literary and textual criticism. The lengthy debates and discussions that have characterized the text of the *Commedia* since the 19th century revolve around one main fact : the tradition of the *Commedia* is made up of around 600 non-fragmentary manuscript witnesses, i.e., it was so massive that no one was able to consider and examine it in its entirety [35]. Moreover, the important reception

33. This edition was published in 2013 and was edited by Paolo Chiesa and Andrea Tabarroni with the collaboration of Diego Ellero : *IV. Monarchia,* Rome, Salerno Editrice. Shaw's edition of *Monarchia* was published in DVD-Rom in 2006 and in 2009 as a National Edition : Dante Alighieri, *Monarchia*, Florence, Le Lettere, 2009.

34. With regard to this perspective on the canon, see, for example, the introduction to an article by Emilio Pasquini (inspired by Cesare Segre's approach in *Ritorno alla critica*) : Pasquini 2002, in particular, p. 105-108.

35. See Trovato 2014, p. 299-300.

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of the poem over the centuries has allowed for many different interpretations, which are testified to by the numerous commentaries addressed by the CPR edition.

The two projects included in the National Editions focus on two different aspects of Dante's *Commedia*, basically, the critical text and the historical commentaries. The next two sections will offer a brief overview of the discussions that surround them. In particular, they seek to emphasize the peculiar role of the National Edition in supporting projects with a wide resonance.

2.1 On the critical text of Dante's *Commedia*

> [A]t least in the most complicated cases – which often concern the most popular works and those that are most representative of national traditions (Dante, Shakespeare, Cervantes...) – philology cannot limit itself to a masterly application of its rules of classification [36].

As has been demonstrated, Italian National Editions are selected following comprehensive criteria ; hence, they do not aim to build a hierarchical canon. Nonetheless, for literary authors, inclusion in the National Editions sometimes leads to the question of their belonging to the literary canon. It is indubitable that this label confers an official status on the editions in question. So, what happens when the considered author is a classical one such as Dante ? There would then be room, and a market, for more than a single edition, but the National Edition could end up being considered as the official one. Nevertheless, this idea is at odds with the struggle of the textual philologists to explain how and why their goal cannot be the establishment of a "definitive text" [37].

Moreover, the case of Dante's National Edition has to consider the fundamental problems of the discipline. Indeed, the *Commedia*'s textual tradition is particularly complicated, mostly due, as is known, to the absence of an autograph manuscript and to the aforementioned very rich early tradition, i.e., the proliferation of the text in Tuscany as well as in Northern Italy. The textual tradition is just as complex as it cannot offer reusable methods ; indeed, as has sometimes occurred, Dante scholarship is considered more as an independent discipline than as a field of research.

As a matter of fact, a wider discussion has spread from the problem of such a complex tradition that imposes radical methodological choices. A historical overview of the evolution of the way in which textual criticism has dealt with this text since the 19th century was analysed in the last part of Paolo Trovato's handbook *Everything you always wanted to know about Lachmann's method*, which presents the *Commedia*, among other case studies, as an example of a « very complicated tradition » [38]. The partially satisfying solutions, adopted by different scholars, had to be independently designed and selected since no other critical edition has faced similar challenges.

36. Trovato 2014, p. 336.

37. See Greetham 1992, p. 295-6 : « The single most important characteristic of textual *criticism* [...] is that it is *critical*, it does involve a speculative, personal, and individual confrontation of one mind by another, despite the attempts by some textual critics to turn the process into a science, and despite the frequent misunderstanding by non-textualists, who often suppose that textual criticism is merely a mechanical imposition of certain technical procedures in order to produce "definitive editions" of works that can be accepted without question and will never need editing again ».

38. Trovato 2014, p. 299-333.

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In brief, the necessity of a compromise had to be accepted early on. Two possibilities have, historically, been considered and are still relevant : one is the selection of a few reliable manuscripts, and the second is the selection of points of variation in the three *canticas*, which make it possible to compare different manuscripts. The first and most fruitful of these lists of variants contains precisely 396 *loci* and was compiled by Michele Barbi [39]. In this way, in his mind, different scholars working from various archives around the world would be able to compare the manuscripts. Through this comparison, it could have been easier to build a *stemma codicum* that completely represents the relationships of the manuscripts within the tradition of one text. There are two reasons why such a list was appreciated. First, later scholars have recognized that the points had been very effectively chosen in order to make a reconstruction of the *stemma codicum* possible. Second, it has established an adequate use of Lachmann's method through its revision : Barbi does not reject a genealogical construction ; by contrast, he adapts this method to the exigencies of this highly complex textual tradition.

The first SDI Edition of the *Commedia* was part of the *Edizione del Centenario*, which comprises all of Dante's works. Giuseppe Vandelli was responsible for the edition of the *Commedia* ; in particular, he corrected the "vulgate" edition in the 19th century. The particularity of his method consisted in renouncing the Lachmannian *stemma codicum* ; on the contrary, he sought to reconstruct the genealogy of single passages [40]. Vandelli's shortcoming was the correction of linguistic features [41]. Petrocchi's renowned edition was published for SDI in three volumes containing the *canticas* and one introductory volume between 1966 and 1967. It undoubtedly represents the standard edition of the second half of the 20th century. He solved the linguistic issues using an approach that differed from Vandelli's, namely, he was trustful of the linguistic character of the early copies of Dante's text [42]. Nonetheless, Petrocchi's National Edition, entitled *La "Commedia" secondo l'antica vulgata*, did not consider Barbi's *loci*, which had been selected in the meantime, but was based on a chronological selection of early manuscripts.

In fact, the defining feature of Petrocchi's effort was his decision to consider the *antica vulgata*, which means that the manuscripts he considered when compiling his text were limited to the 27 known copies dated before 1355. This methodological decision was based on the assumption that Boccaccio's corrupt copies had influenced all copies dated after 1355. Until the end of the last century there was unanimous agreement on the reliability of this edition and, consequently, most of the editions were based on Petrocchi's four-volume edition [43]. As a matter of fact, « [...] within three decades or so, Petrocchi's selection of 27 early vulgate copies was taken – by an understandable but risky metonymy – for the totality of the pre-Boccaccio tradition, of which it is merely a random sample (the surviving manuscripts that meet Petrocchi's definition of *antica vulgata* are close to one hundred) » [44].

39. See Barbi 1891, p. 34-37.
40. See Abardo 1995a p. 297.
41. See Vergani 1969.
42. See *ibid.*, p. 191-193.
43. See Canova 2011, in particular, p. 65.
44. Trovato 2014, p. 311.

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In recent decades, there has been a flourishing debate among philologists and textual critics that has led to new editions authored by Federico Sanguineti, Giorgio Inglese and the forthcoming edition of the research group directed by Paolo Trovato. Petrocchi himself admitted that his edition should be considered a working hypothesis and that later manuscripts could be *non-deteriores*[45]. Following this assumption, Giorgio Inglese updated his commented edition with some textual corrections, while Federico Sanguineti reconsidered Barbi's selection of *loci* in a larger choice of manuscripts in order to redefine the *stemma codicum* and to use it accordingly. In conclusion, it is worth remembering the ambitious task of the forthcoming edition directed by Paolo Trovato : « The only scientifically important, indeed, ineluctable objective after the Sanguineti edition and NP [*Nuove prospettive sulla tradizione della Commedia : una guida filologico-linguistica al poema dantesco*], is extending our investigation to the whole tradition. »[46]

2.2 On the tradition of the *Commedia*'s commentaries

The *Commedia*'s fortunes have not been constant over the centuries. The repeated (but not continuous) reception of Dante's *Commedia* and the consequent diffused practice of its commentary throughout the centuries has made an in-depth analysis of these texts necessary. Indeed, they are a great source of information for many fields of knowledge with regard to the centuries between the Middle Ages and today. On the one hand, it is important to take into account the fact that both students and scholars are interested in comparing their interpretations with previous ones[47]. On the other hand, the commentaries offer ideological and historical elements of the respective periods.

In an extensive review of the above-mentioned book edited by Paolo Trovato in 2007, which presented new perspectives on the tradition of the *Commedia*, Enrico Malato stated his strong belief in the necessity of favouring exegesis (and commentary) over the critical edition :

> At this point in the history of Dante criticism, the game of the *Commedia* (and not only of the *Commedia*) has to be played, essentially, on the commentary : that is the only way to guarantee the surviving and reverent knowledge through time[48]

In support of his argument, Malato mentions two editions that have already been discussed in this chapter, namely, the *Edizione del Centenario*, directed by Michele Barbi in 1921, and the second edition of the *Commedia* edited by Giorgio Petrocchi, with the same text as his famous *Edizione nazionale* and without all of the scientific apparatus[49]. The mention of these antecedents makes clear that the two functions

45. See Petrocchi 1995.
46. Trovato 2014, p. 329.
47. See Hollander 1995.
48. See Malato 2007, in particular, p. 404 [author's translation] : « *A questo punto della storia della critica dantesca la partita della* Commedia *(e non solo della* Commedia) si gioca fondamentalmente sul commento : che è la sola *via* per garantirne la sopravvivenza e l'ammirata frequentazione nel tempo. »
49. See *ibid.*

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and objectives of the research – the edition and the commentary of Dante's *Commedia* – are not separate, as was also the case for Barbi and Petrocchi.

An interesting aspect of the collection *Nuova Edizione commentata delle Opere di Dante*, edited by Enrico Malato, is the inclusion, together with Dante's works, of texts that were earlier considered to have been written by Dante but are no longer considered as such [50]. This decision underlines, as shown in section 1.3, that this project is strictly correlated with the CPR's previous work on the *Edizione nazionale dei commenti danteschi* and, thus, implies a diachronic view of the reception and exegesis of Dante's production.

Explicit philological attention to the commentaries of the *Commedia* was only demonstrated by scholars from 1965 onwards, when Giorgio Padoan published the first critical edition of commentaries on Dante, that is, Boccaccio's *Esposizioni* [51]. Interest in the early exegesis was already present in the 18th century but at that time commentary was not considered as an autonomous genre and, therefore, was not meant to be re-edited, reprinted and republished [52]. In fact, also in terms of the edition of the comments, there exist textual issues that begin with the analysis of the surviving witnesses. The most outstanding proposal was the aforementioned Dante Dartmouth Project, which, at the end of the 1980s signalled both the growing trend towards digitization and, more generally, the increasing interest in ancient commentaries. Luca Carlo Rossi has investigated the comments of the *Commedia* published after 1965 and identified 15, seven of which, he notes, are isolated, while eight are parts of three structured projects [53]. The first is a collection of the *Centro di Cultura Medievale della Scuola Normale Superiore* and focuses on commentaries in general as a source of understanding of the period. Giuseppe Billanovich and his group, editors of the collection "Medioevo e Umanesimo", directed the second, which also sits within the framework of medieval studies. The third project is the National Edition directed by Enrico Malato, which, for the first time, considers the comments on Dante as an entire and independent project [54].

3 Projects

As noted, the single National Editions have been initiated with different purposes depending on the typology of the texts and the relevance of the authors. Through both endeavours dedicated to the Florentine author – namely to his texts and to their commentaries – the following pages seek to show how different scholars and research teams have approached these matters of wide interest.

50. See Malato 2012, p. 17. Two volumes have been already been published in this series : *Il Fiore e il detto d'Amore*, edited by Luciano Formisano, Rome, Salerno Editrice, 2012 and *Codice Diplomatico Dantesco,* edited by Teresa De Robertis, Laura Regnicoli, Giuliano Milano and Stefano Zamponi, Rome, Salerno Editrice, 2016.

51. See Rossi 2011, in particular, p. 201.

52. *ibid.*, p. 206-207.

53. In addition to them, numerous articles and studies were published in the same time span ; they should be taken into account as essential preliminary work for the editions of the commentaries. See *ibid.*, p. 211.

54. See Rossi 2011, p. 212-213.

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3.1 The National Edition of Dante's *Opera omnia*

As outlined, the critical edition of Dante's *Commedia* is a specific case which, due to the complexity of its tradition, is hardly comparable to other National Editions. Since the foundation of the SDI project, its aim has been to offer an adequate and trustworthy reading text of the work of an already classical author. Indeed, at the beginning of the 20th century, there were no critical editions of the text.

As already mentioned, the first National Edition was acknowledged in 1913. It is known that in the early years the edition received economic support from the respective ministry and for 10 years, starting in 1914, a national law funded an annual contribution of 14 000 lire. This supported the first decade of work under the supervision of Michele Barbi and Giuseppe Vandelli [55]. The MiBACT Website now lists the precise amounts of funding granted since 2014. The edition of Dante's *Opera omnia*, registered again in 1964, was funded regularly from 2014 to 2017. Moreover, financial support of 300 million lire was assigned in 1964 for the celebration of the centenary and this also foresaw the possibility of funding editions [56].

Each work in the *Opera omnia* project was assigned to a different scholar or group of scholars. In 1932, Michele Barbi edited Dante's *La Vita Nuova* as the first publication of the *Edizione Nazionale*. This edition contained only minor amendments compared to the previous edition published by Barbi himself for the SDI in 1907. Moreover, at the beginning of the 20th century, the *Convivio* was assigned to Ernesto Giacomo Parodi and Flaminio Pellegrini, the *Monarchia* to Enrico Rostagno, the *Egloge* and the *Epistole* to Francesco Novati and the *Questio* to Ermenegildo Pistelli [57]. Nonetheless, *La Vita Nuova* was to be the only publication in three decades as a consequence of the concrete difficulties and hindrances that occurred during the Second World War [58].

The *Commedia* was assigned to Giuseppe Vandelli. Although he published various temporary editions from 1902, he did not produce a critical edition. In fact, the SDI later directed two editions of the *Commedia* as National Editions. Both of these were published in particularly significant years : the first one on the sixth centenary of Dante's death (1921) and the second on the seventh centenary of Dante's birth (1965). The 1921 edition, best known as *Edizione del centenario*, contained the text proposed by Vandelli and the 1965 edition was edited by Giorgio Petrocchi [59]. Both publications had great resonance and were treated as standard in the following decades.

Also the latter was basically an enterprise of the first half of the last century but the results were published after the Second World War. Fundamental to the National Editions are also the publishers, who were very active during this growing economic phase. Since this is a history of revisions and reprints, it is important to mention that the publisher changed after the institutional agreement was revised in 1964. Namely, in

55. See Mazzoni 1995, p. 28.

56. See the law of 20th March 1964, n.162 (« Extraordinary contribution of the state for the national celebration of the VII Centenary of the birth of Dante ; constitution of the committee for the celebrations » [author's translation]) http ://www.librari.beniculturali.it/opencms/export/sites/dgbid/it/documenti/2017-Aprile-Giugno/DMALIGHIERI.pdf.

57. See the Website http ://dantesca.org/cms/edizione-nazionale/.

58. See *ibid.*

59. See section 2.1.

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1964 Mondadori took responsibility for these publications, demonstrating its interest in covering the classics in its catalogue. This tendency was notably confirmed by the inauguration of the famous collection "I Meridiani" in 1969. The contract with this publisher was not renewed in 1984 and since that time the publications have been the responsibility of the Florentine publisher Le Lettere.

The National Edition of Dante's *Opera omnia*, directed until 1990 by Gianfranco Contini, is now the responsibility of the entire Editorial Committee elected by the SDI. The outdated editions are gradually being replaced by new ones. In particular, Barbi's *Vita Nuova* and Rajna's *De vulgari eloquentia* are due to be replaced by two editions that have already been published elsewhere, namely Gorni's *Vita Nova*, which was published by Einaudi in 1996, and Enrico Fenzi's *De vulgari eloquentia*, published by Salerno Editrice in 2012. At the same time, the *Questio de Aqua et Terra* is signalled on the Webpage as being in preparation by Gianfranco Fioravanti, as are the *Epistole* by Claudia Villa and the *Egloge* by Gabriella Albanese. These have all been included in the "I Meridiani" edition of the collection of Dante's *Minor Works*, directed by Marco Santagata [60]. Other works are relatively recent and have arisen within the context of the National Edition, such as the *Rime*, edited by Domenico De Robertis, *Convivio* by Franca Brambilla Ageno, *Monarchia,* edited by Prue Shaw and *Fiore. Detto d'Amore,* edited by Paola Allegretti [61].

At the moment, the SDI is still active on this editorial project but it is less focused on the edition of the *Commedia*, which is established in an updated version of the edition prepared by Giorgio Petrocchi. As a consequence, Enrico Malato includes, despite Federico Sanguineti's neo-Lachmannian edition, Petrocchi's text in his *Nuova Edizione Commentata della Commedia.* [62]

3.2 Edizione nazionale dei commenti danteschi

The philological attention on Dante's *Commedia* also has some consequences for the second degree of analysis. The significance of the *Commedia* as a fundamental text of Italian literature is, in fact, also recognized through its reception. The first hint of this is inherent in the diffusion of the text and is shown by the estimated number of existing manuscripts. Although about 600 extant manuscripts are currently known, Paolo Trovato has calculated that at least 6 400 manuscripts and early printed editions existed in the early centuries of the reception of the *Commedia* [63]. Moreover, this text has a long tradition of dedicated commentaries which have, in turn, been extensively considered by later commentators, right up to the present day. This means that the whole corpus of Dante witnesses and, above all, those of the *Commedia*, from the early manuscripts to the printed versions, contains numerous commentaries and glosses.

Two important projects have been based on these historical commentaries. The first, the already mentioned Dante Dartmouth Project, has primarily didactic purposes and has the character of a pioneer in the field of the digital humanities. The second, the *Edizione nazionale dei commenti danteschi*, initiated by the CPR, foresees an editorial

60. Dante, *Opere*, directed by Marco Santagata, Milano, Mondadori, 2011.
61. See the Website http ://dantesca.org/cms/edizione-nazionale/.
62. See Malato 2004, p. 133-139.
63. See Trovato 2014, p. 300.

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plan of 85 critical editions of the comments, which date from the beginning of the 14th century (Jacopo Alighieri) to the early 20th century (Isidoro del Lungo) [64]. These volumes have been edited by different scholars and have been published by Salerno Editrice since 2001.

To date, 14 editions have been edited and published : Cristoforo Landino, *Comento sopra la Comedia* (2001), Antonio Cesari, *Bellezze della "Comedia" di Dante Alighieri* (2003), Anonymous, *Chiose filippine* (2003), Matteo Chiromono, *Chiose alla "Commedia"* (2004), Niccolò Tommaseo, *Commento alla "Comedia"* (2004), *Chiose Palatine (Ms. Pal. 313 della Biblioteca Nazionale di Firenze)* (2005), Alessandro Vellutello, *La "Comedia" di Dante Alighieri con la nova esposizione* (2006), Vittorio Rossi *Commento alla "Divina Commedia" con la continuazione di Salvatore Frascíno* (2008), Francesco Torraca, *Commento alla "Divina Commedia"* (2009), Iacomo della Lana, *Commento alla "Commedia"* (2010), Andrea Lancia, *Chiose alla Commedia* (2012), Guido da Pisa, *Expositiones et glose. Declaratio super "Comediam" Dantis* (2013), Vincenzo Buonanni, *Discorso sopra la prima cantica della "Commedia"* (2014) and Ludovico Castelvetro, *Spositione a XXIX canti dell"Inferno"* (2017).

The establishment of this project as a National Edition allows the focus to shift from the edition itself to its reception. This does not mean that the definition of an authentic (or reliable) text has lost its importance. Indeed, the discussion of this issue is far from being exhausted, either from a stemmatic point of view or from the perspective of linguistics. Nonetheless, the stress on the evolution of the reception confirms the necessity to avoid static definitions of the canon in order to accept the changes to the perception and interpretation of the masterpiece that have occurred over the centuries.

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64. See the Website https ://centenaridanteschi.it/piano-editoriale-edizione-nazionale-dei-commenti-danteschi/.

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