

Appropriating the novel: Pietro Chiari's *La filosofessa italiana*

Marius Warholm Haugen
Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU)

In *La filosofessa italiana* (1753), written by the Brescian novelist and playwright Pietro Chiari, there is a conversation going on in a Bolognese bookstore, between a bookseller, an abbot and the novel's eponymous heroine, on the situation of the book market in Italy. The bookseller asks the young woman, who has recently come from France, whether she is in possession of any new French novel that he could have translated into Italian. Responding affirmatively to this, she adds that it is “[...] una tale vergogna de’ belli ingegni Italiani, che per produrre qualcosa di nuovo, dovessero ricorrere ad originali francesi” (“shameful that the beautiful and talented Italians have to turn to French originals in order to create something new”).¹ The abbot joins in the lament, stating that translations of French books are preferred to domestic literature for two reasons: firstly, the favourable inclination amongst Italians towards French culture, which has created the feeling that “in Francia nulla mai si stampasse di cattivo, e di scellerato” (“in France nothing bad nor villainous is ever printed”)²; and secondly, the greed of booksellers, who prefer translations because they are cheaper. The discussion has an obvious self-reflexive function, and is revelatory of an authorial preoccupation that surfaces regularly throughout the text: how to create room for an Italian novel.

That this would be a concern for Pietro Chiari is perhaps no wonder when we take into account that his book is considered to be the first modern Italian novel.³ During the previous century, the Italian peninsula, and Venice in particular, had seen the flourishing of the Baroque, heroic-gallant novel; but by the turn of the century this genre would lose its appeal and its production stagnate, noticeably because of a return to neo-classicism and a subsequent dismissal of Baroque aesthetics.⁴ In the first half of the eighteenth century, a new form of novel, more realistic and “bourgeois”, was brought to Italian readers.⁵ Authors such as Defoe, Fielding, Richardson, Lesage, Marivaux and Prévost were imported from Britain and France, achieving an extraordinary success. When Chiari published his first novel in 1753, it was the first noticeable attempt to exploit the success of this new form of narrative fiction by creating an original Italian novel.⁶

La filosofessa italiana thus constitutes a project of appropriation almost by default, through its pioneering status, making the novel Italian; but this project is also inscribed into the novel itself through a series of self-reflexive and intertextual motifs, developed both in the main text and in the paratexts (the title and the prefaces to the different volumes).⁷ Chiari establishes explicit connections to a number of novelistic models, in such a way that we can talk about his text as an appropriation, not first and foremost of each separate work, but of the novel genre *per se*. And, as a reflection of this appropriative practice, his novel constructs a metaphorical relationship between the heroine and the text itself that allows us to read the story of her quest for identity as a metaphorical account of the struggle to create an identity for the Italian novel.⁸

When I claim that Chiari appropriates the genre of the novel more than any single work, it is because the allusions to specific precursors accumulate in such a way that it becomes not only difficult, but also less relevant to distinguish which model has the greatest influence. Prévost, Boyer D'Argens, Marivaux, Fielding, de Mouhy, Richardson, Scarron, Lesage and Cervantes all reveal their influence, both through clearly distinguishable motifs and explicit mentions of their works. In a strict sense, for there to be an act of appropriation, there should be a "sustained engagement" between the text in question and its hypotext(s).⁹ In this case, then, the sustainment lies in the constant dialogue that Chiari's text conducts with the genre as such, by means of the numerous intertextual references.

The paratexts of the novel play a key role when it comes to establishing the intertextual connections, as well as in the project of appropriation as a whole. The paratexts will therefore be the subject of the first part of my analysis, where I will also give a brief account of the context in which Chiari wrote his novel, and of what was at stake for him in doing so. In the second part, I will move to the main text and to the plot of the novel, looking at how the analogy between heroine and novel mirrors and develops the issues presented in the paratexts. Before any of this, however, it is necessary to take a closer look at the notion of appropriation, in order to make clear why I use this term and how it is going to serve my analysis.

The debate in the Bolognese bookstore that served as my introduction indicates that Chiari's project of appropriation is complex, having to do with cultural politics and economics as well as with aesthetics. It concerns the state of Italian letters, its tradition and its capacity to create something new. It also concerns Italian national identity and

the relationship with other languages and cultures, especially with France and the French novel, but also with Britain and the British novel. And it treats questions concerning the book market and the financial conditions of authors.

Talking about this text in terms of appropriation allows us to highlight such features, the complex relationship between the text and the context of its creation. Signifying “to take (something) for one's own use”¹⁰, the term appropriation ties in with issues of property, of ownership and identity, as well as of the struggle for liberation and autonomy. When Julie Sanders closes in on a critical definition of the term on the basis of the Australian author Thomas Keneally's novel *The Playmaker*, which embeds an eighteenth-century play, she shows how this aesthetic appropriation functions as a catalyst for exploring the imperialist, material appropriation of aboriginal land and culture. She concludes that appropriation, “as with adaptation, shades in important ways into the discursive domains of other disciplines, in particular here the legal discourse surrounding the controversial areas of land and property rights”.¹¹ At the same time, appropriation distinguishes itself from adaptation, by adopting “a posture of critique, even assault”¹² with regard to its hypotext(s). In other words, an appropriating work depends upon one or several models, but at the same time creates a distance, liberates itself from them.

All these semantic layers make the term appropriation particularly suited to examining texts where the aesthetic relationship to other literary works conveys questions pointing beyond the world of texts, pertaining, for example, to cultural politics. In the case of Chiari's attempt to create room for an Italian novel, the traces of which are inscribed in the text itself, we are witnessing a negotiation with different domains of influence and power: on the one hand with the cultural establishment, gatekeepers of an aesthetic hierarchy, nostalgic for the golden age of Italian culture, and hostile towards foreign literary and linguistic influence; on the other, with the reading, and not least buying, public, avid consumers of French and British novels.

The strong presence of the Church and of numerous *accademie*¹³ was upholding an entrenched classical culture in Italy, which acted as a “veritable dike of *monumenta* and rules” against literary and aesthetic innovations.¹⁴ The eighteenth-century novel represented a veritable scandal, “sia con le insidie di una narrazione immorale sia attraverso uno stile che, per la prima volta, metteva in crisi le regole della concinnitas classica” (“because of the dangers of an immoral story as well as because of a style that,

for the first time, questioned the rules of the classical *concinnitas*").¹⁵ In Venice, where Chiari resided, classicism had a particularly firm hold on cultural life, owing a great deal to the influence of the purist and conservative *Accademia dei Granelleschi*. One of the founders of this *accademia*, Carlo Gozzi, who was a ferocious defender of the *commedia dell'arte* against the bourgeois-realist theatre of Carlo Goldoni and Pietro Chiari, was no less hostile towards the genre of the novel. Gozzi deemed Chiari's comedies and novels alike to be immoral and purely vulgar entertainment; the broad diffusion that the novels would get became proof enough of their miserable quality.¹⁶

And novels did indeed have a formidable diffusion in eighteenth-century Italy. A substantial number of universities (fifteen in all at the beginning of the century) helped ensure a high degree of literacy, noticeably in the cities, and meant the existence of a relatively large and composite public to take an interest in the novel.¹⁷ In terms of readership, conditions seemed favourable for entering into the business: "When Chiari published his first novel [...] there was considerable evidence to suggest that there would be a market for such works. The success of novels sold in translation from French and English demonstrated that there was a reading public avid for 'letteratura amena' [...]"¹⁸ Against this backdrop, the creation of the eighteenth-century Italian novel appears as a largely commercial enterprise, based on the imitation of foreign models: "In Italia il romanzo nasce su un impulso imitativo e commerciale, quando alcuni editori e letterati si accorsero che esisteva un pubblico, mentre non c'era un'attività narrativa italiana". ("In Italy, the novel was born from an imitative and commercial impulse, when a few publishers and literati discovered that there existed a public, while there was no Italian narrative activity".)¹⁹

The 'imitative impulse' is clearly detectible in *La filosofessa italiana*: the paratexts of Chiari's novel immediately place it in a direct relationship with the novelistic traditions of France and Britain, thus indicating its intention of appropriating them to the Italian context. The first references appear already in the title of the novel, *La filosofessa italiana*, a title which connects Chiari's novel to two of the most widely read fictional works of eighteenth-century France, Prévost's *Cleveland ou Le philosophe anglais*, and the pornographic and clandestine *Thérèse philosophe*, usually attributed to Boyer D'Argens. Certainly, 'the philosopher + adjective' titles were rather common, something that Chiari makes a humoristic nod at by having one of the minor characters of his novel write a play entitled "il *Filosofo ammogliato*".²⁰ But the success of these two

works was such that they would necessarily have resonated in the mind of Chiari's readers.²¹ As we shall see, in the case of Prévost's *Cleveland*, the reference soon becomes explicit.²²

That Chiari gave this title to his first novel is a symbolic marker that points to the act of appropriation. Transporting, so to speak, 'the philosopher + adjective' title into Italian territory by putting a national epithet on it, Chiari not only attaches his text to a specific genre, but also to a figure that the Italian public would strongly associate with France.²³ As Nathalie Ferrand argues, the title announces a "naturalisation de la philosophie en terres italiennes" ("naturalisation of philosophy on Italian soil")²⁴, the effect of which becomes all the more strong by the fact that the figure of the philosopher did not conform to the national stereotypes of the Italians.²⁵ Chiari makes it clear that he is moving Italian literature into a new aesthetic and cultural domain, and that he is taking possession of this domain by making it Italian.

However, the "philosopher + adjective" title constitutes simply one of several intertextual references. Moving into the preface, the author reveals, through the voice of a fictional editor, an explicit connection to a group of novels, British as well as French:

Chi ebbe la benignità di mandarmelo con tanta attenzione, m'assicura; e può per la capacità sua assicurarmelo; esser egli migliore di quanti ne sono usciti fin ora: più istruttivo della *Marianna*, più tenero della *Pamela*, più intrecciato della *Contadina*, più vago, e, dirò così, filosofico del *Filosofo Inglese*, che pur fu ricevuto con tanto compatimento.²⁶

The person who was so kind as to send me the book assures me – and he is in a position to assure me about this – that it is better than those novels that have come out so far: more instructive than *Marianne*, more tender than *Pamela*, more intertwined than *la Contadina*, more elegant and, I would say, philosophical than *il Filosofo Inglese*, which, however, was very kindly received.

Again, we detect the signs of an appropriation that contains the most central aspects of the notion: the admission made in the text of a dependence upon precursors, while the text simultaneously distances or liberates itself from these same models. The preface reveals the debt that the novel owes to several foreign models by claiming that it is superior to them. Chiari does not simply want to imitate, but to improve, taking and ameliorating the distinctive features of these novels, which were all best sellers of the first half of the eighteenth century.

It is significant that three of the four novels enumerated in the preface are French. In addition to Prévost's *Cleveland ou Le philosophe anglais*, we have Marivaux' famous novel *La Vie de Marianne* and *la Contadina*, which refers to de Mouhy's *La Paysanne parvenue*. The fourth novel is British, Richardson's epistolary novel *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded*. In addition, direct references to specific works, mainly French, will appear throughout the main text. First Lesage's picaresque tale *Gil Blas de Santillane* is mentioned²⁷, then the seventeenth-century novel *Le Roman comique* by Scarron²⁸. And towards the end of the second volume *La Vie de Marianne* and *La Paysanne parvenue* make a second appearance together.²⁹ A noticeable exception to the French and British dominance appears with a reference to *Don Quixote*³⁰, hardly a surprise considering the influence of Cervantes' novel on the development of the genre in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The distribution between nationalities is symptomatic of the influence that foreign literatures had on Italian culture in the mid-eighteenth century. While novels from both Britain and France were imported to Italy on a large scale, the aesthetics and language of its transalpine neighbour were dominant, also because British novels usually entered by way of quite liberal, French translations, which were either read directly in French or translated, a second time, into Italian.³¹ The latter was, for instance, the case of Fielding's *Tom Jones*, translated by the same Pietro Chiari, via the French translation of Pierre-Antoine de La Place.³²

French cultural domination was at the time the subject of great and multifaceted controversy. The conflict between Italian adherents of Enlightenment philosophy and its critics was one aspect of this. Another aspect concerned language: Italian went through a radical transformation in this period, partly influenced by English, but again mainly by French. One spoke of an *infranciosamento*, a "gallicisation" of Italian, which did not limit itself to simple vocabulary loans, but also implied changes of syntactic as well as stylistic nature. Many literati saw this *infranciosamento* as a destructive trend that harmed the Italian language by corroding the ideal model offered by the grand works of its golden age(s) in the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries.³³

Finally, suspicion towards the novel amongst the cultural élite, as a genre that fell out of the established generic hierarchies, was particularly strong in Venice, not only because of the domination of classicist aesthetics, but also because "theatre held sway over [its] social and artistic world".³⁴ However, *la Serenissima* was also the "big bookstore" of Italy, through which a major part of the foreign novels passed on their way

to the rest of the peninsula.³⁵ Paradoxically, it was to become the “capital of the Italian novel”, while at the same time being governed by men of letters particularly hostile towards the genre.³⁶

As mentioned initially, Chiari had already as a playwright been in conflict with parts of the cultural establishment, who deemed his plays immoral.³⁷ His move into novel writing would do little to placate his critics. On the other hand, Chiari’s novels would ensure him a vast readership.³⁸ The considerable success of French and British novels in translation must have made it tempting for Chiari to venture into the genre himself. He had started exploiting this success as a playwright, adopting for the stage the best-selling novels of authors such as Marivaux, de Mouhy, Fielding and Richardson.³⁹ The move to the novel meant a good financial outcome, combined with an increased degree of autonomy⁴⁰ and an escape from the turbulence of stage life.⁴¹

In light of the financial prospects that novel writing entailed, the preface of *La filosofessa* may be suspected of having been created for advertising purposes. The claim that the book is superior to the best sellers of its time is obviously constructed, for a large part, to have an effect on potential buyers. Furthermore, the preface presents the novel as having come from Paris, which can also be seen as an attempt at boosting its sales, considering the large interest that the Venetian readership took in novels coming from, as well as through, France: “Questo Romanzo, che espongo alla luce del Pubblico, è tanto nuovo, che l’ho ricevuto da Parigi a foglio per foglio, secondo che usciva dal Torchio; e posso dire con tutta franchezza, che in Italia non l’ha ancora veduto nessuno”. (“This novel, which I now put into the light of the Public, is so new that I have received it from Paris sheet by sheet as it left the press; and I can say in all honesty that no one in Italy has yet seen it.”)⁴² Two things stand out from this passage, namely the novelty and the origin of the book: new and “from Paris” are apparently essential elements of success. According to Maria Rosa Zambon, the French label was almost indispensable for a book to be successful, and led to Italian authors falsely attributing French origins to their productions.⁴³ Chiari seems to be exploiting the status of the French novel to promote his own work. As Carlo A. Madrignani notes, seeking to win the attention of novel readers meant adapting to their Francophile taste.⁴⁴

On one level, this would also explain why the novel is presented as a translation from French, the full title being: *La filosofessa italiana, o sia Le avventure della Marchesa N.N. Scritte in francese da lei medesima (The Italian (Female) Philosopher, or The*

Adventures of the Marquise N.N., Written in French by Herself). However, this false attribution is immediately undermined by the epithet *Italian*, which creates confusion as to the origin of the book. In itself, there would be nothing unusual about an Italian writing her or his memoirs in French; but for the first half of the novel Chiari's *filosofessa*, who is raised in a monastery in Avignon without knowing her parents, believes that she is French. The epithet of the title receives a possible, although unsatisfactory, explanation by the fact that the heroine, after escaping from the monastery, disguises herself as an Italian nobleman and philosopher. This explanation is unsatisfactory because the philosopher of the title is female, which makes the confusion complete. As Nathalie Ferrand puts it,

Ainsi, du roman à sa protagoniste, nous avons un rapport inversé: un vrai roman italien qui est un faux roman français (une fausse traduction), et de l'autre côté, une héroïne vraiment française qui est un faux jeune homme italien. En toute logique, Chiari devait appeler son roman soit 'le philosophe italien' ou bien 'la philosophe française'.⁴⁵

Thus, between the novel and its protagonist, we have an inversed relationship: a real Italian novel that is a false French novel (a false translation), and, on the other hand, a real French heroine who is a false young, Italian man. In all logic, Chiari ought to have called his novel either 'the Italian (male) philosopher' or 'the French (female) philosopher'.

The discrepancy in the title acts as an indicator of a revelation that is made in the second volume of the novel, of the true Italian identity of the protagonist. For in reality, the inversion that Ferrand evokes is not complete. It turns out that the heroine is only partly French, that she is in fact half Italian, born in Rome as the daughter of an Italian princess. From that moment on, Italy will be for her the preferred country: "[...] e parve che il Cielo, avendomi fatta nascere di Madre Italiana, mi destinasse a menare il resto della mia vita in un Paese da me prediletto, forse perché c'ero nata io medesima" ("and it seemed that Heaven, in making me be born by an Italian mother, had destined me to spend the remainder of my days in a country that I preferred, perhaps for having been born there myself").⁴⁶

For the first part of the novel, however, her Italian origins remain hidden from the heroine, and are only hinted at to the reader through the somewhat enigmatic title. Here we are reading an apparently French novel that tells the story of an apparently French heroine, both of which turn out to be Italian. This parallel is one of several indicators of a metaphorical relationship established throughout the text between novel

and heroine. In *Le Récit génétique au XVIII^e siècle* (2009), Jan Herman examines precisely such relationships, particularly visible in novels that combine the *topoi* of the foundling and the discovered manuscript. As an example, Marivaux' Marianne is a foundling in the same way as the manuscript that tells her story:

Comme le manuscrit qui contient son récit, Marianne est un objet trouvé. On ne sait, ni de l'un ni l'autre, d'où ils viennent. Au moment crucial donc où se pose la question fondamentale de l'origine de Marianne, se pose en même temps celle de l'origine du texte. Marianne et le texte qui véhicule son récit se rejoignent à l'endroit où les racines de l'arbre généalogique disparaissent sous terre. Marianne est la métaphore du texte.⁴⁷

Like the manuscript that contains her story, Marianne is a found object. One doesn't know, neither of one nor the other, where they come from. At the crucial moment, then, when the fundamental question of Marianne's origin arises, the question of the origin of the text arises also. Marianne and the text conveying her story meet at the place where the roots of the genealogical tree disappear under ground. Marianne is the metaphor for the text.

Although the text of *La filosofessa italiana* is not presented as a discovered manuscript, a similar uncertainty with regard to identity nonetheless ties the book and the heroine inextricably together. As Marianne, Chiari's protagonist may be read as a metaphor for the text.

When the Italian origins of the heroine have been revealed at the end of the second volume, the alleged publisher returns, in the preface to the third volume, to admit that the novel itself is also Italian, and that that there has in fact been no translation from French:

Dando questo Romanzo per una traduzione dal Francese, l'ho dato quale l'ho ricevuto. Anch'io sono stato ingannato dalla modestia dell'Autore, che per conciliare un po' più di credito all'Opera sua volle fingere, che fosse straniera, perché godesse del privilegio delle cose, che vengono da lontano. Il Romanzo è nato in Italia; un Italiano l'ha scritto; e l'ha scritto per far vedere alla nostra Italia, che non c'è sempre bisogno di risciorrere a Traduzioni servili, per dar alla luce un Libro da passatempo.⁴⁸

Presenting this Novel as a translation from French, I gave it as I had received it. I was myself fooled by the modesty of the Author, who, in order to give a little more value to his Work, wanted to pretend that it was foreign, so that it could benefit from the privilege of those things that come from far away. The Novel was born in Italy; an Italian wrote it; and he wrote it to show to our Italy that one does not always have to turn to servile Translations in order to put into life a Book of entertainment.

Evoking the Italian *birth* of the novel, this passage strengthens the metaphorical relationship between book and heroine. Here it becomes clear how Chiari uses the

paratexts to tell a fictional story of the text, parallel to that of the heroine, in which national identity plays a significant role. Parting from the question of identity, the two parallel stories develop a common discussion of the value of Italian culture.

The passage cited here resonates with the discussion in the Bolognese bookstore on the dominance of translations on the Italian market. That the book had hitherto been falsely presented as French is explained by the wish to give it greater legitimacy. It acquired greater value simply by appearing as foreign. In the light of this passage, attaching the novel to foreign models appears not merely as an argument designed to sell, but also conceals a critique of the prejudices of a readership favourably inclined towards “those things that come from far away”. The tone is subtly satirical, while at the same time revealing a strategy of persuasion: disguised in French clothes, so to speak, the book benefits from the prejudices of the readership, before its true identity is revealed to show how Italy is perfectly capable of producing a novel of its own.

Thus we may observe certain parallels between novel and heroine, not only with regard to their ambiguous national identity, but also with regard to disguise. The heroine is disguised as a man for the first part of the novel, which is what allows her to travel freely, and to act as a philosopher without the biases that a female thinker would have been encumbered with.⁴⁹ Thus, in *La filosofessa italiana*, putting on a disguise appears as a strategy for circumventing prejudices and social conventions, both for Chiari as a novelist and for his heroine as a philosopher. The male disguise of the heroine makes her think like a man, something that, to begin with, also persists after she has taken off the mask.⁵⁰ In the following part, her task becomes to develop, as Nathalie Ferrand puts it, “une capacité de philosopher en tant que femme” (“a capacity to philosophize as a woman”).⁵¹

In this way, the heroine’s “coming to be” as a female philosopher, a “filosofessa”, reflects a central aspect of Chiari’s own project of appropriation: to play a role, to imitate, to borrow the features of another – of men in the case of the heroine, of the French novel in the case of Chiari himself – is presented as an important step in a process that leads to the creation of an autonomous position, whether it be for the female philosopher or for the Italian novel. At the same time, this very process reveals how the autonomy is only partial. Chiari’s Italian novel is constantly drawn back to the shadow of its French precursors, a shadow that conditions the novel aesthetically and culturally as well as financially. There is a parallel with the position of a woman

philosopher in the eighteenth century who would necessarily be conditioned by the cultural biases that gendered the figure of the philosopher as male.

Let us not forget, however, that the heroine not only becomes a *female* philosopher, but also *Italian*, a “filosofessa italiana”. This brings us back to the question of national identity. If the French “disguise” of his novel is used by Chiari to exploit the favourable inclinations towards all things foreign, thus commenting on a key aspect of the Italian literary market, the French identity of the heroine enables her to take an external perspective on Italian culture. In the second volume, as the novel progresses towards the revelation of its Italian identity, the value judgement that the heroine makes of Italian culture gradually changes, moving from quite a harsh criticism to portraying a more balanced and hopeful view:

Seguitando in progresso di tempo a viaggiare dentro un Paese, che può dirsi il cuor dell'Europa, m'andò crescendo in istima a misura che lo andavo vedendo: di modo che deposi que' pregiudizj che avevo da principio contro di lui; e se ne parlo bene, ora che io so d'esser ancor io nata in Italia, non è prevenzione la mia, ma giustizia; perché cominciai a conoscere il pregio, anche prima di sapere che dovevo riputarmi Italiana.⁵²

As I continued, in the process of time, to travel through a country that can call itself the heart of Europe, it grew in my esteem as I kept discovering it; in such a way that I would put aside those biases which I had had against it in the beginning; and if I speak well of it, now that I know myself to have been born in Italy, it is not by prejudice that I speak, but by justice; for I began to know its value even before I knew I had to consider myself Italian.

The “biases” evoked here might be precisely those that Chiari identifies in his own readership: a self-criticism and a feeling of inferiority that give preference to foreign literature. At the same time, the French identity serves the heroine as a defence against potential accusations of chauvinism, since she can claim having begun appreciating Italian culture before she knew that she was Italian herself. The evolution of the heroine’s attitude finally becomes a defence of Italian culture, which may be read not only as a response to those who favour the foreign, but also to those members of the élite sceptical of the foreign influence and of the novel in particular. We might ask if Chiari is not showing his concern for the status of Italian culture in order to forestall the criticism coming from the literary establishment.

Chiari is probably addressing the same critics when defending the genre of the novel, again using his heroine as a mouthpiece. At a point in the novel where she still believes herself to be French, the protagonist criticizes Italian women for their vanity

and want of spirit, which she sees as a result of their lack of education. As a true *filosofessa* adhering to Enlightenment ideology, she presents French women as a role model for the Italian, on the basis of their extensive reading:

Non sarebbe così, se l'educazione fosse stata diversa. In Francia leggono più le donne, che gli uomini; perocché essendo esse meno occupate di loro dagli affari civili, e domestici, hanno più tempo da coltivarsi colla lettura l'ingegno; dandogli quella tintura di varie cose morali, storiche, geografiche, romanzesche, e civili, che basta al loro sesso, per meritargli il nome di donne di spirito.⁵³

It wouldn't have been this way had their education been different. In France, the women read more than the men. For since they are less occupied with civil and domestic matters, they have more time to cultivate their talent by reading, and to give it a sufficient touch of things moral, historical, geographical, novelistic and civil to earn them the title of women of spirit.

This critique of Italian women carries with it a defence of the novel, the reading of which the heroine sees as a means for women to educate themselves: the "novelistic" is presented without further reflexion as a part of those things that cultivate the spirit of women. By adding the novel to "things moral, historical, geographical [...] and civil", Chiari is seen communicating not only to the convinced readers of the novel, but also to sceptics, making an argument in favour of the genre they hold in such low esteem. In other words, the context of the text's creation, the *extra-textual*, is being thematized within the novel itself, not only in the prefaces.

The *intertextual* elements of the paratexts are also reflected in the main text. We saw initially how Chiari used the preface to the first volume to compare his novel to precursors. Similarly, the pseudo-memoir form that he adopts for the main text allows him to put forward comparisons and critiques of other works through the voice of his first-person narrator. When evoking the decision to write down her adventures, the heroine presents this as an opportunity to comment on other women's memoirs.⁵⁴ This makes her compare herself to Don Quixote, the hero of a novel that comments on chivalric literature:

Ripensando, che l'ingegnoso Romanzo del Don Chisciotte era una critica arguta, ma misteriosa di tutti gli Eroi Romanceschi, non meno che di tutti gli altri libri di questo genere, mi venne in idea di scrivere le mie avventure sullo stesso modello. Una Femmina, o compagna, o sorella di Don Chisciotte, che contrafacesse ne' suoi avvenimenti quanto si leggeva accaduto ad altre donne, di cui abbiamo le Memorie scritte da loro medesime, mi pareva soggetto assai buono, e ridicolo per un libro da passatempo, in cui registrando le avventure mie, potevo modestamente censurare l'altrui.⁵⁵

Thinking back to how the ingenious novel of Don Quixote was a witty, but mysterious criticism of all the romance heroes, as well as of all the other books of this kind, I had the idea of writing my adventures on the same model. A female version, or a companion, or a sister of Don Quixote – who would imitate in her events those that had happened to other women, of whom we have the memoirs written by themselves – seemed to me a very good and amusing subject for a book of pastime, in which, writing down my own adventures, I could modestly censure other people's.

There is appropriation here in a double sense. Chiari borrows an important aspect from Cervantes' novel that in itself is an appropriative act. We are invited to consider *La filosofessa italiana* as a rewriting of the pseudo-memoir genre in a way similar to what *Don Quixote* does with the chivalric novel.⁵⁶

Inspired by Cervantes' novel, Chiari's heroine aspires that her critique be "mysterious", in other words indirect or concealed. She wishes to present her memoirs as a sort of counter-example that exposes the flaws of others by mere virtue of its quality, without making upfront attacks. However, Chiari and his heroine do not refrain completely from issuing direct comments on specific precursors, returning to two of the novels mentioned in the preface:

[I]o scrivo le avventure mie, non quelle degli altri. Se la *Contadina ingentilita*, e la sventurata *Marianna* avessero fatto anch'esse questo riflesso, non avrebbero dato luogo nelle loro memorie a tante lunghissime istorie di persone affatto straniere; e facendo meno voluminosa la loro vita, l'avriano forse resa più bella.⁵⁷

I write down my own adventures, not those of others. If the *Contadina ingentilita*, and the unfortunate *Marianne* had thought the same way, they would not have made room in their memoirs for so many long stories about people who are in fact strangers; and so by making their life less voluminous, they would have made it more beautiful.

The heroine compares her memoirs to those of de Mouhy's peasant woman and Marivaux' Marianne in what is really a comparison between Chiari's novel and the works of his French colleagues.⁵⁸ Chiari argues that his novel is more rigorously composed, with no embedded stories and less time spent on portraying minor characters.⁵⁹

On one level, the fact that the heroine refers to *La Vie de Marianne* and *La Paysanne parvenue* as memoirs and not as novels implies an admission by the author of the fictional nature of his characters.⁶⁰ On another level, we see that the separation between character and novel is blurred by the identification between *life* and *life story*. If we take the last sentence of the quoted passage at face value, it is the lives of the

heroines themselves that are subject to a judgement of value, not only the stories that describe them. Or, to be more precise, it seems that those two cannot be separated, that the memoirs stand in a metaphorical relationship with the identity of its author, thus creating a bridge between her and the novel. The effect this has is to shed a particular light on the passages where Chiari's heroine comments on the differences between Italian and French culture. Every time she criticizes the lives of others, and especially when she does so along the lines of national identity, we are pointed to a covert literary and aesthetic discussion.

In some of the overtly meta-literary passages, cultural critique and literary commentary pass as inextricably linked. In the passage that leads up to the heroine comparing her memoirs to those of her novelistic precursors, she recalls some advice given to her by an Italian friend:

Con voi Francesi, mi diceva egli sovente, bisogna guardare cosa si dice, perché fate caso di tutto; e quando tornate a Parigi, per far un Romanzetto de' vostri viaggi, tutto vi torna al proposito. Quanti ritratti ho io veduti ne' libri francesi, di cui conosco in Italia gli originali!⁶¹

With you the French, he often said to me, one has to take care what one says, because you take an interest in everything; and when you return to Paris, to write a novelette about your travels, everything comes back to you as relevant. How many portraits have I not seen in French books, whose originals I know in Italy!

The assessment presented here targets at one and the same time the fields of custom and of literature. Consequently, in the following passage, the choice of Marivaux' *Marianne* and de Mouhy's *Paysanne parvenue* as points of comparison seems to depend just as much on their nationality – representatives of France and the French novel – as on the thematic similarities they share with Chiari's text.

This finally brings us to the revelation of the heroine's true origin. At the end of her quest, she discovers both a noble lineage and a dual national identity, Italian and French. The latter may, in the context we have presented, be seen to symbolize the intermediary position of the novel itself, halfway between two cultures. As for the aristocratic nature of her origin, it is perhaps a reflection of the ambivalent status of the genre of the novel, and of the author's wish to give it its *lettres de noblesse*. The genealogy of the novel was a problem that for a long time had preoccupied theorists and critics of the genre. In his influential *Traité de l'origine des romans* from 1670, the French clergyman and scholar Pierre-Daniel Huet sought to provide the novel with a noble

genealogy that extended back to Antiquity. Showing that the novel had a classical ancestry became a strategy for increasing its status within the hierarchy of genres.

According to Carlo A. Madrignani, Chiari was influenced by Huet's treatise during the period of writing *La filosofessa*⁶², although without adhering fully to its aesthetic and rhetorical theses.⁶³ Huet's treatise was highly influential in Italy, but was criticized by Italian literati for making the novel "too French" by downplaying the influence of the Italian Renaissance epic. Gasparo Patriarchi, who translated the treatise in 1758, "was able to transform [the novel] into an expression of an indigenous Italian literary culture", by "making [it] conform to the ideas of Renaissance literary theorists".⁶⁴ Coming back to our discussion in the Bolognese bookstore we see how it reveals the author's preoccupation with the novel's genealogy: Chiari is having his heroine mourn the era when Italy was "la maestra del Mondo"⁶⁵, while at the same time deploring the absence of an Italian novel in the flood of French and British imports. The subtext seems therefore to be as follows: this very novel will itself contribute to restoring the heyday of Italian literature. In the light of this, it is tempting to read the discovery of the noble heritage of Chiari's heroine, the daughter of a Roman princess, as a symbol of this preoccupation, an attempt to link the novel to a glorious, Italian past.

We have seen how *La filosofessa italiana* contains a meta-narrative, embedded in the main text and the paratexts, that discloses a veritable project of appropriation. In this narrative, the ambiguous relationship that Italian culture entertains with regard to France and French cultural dominance constitutes a central element. The story of the heroine's quest for identity, her journey to discover her Italian origins, and her reflections on the differences between France and Italy in custom, culture and aesthetics all mirror the explicit meta-literary discussions put forward in the paratexts and in certain key scenes on the conditions of publishing an original Italian novel.

In other words, *La filosofessa italiana* not only appropriates the genre of the novel, but also comments on its own appropriative project, revealing how it negotiates its position between dependence on, and liberation from, the hypotexts and the tradition they represent. In this negotiation, issues of aesthetics are at play, but also of economics and cultural politics, pertaining to the book market as well as to the status of the novel within the hierarchy of genres. On a fundamental level, the narrative of appropriation as developed in *La filosofessa italiana* tells the story of an author trying to manoeuvre his

text within a field of conflicting forces and interests. As such, it gives us a fascinating insight into the practice of writing a novel at a particular time and a particular place.

- 1 Alberto Asor Rosa, *Storia europea della letteratura italiana II. Dalla decadenza al Risorgimento* (Torino: Einaudi, 2009).
- 2 Ann Hallamore Caesar, 'Bagatelle, Bamboccerie, and Bordellerie: the Critics and the Novel in Eighteenth-Century Italy', in *Italian Studies*, vol. 60 (2005), pp. 22-41.
- 3 Ann Hallamore Caesar and Michael Caesar, *Modern Italian Literature*, (Cambridge: Polity Press: 2007).
- 4 Ann Hallamore Caesar, 'Theatre and the Rise of the Italian Novel: Venice 1753-84' in *Italian Studies*, vol. 67 (2012), pp. 37-55.
- 5 Pietro Chiari, *La commediante in fortuna o sia memorie di madama N.N. scritte da lei medesima* (Roma: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2012).
- 6 ———, *La filosofessa italiana, o sia Le avventure della Marchesa N.N. Scritte in francese da lei medesima* (San Cesario di Lecce: Manni, 2004).
- 7 Henri Duranton, 'Présentation', in Charles de Fieux, chevalier de la Mouhy, *La Paysanne parvenue, ou Les Mémoires de Madame la Marquise de L.V.*, ed. by Henri Duranton (Saint-Etienne: Publications de l'Université de Saint-Étienne, 2005).
- 8 Ted A. Emery, 'Tom Jones on the Italian Stage: The *Orfano* Trilogy of Pietro Chiari', in *Studies in eighteenth-century culture*, 18 (1988), pp. 311-22.
- 9 Nathalie Ferrand, '« C'est en habits d'homme qu'une femme peut philosopher » : figures féminines du philosophe dans *Thérèse philosophe* et *La Filosofessa italiana*', in *La figure du philosophe dans les lettres anglaises et françaises (XVI^e-XVIII^e siècles)*, ed. by Alexis Tadié (Paris: Presses Universitaires de Paris, 2010), pp. 171-87.
- 10 ———, 'Un roman plus philosophique que *Cleveland*? *La Filosofessa italiana* de l'Abbé Chiari (1753)', in *Fictions de la pensée - pensées de la fiction. Roman et philosophie aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles*, ed. by Colas Duflo (Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 2011), pp. 207-21.
- 11 Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*. trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

- 12 Jan Herman, *Le Récit génétique au XVIII^e siècle* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2009).
- 13 Carlo A. Madrignani, *All'origine del romanzo in Italia. Il "celebre Abate Chiari"* (Napoli: Liguori, 2000).
- 14 ———, 'Introduzione', in Pietro Chiari, *La filosofessa italiana* (San Cesario di Lecce: Manni, 2004).
- 15 Albert N. Mancini, 'Narrative Prose and Theatre', in Peter Brand and Lino Pertile, *The Cambridge History of Italian Literature*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
- 16 Vivienne G. Mylne, *The Eighteenth-Century French Novel. Techniques of Illusion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).
- 17 Julie Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation* (London: Routledge, 2006).
- 18 Maria Rosa Zambon, *Bibliographie du roman français en Italie au XVIII^e siècle. Traductions* (Florence: Publications de l'institut français de Florence, 1962).

¹ Pietro Chiari, *La filosofessa italiana, o sia Le avventure della Marchesa N.N. Scritte in francese da lei medesima*, (San Cesario di Lecce: Manni, 2004), p. 290. Unless otherwise stated, all translations in this article are mine.

² Ibid. p. 291.

³ See Carlo A. Madrignani, 'Introduzione', in *La filosofessa italiana*, (San Cesario di Lecce: Manni, 2004), (p. 5 et sqq.). In recent years, it is Madrignani that has spurred the interest in Chiari's novelistic authorship and its reception, with his edition of *La filosofessa italiana* and with his book *All'origine del romanzo in Italia. Il "celebre Abate Chiari"*, (Napoli: Liguori, 2000).

⁴ "[...] the return to neo-classicism with the Arcadian movement, account in part for the stagnation in the production of fiction during the late seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries in Italy and for the fact that the Baroque novel turned out to be a literary dead-end". Albert N. Mancini, 'Narrative Prose and Theatre', in Peter Brand and Lino Pertile, *The Cambridge History of Italian Literature*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 319.

⁵ As Carlo A. Madrignani notes, Chiari's novel might still employ the formula of adventurous-sentimental wanderings that the Baroque novel had inherited from the Greek model, but with a very different tonality and a "borghese-popolare" filtering of the central motifs of wandering and "fatal" encounters. Madrignani, 'Introduzione', p. 10.

⁶ Ann Hallamore Caesar has added an important nuance to the idea of *La filosofessa italiana* as the starting point of the modern Italian novel: “If one distinguishes, as modern critics usually do, between the indigenous novel and fiction that originates elsewhere, the history of the novel in eighteenth-century Italy separates neatly into two halves, the dividing line coming in 1753 with the publication in Venice of Pietro Chiari’s first novel, *La filosofessa italiana*. [...] If, on the other hand, one does not distinguish between foreign novels in translation and indigenous novels, the rise of the novel in Italy got under way some twenty years later”. Ann Hallamore Caesar, ‘*Bagatelle, Bamboccherie, and Bordellerie: the Critics and the Novel in Eighteenth-Century Italy*’, in *Italian Studies*, vol. 60 (2005), p. 24.

⁷ I use the term paratext in the sense of Gérard Genette: “A literary work consists, entirely or essentially, of a text, defined (very minimally) as a more or less long sequence of verbal statements that are more or less endowed with significance. But this text is rarely presented in an unadorned state, unreinforced and unaccompanied by a certain number of verbal or other productions, such as an author’s name, a title, a preface, illustrations”. The paratexts are to be understood as “accompanying productions” that “ensure the text’s presence in the world”. Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 1-2.

⁸ The title presents the protagonist as anonymous, and she is herself unaware of her true identity in the first part of the novel. When this identity is disclosed, it is with the name of d’Arville. To simplify, I will refer to her as “the heroine” or “the protagonist”.

⁹ Julie Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 4. I use the term hypotext to describe “the source text of any appropriation or rewriting”. *Ibid.* p. 162.

¹⁰ The article ‘appropriate’ in the *Oxford Dictionary of English* (Oxford University Press: 2005).

¹¹ Julie Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, p. 30.

¹² *Ibid.* p. 4.

¹³ On the complex role of the academies in Italian cultural life in the eighteenth century, see Ann Hallamore Caesar and Michael Caesar, *Modern Italian Literature*, (Cambridge: Polity Press: 2007), p. 13 et sqq.

¹⁴ Madrignani, *All’origine del romanzo in Italia*, p. 220.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* p. 29.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* p. 28. See also Ann Hallamore Caesar, ‘*Bagatelle, Bamboccherie, and Bordellerie: the Critics and the Novel in Eighteenth-Century Italy*’, pp. 38-39.

¹⁷ Ann Hallamore Caesar and Michael Caesar, pp. 32-33.

¹⁸ Ann Hallamore Caesar, *Theatre and the Rise of the Italian Novel: Venice 1753-84*, (2012), p. 40.

¹⁹ Madrignani, *All'origine del romanzo in Italia*, p. 221. Chiari was very open about his financial motivations for writing novels. See Ann Hallamore Caesar, p. 40, note n° 9.

²⁰ Chiari, p. 326. During the same period that he was working on his first novel, Chiari also wrote a play entitled *Il filosofo viniziano*. See Madrignani, *All'origine del romanzo in Italia*, p. 25. Chiari's great rival, the playwright Carlo Goldoni, wrote a comedy entitled *Il filosofo inglese*, first performed the year after the publication of Chiari's debut novel.

²¹ *Cleveland* was translated the first time into Italian in 1751, and became a huge success. See Maria Rosa Zambon, *Bibliographie du roman français en Italie au XVIII^e siècle. Traductions*, (Florence: Publications de l'institut français de Florence, 1962), pp. XVI, 67. As for *Thérèse philosophe*, I have not been able to find out whether it was translated into Italian, but many Italian novel readers would in any case have read French novels in the original. See *ibid.* p. VIII.

²² Nathalie Ferrand has published two articles comparing Chiari's novel to those of Prévost and Boyer d'Argens: 'Un roman plus philosophique que *Cleveland*? *La Filosofessa italiana* de l'Abbé Chiari (1753)', in *Fictions de la pensée - pensées de la fiction. Roman et philosophie aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles*, ed. by Colas Duflo (Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 2011), pp. 207-21; '« C'est en habits d'homme qu'une femme peut philosopher » : figures féminines du philosophe dans *Thérèse philosophe* et *La Filosofessa italiana*', in *La figure du philosophe dans les lettres anglaises et françaises (XVI^e-XVIII^e siècles)*, ed. by Alexis Tadié (Paris: Presses Universitaires de Paris, 2010), pp. 171-87. Ferrand does not treat this relationship in terms of appropriation, but proposes to "construct a dialogue" (Ferrand, 2011, p. 210.) between the novels, comparing their treatment of particular themes and motifs, noticeably the role of philosophy and the figure of the philosopher.

²³ "Pour le public italien, le philosophe sera d'ailleurs par excellence français, plutôt qu'anglais". ("For the Italian public, moreover, the philosopher will be French *par excellence*, rather than English".) *Ibid.* p. 211.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.* Of course, the figure did not conform to the contemporary role of women either. Chiari's title therefore has a double effect of surprise. The novel discusses at great length the conditions for women when it comes to cultivating their spirit and becoming philosophical beings. For more on this, see Ferrand, 2010.

²⁶ Chiari, p. 29.

²⁷ *Ibid.* p. 105.

²⁸ *Ibid.* p. 109.

²⁹ *Ibid.* p. 300.

³⁰ *Ibid.* p. 260.

³¹ See Zambon, p. X. “Les œuvres anglaises arrivaient donc en Italie ‘adaptées à la française’, et elles subissaient une deuxième adaptation à travers la nouvelle traduction italienne”. (“The English works arrived in Italy ‘adapted in the French manner’, and they underwent a second adaptation through the Italian translation”.) Translation was of course also a form of appropriation, especially in a period when translators had no scruples about moving far away from the source text, and seeking to adapt the text to the “taste” of their countrymen.

³² Ted A. Emery, 'Tom Jones on the Italian Stage: The *Orfano* Trilogy of Pietro Chiari', *Studies in eighteenth-century culture*, 18 (1988), p. 320. Note n° 6. According to Emery, Chiari's translation was published in Venice in 1756-57. Ibid.

³³ See Alberto Asor Rosa, *Storia europea della letteratura italiana II. Dalla decadenza al Risorgimento*, (Torino: Einaudi, 2009), pp. 230-33.

³⁴ “[...] the relationship between the novel and play saw the novel, which lacked the genealogy and status of theatre, as the poor relation, and nowhere more so than in Venice, where, for a part of each year, theatre held sway over the social and artistic world of her 170,000 or so residents”. Caesar, p. 38.

³⁵ See Zambon, p. VIII.

³⁶ Madrignani, *All'origine del romanzo in Italia*, p. 21.

³⁷ Ibid. p. 23.

³⁸ Ibid. p. 11 et sqq.

³⁹ Between 1751 and 1752, Chiari made stage versions of *Tom Jones*, *Clarissa*, *La Vie de Marianne* and *La Paysanne parvenue*. See Emery, p. 312.

⁴⁰ According to Ann Hallamore Caesar, the conditions were favourable for creating a loyal readership and subsequently for a steady income: “[...] there were ways of approaching publication which were already in place, such as advertising, that allowed a loyal following to be built up”. Caesar, p. 40. In addition, novel writing, as opposed to writing for the stage, “cut out everybody except the author himself and his publisher” (ibid.), making him self-employed.

⁴¹ Chiari had a polemic row with Carlo Goldoni, a public conflict that lasted several years and peaked in the period between 1753-54 and 1754-55. Ann Hallamore Caesar speculates that this conflict, and the high profile that playwrights had in Venice, were factors in Chiari's decision to move into the domain of fiction. Ibid. p. 39.

⁴² Chiari, p. 29.

⁴³ Zambon, p. XI.

⁴⁴ Madrignani, *All'origine del romanzo in Italia*, p. 40.

⁴⁵ Ferrand, 2011, p. 211.

⁴⁶ Chiari, p. 461.

⁴⁷ Jan Herman, *Le Récit génétique au XVIII^e siècle*, (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2009), p. 95.

⁴⁸ Chiari, p. 362.

⁴⁹ See Ferrand, 2010, p. 182.

⁵⁰ By way of studying intensely her role, the heroine is absorbed by it: “Avendo tanto studiato, per non darmi a conoscere per una donna, il portamento, e le azioni da uomo s’erano in me fatte così naturali, che mi pareva impossibile d’operare diversamente”. (“Having studied so much how not to reveal that I’m a woman, the behaviour and the actions of a man had become so natural, that it seemed impossible to behave differently”.) Chiari, p. 353.

⁵¹ Ferrand, 2010, p. 183. “Il lui faut trouver une capacité de philosopher en tant que femme et c’est ce à quoi est consacrée la suite de ce long roman”.

⁵² Chiari, p. 292.

⁵³ Ibid. pp. 265-66.

⁵⁴ This motif, which returns several times throughout the novel, forms the *incipit* of the main text, which attests to its importance: “Io scrivo le mie avventure per mio solo divertimento. Non cerco, come altre donne del mio secolo, la bella gloria di farmi immortale da me medesima colle pubbliche stampe”. (“I write my adventures solely for my own amusement. I don’t seek, as other women of my century, the great glory of becoming immortal through the public press”.) Ibid. p. 37.

⁵⁵ Ibid. p. 260.

⁵⁶ It is important to remember, in this respect, that the pseudo-memoir genre was, together with the epistolary novel, by far the preferred form of eighteenth-century French novelists. See Vivienne G. Mylne, *The Eighteenth-Century French Novel. Techniques of Illusion*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 32.

⁵⁷ Chiari, p. 300.

⁵⁸ The choice of precisely these two authors is interesting, since de Mouhy’s novel is an appropriation, or rather a pastiche, of two Marivaux novels, *La Vie de Marianne* and *Le Paysan parvenu*. De Mouhy’s protagonist is a double of Marivaux’ Marianne, whereas the title and the plot are borrowed from *Le Paysan parvenu*. For more on this, see Henri Duranton, ‘Présentation’, in Charles de Fieux, chevalier de Mouhy, *La Paysanne parvenue, ou Les Mémoires de Madame la Marquise de L.V.*, ed. by Henri Duranton (Saint-Etienne: Publications de l’Université de Saint-Étienne, 2005), (p. 10). Does Chiari intentionally play on this relationship, tripling it, as it were? In any case, for the informed reader of Chiari’s novel, the appearance of these two novels has the effect of emphasizing the appropriative aspect of the text. By the distance it creates to its hypotexts, Chiari’s text is more of an appropriation in the way we use the term here, than de Mouhy’s *La Paysanne parvenue*, which is a rather unimaginative copy. See *ibid.*

⁵⁹ *La Vie de Marianne* in particular makes extensive use of the embedded narrative, with the story of the nun Tervire developed as a parallel to that of Marianne.

⁶⁰ According to Nathalie Ferrand, Chiari fully discloses the fictional nature of his protagonist when he presents *La Vie de Marianne* and *La Paysanne parvenue* as memoirs and not as novels. Ferrand, 2011, p. 220. Chiari repeats this motif in his later novels, merging other fictional universes into his own text, and treating the pseudo-memoir novels referred to as real memoirs. In *La commediante in fortuna* (1755), it is Chiari's own previous novels that serve as hypotexts: "Ho detto di voler scrivere io pure le mie avventure, peroché l'esito favorevole avuto nell'Italia nostra, e fuori della medesima dalle Memorie della *Filosofessa Italiana*, della *Ballerina onorata* e della *Cantatrice per disgrazia*, mi hanno fatto invidiarne la lode invogliandomi a non esser da meno di loro nella memoria de' Posterì". ("I've said that I also want to write down my adventures, since the favourable result in both our own Italy and abroad of the memoirs of *La Filosofessa Italiana*, of *La Ballerina onorata* and of *La Cantatrice per disgrazia*, has made me envy their praise, and given me the wish to be held no less in esteem by our descendants than them".) Pietro Chiari, *La commediante in fortuna o sia memorie di madama N.N. scritte da lei medesima*, (Roma: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2012), p. 8.

⁶¹ Chiari, p. 300.

⁶² Madrignani asserts that Chiari's comedy *Il filosofo veneziano* (1753) contains a discourse that summarizes Huet's arguments. See Madrignani, *All'origine del romanzo in Italia*, p. 25.

⁶³ Ibid. pp. 26-27. Carlo A. Madrignani has identified in Chiari's style of writing an aesthetic halfway position: the temptation of the modern coupled with an incapacity to break free from the grasp of classicism. As Madrignani writes, "Chiari è il primo scrittore italiano che si lasci affascinare dalla vitalità della narrativa moderna non riuscendo tuttavia a andare oltre l'orizzonte estetico della sua educazione". ("Chiari is the first Italian writer to let himself become fascinated by the vitality of the modern narrative, but he is incapable of moving beyond the aesthetic horizon of his education".) Ibid. p. 27.

⁶⁴ Ann Hallamore Caesar, 'Bagatelle, Bambocserie, and Bordellerie: the Critics and the Novel in Eighteenth-Century Italy', p. 27.

⁶⁵ "[...] l'Italia era stata una volta la maestra del Mondo". Chiari, p. 290.