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The Enlightened Journalism of Elisabetta Caminer Turra

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Onde arguta mi viene
e penetrante al cor voce di donna,
che vaga e bella in gonna,
dell'altro sesso anco le glorie ottiene;
fra le Muse immortali
con fortunato ardir spiegando l'ali.
G. Parini, *La magistratura*

The 18th century saw the periodical press make its mark in almost all European countries. On the Italian peninsula, the Veneto region was home to various printed periodicals, including the *Giornale enciclopedico* (1774-1781), directed by Elisabetta Caminer Turra, which reported on literary and scientific innovations of Enlightenment Europe. Even in the context of the contemporary publishing scene, this was an unusual periodical both for its female direction and for its editorial configuration, and was created as a free and independent space from which to freely express enlightened ideas and fight against the principle of authority and the prejudices of the century. Building on studies by Angelo Colla (1992), Rita Unfer Lukoschik (1997), Catherine M. Sama (2003), Michaela Liuccio (2010) and Rotraud von Kulessa (2015), this paper aims to illustrate Caminer Turra's professional ethics through an analysis of a selection of her articles, written during the early years of her editorship of *Giornale* (1777-1779). I will focus on her interest in the writings of Denis Diderot, Jean Le Rond d'Alembert, and John Locke; her commitment to education as an instrument for social renewal, and – finally – on the ideas underpinning her journalistic work.

From Europa Letteraria to Giornale Enciclopedico: A Short History of an Enlightened Literary Journal

Between the 17th and 18th centuries, journalism was recognized as one of the most successful tools for building cultural networks. The gazettes, which published daily news and political pieces, were soon flanked by literary journals:¹ these contained reports on the most recent publications, both in the scientific and literary fields, and contributed to the circulation of books and ideas in Europe. The new genre spread in Italy in the second half of the 18th century, especially in Veneto, and one of its main goals was to announce newly printed books, along with a short presentation and – at times – a small excerpt. Domenico Caminer's *Europa letteraria* (1768–1773) collected information on recently published books to “risparmiare spesa e fatica a' letterati” [spare intellectuals the expense and effort] (Berengo 362), contained translations of articles originally published in the *Mercure de France*, and “si atteneva esclusivamente all'informazione libraria” [it kept exclusively to information pertaining to book publication] (Berengo 55). However, Domenico's young daughter soon transformed his initial goal of creating a trade journal for booksellers. Elisabetta Caminer Turra had been a skilled translator for the journal since its conception, and she soon started to intervene in cultural controversies and to write witty reviews of popular plays and poems. The young Elisabetta aimed her journalistic activity not just at providing information but it became, for her, an educational space from which to fight the prejudices of the time, divulge Enlightenment ideas, and offer readers tools to better understand books and events.² These elements determined the birth of *Giornale enciclopedico* (1774-1781).³ The title's claim of encyclopaedism was confirmed on the pages: it featured original articles about debates on education, translation, theatre,

* I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their careful reading and the tips and useful suggestions that have allowed me to improve this paper. I would also like to thank Mario Cosenza and Flavio Zaurino for their invaluable advice. All quotes from *Europa letteraria* and *Giornale enciclopedico* are taken from the Vatican Apostolic Library copy (Shelfmark: R.G.Period.V. 6-7). All translations are mine unless otherwise stated.

¹ In this paper “the terms *periodical*, *journal*, and *paper* are treated as approximately synonymous” (Italia 3).

² “Più letterario il primo [*Europa Letteraria*], più impegnato ideologicamente il secondo [*Giornale Enciclopedico*], essi avevano ovviamente riservato uno spazio notevole ai più significativi rappresentanti della cultura illuministica d'Oltralpe, con una predilezione tuttavia per Voltaire” [The first [*Europa letteraria*] was more literary-oriented, while the second [*Giornale enciclopedico*] was more ideologically committed; they had given considerable space to the most significant representatives of the Enlightenment culture of the Alps, with a preference, however, for Voltaire] (Piva 498).

³ Caminer Turra's journalistic activity will then continue with the *Nuovo giornale enciclopedico* (1782-1789) and the *Nuovo giornale enciclopedico d'Italia* (1790-1796). For the history of the journalist activity of the Caminer family see Liuccio 43-65, and von Kulesa 21-22.

European literature, and the evolution of language; there were also scientific articles on economics, law, agronomy, medicine, and mineralogy. Elisabetta Caminer Turra formally assumed the role of director in 1777, even though she was already effectively in charge from the outset. Collaborations with the most important intellectuals of the time,⁴ such as Alberto Fortis and – later – Giovanni Scola, succeeded in making the periodical “uno dei giornali italiani più vivi e coraggiosi” [one of the liveliest and most courageous Italian papers] (Colla 153) in the Veneto area, allowing it to spread beyond the regional borders.⁵ Elisabetta’s unscrupulous spirit, her polemical verve, her ironic and light style, and her adherence to contemporary philosophical principles made the periodical open to constructive debate, the only one in the Veneto to give “piena e matura testimonianza del pensiero illuministico” [full and mature testimony of Enlightenment thought] (Berengo LVI).

The *Modello di prefazione*, that opened the first issue of the *Giornale enciclopedico*, described the new journal’s method, content, and goals (Caminer 1). Elisabetta and her father – the latter was still involved in this first phase, both as author and as editor – wanted to contribute to a stimulating and constructive exchange of ideas with their readership against those who were still anchored in the principle of authority and resistant to new European ideas.⁶ As Sandra Parmegiani emphasises, the journalistic activity of the Caminers and their collaborators was “a continuous publishing enterprise that positioned itself at the forefront of progressive ideas, promoted Enlightenment values and played an essential role in fostering a network of critically informed Italian readers” (2).

Domenico’s “molti affari” [many businesses] prevented him from keeping up with the periodical and he soon became a simple collaborator, his articles increasingly rare, and eventually

⁴ For example, Giuseppe Gennari, Lazzaro Spallanzani, Melchiorre Cesarotti, Clementino Vannetti. These were intellectuals who embraced the Enlightenment philosophy and promoted – like Caminer Turra herself – its diffusion.

⁵ The journal listed subscribers from Bergamo, Bologna, Brescia, Florence, Fogliano, Lugano, Mantua, Milan, Modena, Naples, Padua, Parma, Pesaro, Treviso, Turin, Udine, Venice, Vercelli, Verona and Vicenza.

⁶ On *Giornale*’s role of European cultural container see Colla 1992, Unfer Lukoschik 1997, Liuccio 2010: 67-101. For the spread of English culture see also Parmegiani 2017 and Penso 2020.

the *Giornale Enciclopedico* passed definitively into the hands of Elisabetta who moved its printing to Vicenza, where she relocated in 1772 with her husband Antonio Turra.⁷ This was not a simple task: the director was responsible for the journal reaching its subscribers,⁸ finding new associates, negotiating with insolvent subscribers, balance budgets, source original contributions and, above all, write articles.⁹ Elisabetta's intense activity was therefore divided between the duties of director and editor-in-chief. However, although her role was not clear-cut, it was certainly facilitated by her family and geographical context. In this regard, Catherine M. Sama pointed out: "Were it not for her fortuitous circumstances – her Venetian birth, her middle-class status, her father's involvement in journalism and the theatre, and Domenico's devotion to her – Caminer would very likely not have gained access to an education, much less to a profession in letters" (13). Also, while in the 18th century women progressively became protagonists of the cultural debate and animated the intellectual life of salons and academies, they were only marginally involved in journalistic activity,¹⁰ often dealing exclusively with fashion,¹¹ not politics, philosophy, or cultural topics. For this reason, Caminer Turra's open-minded activity was often opposed by a prejudiced and hostile environment – especially when moving her business to Vicenza – which spared her no criticism,

⁷ In a letter addressed to Lazzaro Spallanzani, dated May 3, 1777 Elisabetta wrote: "Il giornale enciclopedico, ch'era una volta l'Europa letteraria, passa da Venezia a Vicenza. I molti affari del padre mio non permettono di farsene una occupazione principale, egli consente che io me ne addossi il pensiero" [The *Giornale enciclopedico*, previously *Europa letteraria*, moves from Venice to Vicenza. The many affairs of my father do not allow him to hold the directorship of this paper as his main occupation, and he has allowed me to take care of it].

⁸ In the colophon of each volume we read: "Di questo giornale se ne pubblicano due fogli per settimana, numerati in modo che a capo di 8 o 9 fogli se ne formi un volume. Si spediscono a fogli o a volume come ricercano li signori associati" [Two sheet of this paper are published a week, numbered so that a volume is formed every 8 or 9 sheet. They are delivered either in sheets or volumes, as per the request of the associated gentlemen].

⁹ Looking at the indexes of her publications, we see a gradual decrease in journalistic activity. Indeed, where in *Europa letteraria* her articles are very numerous, after she assumes direction – first unofficially and then officially – of the *Giornale enciclopedico*, her articles decrease in number and regularity. A list of items signed E.T.C. can be found in Pugliese.

¹⁰ We recall the activity of three other women in journalism on the Italian peninsula of the eighteenth century. In Rome, Caterina Cracas (1691-1771) continued to publish *Diario ordinario* or *Cracas* (1719-1771), after her father's death (Formica). In Naples, Eleonora de Fonseca Pimentel (1752-1799) directed *Il monitore napoletano* (1799), a Neapolitan Parthenopean Republic's revolutionary journal (de Fonseca Pimentel 1943 and 1999). In Venice, Gioseffa Cornoldi Caminer (1758-?) edited *La donna galante ed erudita: Giornale dedicato al bel sesso* (1786-1788) (Cornoldi Caminer 1983).

¹¹ For example, her sister-in-law Gioseffa Cornoldi Caminer published *La donna galante ed erudita*, joining other similar experiments: *La Toelette, ossia raccolta galante di prose e versi toscani dedicati alle donne* (1770-1771), *la Biblioteca galante* (1775-1777) and *il Giornale delle dame* (1781) were published in Florence; the *Giornale delle dame e delle mode di Francia* (1787-1794) was circulated in Milan. On this subject, see Morato and Strumia.

both against her public activity and her private life.¹² She responded to the accusations with irony, both in her the private correspondence and on the pages of her paper: her goal was to make her colleagues understand that women, victims of an educational system that privileged men, were nevertheless intellectual equals with men. Thanks to the revolution of Enlightenment, men should no longer be surprised at the existence of culturally active women. Caminer Turra, like other women,

ha appresa una lingua straniera, conosce l'uso della penna, sa star seduta ad un tavolino piuttosto che a una toeletta: ell'eccita in conseguenza un desiderio che rade volte suole aver per oggetto una donna, quello di vederla rendersi utile alla sua nazione maneggiando dell'Opere che possano procurarle dei vantaggi reali o dei piaceri, che forse è la medesima cosa (Caminer Turra, 1777 *Compendio*: 80).

[has learned a foreign language, knows how to wield a pen, and knows how to sit at a writing table rather than at her toilette. As a result, she inspires the desire that is rare in women, that of seeing her make herself useful to her nation by translating works that can bring her real advantages or pleasures, which is perhaps the same thing. (Sama 148).]

The quote is taken from the pages of the review to *Compendio della storia e della morale dell'antico testamento*, in which Caminer Turra presented the translation, made by a woman, of François Philippe Mezanguy's commentary to the Old Testament.¹³ She took the opportunity to covertly criticize the city of Vicenza (Sama 135), "dove i libri sono così poco comuni" [where books were so uncommon] (Caminer Turra, 1777 *Compendio*: 79), so distant from the new European enlightenment ideas, whose inhabitants had never responded kindly to her business. Recognizing an alter ego in the translator, Elisabetta reminded the reader that women, too, could

¹² From a young age, Caminer Turra suffered numerous attacks aimed both at her professional activity and private life. Her opponents pointed out shortcomings in preparation, ridiculed her female opinion, made ferocious attacks to undermine her reputation, and portrayed her in attitudes unbecoming for her sex. Antonio Piazza, for instance, drew a ridiculous portrait of the journalist in his short story *La Poetessa*, in which he insisted on the masculine connotation of her work and alluded to the promiscuity of her professional relationships (Piazza 19-20). A collection of 'portraits' – both flattering and denigrating – can be read in Fido.

¹³ The full title reads *Compendio della Storia e della Morale dell'antico Testamento, con Spiegazioni e Riflessi. Traduzione dal Francese. Tomo I, parte I. Vincenza, 1777, appresso Antonio Veronese*. In the review, the author reflects on the copious critical activity around the Holy Scriptures and presents this new publishing enterprise by way of quotes. The reference to the anonymous female translator allowed her to criticize Vicenza and to respond covertly to the criticism that she herself received precisely because she was a woman.

engage in cultural matters, and criticized the archaic, misogynistic system that for centuries had fixed women in pre-established roles and positions.

Elisabetta Caminer Turra and Denis Diderot's Encyclopedism

The journalistic activity of Elisabetta Caminer Turra, spanning the period 1768–1796, included articles, reviews, translations of excerpts from foreign periodicals, revision of pieces sent by external collaborators, and editing of literary and theatrical articles. Her copious production, often aimed at spreading European culture, mainly revolved around three themes: reflections on the journalist profession, the *querelle des femmes* (Sama, Giari Sich) and literary and theatrical practices (De Paolis, von Kulesa, Turchi). It should be kept in mind, however, that even if this tripartite thematic structure helps us navigate through her vast production, these themes should not be treated as watertight compartments, but as spheres that continuously communicate and enrich one another. In what follows, I will analyse six articles written by Elisabetta Caminer in the first two years of her official management of the *Giornale enciclopedico*. These showed her to be an attentive reader of the masters of the European Enlightenment, using their teachings to build and promote a certain idea of journalism: objective, militant, and open to the most revolutionary European debates. Mario Berengo (LVII) described this period of the journal as “eroico” [heroic], because it was a time when Elisabetta and her collaborators – first Fortis and then Scola – paid greater attention to Enlightenment culture, stressed the skills of journalism, and staunchly pursued a synthesis between the informative and the educational purpose, which was one of the main objectives of her publishing practice. Indeed, when she took over the management of the *Giornale*, Caminer Turra seized the opportunity to reflect on the work of the journalist. In her published

manifesto *Avviso pel giornale enciclopedico*¹⁴ she illustrated the principles that guided her publishing and cultural enterprise:

Il foglio di cui si tratta porta nel titolo la sua spiegazione. La parola *Enciclopedia* significa *concatenazione di cognizioni*¹⁵, e lo scopo di questo Giornale si è di raccogliere appunto e di presentar unite le cognizioni diverse, le quali rimanendo sparse¹⁶, e pel poco esteso commercio fra Libraj d'Italia e gli Oltramontani, e pella disistima che certe Nazioni hanno d'alcune altre, e per ragioni politiche, e per trascuratezza di molti, sarebbono in grande parte ignorate. L'autrice di questo foglio, che fu pubblicato per molti anni a Venezia, non vuole già spargere un'aria di ampollosità nella sua impresa, né dar ad intendere che essa sia necessaria all'umanità, che il mondo colto non possa farne a meno, che i posteri vi sieno interessati¹⁷ e che in natura non possa darsi di meglio: questi luoghi comuni della venalità o dell'amor proprio non fanno l'elogio di un'opera. Ma s'egli è vero che le concatenazioni dell'intelletto per una certa concatenazione di cause e d'effetti, di fisico e di morale sieno utili al cuore, e che il sapere contribuisca alla felicità, un repertorio di siffatte cognizioni una relazione esatta e seguita del loro stato e de' loro progressi, un mezzo onde conoscere quell'opere che i vari amatori possono quindi procurarsi, un'unione di diversi pensieri di genti colte, non sarà per avventura inutile affatto (Caminer Turra, 1777 Avviso).

[The newspaper at hand carries its explanation in the title. The word *Encyclopedia* means *concatenation of cognitions*, and the goal of this periodical is precisely to gather and present together diverse cognitions which, remaining scattered, would be largely unknown. This is due to the limited commerce between the booksellers of Italy and those of our transalpine neighbors, the contempt in which some nations hold others, political reasons, and the neglect on the part of many people. The author of this paper, which was published for several years in Venice, certainly does not wish to adopt a bombastic air about her undertaking, or insist that it is necessary to humanity, that the educated world cannot do without it, that its successors will be interested in it, and that something better does not exist in nature: these commonplaces of venality or self-love are not sufficient to inspire appreciation of a work. But if it is true that the cognitions of the intellect, owing to a certain concatenation of causes and effects, both physical and moral, are useful to the heart, and that knowledge contributes to happiness, a repertory of such cognitions, an exact and consistent account of their status and of their progress, a means by which to know those works that various amateurs can then procure for themselves, a union of the diverse thoughts of cultured peoples, will not perchance be at all useless" [italics in the text, e.d.] (Sama 143).]

¹⁴ The article, published after the February volume index, on unnumbered pages, is anonymous. Berengo and Colla, however, found the *Avviso* to be attributable to Elisabetta, recognizing her characteristic style: argumentative prose, use of *emotional* [italics by the author] words that aim to bring the reader close, technical jargon drawing on modern ideas, and an underlying strand of irony. For the first stylistic analysis of some of Caminer Turra's articles, published in the years following those under consideration here, see Giuliano.

¹⁵ The expression, in italics in the original text, is the translation of the definition of the term *encyclopédie* written by Denis Diderot. I quote *Encyclopédie* from the digital critical edition available at the following link: <http://enccre.academie-sciences.fr/encyclopedia/>.

¹⁶ Diderot writes: "En effet, le but d'une *Encyclopédie* est de rassembler les connoissances éparses sur la surface de la terre".

¹⁷ As Diderot points out: "[...] d'en exposer le système général aux hommes avec qui nous vivons, & de le transmettre aux hommes qui viendront après nous; afin que les travaux des siècles passés n'aient pas été des travaux inutiles pour les siècles qui succéderont; que nos neveux, devenant plus instruits, deviennent en même tems plus vertueux & plus heureux, & que nous ne mourions pas sans avoir bien mérité du genre humain".

Written in the third person to maintain an objective and impartial tone, the article explains the role of the word *enciclopedico* in the title of the journal, and illustrated its new structure. Upon careful reading, there are many points of contact, here, with the *Encyclopédie* entry edited by Denis Diderot (Leca-Tsiomis), as underlined by the quotes I included in the footnotes. Indeed, in addition to the definition of the term “enciclopedico” as “enchaînement de connoissances”, Elisabetta attributed to the periodical the same task that the French philosopher had attributed to the *Encyclopédie*: to collect the “connaissances éparses sur la surface de la terre”. Compared to that model, however, she illustrated the aims of her enterprise through the *topos* of false modesty. She freely translated and paraphrased the original, and smoothed out its revolutionary tones. For her, as for Diderot, the essence of journalism was constituted by a union of utility and pleasure.¹⁸ Further points of contact between Caminer Turra and Diderot can be found in Diderot’s *Prospectus de l’encyclopédie*, published in the first volume of the *Encyclopédie*, useful for “guider ceux qui se sentiroient le courage de travailler à l’instruction des autres, qu’à éclairer ceux qui ne s’instruisent que pour eux-mêmes”. This was a common objective for the *Avviso*, in which, as testified by the quote above, Caminer Turra illustrated the aims of the *Giornale enciclopedico*.

Echoes of the *Prospectus* are also present in the second part of the text, in which Caminer Turra describes the sections¹⁹ into which the newspaper was divided:

Eglio [gli estratti] saranno fatti da più persone, giacché un Giornale Enciclopedico può farsi, ma una testa Enciclopedica non si trova, ed inoltre l’Autrice conosce troppo le sue deboli forze e la scarsezza del suo talento. Chi non è intendente della materia del libro non ne additerà le cose nuove, non rileverà i plagii o gli errori, non parlerà giustamente di Matematica sennon un Geometra, di Metafisica sennon un Filosofo, di Medicina sennon un Medico, di Poesia sennon chi la maneggia o la gusta [...] (Caminer Turra, 1777 *Avviso*).

[They [excerpts] will be done by several persons, since an encyclopaedic journal can be produced, but an encyclopaedic head cannot be found; and, in addition, the author knows too well her weak powers and the meagerness of her talent. Whoever is not knowledgeable about

¹⁸ Remember Horace’s *Ars poetica*: “Omne tulit punctum qui miscuit utile dulci, / lectorem delectando pariterque monendo” (vv. 343-344).

¹⁹ The sections are: *Letteratura*; *Novelle letterarie*; *Accademie*; *Opuscoli*; *Aneddoti*; *Teatro*; *Mode*; *Tratti di beneficenza*; *Avvenimenti storici*.

the subject of a book will not point out new things and notice cases of plagiarism or errors. About mathematics only a geometer will speak, justly, about philosophy only a philosopher, about medicine only a physician, about poetry only someone who crafts it or enjoys it [...] (Sama 144)]

While in the *Encyclopédie* Diderot unequivocally recognized the impossibility of attributing the works of the encyclopaedia and the universal knowledge of nature and art to a single man,²⁰ in the *Prospectus* he stressed the principle of specialism, which inspired him to draw up the various entries of the *Encyclopédie*. The pertinent section reads:

Nous avons distribué à chacun la partie qui lui convenoit; les Mathématiques au Mathématicien; les Fortifications à l'Ingénieur; la Chimie au Chimiste; l'Histoire ancienne & moderne à un homme versé dans ces deux parties; la Grammaire à un Auteur connu par l'esprit philosophique qui regne dans ses Ouvrages; la Musique, la Marine, l'Architecture, la Peinture, la Médecine, l'Histoire naturelle, la Chirurgie, le Jardinage, les Arts libéraux, les principaux d'entre les Arts mécaniques, à des hommes qui ont donné des preuves d'habileté dans ces différens genres: ainsi chacun n'ayant été occupé que de ce qu'il entendoit, a été en état de juger sainement de ce qu'en ont écrit les Anciens & les Modernes, & d'ajouter aux secours qu'il en a tirés, des connoissances puisées dans son propre fonds: personne ne s'est avancé sur le terrain d'autrui, ni ne s'est mêlé de ce qu'il n'a peut-être jamais appris (Diderot, *Prospectus*).

The principle of specialism was also linked to intellectual property, and for this reason in the *Giornale*, and previously in the *Encyclopédie*:

Ad ognuno si sottoporranno le iniziali de' nomi di chi lo scrisse, o un N.N. per chi non volesse essere conosciuto e ciò perché nessuno si faccia merito o demerito colle cose degli altri. (Caminer Turra, 1777 Avviso)

[The initials of the person who wrote each article will be appended to it, or, for whoever does not wish to be known, the letters N. N.174 will appear; and this so that no one will earn merit or demerit with the things of others (Sama 145).]

Les différentes mains que nous avons employées ont apposé à chaque article, comme le sceau de leur style particulier, du style propre à la matiere & à l'objet d'une partie (Diderot, *Prospectus*).

²⁰ We read in Diderot: "Quand on vient à considérer la matiere immense d'une *Encyclopédie*, la seule chose qu'on apperçoit distinctement, c'est que ce ne peut être l'ouvrage d'un seul homme. Et comment un seul homme, dans le court espace de sa vie, réussiroit-il à connoître & à développer le système universel de la nature & de l'art?"

Moreover, Furio Diaz pointed out that in Italy there was a close link between periodicals and encyclopaediae “in un reciproco richiamarsi e confrontarsi, dove l’esigenza del riferimento ad un’informazione più sicura si integra con la spinta verso le ipotesi di un nuovo fermento intellettuale” [in reciprocal recall and exchange, where the need to refer to more reliable information is integrated with the drive towards hypotheses of a new intellectual ferment] (17). Furthermore, in the introduction to the monographic issue of *Studi settecenteschi*, entitled *L’enciclopedismo in Italia nel XVIII secolo*, the scholar states that Caminer Turra’s activity gains “la palma per mobilità e curiosità intellettuale, spirito di novità di tono enciclopedistico” [the palm for mobility and intellectual curiosity, spirit of novelty of encyclopedic tone] (22).

This also signalled a new conception of the journalist, as a socially, politically, and culturally active intellectual, already proposed by Verri’s *Il caffè*.²¹ Capra defined the Milanese magazine as an “enciclopedia, naturalmente, intesa nel senso dell’*Encyclopédie* di Diderot e d’Alambert, come strumento per lo svecchiamento della cultura e il progresso della società, per una battaglia latamente politica” [an encyclopaedia, of course, understood in the sense of the *Encyclopédie* of Diderot and d’Alembert, as a tool for cultural renovation and social progress; for political battle] (223). In the second half of the century, after the first circulation of enlightenment ideas, literary periodicals intended to spread the knowledge of the century and new publications, and began to present the typical features of modern journalism. Journalists were recognized as professional figures, getting paid for their work;²² they were objective and impartial, free from ideological prejudices, and addressed a vast audience without class distinctions, with the conviction that their writings could contribute to a moral and civil renewal of society (Berengo IX-LXV).

²¹ The newspaper was directed by Pietro and Alessandro Verri and published in Milan every ten days between 1764 and 1766. In the introduction, Pietro Verri provided readers with explanatory data on the action and meaning of the newspaper, namely spreading useful knowledge and amusing citizens (Francioni-Romagnoli 411).

²² In a letter to Clementino Vannetti (17 luglio 1778), Elisabetta wrote: “S’io mi fo pagare [underlined in the text, e.d.] dagli associati il mio Giornale, gli è che non voglio gettare per puro divertimento due mila e tante lire all’anno, e che fo quello che i più rispettabili uomini e letterati hanno fatto e fanno.” [If I get the associates to pay for my newspaper, it is because I do not want to throw away two thousand and more lire a year for fun, and because I do what the most respectable men and writers have done and continue to do].

Advice for the Reader: Reflections on Empiricism and Education

While objectivity and impartiality were the principles guiding journalistic practice, Caminer Turra's *Giornale enciclopedico* also addressed the qualities required to be a good reader. The long review to *Guida dell'intelletto nella ricerca della verità*²³ was seized as an opportunity to outline the figure of the ideal reader and suggested that for "chiunque aspira ad essere uomo ragionatore, autore luminoso di opere ove genio, verità e raziocinio sono necessari" [anyone who aspired to be a man of reason, an enlightened author of works of genius, truth and reasoning were necessary] (Caminer Turra, 1777 Guida: 4). The long review was dedicated to an Italian translation of a posthumous work by John Locke (*Of the Conduct of the Understanding*) by Francesco Soave and was divided into three parts, published in the May, June, and October issues of 1777. These three articles are interesting not only for their subject, but also for the further reflections that this topic allowed. The reviews contain Caminer Turra's reflections on translation, on Locke's empiricism, and on education, and it is to these three areas of interest that I will now turn my focus.

In the first part, Caminer Turra criticized the state of translation in Italy (Caminer Turra, 1777 Guida: 4). She complained of the excessive circulation of translations on the basis that the abundance obscured the most deserving works. Now, Francesco Soave was not part of the "guazzabuglio" [jumble] since he was an excellent translator both for his chosen language and for the translated subject, offering the Italian reader the opportunity to read "una raccolta di regole dirette a trar l'uomo dall'errore, ed a condurlo a pensare e ad operare da saggio" [a collection of rules aimed at preserving man from error and guiding him to think and act wisely] (Caminer Turra, 1777 Guida: 5). Moreover, Elisabetta was a translator who supported the educational purpose of translation. Her contributions in this field served not only to spread the European bourgeois

²³ The full title is: *Guida dell'intelletto nella ricerca della verità. Opera postuma di Gio. Locke, tradotta e commentata da Francesco Soave C. R. S. Prof. di Filos. Mar. nel R. Ginnasio di Brera, in Milano, per Gaetano Motta, 1776*. Soave had also translated a compendium of Locke's *An essay concerning human understanding* for the same publisher in 1775 (*Saggio filosofico di Gio. Locke su l'umano intelletto compendiato dal Dr. Winne. Tradotto, e commentato da Francesco Soave*).

drama,²⁴ but she also nourished and promoted theoretical reflections on translation, aimed at educational purposes (De Paolis 143).

In the second part, Caminer Turra delved into the principles of Lockian philosophy and insisted on the values of experience and exercise (Caminer Turra, 1777 Proseguimento: 4), arguing that they are essential for the ability to reflect widely and correctly on things and words. It appears, here, that Caminer Turra was aware of Locke's theory of knowledge and the importance that this English philosopher bestowed on experience (Locke 1998: 117).²⁵ Indeed, Caminer Turra here declares that she will explain the *Essay*'s concept of knowledge for the benefit of those who did not know Locke (Caminer Turra, 1777 Proseguimento: 6), an unusual choice given that philosophy did not fall within the range of topics she usually addressed. Scrolling through the indexes of the periodical, it can be noted that Elisabetta preferred to direct her attention to literary dissemination and reviews of didactic and historical works. The more philosophical section was entrusted to Giovanni Scola, who spread the thought of the encyclopaedists, of the sensist philosophers, and of Locke himself.²⁶ Elisabetta recognized the "arditezza" [boldness] of her work and took the opportunity to make a long digression into the usefulness of the excerpts and the advantages of the journalistic profession:

Ma non è arditezza estrema il frammischiare degli scherzi alla grave Filosofia e dei riflessi da Giornalisti alle decisioni di Locke? Nulladimeno che importa? Se anche per questo l'estratto presente divenisse lungo oltre al solito, vi sarà chi faccia un delitto dell'estendere l'estratto d'un Libro buono per comodo specialmente di chi non lo leggesse per esteso, di render sensibili con alcuni esempi comuni le massime astratte di così gran Filosofo? Lo scopo nostro facendo un giornale si è di render conto dell'opere altrui e di spacciare eziando i nostri buoni o cattivi pensieri, di studiare noi medesimi un'opera grande per mezzo dei nostri estratti e di nel tempo stesso divertirci se ce n'è il caso. Oh il nostro divertimento e i nostri esempi e le ciance che non si trovano nell'opera ponno annoiare una parte di quei che ci leggono! (Caminer Turra, 1777 Proseguimento: 5).

²⁴ Theatrical translations were collected in *Composizioni teatrali moderne* (1772) e *Nuova raccolta di composizioni teatrali tradotte da Elisabetta Caminer Turra* (1774-1776). She also translated the Salomon Gessner's *Idilli* (1781). On Gessner see Unfer Lukoschik 2000.

²⁵ Caminer Turra might have read Locke in Italian, but she appropriated his philosophical thinking through d'Alembert's mediations.

²⁶ Giovanni Scola had reviewed Locke's *Saggio sull'intelletto umano commediato*, translated by Soave, in the May 1776 issue. Caminer Turra's long article, published the following year, summarizes its content. See Colla 96-98.

[Isn't it risky to combine Locke's philosophy with the reflections of journalists? But who cares? If the excerpt should become longer than usual, there will be someone who will consider it useful because he can draw from this some examples of Locke's philosophy. The purpose of a newspaper is to make accessible the works of others, but also to allow the journalist to study the book and have fun. But we know that our fun and our examples could bore part of the readership!]

So, both the author and the reader may benefit from the review. The author was able to read the most current revolutionary works of the time, keep up with cultural and political news, and broaden their intellectual baggage; the reader could discover a new book and build their own opinion about it. The reader should not be bored by digressions or unnecessary details as these may increase their knowledge and train their thinking faculties. Indeed, before going on to describe the subject of the book under review, Caminer Turra ended her digression reminding the reader to always exercise reason with moderation and consistency:

Ci vuole pazienza in quasi tutte le cose umane quello che fa vantaggio o piacere ad uno porta discapito o dispiacere ad un altro. Dopo questa digressione concludiamo con Locke sul serio che della facoltà di ragionare dee farsi molt'uso ma, come nelle altre cose, non dimenticarsi la moderazione. Una tranquilla insistenza, una conveniente lentezza, ma senza interruzione abiteranno le menti a ragionare e gli occhi a vedere la verità. (Caminer Turra, 1777 *Proseguimento*: 5).

[It takes patience because what benefits someone disadvantages the other. After this digression, we recall that Locke recommends using reason but, as with other things, using it in moderation. A quiet insistence, a convenient slowness, but without interruption, will accustom the minds to reason and the eyes to see the truth.]

In the third and last part of the review, Caminer Turra gave more space to the reviewed book's topics and focused her attention on reading:

Si crede generalmente, che la molta lettura sia una scala essenzialissima per acquistare molte cognizioni; eppure ell'è tutt'altro sovente. Se non si esamina l'estensione, la forza, la connessione di quel che si legge, altro non si fa ch'esercitar inutilmente la memoria, né il giudizio divien più sano. Quelli ordinariamente che non riguardano i libri sennon come semplici magazzini di cognizioni false dispetto e contraddittorie danno un altro errore, vi ricercano le cose sole che favoriscono le loro proprie opinioni e si mantengono quindi ne' loro inganni. La lettura esige un esame imparziale ed attento, né si potrà esser al fatto del vero senza rimontar alla base d'un argomento per vedere s'ella è giusta, e se sta a dovere colle conseguenze che se ne deducono. Sembrerà a prima vista a' Leggitori che questo esercizio

esatto e penoso debba impedire l'avanzarsi negli studi, ma gli è tutt'altro; imperocché chi s'avvezza ad esso vede in un colpo d'occhio quello che un altro non vede sennon con estrema fatica, quindi si facilitano anziché difficolarsi. (Caminer Turra, 1777 Fine: 34-35)

[It is generally believed that much reading is necessary to increase knowledge; yet this is not always the case. If you do not examine the extent, the strength, the connection of what you read, your memory is uselessly exercised, and your critical ability does not improve. Those who look at books as mere warehouses of knowledge seek only the things that favour their opinions and therefore remain lodged in their deceptions. Reading requires an impartial and careful examination, returning to the basis of an argument to see if it is right, and deducing the consequences. At first glance it will seem to readers that this exact and painful exercise should prevent them from advancing in their studies, but it far from it: on the contrary, those who get used to this have it easier.]

The author here criticizes the superficial reading of texts, aimed only at mnemonic exercise, inviting her readers to instead engage in a careful and objective reading that really allows them to understand the text, and encouraging a critical examination of the source. Attaining a deeper understanding of the text would facilitate the reader's efforts to advance in their studies and to acquire those *concatenazioni di cognizioni* proposed by the journal. The points of contact with Locke's *Of the conduct of the understanding* are particularly evident here. The final paragraph of Chapter 19, entitled "On reading" reads:

To which let me add that this way of thinking on and profiting by what we read will be a clog and rub to any one only in the beginning; when custom and exercise has made it familiar it will be dispatched in most occasions without resting or interruption in the course of our reading, the motions and views of a mind exercised that way are wonderfully quick, and a man used to such sort of reflections sees as much at one glimpse as would require a long discourse to lay before an other and make out in an entire and gradual deduction. Besides that when the first difficulties are over the delight and sensible advantage it brings mightily encourages and enlivens the mind in reading which without this is very improperly called Study. (Locke 1706: 62-63)²⁷

Caminer Turra, moreover, seemed to adhere to Locke's pedagogical principles, not only for the importance he attaches to experience but also for their educational use.²⁸ Indeed, educators had to

²⁷ Recall that Caminer Turra had read this passage in Soave's faithful translation.

²⁸ Caminer Turra wrote: "Gli educatori dovrebbero ricordarsi di questo principio per insegnare alla gioventù fondatamente quante più cose è possibile e non prevenirla per alcune di esse, onde schivare l'uno e l'altro di questi inciampi." [Educators should remember the principle to teach young people as many things as possible and to not

open the minds of young people and prepare them to understand the complexity of reality. It should also be added that, in line with the Enlightenment spirit, she believed in the social and political value of education, as its practice contributed to the moral and civil renewal of society. It was a good educational system that determined the improvement and the size of society, because “i talenti, dice Locke, sono stati sempre gli stessi e la sola educazione o la moda ha fatto che una generazione superi l'altra [talents, said Locke, have always been the same and only education or fashion had made it so that one generation exceeds the other] (Caminer Turra, 1777 Fine: 35).

Moreover, through her journalistic activity and her publishing initiatives,²⁹ Caminer Turra offered considerable stimuli to the contemporary debate on the renewal of the educational system. For example, in the review *Raccolta di opuscoli attenenti l'educazione della gioventù*,³⁰ published in the September issue of 1779, in addition to presenting the subject of the book as usual and reporting on the most significant extracts, the author shifted her attention from the content of the volume to the educational method suggested therein:

Si presentino ai giovani i vari oggetti dell'Universo: le molte idee cui somministrano riscalderanno, scuoteranno il loro cerebro, senza le mozioni del quale non può l'uomo percepire né far confronti; queste idee molteplici e chiare perché offerte ai sensi da oggetti reali e semplici li faciliteranno questi confronti e produrranno giudizi; coltivato il cerebro, assuefatta la mente a simili funzioni, ella comincerà a stabilire principi, formerà raziocini estesi e tanto più giusti, quanto che avranno per base la realtà delle cose quindi s'incamminerà con riuscita alla felice scoperta della verità. Si osservi molto e diligentemente; il resto verrà da per sé: ecco in una parola il sistema. (Caminer Turra, 1779 Raccolta: 100-101)

[Present to the young the various entities of the universe: all these ideas that we give them will warm up and shake their brain, without this motion men can neither perceive nor

prevent them from doing anything, in order to avoid both of these stumbling blocks] (Caminer Turra 1777 Fine: 34). Even Locke insisted on this point: “Young beginners should be entered in, and showed the use of that they might profit by the reading” (Locke 1706: 62).

²⁹ In 1778 she supported the publication of the *Raccolta di opuscoli attenenti l'educazione della gioventù* in Vicenza for Antonio Veronese; she translated the four volumes of De Beumont's *Il magazzino delle fanciulle* from the French; she commissioned the *Piccola enciclopedia* – a volume exclusively addressing the education of young people – which she printed in her printing shop, that was open and direct with her husband in Vicenza. It should also be noted that the *Giornale enciclopedico* repeatedly welcomed the debate on the educational system whenever books with pedagogical content appeared on the publishing market. For more on this, see Colla 94-97.

³⁰ Full title: *Raccolta di opuscoli attenenti l'educazione della gioventù, in Vicenza 1779. Per Antonio Veronese, vale tre lire.*

compare. These varied and clear ideas, which are given to the senses by real and simple objects, will facilitate these comparisons and produce judgements; once the brain is cultivated and the mind has gotten used to this function, the mind will start to establish principles, it will form extended reasonings, which will be correct, to the extent to which they have as their basis the reality of things. And then, the mind will successfully set off on the happy discovery of truth. Observe frequently and diligently: the rest will come of its own accord: this, in a nutshell, is the system.]

Educators had to provide their students with the appropriate tools for understanding simple ideas and autonomously develop complex ones, whatever the object of study. Educators also had to insist on the value of experience (Caminer Turra, 1779 Raccolta: 101) and observation (Caminer Turra, 1779 Raccolta: 102). And all this would be possible only if they used “ragione” [reason] understood as:

facoltà di comprendere, che quasi affilata dall’uso delle cose, penetra nella sostanza delle nozioni, stabilendo se sieno uniformi o no, che non venera, non esamina, che dietro alle tracce della verità scopre e rigetta l’errore e che servì a formar Newton, Bacone, Locke, Franklin, Beccaria. (Caminer Turra, 1779 Raccolta: 100).

[The faculty of understanding, sharpened by the use of things, penetrates the substance of the notions, establishes whether or not they are uniform; it does not worship, it does not examine, it discovers the truth, it rejects error, and it served to train Newton, Bacon, Locke, Franklin, Beccaria.]

Isaac Newton, Francis Bacon, John Locke, Benjamin Franklin, and Cesare Beccaria did indeed contribute to the re-foundation of knowledge, and proposed solutions – different but not antithetical – to the problem of the methods and functions of knowledge. Here, she surely had in mind the *Discours préliminaire de l’encyclopédie*,³¹ that had arisen from acute reflections on the experimental method. Jean Le Rond D’Alembert not only took advantage of Lockean analyses of ideas³² but proposed a genealogy of modern knowledge, suggesting that the first three

³¹ This was the ideological manifesto of the *Encyclopédie* and “grants that knowledge depends upon and may change according to human cognitive tools, biases, and cultural contexts” (Moscovici 386). Caminer Turra’s purpose was the same. I quote from the digital critical edition available at the following link: <http://enccre.academie-sciences.fr/encyclopedia/section/S01-85e1e524ff91/?p=v1-p29&>.

³² “On peut diviser toutes nos connaissances en directes et en réfléchies. Les directes sont celles que nous recevons immédiatement sans aucune opération de notre volonté; qui trouvant ouvertes, si on peut parler ainsi, toutes les portes de notre âme, y entrent sans résistance et sans effort. Les connaissances réfléchies sont celles que l’esprit acquiert en opérant sur les directes, en les unissant et en les combinant” (D’Alembert, *Discourse*).

aforementioned thinkers contributed the most to the advancement of knowledge (D'Alembert, *Discourse*); to these three Caminer Turra added two philosophers who adhered to (and contributed to spread of) the teachings of the *Encyclopédie*, in order to offer the reader a comprehensive picture of the models to come. Therefore, on d'Alembert's invitation, Caminer Turra recommended the use of reason, as conceived by the Enlightenment thinkers: that is, as a faculty capable of probing the bottom of things, free from prejudice, not subservient to any idol, capable of highlighting truth by rejecting falsehood and error; the kind of reason that had guided the most enlightened minds of the century in their efforts towards moral, cultural, and civil renewal.

The Modern Deontology of the Journalist

The principles of the European Enlightenment guided Elisabetta Caminer Turra's activity and underlined the purposes of her journal. Indeed, *Giornale enciclopedico* was often heavily criticised for the innovative themes it embraced, including criticism of ecclesiastical obscurantism, satire on academic pedantry, denunciation of prejudice, and attacks against all sorts of principles of authority. Her cultural activity appeared scandalous and was often the subject of biting criticism, from which she was always ready to defend herself, in both in public³³ and private correspondence (Caminer Turra 2006).

Ludovico Barbieri was one of her most aggressive critics. He wrote a polemical pamphlet, printed anonymously in Venice in 1778, against Caminer Turra's journal, accusing it of spreading irreligion and corrupting good people's customs. The attack was especially aimed at the section (enthusiastically received by the director) *Lazzaretto letterario*, edited by Clementino Vannetti (Canfora), which satirized the culture of the time with fake reviews of non-existent books. Elisabetta responded to the criticism in an article published in the April 1779 issue, entitled

³³ Not infrequently Elisabetta decided to publish letters of reproach on the pages of the *Giornale*, followed by her reply. See Di Giacomo 2002 and Sama.

Ricerche sommesse intorno ad alcuni dei Riflessi giusti e necessari (che qualcuno oserà forse di non credere né necessari né giusti) sul *Giornale enciclopedico*, in which she illustrated the critical methodology adopted in her writings and her idea of journalism. The long article was divided in two parts: in the first, Caminer Turra defended her periodical and the journalist profession; in the second, she shared a series of tips useful to anyone who wanted to engage in honest and unprejudiced criticism. The defence was conducted through twenty-nine points, or “argomenti” [topics], in which the author quoted Barbieri’s critical statements to prove their inaccuracy, whereby all allegations were rebutted with a series of paradoxes that had a ridiculing effect without causing offense. Caminer Turra’s logic showed that the opponent’s arguments were replete with fallacies aimed to persuade the readers by deceiving them. For example, she denied the accusations of “irreligione” [irreligion] and dishonesty by recalling the *imprimatur* that had always been granted her journal (Caminer Turra, 1779 *Ricerche*: 113); pointing to the detractor’s anonymity, she reaffirmed the critical impartiality and personal accountability of journalism (Caminer Turra, 1779 *Ricerche*: 114); she recognized the intellectual value of the French philosophes (Caminer Turra, 1779 *Ricerche*: 117), and advocated the intellectual’s right to be paid for their work (Caminer Turra, 1779 *Ricerche*: 119). Her witty irony and plain prose made her response to Barbieri’s pedantic and hypocritical piece of criticism into a real pamphlet.³⁴ With civility and reason – two key values of the *république des lettres* – Elisabetta underscored the errors of the anonymous detractor, overturned any criticism, revealing his vacuity. In the second part, then, the opponent was invited to write a piece for the paper, and received some useful advice for an honest journalistic practice:

³⁴ The narrative process here used by Caminer Turra recalls d’Alembert’s *Avertissement des éditeurs*, published in the opening of the third volume of the *Encyclopédie*. Here, the French philosopher responds to the three types of criticism, received from several fronts: “les critiques purement littéraires”, “les imputations odieuses contre nos sentimens & notre personne” and “les critiques quelques personnes à qui nous n’aurons pas rendu justice”. D’Alembert also asked his detractors to abandon anonymity: “Nous ne leur demandons qu’une grace, c’est de nous accuser par écrit, & de se nommer”.

Siate saggio e veridico e conseguente; non chiamate gli uomini increduli quando condannano l'incredulità; non vi impegnate in discorsi filosofici quando non siete a caso di dar definizioni, e di ragionare seguitamente. Non aggiungete, non sottraete da quello che si dice. Non incoraggiate la maledicenza e, giacché senza passioni gli uomini non ponno ridursi, compiangeteli, e cercate di istruirli, ma con le buone, se non volete far tutto questo, lasciate stare almeno quelli che sentono differentemente da voi [...] Siate buono e cortese [...] Non incoraggiate il falso, l'alterezza, l'imbecille pretesa che quanto più è avanzato tanto ottien meno. Lasciate che ognuno disponga del suo come vuole. [...] Di quello che non intendete non parlate giammai. Siate modesto, umano, date più esempi che lezioni; e dopo d'aver pensato quindici mesi per far un libercolo di cinque fogli, stampate qualche cosa di più *giusto* e di più *necessario*. (Caminer Turra, 1779 *Richerche*: 129-131)

[You should be wise and truthful and consistent; you do not call those unbelieving who condemn unbelief; you do not engage in philosophical discourse when you are not capable to give definitions, nor to reason afterwards. You don't add, nor subtract from what is said. Do not encourage malice, but pity men without passion and try to instruct them with good humour. And if you don't want to do all this, at least forget those who think differently [...] You should be kind and courteous [...] You do not encourage the false, the arrogant, the imbecile claim that the more advanced you are the less you achieve. Let everyone have their own as they want. [...] You never talk about what you don't understand. You should be modest, humane, give more examples than lessons; and print something more *just* and more *necessary*, since it took you 15 months to write this book (italics in the original, e.d).]

Wisdom, honesty, objectivity, goodness, truth, modesty, and competence were, then, in Caminer Turra's view, the qualities of good writing, and she took them to be essential, necessary, and fair. Above all, they represented the writing criteria adopted by the entire editorial staff of the *Giornale enciclopedico*.

Journalists had to take responsibility for their own ideas, to always be honest towards readers, aim towards clarity in writing and – above all – believe in freedom of thought, in the value of intellectual debate, and in respect for others' opinions. Thus, a modern idea of journalism emerged, according to which journalism was not only a means for cultural promotion but also an instrument for militant criticism, serving the double purpose of utility and pleasure, providing an opening to modernity which allowed Elisabetta Caminer Turra to be recognized as one of the most important advocates of Enlightenment principles in the Veneto region – a fertile ground for ideas and cultural exchange (Torcellan 234).

Conclusion

On the pages of Caminer Turra's articles emerged a modern conception of journalism which valued objectivity of information, autonomy, and the ideological freedom of the journalist, who could now be recognized as a real professional figure, and taking an innovative stance towards the contemporary social and cultural context. From the articles analysed in this paper emerges not only a writer capable of capturing all the stimuli offered by her intellectual role-models, but also a woman with very clear ideas about her work and activities. Caminer Turra knew how to put her newspaper to its best use, by promoting a cultural change fostered by the diffusion of the ideas of the Enlightenment. She carried out this operation with wit and modesty. Almost taking her readers by the hand, she helped them to acquire the kind of knowledge her journal promoted. Diderot's encyclopedism, Locke's empiricism and ideas, and the polemic verve of d'Alembert structured her articles. The careful use of sources allowed her to transform *Giornale enciclopedico* into a container of Enlightenment ideas and an open field onto which to welcome European ideological debates. The modest purpose that d'Alembert ascribed to the *Encyclopédie* seemed valid also for her activity: "nous ne demandons qu'à être utiles & oubliés; & en tâchant par notre travail de nous procurer le premier de ces avantages, il seroit injuste que nous ne pussions obtenir l'autre" (d'Alembert, *Avertissement*).

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