

Scandal, Motherhood and Mina in 1960s' Italy

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ABSTRACT

Celebrity scandals are a useful tool to reveal the pervasiveness of expected ways of behaving within a particular culture or society. Italy of the early 1960s was particularly marked by these kinds of scandals, including that of singer Mina's pregnancy by Corrado Pani in 1963. This article takes this scandal as a case study to explore how star image in this period in Italy was influenced by the established ideologies that governed social convention, morality, and traditional gender roles. It examines in detail the ways in which the popular press reported on this scandal, using the reports that covered the announcement of the pregnancy and then the birth to cast light on the extent to which the mainstream social values and ideas regarding the status quo and expected ways of behaving for women in Italy during the early 1960s are destabilised and/or reasserted through the star persona of Mina.

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Mina (born Anna Maria Mazzini, 1940) is a prolific Italian pop singer whose rise to fame occurred at the end of the 1950s. She was especially popular from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s and her status with Italian audiences was cemented during the 1960s in particular by her continued participation in RAI's Saturday night variety television shows. Indeed, her rise to national fame had been mediated through the small screen, beginning with guest appearances on two of the most popular programmes of the late 1950s in Italy: *Il musicchiere* and *Lascia o raddoppia?*. By the time she took on her first recurrent role on television, becoming in 1961 the host and leading star of the first series of *Studio Uno*, Mina had already been labelled by the press as the 'diva nazionale' (Guerrini 1961, 12) of the moment.

Yet although she was cast on *Studio Uno* as the demure starlet and respectable young woman, Mina's star status of this period was more contradictory than might first appear. Her image as a star was in fact informed by her early career as an *urlatrice* and modern popstar, thanks to the influence in particular of American pop and rock 'n' roll. She was presented by the media as the lively, modern young woman from Cremona, who lived a celebrity lifestyle with fast cars, cigarettes, and late nights out dancing. Her many different love interests were also the focus of magazine and newspaper articles about her. Indeed, her ability to shock her audience, be it through her performance style, outfit, current relationship, or interview response, had by 1961 earned her the nickname 'la tigre di Cremona'. Even if her star image had softened by the time of her television appearances on *Studio Uno*, as she embraced more obviously in her performances the traditional *canzone italiana* genre, she was still known to Italian audiences as 'Mina: cantante modernissima' (n.a. 1962, n.p.)

One particular aspect of Mina's private life illustrates the extent of her modernity: in January 1963, Mina announced she was expecting a baby with Corrado Pani, a married actor

with whom she had been having an affair. It is important to place this announcement within the context of 1960s' Italy, where divorce and abortion had not yet been legalised, and the influence of the Church and the Christian Democrat government resulted in the promotion of traditional domestic roles for Italian women. As a result of the socially transgressive nature of the pregnancy, the story received much media coverage throughout the year, as Pani sought to annul his marriage, and Mina prepared for motherhood. In particular, several feature articles were published in January 1963 in reaction to the announcement, and in April and May 1963, when baby Massimiliano was born.

The present article takes as its case study these reports, and examines in detail the ways in which the popular press reported on this scandal, in order to explore the clash of values that the pregnancy represented. Perry Willson explains that the early 1960s was the period in which there were 'fears about the erosion of the family, the loss of parental authority over children, "juvenile delinquency", the confusion of classes, the loss of moral and spiritual values in a period of unbridled materialism, and the spectre of the Americanisation of society' (Willson 2010, 123). As a consequence, there was a renewed emphasis on women's maternal role and the importance of the family (ibid.). And in this period, 'gender hierarchies remained essentially intact, albeit not unchanged' (113). For example, although there was an increase in freedom for young women in particular, 'approved sexuality for women was still located within marriage or, at most, as a prelude to marriage' (126). This meant that extramarital sex and pregnancy were perceived as going against the dominant moral code of the period, which functioned to reinforce the perceived traditional roles for women as housewives and mothers. These conservative roles were informed by a politically-reinforced moral code that governed the accepted ways of behaving and 'being woman' in Italy in the 1960s.

This social conservatism clashes with the modernity of Mina's star image. Her transgressive behaviour as an *urlatrice*, a sexually active woman, and, in 1963, an unmarried mother posed a threat to the social and gender conventions of 1960s' Italy. Writing about Italian stars in general, Stephen Gundle has pointed to the significance of their apparent 'function as a cultural symbol and conduit for ideas about gender, values and national identity' (2008, 263). As far as Mina is concerned, the ideas she comes to symbolise by 1963 are two-fold, both highlighting and challenging established ideas regarding gender and values in Italy in the early 1960s. The reporting on the pregnancy scandal then becomes the playing out of this challenge. In their volume on media scandals, Lull and Hinerman posit that 'the scandal functions simultaneously as a moral anchor in a sea of conventionality, and as a vigorous challenge to mainstream social values conditioned by the substantial forces of ideological and cultural hegemony' (Lull and Hinerman 1997, 2). Mina's pregnancy scandal, then, is inherently contradictory and thus a useful tool through which to explore the ways in which stars come to signify as national symbols and the extent to which they represent dominant and subaltern cultural ideas and values.

This process is clearly informed in this case by Mina's 'diva nazionale' status, or more precisely her star image, in 1963. Regarding star image in general, Dyer points out that

Star images function crucially in relation to contradictions within and between ideologies, which they seek variously to 'manage' or resolve. In exceptional cases, it has been argued that certain stars, far from managing contradictions, either expose them or embody an alternative or oppositional ideological position (itself usually contradictory) to dominant ideology. (Dyer 1998, 34)

Thus it is the coming-together of Mina's star image with the established ways of behaving and 'being woman' that allows us to identify emergent contradictions within the established ideologies at work in Italy in this period. Specifically, and as this article will demonstrate, Mina's case points to the presence within Italian culture of 'non-traditional' gender behaviours and ways of being woman. But Mina's scandal was not unique in this period in Italy. Other prominent examples of extra-marital pregnancies include: in cinema, Ingrid Bergman and Roberto Rossellini in 1950; in television, Carla Gravina and Gian Maria Volonté in 1961; and in music and entertainment, Marisa Del Frate and Tonino Micheluzzi in 1962.¹ Together, these scandals illustrate the broader turn towards modernity in Italy by the early 1960s.

Scandals in the popular press

As far as the reporting of Mina's scandal is concerned, the present article analyses the reports published in *rotocalchi* during 1963. The specific titles considered are: *Gente, Oggi, Tempo, Amica, Grazia, Lo Specchio, L'Espresso, Epoca*, and *ABC*.² These magazines are *settimanali di attualità*; they have a national readership and their content is guided by national political or social concerns rather than local or regional preoccupations. They constitute examples of 'lettura leggera' (Ajello 1976, 176), with articles written in a more colloquial or romanticised style. Register and language use is determined by the target audience, which tends to be composed of 'gente comune' (ibid.). Finally, in addition to news articles, these publications also tend to feature opinion pieces, didactic essays, and publicity materials. The apparent function of such publications begins to explain this choice of content: Ajello suggests that a *rotocalco*

obbedisce ad una visione del mondo astratta dalle leggi del successo e legata, invece, a considerazioni immediatamente politiche. Ciascun periodico illustrato, in sostanza, rafforza e sfrutta più o meno apertamente le tendenze politico-culturali dei propri lettori, i quali costituiscono un settore ben individuato e censito dell'opinione nazionale. (ibid.)

However, the *rotocalchi* also paradoxically offer their readers a lifestyle to aspire to, which can at times be seen to contradict pre-established political, cultural, and social attitudes. And, as Morris (2004) has demonstrated in the case of *Epoca* and *Alba de Céspedes* in the 1950s, the nature of the articles included in these publications could also be subject to the aims of a particular journalist, seeking perhaps to highlight and offer alternatives to the established tendencies of the period. Such publications thus become a useful tool through which to analyse the changes and developments of Italian society in this period. Ajello suggests that 'la stampa periodica è in grado di fornire nel suo complesso una *diagnosi* del costume italiano, o almeno una esplorazione sociologica discretamente attendibile dei propri lettori' (ibid.). It is for this reason that this article does not focus on the differences in approaches adopted by the publications due to political allegiance, geographic provenance or target audience. Rather, by pursuing an overview of all the approaches of these publications to the scandal, it is possible to explore how Mina's star status related to the 'costume italiano' (ibid.) in this period. In addition, whilst we must bear in mind that an investigation of articles in magazines can only ever offer comment on the nature of the target audience, and not actual readers, such analysis is nevertheless useful in understanding the significance of star status, and the construction and dissemination of ideals and values regarding morality, social convention, and, in this case in particular, gender norms in 1960s' Italy.

A scandalous announcement

The news of Mina's pregnancy was first reported in a *rotocalco* by *Gente* on January 18th 1963. A further ten articles were then printed during the remainder of the month, which together allow the reader to understand the facts and context of the story. By January 1963, it was no secret that Mina was in a relationship with Corrado Pani. Several reports remind the reader that Pani's marriage to Renata Monteduro had broken down several months prior to his meeting Mina. Yet up until January 18th, the two had denied that they were in a relationship; this was despite the publication in the *rotocalchi* of photographs of the couple together at multiple locations during 1962 that suggested precisely the opposite. Mina's announcement of her pregnancy, then, was confirmation of this 'open secret'. However, as well as updating the public on the developments of the story, the articles of January 1963 also serve to encapsulate a range of reactions to the pregnancy and to the scandal that it represented. As a result of the law in Italy governing what happened to children born out of wedlock at the time, Mina's baby would have the status of *figlio naturale* and, as such, would carry only the mother's surname. Pani would not be able to recognise or adopt the baby as his, despite assertions made to the contrary by some of the articles published at the start of 1963. At best, he would be able to claim affiliation with the baby, which involved a difficult legal process that would last several years.

Given the transgressive nature of the pregnancy, it is perhaps no surprise that several reports disapprove at Mina's forthcoming maternity. Articles in *Amica*, *L'Espresso*, and *ABC* implicitly and explicitly criticise Mina's behaviour, which flouts the established ideas about gender, value and identity of the period, thus going against the status quo which produced ideas about right and wrong ways of behaving and moralities. In order to fully appreciate the significance of a celebrity scandal, Lull and Hinerman explain that we must be aware that 'the private act(s) in which stars engage [...] are interpreted according to the dominant

morality, but they are simultaneously relativized in terms of the moral character and boundaries of the star's complex image system'. (1997, 22) These established ways of behaving and the resultant ideas regarding dominant morality in this case form the backdrop against which Mina's behaviour is measured, but the negative interpretation offered in these pieces are also dependent on the reader's awareness of Mina's star image. In *Amica*, we are clearly reminded that we should be shocked by Mina's announcement: 'tutta l'Italia appassionata di canzoni – e indirettamente anche l'altra, giacchè la protagonista di questa storia è stata un idolo nazionale – si è messa in agitazione la settimana scorsa alla notizia-bomba che Mina, l'urlatrice cotonata, aspetta un bambino per aprile' ("I celebri bebè del 63" 1963, 20). We can only appreciate the wider implications of this bombshell if we remain aware of the fact that the protagonist of this story is a national idol. This status suggests that Mina in some way embodies what it means to be Italian. Thus her flouting of Italian ideas and values, which are reified as such on a national scale by the print media, not only challenges these ideas and values but also the very fabric of the nation. It is for this reason that the journalist highlights that

È sembrato, però, fin troppo disinvolto il comportamento della futura madre; d'accordo che son cose che possono accadere; che non è giusto buttar la croce addosso a nessuno. Ma sarebbe stato augurabile, in questa occasione, un tono più riservato. Invece Mina, da buona urlatrice, non ha avuto il garbo di stendere un velo di pudore su questa sua storia intima, che in altri tempi avrebbe fatto gridare allo scandalo. ("I celebri bebè del 63" 1963, 20)

Although apparently demonstrating an understanding attitude regarding Mina's situation and showing no desire to condemn her, the very mention of criticism, the 'ma' that opens the

second sentence, and the indication of Mina's bad taste in her lack of modesty, suggest that in fact the reader is encouraged to not understand and rather to criticise Mina's handling of the announcement. As a star, more is expected of her; she should appreciate the necessity to adhere to social conventions by not drawing attention to her transgressive behaviour. Her decision to not keep quiet and thus her lack of modesty enable us to identify this as a scandalous event. As Lull and Hinerman explain, in a scandal, 'the secrets of desire are unlocked; the curtains of privacy are pulled back. The unspoken is articulated, observed, and pondered' (Lull and Hinerman 1997, 3). In the context of Italian society, where the ideas of 'woman as mother' and woman as symbol and protector of the family were identifiable in the constitution and in the political and social discourse of the period, where women caught in adultery risked being sent to prison, and where children born out of wedlock had to bear the 'considerable stigma' of illegitimacy (Morris 2006, 3-4),³ the public disclosure of the pregnancy constituted a breaking of social taboos. Not only was an extramarital pregnancy an example of behaviours that went against those that were expected for young women, but Mina's decision to speak in public of her forthcoming maternity and her adulterous relationship with Pani elicited a public discussion of what was a private matter. The very act of talking about her pregnancy constituted a break with social conventions and thus challenged the mainstream social values of the time, which deemed this type of situation taboo. This identification of the event as scandal is re-enforced by Mina's star status, and by the comparison of her case with those of other women, and the revelation of the resultant paradoxical handling of these 'scandals' ("I celebri bebè del 63" 1963, 20).

This treatment of these other cases is the focus of the report in *L'Espresso*. Here, in her gossip column *Il lato debole*, which commented on and satirised the alleged regressive nature of Italian society in the period, the journalist Camilla Cederna describes the emerging

trend in the Italian media that dictates how such scandals are to be reported. The reader is told:

I diritti dell'amore. I diritti della cronaca. Il diritto di rifarsi una vita. Il coraggio delle proprie azioni. Sono frasi che sentiamo ripetere o leggiamo ogni giorno, specialmente a proposito dei beniamini del pubblico che in questo periodo, più o meno sposati (più 'meno' che 'più') danno alla luce o decidono di dare alla luce dei figli. (Cederna 1963, 20)

There are clearly more of these cases happening in Italy, as they are reported regularly by the press, which indicates the ways in which Italian society was changing in this period. Yet this trend in reporting focuses on the rights of the individual to fall in love and have a family with whomever they please, and the satire with which these 'more or less' married individuals are portrayed, illustrates the extent to which Cederna sees this as negative. This is because it appears that the individual is held in higher regard than society at large, and so individual 'deviant' morality is protected over the dominant morality of Italian society. Cederna reminds us that Mina's pregnancy in particular goes against the ideals of the time. As such, it is right that 'il lettore tranquillo provi un piccolo shock' (ibid.) when Mina declares herself to be proud of her courageous decision to announce her news, or happy to be choosing baby names or eating for two. Ultimately, Cederna concludes that:

'Forte e coraggiosa', sono quindi gli aggettivi di cui è gratificata la tigre, e c'è da giurare che sulle pagine dei giornali, d'ora innanzi, di queste forti e coraggiose fanciulle ne incontreremo delle schiere. (ibid.)

The fashion of reporting all phases of these illegitimate pregnancies to the press reinforces the idea that merely talking about such situations poses a challenge to society, and can result in only one thing: more young girls in the same predicament. The irony of the inverted commas here re-enforces the idea that this is an unacceptable and shocking situation, thus reasserting conventional morality as the social norm, and suggests that Mina is behaving selfishly by not acting in a manner becoming to a national symbol, and thus is challenging these social norms.

Yet not all articles present Mina and her pregnancy in an entirely negative light. Reports in *Epoca* and *Lo Specchio* seek to explore the paradoxical elements of the story. In *Epoca*, for example, the journalist evokes sympathy for both Mina and Pani whilst simultaneously re-enforcing social norms and highlighting the extent to which the couple has transgressed the status quo. The headline and subtitle contextualise the article thus: ‘Per loro la vita è solo una canzone. Mina e Corrado Pani tra scandalizzate condanne e compiaciute assoluzioni: due sprovveduti protagonisti di una vicenda seria che non hanno ben capito’ (“Per loro la vita è solo una canzone”, 1963, 62). The two lovers are ill-prepared for the severity of the situation in which they now find themselves. The naivety with which they have acted and the way in which they have divided public opinion are a reminder of the established moral code of the period. Indeed, the extent to which the reader should empathise with Mina and Pani is called into question as the article describes their lavish lifestyle and how they do not want for anything. We see that they have failed in their roles as stars to uphold the established way of behaving and there is then a sense of disappointment in Mina and Pani’s apparent lack of responsibility. In her analysis of female film stars of the 1950s in Italy, Buckley explains that ‘the[se] film stars, as working women who often married and had children while at the peak of their profession, were caught in multiple contradictions. In many ways they offered new role models but they were also pressured to conform to conventional

expectations' (Buckley 2006, 36). As a popular music star, Mina is held up to the same scrutiny. Ultimately, it is her personal deviation from her public star image, which connotes an established expectation regarding ways of behaving, that has brought about this situation, and which prevents Mina (and importantly Pani, who is held to the same standard despite his gender) from truly grasping the legal and moral severity of the situation. The article then functions as a warning to readers to not be deceived by celebrity and success as Mina and Pani have, nor to follow the example of these stars who were previously perceived as role models.

A similar warning to readers features in the article published in *Lo Specchio*. Here, the journalist Olghina di Robilant is worried about how many girls will follow Mina's example and seek an 'avventura oltre le convenzioni e la morale comune' (di Robilant 1963, 36). Although the article disapproves of Mina's 'cattivo esempio' (ibid.), and shows a certain level of concern for the morality of future generations, it appears here that the scandal is not seen as entirely negative. This is perhaps because, in her private life, di Robilliant was no stranger to scandal: it was at her birthday party in 1958 that the infamous photographs of Aïche Nana's striptease were taken and subsequently published in *L'Espresso*. The photographs quickly become synonymous with the excesses of 'la dolce vita' of Italy in the late 1950s. Di Robilliant herself also had a child out of wedlock in 1959. Yet her attitude towards Mina in the article quoted here demonstrates much more the conservative attitude of the magazine for which she was writing. Thus it appears that this is a story that will sell well and attract readers, thereby affording di Robilant the opportunity to admonish the younger generation. Her apparently benevolent paternalism towards them is seen in the way in which Mina's head-strong behaviour and arrogance are highlighted as the reasons why she would want to challenge social convention. Yet 'il caso di Mina è diverso, in quanto il suo personaggio è diventato una specie di monumento nazionale ed il suo esempio rischia di

essere più pericoloso degli altri' (ibid.). Again, the idea of Mina as national star is evoked here: as a national figurehead, Mina arguably represents the values and ideals that are quintessentially Italian (whatever these may be). As such, she is held to a higher standard for other women to emulate. This is an example of this attitude of apparent benevolent paternalism. Di Robilant appears to reprimand Mina from a position of caring authority: she is seemingly knowledgeable and well-informed enough to be able to read Mina's behaviour as transgressive and thus is able to warn other female readers to not follow suit. Yet such an attitude assumes a level of control over women's bodies, their reproductive rights, and their role within society; this supposition is informed by the established ideas about behaving and 'being woman' of the time, where 'the role of the family and identification of women primarily with it remained strong in this period' (Willson 2010, 129). This was primarily thanks to the approaches of the two main political parties in this period, the DC and the PCI, both of which 'emphasised women's maternal role, had quite "traditional" ideas about the private sphere and presented themselves as defenders of the family' (ibid.).

It is this gender status quo that di Robilant draws upon in her article, and which informs her reading of Mina's behaviour as transgressive. She explains to her readers that

Mina ha deciso di diventare madre legandosi ai soli principi dell'amore e della maternità e mettendo da parte per il momento quelli della religione e delle convenzioni; se bisogna puntare il dito su di lei è innanzitutto per il fatto che il suo esempio può portare altre donne molto più semplici e certamente meno preparate a fare altrettanto. Fino a che punto si può accusare la cantante per tanta mancanza di senso di responsabilità? (di Robilant 1963, 36)

The counterposition of love and maternity to religion and convention establishes a hierarchy here, which valorises the latter over the former and thus encapsulates the social disapproval of Mina's situation that we have seen elsewhere. Yet here, Mina is guilty of leading other women to emulate her. Her position as star means that more is expected of her and she is responsible for setting a socially and morally acceptable example. However, the naïve expectation that young women will follow Mina's example, and thus require a stern reminder of the socially unacceptable nature of extramarital pregnancy, re-enforces the patriarchal values that shape the status quo of 1960s' Italy.

Yet Mina is also portrayed in this piece as a victim of circumstance and celebrity. The reader learns that Mina comes from a good, bourgeois family and is aware of the social expectations she should adhere to as a young Italian woman. In the presentation of her previous relationships, Mina is portrayed as being in conflict with her upbringing and thus as a morally upstanding young woman. It is Corrado Pani who has seduced Mina: this is the only possible explanation for her behaviour, according to the article. Indeed, di Robilant is careful to point out that Pani only married Monteduro once evidence had been put in place about her not wanting children, thus creating the grounds for a possible annulment of the marriage in the future. Pani is thus the deceitful one in the current relationship, and lacks integrity and morals. We are assured that 'Mina vale assai più di Corrado' (37), suggesting that Mina can and should be redeemed from this socially reprehensible situation. We also feel sympathy for Mina who has been deceived by Pani and who has compromised her strength of character and morals as a result. The article concludes by claiming that, although outwardly men seem to admire Mina and disapprove of apparently 'weaker' women, inwardly they would not choose to be in a relationship with her: 'L' "urlatrice" Mina non sa che fa paura agli uomini non come "urlatrice" ma come donna' (ibid.). This, then, is the paradoxical

situation that Mina faces as a result of the pregnancy: she is strong and courageous but undesirable, and feared and avoided by men as a result. Ultimately,

Purtroppo, Mina non sa che così lei è diventata superdonna e cioè una 'eccezione alla regola'. Bella e coraggiosa. Ma se una qualsiasi donna che si attiene alle regole si azzarderà a copiarla (e forse ve ne sarà più di una), quella poveretta rischierà di rovinarsi, di uccidersi o di scivolare nei più miseri madri dei compromessi femminili. (ibid.)

The apparent benevolent paternalism returns here, with di Robilant once again underscoring the dangers of extramarital pregnancy for women and thus re-establishing the dominant social conventions at work within Italian society during this period. Moreover, it is clear now that the description of Mina as beautiful and courageous is paradoxical: although she is an exception thanks to such qualities, and will thus survive thanks to her extra-ordinary status as a star, she nevertheless suffers the negative connotations of these descriptors, as established in the article. The younger female generation is thus discouraged from following Mina's example, and the established ways of behaving and being woman are thus re-asserted.

What is clear from these articles is the apparent widespread acceptance of and adherence to Italian societal norms during the early 1960s. The established ideology is so entrenched that, contrary to what we might expect, the gender of the journalist writing does not in fact have an impact on the expression of disapproval at Mina's actions. This disapproval also illustrates the extent to which expectations for the ways in which stars are to behave are derived from and governed by the established ideologies of the period. In the Italian context, conservatism and tradition inform these expectations and thus the disapproval of Mina's pregnancy. Even though the very act of reporting Mina's situation

breaks a social taboo and thus constitutes a challenge to established social norms, the journalists here are quick to re-establish the status quo. They disapprove of and condemn Mina's behaviour, both in spite and because of her star status, and thus warn their readers of the dangerous effects on their social status should they follow this example.

Mina's pregnancy as positive

Despite the negativity of the articles cited above, there are also reports that seek to portray the announcement of Mina's pregnancy in a neutral or more positive light. Such reports in themselves are examples of what Lull and Hinerman identify as the scandal's potential to 'challenge mainstream social values conditioned by the substantial forces of ideological and cultural hegemony' (1997, 2). In the first article to cover the story of Mina's pregnancy, published in *Gente* on January 18th, the journalist Alberto Libonati presents Mina's strength and courage alongside her presumption and deception, with no comment then on the potential contradiction generated by these typically positive and negative qualities. She is also seen to be the representative of her generation, and Libonati points out how problematic her situation is as a result of her position:

Mina, che interpreta tanto bene il carattere della gioventù del nostro tempo, di fronte ad un così imbarazzante interrogativo, come una ragazzina colta in fallo, non seppe far altro che negare, convinta come sempre che anche questa volta avrebbe avuto ragione. (Libonati 1963, 22)

Here, we are reminded of the moral status quo in a way that allows us to read the situation only as embarrassing. Mina's age, naivety, and upbringing are emphasised for us, bringing with them the possibility of explaining and ultimately forgiving her behaviour. Although she

is stubborn in her behaviour, the reference to her as a ‘ragazzina colta in fallo’ begins to diminish the severity of her situation.

The more positive treatment of the story is demonstrated by the attempts made by Libonati to justify what has happened. The reader is reminded, for example, that Pani is ‘legato ancora da un vincolo matrimoniale giuridicamente valido, anche se praticamente spezzato’ (ibid.): the ‘law of the heart’ is what is important here, not the laws of the land. Then, Libonati charts Mina’s meteoric rise to fame and explains the dangers of having everything (fashion, shoes, regular new hairstyles, and commercial success), and thus expecting that everything is attainable. He explains that ‘a una ragazza come lei, che non ha avuto nemmeno il tempo per assimilare bene il successo, la popolarità e la ricchezza, nulla mai deve essere apparso assurdo o impossibile’ (24). Again, Mina’s lack of experience is emphasised as a way of explaining her behaviour but Libonati also implies that the music industry is to blame in allowing this situation to even come about. The passive structure of the sentence here not only helps to explain and, to a certain extent, justify Mina’s actions but it also begins to distance her from the situation and thus from any associated responsibility or condemnation.

As Libonati distances Mina from the negative implications of transgressing the dominant morality, so he sets in motion a ‘rehabilitative’ process by emphasising the redemptive potential of maternity that has already begun to affect Mina. As he concludes his article, Mina’s youth, naivety, and inexperience are again emphasised, but we are told that a positive transformation of her character has begun, thanks to her becoming pregnant and thus being due to become a mother. This miracle of motherhood appears to have strengthened her resolve and softened her attitude and behaviour. Indeed, as she is quoted directly in the article, we see how she demonstrates her love for and loyalty to Pani, her continued belief in the value of family through the importance she attaches to the baby, her hope for the future,

her belief in the goodness of her peers, and her intention to fight for love and for her baby, to ensure a better future for him/her.

In this context, we see the status quo being reasserted and re-established by both Mina and Libonati. The only way in which Mina can be saved and rehabilitated, in order to once again become an upstanding member of Italian society and thus an exemplary *diva nazionale*, is through the redemptive miracle of motherhood. And the way in which Mina herself focuses on the positive values of family, love, and maternity re-enforces the start of this redemptive process. Libonati's conclusion thus introduces a new type of construction to the notion of Mina as star: that of mother. By embracing this socially acceptable role, Mina's transgression of and challenge to social convention can be forgotten and thus rendered neutral and ultimately unproblematic within her star image.

As Buckley has pointed out, in the late 1950s and early 1960s,

Even as economic opportunities increased with a greater range of jobs available to women at this time, the belief that a woman's main role was to care for her husband and her children and to look after the home continued to be very widespread. This situation of conservatism within a context of change produced a variety of conflicts between tradition and modernity (Buckley 2006, 35).

This conflict regarding gender roles and ideal behaviours is seen in particular in the decision to report on Mina's extramarital pregnancy, a situation which is symptomatic of the changes in Italian society regarding sexuality and attitudes towards marriage,⁴ and of the modernisation of Italian society in this period. Yet the pregnancy also constitutes a scandal, which goes against the social expectations of the time, whilst also challenging these established norms by casting light on other, apparently transgressive, ways of behaving. The

fact that it is a beloved star and apparent role model behaving in this way adds weight to the challenge that the scandal constitutes. Libonati seeks to nullify this contradiction in his article by beginning a redemptive process that will re-align Mina with the established social status quo. But his article nevertheless illustrates that Italian society in the early 1960s was changing, and that the overriding values of conservatism and tradition that are often associated with this period were in fact in flux.

Thus it is that the journalist Domenico Alessi writing in *Tempo* can describe Mina and Pani's decision to have a baby together as generous, honest and beautiful. According to him, this is not a publicity stunt, nor a challenge to public order and morality. Rather, it is an act motivated by their love for one another. Questions regarding what is socially and morally acceptable and expected are deliberately overlooked. Instead, Alessi shows that by having a baby, Mina is embracing the traditional gender role of motherhood that comes as a consequence of growing up. We are told that 'Mina madre è la logica conseguenza di Mina ragazza' (Alessi 1963, 68), and this, implicitly, is what will facilitate her rehabilitation. Alessi is adamant that 'sarà una buona madre, lo porta già impresso sul volto. Più dolce, più costante nella espressione; ogni tanto smarrito in un segreto pensiero di affetto' (ibid.). The changes to Mina's star persona that must take place in order to make her socially acceptable once again, have already begun. She is becoming gentler and more affectionate as a result of her forthcoming maternity. Total redemption is possible due to the fact that Mina will be a good mother. The reader is told that

Mina crescerà suo figlio da sè. Non lo mostrerà ai fotografi, non lo esibirà nei negozi alla vigilia di Natale, o sulla neve, o dentro la carrozzina ai giardini pubblici. Non farà a meno della balia, ma sarà una balia alla buona ; vuole sbagliare, spaventarsi, affaticarsi in proprio. (68-69)

By ignoring the opportunities to increase her fame that her child will bring, and rather embracing fully her role as mother, Mina can be seen to be accepting the socially acceptable role of mother, which reaffirms the moral status quo and begins to nullify the challenge that this transgressive pregnancy is seen to constitute.

The presentation of this pregnancy as positive appears on one level to challenge the established ideologies of 1960s' Italy, allowing potential questions regarding the extent to which conservatism and tradition were dominant in this period. Yet a closer reading of these articles reveals that this potential challenge is also nullified as the positive depiction of the pregnancy is informed by the traditional gender role for women as mothers. These articles therefore emphasise the changes in Italian society in their period whilst simultaneously re-asserting the established way of behaving. It would therefore appear that in this case, and contrary to Ajello's observation that the *rotocalchi* seek to reinforce and exploit the established political and cultural tendencies of their readers, these publications actually shed light on emerging tendencies whilst at the same time seeking to reiterate the status quo and to educate their readership about the established ideology of the period.

The birth of Massimiliano

On April 18th 1963, Mina gave birth to a son, Massimiliano Mazzini, by caesarean section at the Mangiagalli clinic in Milan. The first reports of the birth were understandably brief, and appeared on April 28th in *Amica* and *Grazia*. It is not until Mina had more fully recovered from the operation at the start of May that articles were published that feature interviews with Mina and Pani, and photographs of Mina and Massimiliano. These pieces were published by *Gente*, *Oggi*, *Tempo*, and *Grazia*.

The initial reports reassert the status quo of the period by focusing on the illegality of Mina and Pani's situation. In *Grazia*, the announcement is hidden in amongst reports of other 'famous births', which all receive more attention. The piece in *Amica* describes the birth in a little more detail, recounting how the singer was surrounded by her relatives and 'non relatives' during the birth, and how the baby's surname must be recorded as Mazzini, due to the fact that his father is married to another woman ("I bebé della settimana" 1963, 35). Despite feeling some sympathy for the singer, the reader is nevertheless encouraged to concentrate on the transgressive nature of the pregnancy and to thus temper his/her response to Mina's difficulties.

This is also the case with the second article to appear in *Grazia*, published on May 5th 1963. Here, the journalist reminds us of Pani's marital situation and thus the necessity to give Massimiliano the surname of Mazzini. Again, the legal status quo is evoked, but the comment comes as the journalist explains how Massimiliano was baptised. This is an example of Mina and Pani's behaviour affirming the established moral and religious conventions. And the journalist goes on to tell us that 'la cantante ha deciso di allevare personalmente il figlio e per questo – ha dichiarato – subordinerà la sua futura attività artistica ai suoi doveri di madre' ("Il figlio di Mina vivrà con i nonni" 1963, 78). Mina's decision to put motherly duties ahead of those of her career again suggests she is once again embracing social convention and established ways of behaving as a woman. It is through her embracing of motherhood that Mina's transgressions may be forgiven, her rehabilitation may be effected and her star status re-affirmed.

The journalist Neera Ferreri, writing in *Oggi* on May 2nd 1963, also implements a similar strategy regarding Mina's rehabilitation. In the headline, 'Ora mi sento veramente tigre. Graffio chi tocca la mia creatura', we see the re-writing of the significance of Mina's stage nickname, which is now seen to encapsulate her role as a mother. The positive

resonances of a mother wanting to protect her child, now evoked by the nickname ‘tigre’, begin the process of making Mina socially acceptable once again. The rehabilitation process that starts with the resignification of her nickname is then emphasised through the use of direct speech in the article:

‘Ho pianto fino ad ora’ dice Mina asciugandosi un po’ vergognosa le lacrime. ‘Mi sembra impossibile che sia vero, che il bambino sia qui. E poi è un maschio come lo volevo io, sebbene per scaramanzia parlassi sempre di una bambina. Non credevo si potessero provare sentimenti di questo genere quando si ha un figlio. È proprio vero che, anche quando un figlio è nato, è ancora unito alla mamma da un filo invisibile. Se qualcuno si avvicina e accarezza il piccolino, mi irrito, sono gelosa. Basta che pianga, diventi rosso in faccia, m’impaurisco: ho paura sia ammalato, gli sia capitato qualcosa’. (Ferrerri 1963, 34)

It is significant that Mina herself recounts how she is discovering the joys of being a mother: she is testifying to her own apparent acceptance of the traditional role of motherhood, as demonstrated by her expected emotional response to the cries of her son. The magic of childbirth is also evoked, as Mina cannot believe that her son is here, and that he is a boy. This echoes the miraculous changes to Mina’s character that have apparently taken place: we see that she has renounced her former aggressive way of behaving, and has become gentle and emotional thanks to the birth of her son. Becoming a mother has redeemed Mina: she has embraced the traditional role of mother and thus become socially acceptable once again.

The photographs published alongside this article emphasise this change in behaviour as well as the redemptive and rehabilitative journey that Mina has now begun.⁵ She features on the front cover of the magazine, as well as in two large photographs that accompany the

article. In each of these shots, her hair and make-up are perfect, she is dressed in white lace blouse, and she poses serenely with her son, who is also dressed in white. The constructed nature of these photographs is such that we clearly see the beginning of the rehabilitation process. The use of white brings a sense of innocence, goodness and even purity to the ‘Mina as mother’ image that is being constructed here. In each photograph, then, we see how ‘natural’ a mother Mina is: she smiles contentedly for the camera, as Massimiliano lies sleeping in her arms; she tenderly kisses his fingers; and she carefully and attentively brushes his hair. The troubles of the scandalous pregnancy have been forgotten now that Mina is finally a mother: she has been redeemed thanks to her son and her apparently innate ability to care for him. This transformation is symbolised by the white lace blouse, which is reminiscent of a first communion outfit: the transformation from sinner to saved star is complete, thanks to the arrival of Massimiliano.

This transformation process is emphasised in the article published by *Tempo* on May 11th. Here, Pani is interviewed by the journalist Sergio Di Falco, and comments on the changes in Mina that he has witnessed. Mina’s voice is erased as Pani explains that she ‘è la ragazza più borghese e più attaccata ai principi che abbia mai conosciuto: sarà per Massimiliano una madre perfetta’ (Di Falco 1963, 29). The reference to principles and bourgeois standards here underscores the social status quo, and Mina’s now silent adherence to it. The scandal of the transgressive pregnancy is not mentioned at all, and it thus appears that all challenges to the moral status quo have been resolved or can be forgotten, thanks to Mina’s acceptance of social conventions. This acceptance is illustrated by her love for her son. Pani explains that ‘con il nostro figlio, Mina è veramente, e per la prima volta, un tigre: ha il senso del possesso, sente che deve difenderlo e proteggerlo. Al confronto di Massimiliano non conto più nemmeno io’ (33). The redefinition of her role as ‘tigre’ functions here to underscore her acceptance of society’s requirement that her baby should be

her primary focus. She can thus be rehabilitated and rendered socially acceptable once more. And this process will be completed, according to Di Falco, as Mina evaluates her future career in light of becoming a mother: 'ora deve ricominciare tutto da capo, anche come cantante: non può più urlare le canzoni di una volta che facevano ballare anche i juke-box. La sua maternità trasformerà profondamente anche il suo avvenire di cantante' (ibid.). Being a mother means a change in character as a performer, as well as in personality as a private individual. As the status quo is re-asserted, so Mina's old performance style must be re-evaluated and altered so as to now conform to her role as a mother. Her ways of behaving and the values that were previously associated with her star image must be transformed in order for her new role as mother to be incorporated. Such a change is perceived as necessary by the established ideologies that inform both the construction of star images and the reporting of celebrity scandals in the media in Italy in this period. The reporting of the arrival of Massimiliano thus demonstrates the ability of the status quo within Italian society of the 1960s to seemingly shape public attitudes, star image, and media coverage.

In conclusion, we have seen that during the media coverage of Mina's personal scandal in 1963, readers were consistently reminded of the illegality of her situation, and the break with the status quo that it constituted. However, journalists also sought to render Mina's pregnancy less scandalous by focusing on the redeeming potential of motherhood for the singer. The emphasis on the miracle of maternity and its ability to 'positively' transform Mina into a traditional mother, who fully embraces her new role and who places her son's needs above her own, demonstrates the ways in which this scandal as a challenge to the established ways of behaving and being woman and female star of the period is in fact deflected, diminished and ultimately overcome.

The articles considered here illustrate the ways in which attitudes regarding social and moral conventions and traditional gender roles are prevalent within the written media and at work in the construction of star image in this period. Building on Gundle's assertion regarding Italian stars and their function as 'a cultural symbol and conduit for ideas about gender, values and national identity' (2008, 263), we can see that in the case of Mina in 1963, her star image was constructed by the popular print media in such a way as to preserve the status quo and represent and disseminate established ideas about ways of behaving and being woman in 1960s' Italy. As such, her personal scandal is re-written in such a way as to quickly re-establish social conventions and rehabilitate her star image

However, as Lull and Hinermann point out, a scandal has the ability to simultaneously re-establish and destabilise the status quo (1997, 2). In this particular case, Mina's behaviour does constitute a challenge to the established ideas about gender, present in Italian society during the 1960s. Even if conventionality, tradition, and conservatism are quickly re-asserted by the *rotocalchi*, in an attempt to nullify the challenge and re-establish the status quo, the very act of writing about the extramarital pregnancy constitutes a challenge to the established ideologies of the period. The demand for details and coverage that the very existence of these articles highlights, points to a gap between the established political and social ideologies of the period, and the changes in society that were in fact beginning to take place. Willson has underlined the complex and contradictory nature of this period in Italian history, and has illustrated how 'many Italians displayed enthusiasm for the benefits of modernity and consumerism, whilst at the same time wishing to retain elements of what they saw as Italian lifestyles (which often included what they understood as "Italian" gender roles)' (Willson 2010, 128). Mina's celebrity scandal well illustrates the complexities of this period, and the balance between modernity and tradition that characterised Italian society of the late 1950s and early 1960s.

More broadly, however, the scandal also demonstrates the ability of stars to function as cultural symbols and conduits for multiple and even conflicting ideas that derive from a particular social or cultural context. Prior to 1963, Mina had been labelled as the *diva nazionale*; her status as domestic star was imbued with traditional ideas regarding ways of behaving and being woman that rendered her a symbol of ‘contemporary’ Italian femininity, which was nevertheless reliant on long-established traditions and established social conventions for women in Italy. In 1963, when the scandal of her extra-marital pregnancy broke, the actual extent of Mina’s modernity was revealed. Her decision to openly go against social expectations by publicly discussing her pregnancy, and to have the baby and to build a family outside of marriage, demonstrates her rejection of the conservative traditions upon which her star image had previously been constructed. The coverage of the 1963 scandal in the popular press then reveals the extent of the tensions between the conservative expectations for women that informed the status quo of the period, and modern ways of being woman that Mina’s star image embodied. And although the articles considered here use Mina as a means of re-stating and propping up the conservative notions of femininity in 1960s’ Italy, the extended coverage of her story and the apparent need to shore up and rehabilitate Mina’s way of behaving in fact illustrate the extent to which such notions were beginning to crumble by 1963, as Italian society began to seek more modern ways of ‘being woman’.

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¹ For more information about the Bergman-Rossellini scandal, see Gundle (2000). The

Gravina-Volonté and Del Frate-Micheluzzi are yet to be the focus of sustained analysis. It is

also important to note that the Del Frate-Micheluzzi scandal differs from the others cited here as the baby did not survive, thus generating a different reaction in the press to that for Mina, for example.

² For more information about the nature of these publications, see Ajello (1976).

³ See Morris (2006, 1-20) for more detailed information regarding the political and social context affecting women and gender roles in the 1950s and early 1960s in Italy.

⁴ See Willson (2010, 123-8) for detailed information that illustrates the contradictory nature of this period in Italy and the changes taking place regarding sexuality and marriage, and women's attitudes to them in particular.

⁵ It is important to note that only one official photographer was invited to take photographs of the star and her baby, thus maximising the potential for the construction of a redemptive narrative through the photographs. This also explains the similarity of the photographs published in all articles printed about the birth of Massimiliano during May 1963.