

Scandal as Medium of the Celebritization Process: Exploring the 'Mina as Mother' Image in the Context of Post-War Italian Culture*

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Mina is one of Italy's most popular and best-loved pop singers. She rose to fame in the late 1950s and was particularly dominant from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s. Yet she remains popular even today, despite retiring from television appearances and live performances in 1974 and 1978 respectively. Whilst Mina's celebrity status in Italy is predicated first and foremost on her status as a popular music star, her celebrification has involved different mediums, including live and recorded music, television (as performer and programme host), and films. In 1963, one specific medium was to irrevocably shape Mina's celebrity status for the rest of her career: that of personal scandal. This was the year in which Mina announced her relationship with married actor Corrado Pani and gave birth to a son outside of wedlock (shocking behaviour in the context of 1960s' Italy where divorce and abortion were still illegal). Indeed, the scandalous nature of this behaviour is demonstrated by RAI's decision to ban the singer from their network in 1963. It was then public demand for Mina that forced RAI to rescind their decision. This article takes Mina's celebrity as a case study to examine the legacies of scandal within the celebritization process. Her celebrity is such that she is well-placed to shed light on the nature of Italian culture in the post-war period and to highlight the dominant values and ideals at work within Italian society from the 1960s to the present. After presenting an overview of the nature and significance of Mina's celebrity, the article examines press coverage of the 1963 scandal, as a way of determining how Mina's motherhood was constructed and perceived as scandalous by 1960s' Italian society. The article then traces the ways in which this scandal shaped and continues to inform the meanings of Mina as celebrity and star in post-war Italy. It focuses specifically on the ways in which the idea of 'Mina as mother', scandalous and otherwise, circulates as one of the features of Mina's contemporary star image. The article thus tracks the impact of scandal on the creation, circulation, and significance of celebrity in contemporary society. It argues that, in this case, scandal becomes one of the texts, or 'mediums' through which celebrity and star status is produced and which interacts with other mediums to generate the meanings of Mina's star persona.

Keywords: Mina; scandal; celebritization; motherhood; star image

Mina is a prolific Italian popular music star whose rise to fame occurred at the end of the 1950s and who remains hugely popular in Italy today. At the time of writing, her latest album, *Maeba*, was released in March 2018 and immediately charted in the number one spot in the Italian album charts. She was particularly successful from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s thanks to her continued participation in RAI's Saturday night variety television shows of those years. Indeed, her rise to national fame had always been mediated through the small screen and by the time she took on her first recurrent role on television,

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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, p. 12) of the moment.

Because of this status, Mina constitutes a valuable case study through which to explore post-1945 Italian culture. Indeed, celebrities and stars can shed light on the culture and society from which they originate: Gundle (2008) has argued that Italian cinema stars offer “a significant way of ‘reading’ Italian society and culture” (p. 262). In other words, Italian stars can be seen to transcend their origins and come to reveal something about Italy and “function as a cultural symbol and conduit for ideas about gender, values and national identity” (p. 263). As a result of the celebrity- and star-making process to which they are subjected, Italian stars, and Mina as popular music diva in this case, are seen to embody a specific set of meanings and connotations which reveal something about the systems of cultural value, and the broader, established ideologies and ways of behaving that are at work in Italian society. Understanding ‘the many meanings of Mina’, which have changed and evolved during her career, is a way to develop our understanding of Italian cultural change in the post-war period.

But Mina is also exemplary of the way in which celebrities, stars and icons¹ are all constructed by different media, and the resultant polyvalent status of the star becomes the site for negotiation between local and global identities, values, ideologies, and ways of behaving. This is because whilst Mina is first and foremost a popular music star, during different phases of her career, she has also been a film star and a television personality. She has advertised different successful Italian brands on television, and she has been a magazine writer and agony aunt. Her star persona and subsequent iconic status, then, is the product of her work in many different areas and then of the promotional materials and commentaries that are produced in response to her work. Dyer (1998) explains that “a star image is made out of media texts that can be grouped together as promotion, publicity, films, and criticism and commentaries” (p. 60). But in the case of Mina, the range of media texts that make up her iconic status goes beyond the area of popular music, because she is a star across different media. Meyers (2009) explains that “The celebrity [...] is an intertextual sign informed by multiple sources in multiple ways” (p. 892) but in the case of Mina, I would argue that we need to think about the star as an intermedial sign informed by multiple ‘mediums’ in multiple ways. It is therefore necessary to expand our approach to reading this type of the star, by taking into consideration both the impact of the intrinsic nature of the popular music star (who is a singer, video star, live performer, fixed in time on album covers and recordings, for example) on the star image, but also the way in which all the media that the star is involved in, interact to produce the star image.

Mina is thus a perfect case study through which to analyse both the celebrification and celebritization process. Driessens (2012) argues that a differentiation needs to be made how we use these two terms. Celebrification, he explains, is “the process by which ordinary people or public figures are transformed into celebrities” (p. 643), whilst celebritization then refers to “the meta-process involving changes in the nature of celebrity (or its democratization), and its social and cultural embedding (through its diversification and migration)” (p. 653). Celebritization “occurs not at the individual, but at the social

fields level” (p. 643) and “should be conceived as a product of mediatization, personalization and commodification” (p. 653). It is also important to remember that the process indicates a “shift of emphasis from achievement-based fame to media-driven renown” (Cashmore, 2006, p. 7). This suggests that there is a need to pay close attention to the role and influence of the media in the context of celebrities and, in particular, to the broader impact on society. Celebrityization, Driessens (2012) ultimately suggests, “enables us to think more profoundly about celebrity’s influence without having to cast this immediately in terms of linear effects. Instead [it allows for an] analysis of how celebrity moulds the cultures we live in or the fields people are active in and what its consequences are, for instance in terms of power relations, expectations, identity formation and self-presentation (online as well)” (p. 653). It is in this particular context that the usefulness of Mina becomes clear: the intermedial nature of her celebrity status and star persona allows for an in-depth investigation into how different significances of the celebrity are produced by different ‘texts’ and ‘mediums’, how these meanings continue to circulate and be renegotiated and redefined during a celebrity career through an introduction of and interaction with new ‘texts’ and ‘mediums’, and how ultimately, these meanings influence and impact the broader cultural and social contexts with which the celebrity comes into contact.

To illustrate this, let us focus on what Mina signified in 1961, when the press sought to label her as Italy’s ‘diva nazionale’, with no further explanation of what this meant or how Mina had attained this status. By 1961, Mina had achieved national fame through appearances on popular television shows, including *Lascia o raddoppia* and *Canzonissima* during 1959, and in six *Musicarelli* movies, and through chart success, with three number one singles (‘Tintarella di luna/Mai’ (1959), ‘Il cielo in una stanza/La notte’ (1960), and ‘Moliendo café/Chi sarà (1961)). Following a failed attempt to win the Sanremo Festival in 1961, despite being labelled by the press as the favourite, Mina’s status as national star was cemented through her being cast as the host of *Studio Uno*, the popular Saturday night variety television show, from October to January 1962. Her star image on the show appeared to be that of demure and respectable starlet (Haworth, 2015, p. 33). Yet it was also informed by her success prior to this moment as *urlatrice* and modern singer. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the Italian media had presented her as “the lively, modern young woman from Cremona, who lived a celebrity lifestyle with fast cars, cigarettes, and late nights out dancing” (Haworth, 2017, p. 247). The newspapers and *rotocalchi* were also keen to cover her many different love interests. It can be argued that “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’” (Haworth, 2017, pp. 247–8). These different aspects of Mina’s early career then reveal the various texts at work in the celebrification process here, which are then embedded in a social and cultural context which meant that Mina migrated across genres and texts and her star status underlines the importance of media-renown that is associated with celebrityization. Such a turn then begins to reveal something of the modernisation of Italian culture taking place in

this period, and, specifically, the cultural forms and cultures from which Italian society was drawing inspiration for this change.

A new 'text', or 'medium' would enter the celebrification process in 1963 in the form of a personal scandal: in January of that year, Mina shockingly announced she was expecting a baby with the already married Corrado Pani. Writing about media scandals, Lull and Hinerman (1997) argue 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" (p. 2). In this light, Mina's pregnancy out of wedlock can be seen as scandalous because of the challenge it posed to the dominant social values at work in Italian culture at that time: we need to remember that in Italy in this period, divorce and abortion were still illegal, and the Christian Democrat government that had been in power since 1948 still sought to promote traditional, domestic roles for Italian women as wives and mothers (see Morris, 2006, pp. 3–4). The pregnancy thus functioned to draw attention to and simultaneously challenge and reinforce the social conventions and dominant morality at work in Italy at the time. As a result of the scandalous nature of the situation, the story received much coverage in the press during 1963: articles were published that recounted Pani's attempts to annul his marriage, Mina's preparation for motherhood, and, in April 1963, the birth of baby Massimiliano and the impact this event had on Mina in particular.

This article takes this scandal as its focus, and tracks the ways in which this event shaped and continues to inform the meanings of Mina as star in post-war Italy. After presenting an overview of the ways in which the 1963 scandal was reported in the press and the resultant significance this episode had for Mina's star persona, the article concentrates on the ways in which the idea of 'Mina as mother', scandalous and otherwise, circulates as one of the features of Mina's contemporary star image. The aim therefore is to track the impact of scandal on the creation, circulation, and significance of Mina's celebrity and star status in contemporary Italian society.

A scandalous affair: Mina, Corrado Pani, and the birth of Massimiliano, 1963

Given the status of Mina as 'diva nazionale', and Pani's fame as an actor of stage and screen, it is perhaps unsurprising that the news that they were expecting a baby received much media attention in 1963. The story featured consistently throughout that year in the Italian newspapers and *rotocalchi* (see Haworth, 2017). This article takes as its case study the coverage of the national newspaper *La Stampa*, to illustrate the broader nature of the scandal in the context of Italy of the 1960s. This newspaper had a national readership and an independent, centrist stance in this period under the leadership of editor, Giulio De Benedetti. Specifically, *La Stampa* was arguably representative of the mainstream in Italian culture during the 1960s and became popular largely thanks to Benedetti's strategy of giving a voice to readers through the introduction of a column to which readers could send letters and the editor would then reply. The newspaper constitutes a useful case

study for the analysis of Mina's personal scandal precisely because of its stance and desired interaction with readers: stories would arguably be selected because of their public interest, and presented in such a way to highlight mainstream values and ideals, and promote them to readers.

La Stampa breaks the news of the pregnancy on 10 January 1963. After what the newspaper refers to as 'repeated denials', the headline informs us that "Mina attende un figlio dall'attore Corrado Pani" (p. 4). The photograph that accompanies the story shows Mina "nella tipica espressione aggressiva che l'ha resa popolare" (p. 4) but the article itself focuses not on Mina's aggressive defence of her actions, but rather on her declarations of love for Pani and the unborn baby. This demonstrates a subtle shift in the way Mina is portrayed by the media: she had previously earned a reputation for being aggressive, due to her brash personality and forthright demeanour. Her nickname of 'la tigre di Cremona' illustrates this. But the newspaper here suggests that with motherhood, comes a change in behaviour that can be seen to be only fitting with Mina's changing circumstances. The suggestion that becoming a mother will require Mina to become more obviously loving and thus less aggressive is coupled with the idea that although in the past, Mina's various romantic relationships were 'intricate', or complicated, her declaration that "lotterò per sposare l'uomo che amo" (p. 4) can be read as her seeking to embrace the societal norms of motherhood and marriage seen as fitting for women in 1960s' Italy. Indeed, in an article published in the evening edition of the newspaper on the same day, the label 'tigre' is redefined, so that it now fits this new Mina who will fight tooth and nail for the man she loves and for her unborn child. It is also important to note that although the newspaper acknowledges that the announcement will naturally scandalise some readers, it is also at pains to point out that Pani's marriage was doomed from the start (it recounts how the couple were involved in a car crash immediately after their wedding), suggesting that love is the most important factor in this story and that it can conquer, and perhaps even forgive, all as well ("Mina è fuggita," 1963, p. 9).

There is, then, an element of recuperation at work here, the result of which is to realign Mina once again with the social conventions and values at work in Italy in this period. This approach to Mina and the scandal is present also in an opinion article published on 11 January 1963. Here, the journalist Gaetano Tumati (1963) demonstrates how this story of Mina's maternity will have initially come as a shock to her fans: she is, he argues, the woman they would least expect to settle down, given that fact that "era lei, Mina, che annodava e slegava a piacimento i vincoli amichevoli o sentimentali, passando di fiore in fiore come un'ape regina" (p. 3). He again underscores the sudden change in her behaviour and vocabulary, but goes on to point out that "eppure, a ben pensarci, la nevrastenica modernità di Mina non è una moneta così sicuramente autentica come poteva apparire a prima vista" (p. 3). He argues that "anche quando sbarrava gli occhi, anche quando si elettrizzava, il suo volto non mostrava mai quelle linee tormentate, quelle stigmate affascinanti e vagamente perverse che contraddistinguono i prototipi femminili dell'umanità d'oggi" (p. 3). These role models, he says, include the actresses Sophia Loren, Annie Girardot and Jeanne Moreau. As far as Mina is concerned, Tumati (1963) claims, "per quanto sbarri pupille, il suo viso da precoce matrona mantiene sempre una

regolarità ottocentesca, che ricorda i ritratti delle nostre nonne” (p. 3). His conclusion is that Mina will in fact look very much at home next to a crib.

There is here a careful criticism and subsequent reworking of Mina’s celebrity status: her status as rule breaker, a woman who scorns social conventions, is carefully undone through the suggestion that all that has gone before was inauthentic. The journalist encourages us to look closely at Mina, so as to identify her true self – which, he argues, embodies maternalism and old-fashioned, traditional, family values (through the resemblance to a grandmother). The shock and scandal elements of the story are played down here through the focus on motherhood, which, it would appear, we should all have been expecting as ultimately this is what suits Mina. The potential challenge to societal conventions and gender norms that Mina can be seen to embody in the early 1960s is thus nullified somewhat, as her celebrity status is reworked to begin to embrace motherhood and to simultaneously cast off ideas of her as a challenger of social conventions. She can be ‘saved’ by motherhood, a transformation which allows for her recuperation back into Italian society.

Thus when the newspaper reports in March 1963 that Pani’s wife, Renata Monteduro, has denounced Pani and Mina for ‘concupinaggio’, an offence that carries a two year prison sentence should the two be found guilty, it is unsurprising that the picture portrayed of Mina is not that of a woman fighting ‘tooth and nail’ to protect her relationship but rather that of a shocked, dejected woman who is visibly shaken by the news and cannot understand why Monteduro should seek this course of action. Mina’s focus remains her baby, as she is quoted by the journalists as repeating “proprio mentre sto per avere il bambino...” (“Mina è stata sconvolta,” 1963, p. 5). These words also appear in the headlines of follow-up articles published in March, repeatedly provoking our sympathy for the singer and what we now see as her plight.

The reader’s sympathies then remain firmly with Mina as coverage continues, with the newspaper reporting during April how the pregnancy has affected her health and how she is finally taken to a clinic in Milan during April as a precaution. Her baby boy, Massimiliano, is born 18 April. An article then appears on the occasion of the baby’s baptism on 25 April: the accompanying photograph shows a content Mina, relaxed and apparently well-suited to motherhood (“Battezzato in clinica,” 1963, p. 10). However, we are still encouraged to feel sympathy for her as we learn about the distress she feels at not being able to breastfeed her baby (as a mother should, is the implication of the article).

Following the birth of Massimiliano, the stories that feature for the rest of 1963 in *La Stampa* recount the court proceedings between Pani and Monteduro, as Pani fights the accusation of *concupinaggio*. Mina is never present in court and indeed, as the story unfolds during September and October, there is a suggestion of distance between Pani and Mina that was not present in the stories earlier in the year. An article published on 29 September recounts how Pani and his wife broke down in tears in court and embraced one another; we then learn that Mina’s relationship with Pani is not what it was a few months ago and that when she found out what had happened in court, she too began to cry and asked journalists to leave her in peace (“Corrado Pani offre 30 milioni,” 1963, p. 17). Indeed, we are constantly reminded in articles of this period that Mina is not present in

court, and the photographs used to illustrate these stories nearly always show Mina, Pani and Monteduro in separate shots, or else show Pani and his wife together, with Mina in a separate photograph. It is as if, now that Mina's image has been recreated as that of tender, loving mother, she must be distanced from the sordid story of the affair. There is also the suggestion of a breakdown in the relationship between Mina and Pani (which was in fact inaccurate at this point) through the alleged reconciliation between Pani and Monteduro. This consolidates the idea that by the end of 1963, Mina has been recuperated and can now be seen to have embraced Italian social norms and traditions; she is thus presented as being distanced from any behaviours or relationships that would constitute a challenge to convention. The re-moulding process is complete, and Mina can now be seen to occupy a socially acceptable role within Italian culture: that of mother. It is this idea of Mina that takes hold in the public imaginary during 1963 and becomes an important signifier of the singer in this period.

Mina as mother

This image of 'Mina as mother', and thus of Mina as fulfilling a traditional gender role and abiding by the status quo, then returns throughout the 1960s and indeed remains a fundamental part of Mina's star persona. This is clear in the magazine articles and features which appeared during the 1960s that showcased Massimiliano's childhood and explained Mina's commitment to her son and to her role as mother, which, we are told, is her priority above all else.

For example, in an article in *Bella* from March 1964 entitled 'Mina nuova maniera', we discover that Mina now has a new sense of her responsibilities, both at work and at home. The journalist Tino Robert comments on the changes that are now evident in Mina and explains:

Ecco, la sua ossessione è questa: di essere ingrassata. In effetti si nota un cambiamento fisico, ma non tale da preoccupare. Si è fatta più donna, più florida. Il suo vero cambiamento è forse soprattutto psicologico, interiore. "Prima non ero una cantante, ero soltanto una ragazza di buona famiglia borghese che cantava per divertirsi. Adesso mi considero una professionista che ha degli impegni da assolvere nel miglior modo possibile. Insomma prendo sul serio il mio lavoro" (Robert, 1964).

The reader has to make the connection between the changes to Mina's physical appearance and her recent pregnancy but it is interesting to note that these appear to be positive changes. She has demonstrably embraced her role as mother, seen in the fact that she is now "più donna" and "più florida", meaning that the reader can identify the physical results of Mina embracing her socially acceptable role as mother.

But she has also started to take her work seriously now, following the birth of her son. The article quotes Mina's record label manager, Ansoldi, who explains of Mina "ti sei resa conto di avere delle responsabilità" (Robert, 1964). This is then the opportunity for Mina to talk about her son, "con una sincerità e una commozione toccanti" (Robert, 1964). Her change in attitude is clear to those around her, and, encouraged by the journalist, we too

feel moved by Mina's emotions towards her son. Indeed, following his birth, Mina is no longer 'la tigre' we are told; rather, "si potrebbe definirla una dolce gazzella, adesso, un placido elegante cigno da laghetto" (Robert, 1964). It is important to note that these ongoing reminders of how Mina has apparently changed for the better as a result of becoming a mother then become part of her new star image: 'Mina as mother' is tranquil, sweet, and placid, meanings that are in direct opposition to those associated with her star persona at the end of the 1950s and early 1960s.

These changes have had additional consequences for Mina's star image though, as a four part interview published in *Tuttamusica TV* in October 1964 demonstrates. Again, Mina recounts how the birth of Massimiliano changed her life and how her son is the best thing that has happened to her. But in addition to demonstrably embracing her role as mother, she explains how becoming a mother has brought her closer to the public:

Massimiliano nacque il 18 aprile del '63 a Milano. È il giorno che ho segnato come il più bello della mia vita. Quando mi fecero vedere Massimiliano i miei occhi si riempirono di lacrime, era bellissimo, era come lo avevo sognato.

Fu anche in quell'occasione che mi resi conto come la gente non sia cattiva. Ricevetti poche lettere di insulti, di rampogna. Ricevetti invece migliaia e migliaia di auguri. Ricevetti fiori, coprifasce, abitini per il bambino, da ogni parte d'Italia, da gente che non avevo mai visto, ma che mi conosceva per avermi sentito alla radio, alla televisione o per aver visto le mie fotografie sui giornali. Quei regali e quelle lettere le ho conservate tutti. È stato il più bel premio che abbia avuto, il più grande successo.

Quando tornai a farmi vedere in pubblico mi accorsi di essere ancora amata. La gente mi sorrideva, mi si stringeva attorno, mi chiedeva di Massimiliano. È stato tutto questo a ridarmi il coraggio di ricominciare da zero. Ora posso dire di essere felice, ho riconquistato il mio pubblico, ho una casa mia, ho Corrado e ho il più bel bambino del mondo. (Berlendis, 1964)

Here, we are reminded of the scandal by means of Mina's belief that "la gente non sia cattiva" and through the reference to the very few letters "di insulti, di rampogna" that she received following the announcement of her pregnancy. She is aware of the scandalous nature of her situation but is able to turn this scandal on its head by virtue of explaining what she has found the public's reaction to be, which suggests they do not perceive her situation to be as scandalous as might be expected. Rather, they choose to support the singer in her maternity and send best wishes, flowers, and baby clothes to show their support. The narration of the public's positive attitude to her personalises Mina's story in a way that makes the scandal part of her celebrity status, which has 'migrated', as Driessens (2012) would have it (p. 644), to now include the role of mother. The story she tells here can be seen as part of the celebratization process at work, as Mina's account involves aspects of privatization (allowing the public intimate details about her private life) and emotionalization (allowing the public first hand access to her feelings about her family and about her fans); both of these aspects are fundamental moulding forces in celebratization (Driessens, 2012, pp. 644–5). But in this way, the 1963 scandal thus becomes an integral part of what Mina now stands for as a star, and arguably becomes one of the 'texts' through which her star image is created, again also contributing to our understanding of the celebratization process to which she has been subjected.

In particular, though, the private and emotional responses to the scandal become a fundamental part of its reworking that the 'Mina as mother' image represents. For example, in an article published in *Epoca* in October 1966, the journalist Guido Gerosa places Mina under the spotlight and, through an interview, tries to get to know Mina, the person behind, 'Mina', the star persona. She is, according to Gerosa (1966), "colei che, con Sophia Loren, incarna il tipo della 'diva' italiana del dopoguerra". The reference to this status reminds the reader of Mina's place in Italian culture, which she has arguably regained following the 1963 scandal, if indeed she ever really lost this status for the Italian public in the first place. Gerosa then shows how Mina remains attached to Italy, outlining how she does not like to travel or tour, suggesting a reciprocated affection that repays the status her fans ascribe her (Gerosa, 1966). There is, however, an additional important aspect to this attachment that supports the 'Mina as mother' image. Gerosa seeks to understand the extent to which Mina prioritises staying in Italy and the article recounts their exchange on the subject:

è vero che ha rifiutato un contratto per cantare un mese a Las Vegas, a cinque milioni per sera, e l'ha fatto per non staccarsi dal bambino? Oh Dio, forse non erano cinque milioni per sera, ma un mucchio di quattrini erano, questo sì. Ci ho rinunciato per stare con mio figlio, e anche per stare in Italia. E' un paese troppo bello, il più bello del mondo, lo dice una che il mondo l'ha girato tutto. Siamo così viziati... Io, quando mi trovo all'estero, mi ammazzo a fare dieci cose al giorno pur di tornare a casa in fretta. E se solo sento, per strada, accennare una canzone napoletana, mi vengono le lacrime agli occhi e prenoto un posto sul primo aereo per l'Italia (Gerosa, 1966)

Mina's desire to stay close to her son and to stay close to her country of birth are conflated here, building an important sense of attachment to both family and nation. The 'Mina as mother' image, then, takes on a new aspect here, as the feelings and emotions Mina has for her son are transferred to the nation. Her role of mother is then opened up further: she is now not only responsible for Massimiliano's welfare and wellbeing, but also has a role to play in that of the nation too. Such a representation of Mina reinforces her position as 'diva nazionale' whilst also redefining it to now include an aspect of caring and parental responsibility.

This caring element is reinforced when Gerosa narrates what happens during the interview when he asks directly about Massimiliano:

"Lei dice che non ha bisogno di nessuno, ma non è vero. C'è qualcuno, mi hanno detto, per cui stravede: il suo bambino, Massimiliano." Finora la conversazione si è svolta in clima rarefatto, appunto da film di Fellini. Quei muri decorati di stemmi, quell'abito candido che fa somigliare Mina a un'apparizione di Giulietta degli spiriti, il trucco profondo agli occhi, il suo scivolare lento nella stanza dall'alto di "un metro e settantotto a piedi scalzi". Ma adesso che parla del figlio, una luce diversa le accende lo sguardo: torna ad essere la ragazza di Cremona che aveva paura di presentarsi sul palcoscenico una sera di dicembre di otto anni fa, la Mina che, già ricca di trionfi, invitata al circo, si rifiutò di salire in groppa a un elefante perché le facevano paura gli "animali grossi". (Gerosa, 1966)

The visible change in Mina's demeanour that the conversation about Massimiliano elicits results in a reintroduction into her star image of the original authenticity she used to

represent. Prior to the mention of her son, the interview has had an inauthentic, unreal air, as seen in the likening of the environment and conversation to those found in a Fellini film. Yet when Mina begins to speak of her son, her face lights up and the reader once again sees her as a frightened young girl who has much to learn and much to lose. This revelation of authentic feelings, that echo a pre-existing version of Mina's star image, functions to bring the audience closer to Mina. Meyers (2009) explains that

tabloid and entertainment magazines, fan-authored and official Web sites devoted to celebrities, and any other forum where celebrity lifestyles are the main topic of concern [...] bring the celebrity close to the audience by making her life not so far removed from the audience's own. In other words, the illusion of intimacy strips away the mask of the public performance through the revelation of personal and private details about the celebrity as an average person that resonate with the audience's own experiences. (p. 893)

In the context of the Gerosa article, the presentation of the private details of Mina's lifestyle and, in particular, her experience of raising and caring for her son, help to construct her as an average person whose experiences are similar to those of ordinary Italians. The 'Mina as mother' image introduces an aspect of accessibility to Mina's star persona, making her not so far removed from her audience.

Mina and Massimiliano today

This accessibility then developed during Mina's career and took a new form during from the 1980s onwards. Following Mina's retirement from public appearances, concerts, and television performances at the end of the 1970s, any contact her audience has with her has been and is fully mediated through her recording company, the record industry, and the media. The role of PDU, Mina's recording company, is of particular interest in the context of this article: this is because, although PDU was founded by Mina and her father in 1967, it has for the past thirty years been managed by Mina's son, Massimiliano Pani. His presence serves as a constant reminder of the scandalous events of 1963 and the idea of Mina as mother today. But Massimiliano is also now responsible for delivering Mina to her public and for shaping her contemporary star image through a narrative proposed solely by the record company. As Mina's son, he has the authority to speak about her and to offer a legitimate narrative of Mina's career, in order to continue to celebrate the star and reify her status.

This is clear from a recent episode of *Che tempo che fa* that aired on January 14 2018: Massimiliano Pani appeared on the programme to speak about the newly released *Tutte le migliori* album, a collection of greatest hits and duets from Mina and Adriano Celentano, which was released on December 1 2017. After a short introduction to his career, the questions Massimiliano answers are about Mina's album, the production process for her songs, Mina's artistic choices on the album, his childhood growing up with Mina, and Mina's everyday routine today: the focus always remains Mina. Massimiliano presents certain pieces of information about her personality, her artistic decisions, and her approach to music in general, ensuring that Mina's star image here is shaped appropriately. For

example, when questioned about his description of her as “la più grande donna che io abbia mai conosciuto”, which the host, Fabio Fazio, sees as a wonderful compliment to offer, Massimiliano responds “guarda, [...] sicuramente è una persona che ha un punto di vista delle cose formidabile. A volte dice una cosa e ci penso e dico ‘perfetto, perché non ci ho pensato io?’ perché è proprio avanti” (Biondani). Mina here is presented as continuously and consistently modern, forward-thinking, and ahead of her time, in all that she does. We the audience might think of her musical career in this context, but her personal life and family choices were arguably equally modern and against the status quo. Mina’s absence from the screens is mediated through her son – and through his presentation of her and his guidance on how we should interpret her behaviour. As a trusted family member, Massimiliano can speak on Mina’s behalf, and the images of the two of them together as mother and son that are projected on large screens in the television studio and thus constitute the backdrop to the conversation, remind us of his status. When we then view a ‘Mina montage’ in homage to the great singer, we also see Massimiliano’s live reactions to seeing his mother on screen. The way in which he smiles and nods approvingly of what he sees prompts us to respond in a similar (and thus legitimate) way to the star.

Massimiliano ‘speaks’ for his mother also on the occasion of the release of the 2018 studio album *Maeba*. In an article from *Il Tempo*, for example, published on 22 April 2018, “Massimiliano Pani racconta la madre” (“Mina superstar”, 2018, p. 21). Again, because he is a member of her family, he has the authority to represent Mina to the public: the story he presents is consistent and depicts Mina as “l’artista più moderna che ci sia in Italia” (p. 21). According to Massimiliano, Mina is courageous (as always), hardworking, professional, committed to her art, open to new developments and possibilities, and able to speak to new generations and audiences. She remains unique in her ability to produce a song that goes straight to the heart and elicits an emotional response from her listener. There is no mention here of the 1963 scandal; and whilst its legacy remains in the presence of Massimiliano’s narrative voice and the use of a photograph of Mina and Massimiliano together, all scandalous connotations of the idea of ‘Mina as mother’ have now been removed. Yet the idea of her as modern and courageous takes on new meanings when we bear in mind the scandal of the past: it is as if modernity, courage, and an implicit challenge to tradition and the status quo have always been part of Mina’s star image. The legacy of the scandal then reminds us of the very core of this image, of Mina’s broader significance as modern and anti-traditionalist, and of the ways in which she can be seen to challenge established ideals and values within post-war Italian culture.

It is the circulation of the medium of scandal as one of the ‘texts’ or, rather, ‘mediums’ which constitutes Mina’s star image and its resultant significance, which allows for the negotiation and renewal of Mina’s meaning as a celebrity and star in the Italian context. The coming together of such texts to produce celebrity status is of course indicative of the celebrification process, “by which ordinary people or public figures are transformed into celebrities” (Driessens, 2012, p. 643). But the generation of meaning through the coming together of these texts also sheds light on the process of celebritization, which “points to

certain changes in the nature of celebrity and its societal and cultural embedding” (Driessens, 2012, p. 644). The case of Mina and the 1963 scandal illustrates specifically the anxiety of Italian society about gender norms and ideals in this period, specifically towards young women, given that “the role of the family and identification of women primarily with it remained strong in this period” (Willson, 2010, p. 129). Specifically, the turn towards modernisation within Italian culture of the 1960s brought with it anxieties regarding possible increases in sexual relationships outside of marriage and unmarried young mothers. Mina’s celebrity status drew additional attention to her motherhood and the coverage in the press demonstrates how the dominant values for women were re-exerted and the scandalous nature of Mina’s behaviour recuperated, through the promulgation of the traditional, socially-acceptable ‘Mina as mother’ image. This is the image that Mina herself proposes in her narration of her relationship with her son during the 1960s. She appears to have internalised the societal expectations for a mother as required by Italian culture. Yet the fact remains that Mina was a modern, unmarried mother, and this aspect of modernity continues to be present within her star image and inform her significance to a certain extent, but is always contested then by the presence of the traditional, particularly in the contemporary context. The meanings that Italian audiences attach to Mina are informed by the cultural and social significance of the Italian context within she appears, and by the changes and continuities of post-war Italian society. The legacy of the 1963 scandal continues to circulate within Mina’s star image but is reworked to such an extent that the image of ‘Mina as mother’ now points to the necessity within Italian culture to embrace and adhere to convention. The notion of ‘the unconventional mother’ still exists within Mina’s star image, but has been largely erased by the Italian cultural necessity to recuperate Mina as a traditional, ‘good’ mother, thus reaffirming the positive trope of motherhood within Italian culture.

Biographical note

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Notes

¹ In the case of Mina, these are all terms that can be used to characterise her level of fame at various points in her career. In this article, I have tended to use star in order to indicate a certain longevity for Mina’s career by that point, and to draw a distinction between a type of fame that is associated with an industry and with notions of a constructed star ‘persona’ and a more personal, private aspect of fame that is then connoted here by the term ‘celebrity’. I also use ‘celebrity’ to mean, more generally, ‘a famous person’.