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**Abstract:** In 1975, the Associazione Italiana per l’Educazione Demografica (AIED) sponsored the publication of three *fotoromanzi* as part of a larger campaign effort to educate Italians on the benefits of birth control and the low risks of the contraceptive pill. Against the idea that romances could only be apolitical and escapist tools, the stories of relationships narrated in the AIED *fotoromanzi* aimed at spreading behavioral models that were deemed appropriate by its sponsor’s policy of public health. In doing so, the *fotoromanzi* addressed not only the issue of unwanted pregnancies but also that of sexual rights for both men and women in a country still predominantly patriarchal, despite women’s increasing liberties in both the private as well as the public spheres. In this essay, I analyze the historical and cultural context in which the AIED *fotoromanzi* were conceived, advertised, and distributed. Following the tradition of American educational media, the rhetorical strategies of the AIED’s campaign were not new or original; at the same time, they departed from this tradition by uniquely engaging with Italian celebrity culture. In this way, the 1970s AIED campaign was not only innovative in Europe in the use of the *fotoromanzo* for propaganda purposes, but also demonstrated a deep understanding of what made the medium so successful among the masses.

**Keywords:** *fotoromanzi*, contraception, AIED, Pathfinder, education.

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## The Secret Pill: AIED, *Fotoromanzi*, and Sexual Education in 1970s Italy

PAOLA BONIFAZIO

In 1976, on the pages of *Corriere della Sera*, Umberto Eco praised an experiment that took place in a middle school of the popular Roman neighborhood “Torre Spaccata:” a group of students had created a *fotoromanzo* about one of their favorite celebrities, swimmer Novella Calligaris. “Saper leggere criticamente questi nuovi miti, scoprire qual è l’insegnamento nascosto sotto le forme del divertimento è un modo di fare la scuola preparandosi alla vita,” claimed Eco (Knowing to read these new myths and discovering the teaching hidden beneath forms of entertainment is a new approach to schooling that prepares one for life).<sup>1</sup> Written about ten years after the publication of his seminal essay on mass culture *Apocalittici e integrati* (1964), Eco’s short contribution sustained a positive attitude towards mass media, arguing that the form itself could be used to criticize the ideas that were purportedly imposed on its users. Speaking of *fotoromanzi*, Eco’s friendly words were at odds with the widespread contempt or condescendence that most scholars and journalists usually employed at the time when they talked about these magazines. In a sharp and exemplary critique, Luigi Compagnone in the same *Corriere* had only two years earlier had declared that, the *fotoromanzo* “non ‘dà da leggere’ ma da guardare, quindi elude il linguaggio, quindi abitua a non pensare” (The *fotoromanzo* ‘does not give people to read,’ only to look; thus it eludes language and accustoms them not to think).<sup>2</sup> Writing in a column titled “Risponde Compagnone” (Compagnone Responds) the well-known fiction writer and journalist received many letters from readers who were offended by his words, which he quoted in a follow-up article in the same column (a few weeks later). In a highly ironic tone, Compagnone replied by dismissing resentment and complaints, and insisted that, “il lettore di fotoromanzi è un soggetto passivo perchè privato del linguaggio” ([T]he reader of *fotoromanzi* is a passive subject because he [sic] is deprived of language).<sup>3</sup>

However, Eco was not alone in believing that the *fotoromanzo* could contribute to people’s education. Initiatives like the one in Torre Spaccata were not unique around the mid-seventies, especially in educational contexts such as schools and activist organizations.<sup>4</sup> Among the letters that Compagnone received against his tirade, the one written by Sergio Montesi advertised a “fotoromanzo anticoncezionale” (contraceptive *fotoromanzo*).<sup>5</sup> Montesi wrote on behalf of the Associazione Italiana per l’Educazione Demografica (AIED), which sponsored the publication of three *fotoromanzi* as part of a larger campaign effort to educate Italians on the benefits of birth control and the low risks of the contraceptive pill. Against the idea that romances could only be apolitical and escapist tools, the stories of relationships narrated in AIED *fotoromanzi* aimed at spreading behavioral models that were deemed appropriate by its sponsor’s policy of public health. In doing so, the *fotoromanzi* addressed not only the issue of unwanted pregnancies but also that of sexual rights for both men and women in a country still predominantly patriarchal, despite women’s increasing liberties in both the private as well as the public spheres. The extremely low rate of users of contraceptives and the high number of illegal abortions made the AIED *fotoromanzi* a timely

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<sup>1</sup> Umberto Eco, “Divertendosi si educano alla libertà,” *Corriere della Sera*, March 23 1976, 12. All translations of the original Italian texts are mine, unless otherwise specified.

<sup>2</sup> Luigi Compagnone, “Femminismo,” *Corriere della Sera*, March 3 1974, 2.

<sup>3</sup> Luigi Compagnone, “Fotoromanzo e politica,” *Corriere della Sera*, March 31 1974, 2.

<sup>4</sup> See Maria Teresa Anelli et al., *Fotoromanzo, fascino e pregiudizio: storia, documenti e immagini di un grande fenomeno popolare: 1946-1978* (Rome: Savelli, 1979), which talks about such experiments. See also Anna Bravo, *Il fotoromanzo* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2003), Chapter 5, Kindle. Bravo mentions specifically the case of AIED’s *fotoromanzi* but does not delve into any detailed analysis of their rhetorical strategies, sponsorship, and the American contribution to the campaign.

<sup>5</sup> Compagnone, “Fotoromanzo e politica,” 2.

effort, supported by the extraordinary success of the media itself among mass audiences.<sup>6</sup>

In this essay, I will analyze the historical and cultural context in which the AIED *fotoromanzi* were conceived, advertised, and distributed. Published by the Institute for Demographic Research and Initiative (IRIDE), the AIED's research arm, "Il segreto" (The Secret), "Noi giovani" (We the Youth), and "La trappola" (The Trap) used the technique of the "foto-racconto-lampo" (flash photo-story) a kind of short photo-textual narrative first invented by the Roman firm Lancio in the late 60s.<sup>7</sup> The AIED "foto-racconto" consisted in a brief story that delivered a clear message: contraceptives were the secret weapon for a happy sexual, romantic, and social life. As I will show in the next paragraphs, this message was embedded in stories that pushed the previous boundaries set by the Italian birth control movement with regard to sexual conduct. Following the tradition of American educational media, however, De Marchi's rhetorical strategies were not as new and original as Montesi claimed; at the same time, they departed from this tradition by uniquely engaging with Italian celebrity culture.<sup>8</sup> In this way, the 1970s AIED campaign was not only innovative in Europe in the use of *fotoromanzo* for propaganda purposes, but also demonstrated a deep understanding of what made the medium so successful among the masses.

### *The Campaign: Crossing Boundaries*

"A fumetti il controllo delle nascite" (Birth Control in Comics): with this title, the national newspaper *La Stampa* announced in 1974 the imminent publication of three *fotoromanzi*—"Il segreto," "Noi giovani," and "La trappola"—to advertise and promote the use of contraceptives. Testimonials for the campaign were provided by celebrities like Paola Pitagora, Mario Valdemarin, and Gianni Morandi. The latter eventually did not take part in the project and was substituted by Ugo Pagliani in the leading male role of "Noi giovani." The three *fotoromanzi* were initially distributed for free, 60,000 copies in three pilot cities: Novara, Arezzo, and Salerno.<sup>9</sup> In the following years, other cities would be targeted as well as smaller groups for more specific survey purposes. For example, the *fotoromanzi* were given to a poll of two hundred male workers to test their attitudes

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<sup>6</sup> In the 70s, Edizioni Universo's *Grand Hotel* reached more than a million copies on a weekly basis, Mondadori's *Bolero Film* more than half a million, and Rizzoli's *Sogno* about three hundred thousand. See Milly Buonanno, *Naturale come sei: indagine sulla stampa femminile in Italia* (Rimini: Guaraldi Editore, 1975), 40. According to Dagmar Herzog, only one in ten Italian women was using oral contraceptives in 1969; in 1975, Lucia Purisol claimed that only 5 percent of Italian women used the pill. See Dagmar Herzog, *Sexuality in Europe: A Twentieth Century History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 137; and Lucia Purisol, "Paola Pitagora a fumetti insegna a usare la pillola," *Corriere della Sera*, January 30 1975, 5. Official numbers of illegal abortions are obviously unavailable; however, Maria Luisa Zardini De Marchi affirmed in her study conducted in the Roman housing projects that, on average, the 588 women she assisted were 31 years old, had been married for 10 years and pregnant every two years, and had had two abortions for every three living children. See Lucia Sollazzo, "Inumane Vite," *La Stampa*, October 4, 1969, 17.

<sup>7</sup> Complete copies of the AIED *fotoromanzi* are available online; see "I fotoromanzi di De Marchi sul controllo delle nascite," Rientro dolce, accessed July 25 2018,

[http://www.rientrodolce.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=250&Itemid=0](http://www.rientrodolce.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=250&Itemid=0).

<sup>8</sup> See also Elisabetta Remondi, "Tre fotoromanzi AIED. Noi Giovani. La trappola, Il segreto," *Genesis* 3, no. 1 (2004), 201-219. Remondi argues in this essay that De Marchi's use of "motivational psychology" was original, and does not acknowledge a long tradition of motivational films for educational and training purposes, both in the U.S. and in Europe. For a discussion of the use of these films in Italy see Paola Bonifazio, *Schooling in Modernity: The Politics of Sponsored Films in Postwar Italy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014).

<sup>9</sup> Liliana Madeo, "A fumetti il controllo delle nascite," *La Stampa*, January 30 1974, 7. Madeo also writes that the *fotoromanzi* will be included in "alcune riviste di fumetti" (some comics magazines) but she does not say which, and I did not find any evidence that indeed the AIED *fotoromanzi* were published in magazines for sale.

towards birth control.<sup>10</sup> Each *fotoromanzo* ended with a back cover in which the AIED was presented as sponsor, followed by a list of different methods and products, and addresses of local “consultori” (i.e., free clinics where women could receive medical attention, psychological support, and access to birth control methods). Ugo Fornari is indicated as author of both the story and the script of “La Trappola” and “Noi giovani” while Marco De Luigi is indicated as the same for “Il segreto;” both names, however, were pseudonyms of Luigi De Marchi (Figure 1, 2, and 3).

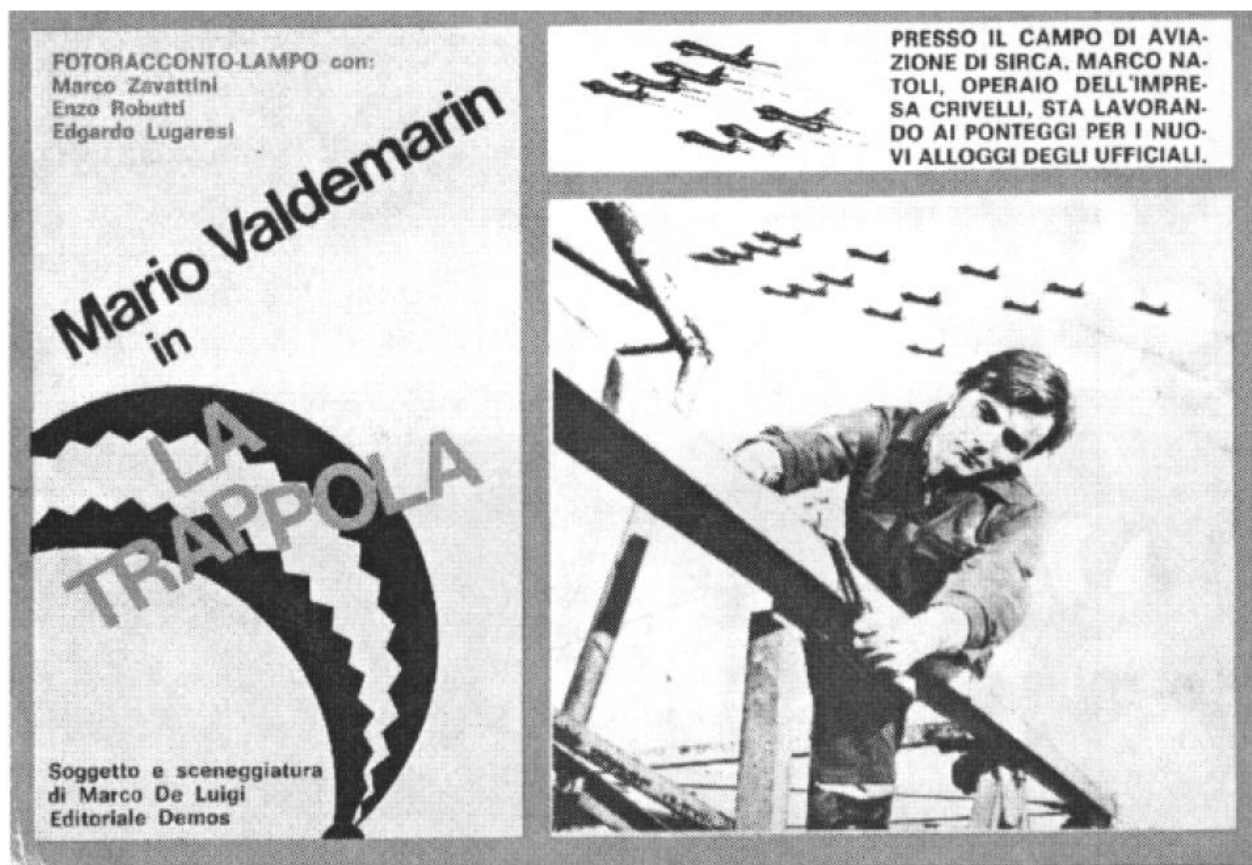


Figure 1: Cover of “La Trappola,” written by Marco De Luigi (aka Luigi De Marchi), with Mario Valdemarin. Courtesy of AIED.

The 1975 AIED campaign for contraception was announced in the press as both the evidence of progress in the sexual education of Italian citizens and as the ultimate success of “l’instancabile” De Marchi, president of the AIED and sexual rights activist, who had just a few years earlier appeared on Italian newspapers for the groundbreaking court ruling that legalized the making and distribution of birth control propaganda in Italy.<sup>11</sup> In the mid-seventies, Italy was still behind in comparison with

<sup>10</sup> See Franco Marchiaro, “Alessandria fa l’esame di educazione sessuale” (Alessandria takes a test in sexual education) *Corriere di Alessandria e Asti*, January 23 1976, 1. In addition to the opening of a “consultorio,” the article announces the release of a film in theaters. About the focus group in a factory see Silvano Villani, “La classe operaia vuole gli anticoncezionali” (The working class wants contraceptives), *Corriere della Sera*, November 11 1976, 7. The public polling company in charge of distributing the survey and analyzing the results was Demoskoepa, whose President Giampaolo Fabris also co-authored with Rowena Davis an important study on the sexual behaviors of Italians. See Giampaolo Fabris and Rowena Davis, *Il mito del sesso: Rapporto sul comportamento sessuale degli italiani* (Milan: Mondadori, 1978).

<sup>11</sup> Liliana Madeo, “A fumetti il controllo delle nascite,” 7. See also Lamberto Furso, “Perché non è più reato dopo 40 anni la propaganda degli anticoncezionali,” *La Stampa*, March 18 1971, 8. De Marchi was secretary of the AIED Roman



Figure 2: Cover of “Noi Giovani,” written by Marco De Luigi (aka Luigi De Marchi), with Paola Gassman and Ugo Pagliai. Courtesy of AIED.



Figure 3: Cover of “Il segreto,” written by Ugo Fornari (aka Luigi De Marchi), with Paola Pitagora. Courtesy of AIED.

other nations, such as the United Kingdom or the Netherlands, with regard to legislation as well as sexual education. According to Gianfranco Porta, in a recent history of the AIED titled *Amore e libertà*, “le normative fondanti del natalismo fascista” (founding norms of fascist natalism) which considered neo-Malthusian theories of population planning “un reato contro l’integrità e la sanità

branch since February 28, 1954 and became National Secretary of the association in 1961. He had a degree in literature, and was a United States Information Services officer, director of *Mondo Occidentale*, editor of *Globo* and *Umanità*.



della stirpe” (a crime against the integrity and health of race) were still in place in the new Republic.<sup>12</sup> In fact, Fascist laws against the use of contraceptives were not dismantled but converted into prescriptive rules that regulated sexual behaviors according to Catholic moral values.<sup>13</sup> Until 1971, Italian law prohibited fabricating, importing, buying, distributing and possessing writings, drawings, and images to propagate birth control methods. Article 553 stated that, “chiunque pubblicamente incita a pratiche contro la procreazione e fa propaganda a favore di esse è punito con la reclusione fino a un anno e con la multa fino a lire quattrocentomila” (Anyone who publicly incites use of birth control methods and makes use of propaganda in their favor can be punished to up to one year in prison and to a fine up to four hundred thousand lira).<sup>14</sup>

In 1975, contraceptives were still officially accepted only for married couples: the official commentator of a newsreel portraying a parliamentary discussion on contraception stated that, “occorre un’opera d’informazione fatta in profondità, cominciando dal punto che la maternità consapevole non ha niente a che fare con il libero amore” (It is necessary to inform pervasively, starting from the idea that planned parenthood has nothing to do with free love).<sup>15</sup> Finally, while in the 1960s and 70s new laws were passed in many European countries to introduce sexual education in school, in Italy the topic was never seriously debated in the Parliament (see for example, the law proposal by Communist deputies Giorgio Bini, Adriana Seroni and others in 1975).<sup>16</sup>

According to Dagmar Herzog, “scholars ten[d] to oscillate between presuming either that the growth of a culture of consumerism and the medical-technological invention of the birth control pill in the early 1960s sparked the sexual revolution or that this revolution was the logical result of courageous social movement activism on behalf of sexual liberties, legalization of abortion, and gay and lesbian rights.”<sup>17</sup> De Marchi’s *fotoromanzi*, and their reception in the press, convey the idea that the use of contraceptives was both a trigger and an effect of the sexual revolution in Italy.<sup>18</sup> In this context, the AIED’s *fotoromanzi* constituted the first nationwide campaign for the pill that detached the sexual act from both procreation and marriage. In anticipation of their publication, De Marchi declared to the press, in open confrontation with both the Vatican and the current political establishment, that Italian doctors who were not in favor of contraceptives contributed to a widespread demonization of sexuality in Italian society. Furthermore, birth control was strictly related to modifications in the ways in which sex was perceived, represented, and repressed. He

<sup>12</sup> Gianfranco Porta, *Amore e libertà: Storia dell’AIED* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2013), 3. See also Doone and Greer Williams, *Every child a wanted child: Clarence James Gamble and His Work in the Birth Control Movement*, ed. Emily P. Flint (Boston: Harvard University Press for Francis A. Countway Library of Medicine, 1978), 375.

<sup>13</sup> Elena Petricola, “Dal discorso sulle donne al discorso delle donne. Birth control, contraccezione e depenalizzazione dell’aborto tra ambienti laici e movimenti delle donne” (From the discourse on women to the discourse of women. Birth control, contraception and decriminalization of abortion between secular environments and women’s movements), *Quaderni di storia contemporanea*, no. 48 (2010), [http://www.isral.it/web/pubblicazioni/qsc\\_48\\_07\\_petricola.pdf](http://www.isral.it/web/pubblicazioni/qsc_48_07_petricola.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> Cited in Porta, *Amore e libertà*, 4.

<sup>15</sup> See newsreel no. 417, “Notizie Cinematografiche” (1975), published on the Internet portal of the Senato della Repubblica and created in collaboration with Archivio Istituto Luce: “Dibattito a Roma su ‘La contraccezione e il lavoro della donna’ organizzato dall’IRIDE (Istituto per le ricerche e le iniziative demografiche) in collaborazione con l’AIED. Presiede Luigi De Marchi, intervengono giornaliste e deputati,” <http://senato.archivioluca.it/senato-luce/scheda/video/IL5000046833/2/Dibattito-a-Roma-su-La-contraccezione-e-il-lavoro-della-donna-organizzato-dallIRIDE-Istituto-per-le-ricerche-e-le-iniziativa-demografiche-in-collaborazione-con-lAIED-Pres.html>

<sup>16</sup> The text of this proposal can be found in Giovanni Berlinguer, Giorgio Bini and Antonio Faggioli, *Sesso e società* (Roma, Editori Riuniti, 1976), 333-350. It was presented to the parliament on March 13 1975 by the following deputies: Giorgio Bini, Adriana Fabbri Seroni, Carmen Casapieri Quagliotti, Giuseppe Chiarante, Cecilia Chiovini, Renato Finelli, Gabriele Gannantoni, Adriana Lodi Faustini Fustini, Giuseppa Mendola, Alessandro Natta, Maria Agostina Pellegatta, Gino Picciotto, Marino Raicich, Giulio Tedeschi, Alessandro Tessari, Rosala Vagli, Nazzareno Vitali.

<sup>17</sup> Dagmar, *Sexuality in Europe*, 133.

<sup>18</sup> See for example, “Nascite controllate con l’aiuto dei fumetti,” *Corriere della Sera*, January 29 1974, 11.

reportedly said that, “storicamente la sessualità si è sempre retta su un equilibrio nevrotico, come peccato con conseguente senso di colpa per cui superare il quale si tende all’espiazione. Sinora non si è fatto altro che presentare queste espiazioni sotto forma scientifica” (Historically, sexuality has been based on a neurotic balance—a sin that leads to a guilty conscience one must overcome through penance. Until now, such penance has been presented under scientific terms).<sup>19</sup> De Marchi’s statements were clearly influenced by Wilhelm Reich’s theories (of which he was a translator), which he programmatically embedded in his book *Sesso e civiltà* (1960). There, De Marchi basically asserted that sexual taboos prevented the healthy functioning of societies. In many ways, dialogues and captions in “Noi giovani” and “Il segreto” reflect De Marchi’s perspective and present the pill as the tool to liberate sexuality, while also sustaining that the commercialization of contraceptives depended on the spread of radical thinking about sexual conduct. In “Noi giovani,” the youth talk about the pill as the means to free love but also as “una forma di rivolta nei confronti della civiltà dei loro padre”(a form of revolution against the fathers’ civilization).<sup>20</sup> In the closing photograph of “Noi giovani,” the young protagonist couple of the story is caught in a close-up as they look obliquely at the future, sealed by a caption that says “Una volta, la gente faceva poco amore e molti figli. Noi giovani, invece, vogliamo pochi figli e molto amore!!” (Once upon a time, people made little love and many children. We that are young, we want less children and more love!!) (Figure 4). In “Il segreto,” the female protagonist Lia explicitly argues for the use of the pill in order to liberate sexual intercourse from the burden of reproduction. A culture of pleasure substitutes for an imperative of fertility as a sign of virility, for men, and of faithfulness, for women. In the story, Lia contemplates being unfaithful because she is not satisfied with her partner, Franco, but is plagued by “l’angoscia di restare inguaiata” (the anxiety of getting in trouble).<sup>21</sup> Franco, on the other hand, wonders whether it would be better to go with a prostitute since “quella almeno non fa tante storie e non ha mille paure” (at least she doesn’t make a fuss and doesn’t have any fear).<sup>22</sup> Eventually “il segreto della [loro] nuova felicità” (the secret of [their] new happiness) is the pill, thanks to which Lia can finally let herself go and, in her words, “gustare per la prima volta il piacere supremo...” (taste ultimate bliss for the first time) (Figure 5).<sup>23</sup>

In a country where, in 1978, women’s pleasure was still “marginal and accessory” and “accepted only as component of the procreational purpose,” to quote Fabris and Davis’ survey on the sexual behaviors of Italians, “Il segreto” was truly groundbreaking.<sup>24</sup> At the same time, “Il segreto” fit perfectly in the historical context of 1970s Italy where, while conservative positions were still predominant at the level of legislation and government, mass culture was increasingly more risqué in representations of sexuality and the press suffered from a “polling fever”<sup>25</sup> that, like in other European countries before, resulted in sex being “talked to death.”<sup>26</sup> In addition to academic

<sup>19</sup> Aida Ribero, “Lui mi nasconde la pillola nel cassetto,” *La Stampa*, July 30 1974, 10. “Historically, sexuality has been based on a neurotic balance—a sin that leads to a guilty conscience one must overcome through penance. Until now, such penance has been presented under scientific terms.”

<sup>20</sup> These are the words used by De Marchi in an interview with Guido Credazzi, “Solo un figlio per famiglia altrimenti l’Italia scoppia” (Only one child per couple or Italy will explode) *Corriere dell’informazione*, January 18 1978, 2.

<sup>21</sup> Ugo Fornari, “Il segreto” (Rome: Iride, 1975), no page.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Fabris and Davis, 203, quoted in Fiammetta Balestracci, “The Influence of American Sexual Studies on the ‘Sexual Revolution’ of Italian Women,” in *Children by Choice? Changing Values, Reproduction, and Family Planning in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, eds. Ann-Katrin Gembries, Theresia Theuke, and Isabel Heinemann (Munich: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2017), 148.

<sup>25</sup> Balestracci, “The influence of American Sexual Studies on the ‘Sexual Revolution’ of Italian Women,” 158.

<sup>26</sup> Dagmar, *Sexuality in Europe*, 145.

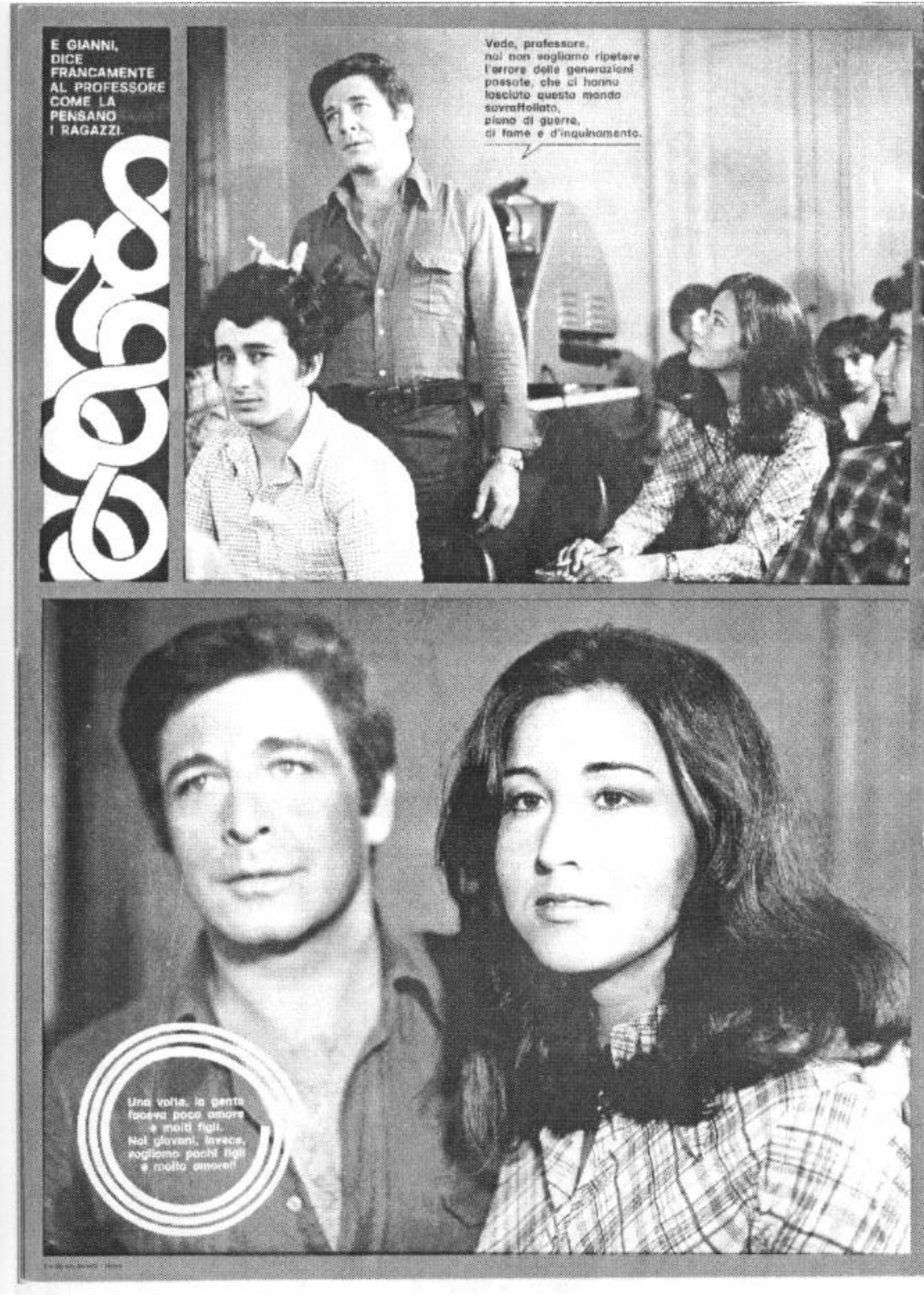


Figure 4: Last page of “Noi giovani,” starring Ugo Pagliani and Paola Gassman. Courtesy of AIED.





Figure 5: "Il segreto," with Paola Pitagora. Courtesy of AIED.

research, surveys were published in popular Italian news magazines such as *Panorama* (1977) and *L'Espresso* (1978) to discuss the knowledge and habits of Italians in matters of sexuality.<sup>27</sup> As Lucia Purisol writes in *Corriere della Sera*, “I settimanali femminili hanno cercato di sopperire alla mancanza totale di educazione sessuale con inchieste, servizi e con inserti ‘vietati ai minori’” (Women’s weeklies tried to fill the gap in sexual education via ‘R-Rated’ surveys, reports and inserts).<sup>28</sup> Other articles published in *Corriere della Sera* and *La Stampa* celebrated the AIED for its contribution to the sexual education of Italian citizens. Such publicity for the AIED aligned with other journalistic reports on sexuality insofar as it redefined the public discourse by “a marked medicalisation and scientification.”<sup>29</sup> An example can be found in *La Stampa*, which in 1974 published in three subsequent articles the results of a sexual education survey conducted at the Istituto Superiore Einaudi.<sup>30</sup> On the same page of the second report, in which students freely discuss their sexuality, another article advertises a press conference titled “Fate l’amore, non i figli” (Make love not children) during which “a new contraceptive method” was presented, the *fotoromanzi*.<sup>31</sup> While the article’s intention to turn this cultural product in itself into a scientific method may be farfetched, it is fair to say that medicine and scientific innovation play a significant role the stories. Additionally, each story ends with an advertisement of contraceptives including brand products such as Rendell, Lorofin, and Taro Cap. While the “inserto informativo” (informative insert) was clearly meant to provide scientific knowledge with regard to these products, their branding added commercial value to a publication that was supposed to be only socially committed.

In fact, despite the fact that propaganda for birth control was illegal, other contraceptive methods had already been advertised in *fotoromanzi* series in the late 60s. In Mondadori’s *Bolero Film*, a commercial for “il nuovissimo Sistema Combinato C.D.I” (the very new Combined System) promoted a “natural method” of contraception that was supported by the Church and recommended by doctors (according to the ad).<sup>32</sup> There are no documents that prove the AIED may have been in any way behind this initiative; however, the slogan for the product was strikingly similar to Vittoria Olivetti Berla’s motto in the essay she wrote in defense of family planning in 1954. “FIGLI, SÌ (ma al momento desiderato)” (CHILDREN, YES [but at the right moment]) said the C.D.I. commercial; “tutti, e solo, i figli desiderati, al tempo desiderato” (all and only wanted children,

<sup>27</sup> See also the film *Le italiane e l’amore* (1961), based on Gabriella Parca’s collection of letters from female readers of *fotoromanzi*, *Le italiane si confessano* (1959); and Luigi Comencini’s television series “Gli italiani e l’amore” (1978).

<sup>28</sup> Lucia Purisol, “Paola Pitagora a fumetti insegna a usare la pillola” (Paola Pitagora teaches how to use the pill in comics), *Corriere della sera*, January 30 1975, 5.

<sup>29</sup> Balestracci, “The influence of American Sexual Studies on the ‘Sexual Revolution’ of Italian Women,” 146.

<sup>30</sup> Eleonora Bertolotto, Donatella Giacotto, Luisella Re, Angela Virdò, “Ma sì, parliamo di sesso,” (Yes, let’s talk about sex) *La Stampa*, January 29 1974, 3.

<sup>31</sup> “I fotoromanzi come la pillola,” *La Stampa*, January 29, 1974, 3.

<sup>32</sup> The full ad reads: “Se desiderate avere figli, o se preferite rinviare la maternità a tempi più opportuni, affidatevi al nuovissimo Sistema Combinato C.D.I. a doppio controllo visivo, alla portata di tutti. Non più libri, non più grafici, non più calcoli incerti! Il Sistema Combinato C.D.I. basato su un metodo naturale, approvato dalla Chiesa e raccomandato dai medici, offre la massima sicurezza. Sarete mamma quando lo vorrete! Chiedete oggi stesso il nostro opuscolo GRATUITO illustr. (sped. Riserv.) e saprete come salvaguardare la felicità della vostra vita coniugale (unire 2 francobolli da L.40)” (If you want to have children, or if you want to postpone maternity to a better future, trust the newest Combined Method C.D.I. with double visual control, easy to use by everyone. No more books, no more graphics, no more uncertain results! The Combined System C.D.I. is based on a natural method, approved by the Church and recommended by doctors, and gives you maximum safety. You will be a mother when you want! Ask today for our FREE illustrated brochure and you will learn how to safeguard the happiness of your married life), *Bolero Film* n. 980 (1966), 46

at the right time) wrote Berla, who was at the time vice-president of the AIED.<sup>33</sup> What is relevant in the similarities between *Bolero Film*'s ad and Berla's statement (as well as Planned Parenthood's, for that matter) concerns the institution of marriage as the appropriate space to speak of "responsible procreation."<sup>34</sup> Indeed, in its founding principle, the AIED did not aim at freeing society from sexual taboos, as De Marchi argued in his books and interviews; moreover, the organization did not at all consider contraceptives to support the sexual revolution. Founded in 1953 by a mixed group of bourgeois intellectuals, industrialists (such as Adriano Olivetti), radicals, and socialists (including De Marchi), the AIED promoted birth control as "un'azione di carattere economico" (an economic intervention)—to solve the world's overpopulation problem—and "il mezzo che consente all'individuo di essere pienamente libero e cosciente di fronte a se stesso e alla propria discendenza" (The means to allow an individual to be free and aware of his [sic] own life and of his offspring).<sup>35</sup> In this sense, the AIED resumed the activities of socialists and radicals who, since the early twentieth century, considered birth control in response to the effects of industrialization, and embraced the Neo-Malthusian ideas with the goal of fighting poverty as well as with the purpose of regenerating Italian society.<sup>36</sup>

In both "Noi giovani" and "La trappola," the radicalization of these principles conveyed De Marchi's unique perspective rather than that of the Italian birth control movement as a whole. In "Noi giovani," the youth aims at solving worldwide issues of overpopulation, hunger, war, and environmental damages, like the birth control movement did; at the same time, their leader Gianni announces that free love is the tool to achieve such a goal (as claimed by De Marchi in his conversation with Guido Credazzi).<sup>37</sup> In "La trappola," the main character Marco is an unskilled worker employed by a greedy contractor who struggles to make ends meet when his fourth son is born. At the end, Marco warns a young fellow worker not to have more than two children (as De Marchi did in the above-mentioned interview) and explains that "preti e padroni" want workers "pieni di figli e fitti come formiche per meglio dominar[li] e sfruttare[li]" (Priests and bosses" want workers "full of children and crammed like ants to better dominate and exploit [them]) (Figure 6).

In sum, De Marchi's *fotoromanzi* draw from both mass culture and from the tradition of the Italian birth control movement while pushing their own political and moral agenda. In "Noi giovani" and "La trappola," anti-capitalist and anti-clerical ideas infuse the middle-class concerns for the world's overpopulation and the poor, while free love is claimed to be effective in solving the issue of the "population bomb" and its deleterious effects on humans and the environment. Furthermore, while *fotoromanzi* like *Bolero Film* were mostly conservative in their visual representations of sexuality, "Il segreto" was way more explicit in both words and images. According to a spokesperson of Lancio, a popular Roman publisher of *fotoromanzi*, "Non c'è nudo, non c'è pornografia. In una scena di letto, lei indossa una camicia accollatissima con maniche lunghe e lui una maglietta alla marinara" (Never a nude scene, never pornography. In bed, she wears a high-necked shirt with long sleeves and he wears a sailor shirt).<sup>38</sup> The "scena a letto" in "Il segreto" shows precisely the "nudo" so much feared by Lancio. Several pictures represent in medium shots and close-ups a couple lying in bed, undressed albeit under the covers; the woman reveals her bare shoulders, the man sits upright with his

<sup>33</sup> Vittoria Olivetti Berla, "Il problema della popolazione," (The Issue of Population) *La Voce repubblicana*, February 10 1954 cited in Porta, *Amore e libertà*, 20.

<sup>34</sup> This was the term officially used by the AIED and other supporters of the birth control movement until 1971 to avoid legal problems.

<sup>35</sup> Porta, *Amore e libertà*, 19.

<sup>36</sup> See Petricola, "Dal discorso sulle donne al discorso delle donne. Birth control, contraccezione e depenalizzazione dell'aborto tra ambienti laici e movimenti delle donne."

<sup>37</sup> Credazzi, "Solo un figlio per famiglia altrimenti l'Italia scoppia," 2.

<sup>38</sup> Virginia Visani, "Il sogno di carta," *Corriere della sera*, September 29 1975, 5.

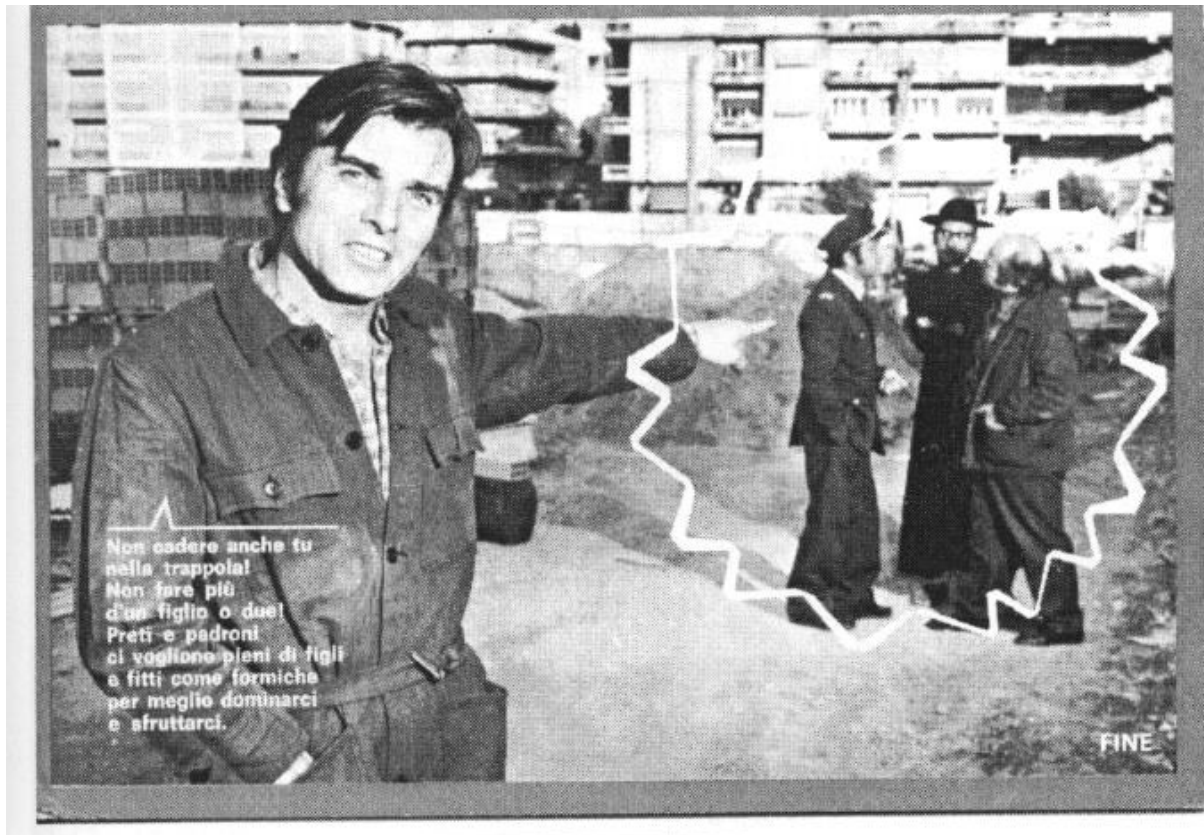


Figure 6: Last page of “La trappola,” with Mario Valdemarin. Courtesy of AIED.

chest naked. The couple not only shows that they had been intimate, but they both talk about sexual intercourse and about the pleasure that they may (or may not) have gained from the act. Furthermore, neither Lia nor Franco refers to each other as husband and wife. Some readers take for granted that the couple represented in “Il segreto” is married; however, this is not at all made explicit in the narrative. Such detail, in addition to the characters’ conversation, is crucial in order to claim that the message in support of contraception delivered by “Il segreto” serves the purpose of liberating sexuality from both the act of procreation and from the institution of marriage.

These claims were not only radical vis-à-vis the AIED’s founding principles, but also with regards to the position held by the association in current contributions to illustrated magazines. In 1974, one year before the publication of the *fotoromanzi*, two reports on women’s “intimate lives” sponsored by the AIED were published in the popular *fotoromanzo* *Grand Hotel*.<sup>39</sup> Each report featured an advertisement for the AIED that stated: “un centro dove si insegna come fare l’amore senza che la donna resti incinta” (A center where they teach you how to make love without the woman getting pregnant). The first report discussed the topic of virginity “con franchezza e senza pregiudizi” (with candor and without prejudices) while the second explained “come evitare una gravidanza non voluta” (how to avoid unwanted pregnancies). In both issues, *Grand Hotel* sent a clear message to its female readership: sexual intercourse was both natural and acceptable; however, “in una cornice di sentimento” (in a love setting) that could only be legitimated by marriage. As written in the second report, “il fine del matrimonio non è più soprattutto quello di avere figli, ma è principalmente quello della felicità e della comunione fra i coniugi. [...] Occorre imparare, però, a

<sup>39</sup> “Servizi sui problemi della donna e della sua vita intima” (Reports on women’s issues and their intimate lives), *Grand Hotel*, no.1470 (1974), 6-7 and no. 1471 (1974), 4-7.

non concepire bambini, se non quando lei e lui lo desiderino. Occorre che tutti sappiano come fare per raggiungere questo scopo” (The main goal of marriage is no longer to have children, but the couple’s happiness and harmony. [...] However, we must learn how to have children only when both desire them. It is necessary that everyone knows how to do that).<sup>40</sup>

*Clarence J. Gamble and De Marchi’s Rise to Celebrity*

“Every child a wanted child” is not only the message conveyed in illustrated magazines and in Berla’s essay but also the title of Doctor Clarence J. Gamble’s biography, written in 1978 to celebrate the life of this American millionaire who devoted his fortune to the cause of birth control in the world, particularly in developing countries. Gamble was initially associated with Margaret Sanger and Robert Latou Dickinson, and the American birth control movement more generally; “every child a wanted child” was also the slogan of Planned Parenthood, previously known as the American Birth Control League and founded by Sanger. Both Gamble and Sanger sustained the benefits of eugenics in democracy and believed in birth control as the way to fight the so-called “population bomb” (similarly, the AIED’s intention was to “ridurre [le] nascite di illegittimi, infanticidi, aborti procurati, suicidi di ragazze madri, *prole ereditariamente tarata*” [To reduce illegitimate births, infanticides, voluntary abortion, teen mother suicides, *genetically retarded offspring*]).<sup>41</sup> Berla was Gamble’s initial contact in Italy, but soon he became close to De Marchi and his wife, Maria Luisa Zardini De Marchi (from now on, Zardini).<sup>42</sup> The relationship between Gamble and the De Marchi has not been investigated much; however, I maintain that it considerably affected the history of AIED and its campaigning efforts.<sup>43</sup> As an official publication of Pathfinder states, “support from Clarence Gamble and Pathfinder enabled AIED to flourish and the De Marchis turned their mission to legalize birth control into their permanent employment.”<sup>44</sup> Beyond the celebratory goal of this booklet, my goal is to understand the influence of such partnership on the politics of the Association, in general, and on the making of the *fotoromanzi*, more specifically.

De Marchi had been at odds with Berla since the publication of *Sesso e civiltà*. For Berla, he advocated free love and thus, he was a menace to the Italian birth control movement.<sup>45</sup> De Marchi, on the other hand, claimed that his “personal” opinions should not matter to the Association, since he deemed his engagement as the secretary of the Roman branch separate from his work as social psychologist and sexual rights activist. Berla never made peace with De Marchi, left the AIED in 1963, and with her departure the Association lost the support of the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF).<sup>46</sup> This seemingly marginal incident is relevant to my discussion

<sup>40</sup> “Servizi sui problemi della donna e della sua vita intima,” *Grand Hotel*, n. 1470 (1974), 6.

<sup>41</sup> Cited in Porta, *Amore e libertà*, 4 (emphasis is mine).

<sup>42</sup> Maria Luisa Zardini De Marchi had a degree in social work, and was employed as phone operator at the US Embassy.

<sup>43</sup> For more information about this relationship see Doone and Greer Williams, *Every child a wanted child*, in particular, Chapter 23 “The De Marchis and the Pope’s Children,” 372-410. See also Luigi De Marchi and Maria Luisa Zardini “Bringing Contraception to Italy,” in *Courageous Pioneers: Celebrating 50 Years of Pathfinder International and 80 years of Pioneering Work in Family Planning and Reproductive Health Around the World*, eds. Linda Suttentfield, Patricia E. Collings, and Daniel E. Pellegrum (Watertown, MA: Pathfinder International, 2007).

<sup>44</sup> De Marchi and Zardini, “Bringing Contraception to Italy,” 41. In this respect, Anna Treves is incorrect by saying that AIED did not have any financial sponsors of notice, but only limited financial help from “privati” and from Adriano Olivetti. See Anna Treves, *Le nascite e la politica nell’Italia del Novecento* (Milano: LED, 2001), 397.

<sup>45</sup> Williams, *Every child a wanted child*, 395.

<sup>46</sup> The IPPF was formed in 1952 as a non-profit global organization, also functioning as the international branch of the American Planned Parenthood. Gamble was initially associated with the IPPF, before opening his own organization, the Pathfinder Fund in 1958.



because it sheds light on how De Marchi's rise to a prominent role in the Association (he became its president in 1961), and thus his ability to single-handedly manage the 1974-75 campaign, happened at the expense of its more moderate faction, represented by Berla. Furthermore, Berla's departure from the AIED, together with the IPPF sponsorship, corresponded to the increasing involvement of Gamble and his organization, the Pathfinder Fund, in support of the De Marchis' personal and political battle for birth control *and* sexual rights.

Gamble and Pathfinder financially supported De Marchi consistently so that, despite the opposition he faced inside the AIED, he could rise to national and international attention for the historic ruling of the Italian Supreme Court in favor of birth control. Indeed, the De Marchis distinguished themselves from other activists at the AIED not only because of their radical ideas but also by openly and aggressively defying the Italian law. As Anna Treves explains, De Marchi (together with Guido Tassinari) was at the head of the AIED's "radical wing," employing strategies of civil disobedience in order to repeal Article 553 and liberalize the use of contraceptives. In her words, "non solo volevano, in qualche modo essi esigevano di essere denunciati; e poi sistematicamente si opponevano alla tendenza della magistratura ad archiviare le denunce" (They wanted to be charged, moreover, they demanded it; and then, systematically, they rejected the judiciary's tendency to dismiss charges).<sup>47</sup> Treves does not acknowledge that, however, this "radical wing" could have not afforded their unruly behavior without Gamble's help. Pathfinder regularly paid De Marchi a consultation fee, which allowed him to concentrate on his legal battle almost full time. In addition, he provided free vaginal diaphragms and jelly (from the United States) to the free clinic that the couple opened in Rome in 1956, and which cost De Marchi a charge but did not lead to trial. In 1969, De Marchi was again charged in violation of Article 553 for opening a free birth clinic in Rome. By that time, Gamble had passed away, but Pathfinder continued to help the Association with funding, and while the American organization did not provide financial support for the court case, it publicly supported the couple throughout the event. Eventually, when the Supreme Court ruled in favor of De Marchi in 1971, the AIED was finally free to promote birth control and to open more clinics (the so-called "consultori"); a few years later, in 1974, Pathfinder financed the first major project campaign that included the publication of *fotoromanzi*.<sup>48</sup>

Beyond financial support, Gamble also invested in the De Marchis to foster his own agenda. In this context, Zardini was especially important in promoting Gamble's project of spreading the use of contraceptives among the poor. Gamble visited the De Marchis for the first time in 1958, right after he split from the IPPF and created the Pathfinder Fund. The IPPF criticized Gamble's work ethic, specifically, his trial in Punjab, India, where he pushed a "simple" birth control method (the so-called salt-and-sponge method), which was proven to be very uncomfortable for women and not very effective. Gamble and his fieldworkers were criticized for their colonial approach towards their clients (who received contraceptives without much control over their own wellbeing). In addition, the IPPF did not approve of Gamble selecting nonmedical personnel (particularly women over fifty) as fieldworkers. During his first visit, Gamble came up with the idea of a contraceptive field trial to be conducted in extremely poor Roman neighborhoods.<sup>49</sup> Soon after, Zardini was appointed to lead the trial and began door-to-door visits to families in the tenements and shacks to deliver vaginal

<sup>47</sup> Treves, *Le nascite e la politica nell'Italia del Novecento*, 402.

<sup>48</sup> De Marchi and Zardini, "Bringing Contraception to Italy," 41. According to this chapter, the AIED also produced short TV advertisements in the *telenovela* format.

<sup>49</sup> Their work would be published in 1969 in the volume *Inumane Vite*, whose title refers to Pope Paul VI's Encyclical Letter on birth control issued on July 25 1968. Zardini conducted, with only another co-worker, about 40,000 visits in ten years among 558 couples, who lived in the poorest *borgate*: Tufello, Tiburtino III, Ponte Mammolo, San Basilio, Villa Gordiani, La Rustica, Centocelle, Quarticciolo e Borghetto Lanuvio. See "Tre testimonianze dal diario di un'assistente dell'AIED" (Three testimonies from the diary of an AIED social worker) in *ABC* 5, no. 52 (Winter 1965), 36.

suppositories, which were provided free of charge by a manufacturer in England. For a while, Zardini also promoted the salt-and-sponge method, at the behest of Gamble; however, the method was not successful among Italian women and was quickly abandoned.<sup>50</sup> Zardini's endeavor, which she undertook with only one other female colleague, was impressive: working against current laws that prohibited the distribution of contraceptives and under the strong opposition of the Vatican (whose emissaries spied on her movements), she had 588 clients and made about 40,000 visits.<sup>51</sup> Zardini reported on these visits in the book *Inumane Vite* (1969), and yet we know very little about her attitudes towards the women she encountered. An episode in the documentary *I misteri di Roma* (1966), titled "Maternità" (Maternity), uniquely represents Zardini at work as she talks to a woman who had been receiving her assistance for a few years. In a scene, Zardini hastily engages with the woman, asking how many packages she would need during the summer (saying she may be gone for the entire month of July); then, she scolds her client for not taking good care of the products that are "so expensive" and makes her promise that she will be more careful in the future. The woman looks both grateful and intimidated, and when she speaks to the cameraman (who is also present on the scene), she fiercely declares that she does not want any more children and that she does not care whether the Church disapproves of her actions, as the interviewer suggests.

Clearly, this scene does not reveal the "truth" regarding Zardini's role as an educator, especially given that the film was intentionally shot in a *verità* style, questioning all claims of the ontological truth of cinema. At the same time, by connecting these images to the commentaries on Gamble's colonial approach in his trials, I aim to broaden the picture of their relationship and better understand its impact on the Italian birth control movement. In particular, I think that this background information is useful to explain the strong criticism expressed by feminist groups against the AIED in the mid-1970s, that is, right around the time of the *fotoromanzi* campaign.<sup>52</sup> For example, the Associazione per l'Educazione Democratica (Association for Democratic Education, AED) argued that the AIED neglected women's right to control their own health and reproductive power. In the Preface to *Manuale di contraccezione* (Manual of Contraception, 1975), National Secretary of the AED Nerina Negrello claims that the process of "population planning" was incentivized in Italy thanks to American funding agencies that financially supported associations that focused on decreasing numbers rather than promoting free choice. In her words: "Il potere non ha alcun interesse che gli individui si autogestiscano sotto l'aspetto procreativo. La conquista della libertà vanificherebbe il monopolio del rubinetto della fertilità" (Power does not care about individual self-management with regard to contraception. To acquire freedom means to frustrate the monopoly of the fertility tap).<sup>53</sup> Negrello does not make reference to Gamble or Pathfinder, but the manual nominally attacks the AIED for experimenting contraceptive methods on Italian women while being aware that they were not effective.<sup>54</sup>

Negrello's commentary and the De Marchis association with Gamble, a conservative Republican, problematize readings of the AIED's *fotoromanzi* that claim their evident support of the feminist cause—for example, that of Elisabetta Remondi in *Genesis*, the journal of the Italian Association of Women Historians.<sup>55</sup> At the very least, Negrello addressed a gap in the discourse of sexuality and reproduction conveyed via the *fotoromanzi*: on the one hand, their narratives supported

<sup>50</sup> De Marchi and Zardini, "Bringing Contraception to Italy," 38.

<sup>51</sup> Porta, *Amore e libertà*, 117.

<sup>52</sup> For a study of the influence of the women's movement in shaping the debate on contraception in Italy in the 1970s, see Petricola, "Dal discorso sulle donne al discorso delle donne."

<sup>53</sup> Associazione Educazione Demografica, *Manuale di contraccezione* (Rome: AED, 1975), 8.

<sup>54</sup> In particular, the manual criticizes the distribution of the T.A.R.O. cap (foam tablets) as dangerous to women because it did not provide accurate protection from unwanted pregnancies. See *Manuale di contraccezione*, 64.

<sup>55</sup> Elisabetta Remondi, "Tre fotoromanzi AIED," *Genesis* 3, no. 1 (2004): 201-219.

women's emancipation by claiming their right to sexual pleasure; on the other hand, they did not address what was also in their rights, that is, their freedom to decide whether or not to be mothers. Pathfinder's influence on the *fotoromanzi*, beyond its financial support, can thus be approached from the point of view of the ways in which the American funding agency may have caused limitations to the political message that De Marchi promoted in his own claims to the press. According to Elisabetta Remondi, the *fotoromanzi* radically rejected patriarchy by promoting birth control: "L'obiettivo a cui si guardava era una coppia in cui gli individui fossero tenuti insieme non più da un modello di soggezione all'uomo, tipico delle società patriarcali, nè dalla paura della solitudine che caratterizzava tante vite femminili, bensì dallo scambio reciproco di maturità e conoscenze" (The goal was to have a couple in which individuals were connected to each other, neither according to a model of women's subjection to men typical of patriarchal societies, nor by the fear of loneliness that characterized so many women's lives, but rather on the basis of mutual growth and knowledge).<sup>56</sup> In fact, as I previously mentioned, these narratives are certainly radical in the way in which they address sexuality but do, however, maintain male partners in a position of leadership, and female characters as subordinate companions. Indeed, in "Il segreto," Lia does make the revolutionary gesture (and openly tells her partner) to fully enjoy sex; at the same time, she concludes that her satisfaction has the ultimate effect of gratifying her man. In her words: "Ora gli altri uomini non mi interessano più, perchè tu mi dai tutto" (Now other men don't interest me anymore because you give me everything).<sup>57</sup>

"La trappola," "Noi giovani," and "Il segreto" did not undermine the system in which men ruled over women; instead, they motivated the former to allow their female partners to take the pill. In Dagmar's words, De Marchi "developed a brilliant strategy for promoting contraceptive use which also implicitly revealed men's discomfort."<sup>58</sup> As both "La trappola," with its male leading character, and the focus group of male workers in a factory further testify, if women were considered by default the target audience of the campaign ("Accetteranno questa lezione le lettrici dei fumetti?") [Will women readers of *fotoromanzi* accept the lesson?] states a journalist most explicitly), a careful reading of the project reveals that men were equally addressed as an interested party.<sup>59</sup> Furthermore, in order to be persuasive, women's sexual freedom had to be presented in a way that was not threatening to traditional notions of masculinity. As reported by Aida Ribero in *La Stampa*, Italian women hid from their husbands that they were using the pill. "Lui non vuole" (he does not want me to), Ribero states in *La stampa* quoting unnamed sources, "se lui lo sa si arrabbia" (if he knows he gets mad) and "mi tiene le pillole chiuse in un cassetto" (he keeps my pills locked in a drawer).<sup>60</sup> Similarly, Zardini De Marchi reported that husbands of women in her trial were often suspicious, made her visits difficult, and many "felt that contraceptives were an affront to their manhood. They worried that without the fear of pregnancy, their wives would 'be free to go with someone else.'"<sup>61</sup>

Rather than trying to convince women and their male companions that contraception was needed to prevent global crisis, or to rid them of guilt (for having more children than they could possibly care for), these photo-stories were meant to engage them on the basis of positive incentives

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<sup>56</sup> Remondi, "Tre fotoromanzi AIED," 201. "The goal was to have a couple in which individuals were connected to each other, neither according to a model of women's subjection to men typical of patriarchal societies, nor by the fear of loneliness that characterized so many women's lives, but rather on the basis of mutual growth and knowledge."

<sup>57</sup> Fornari, "Il segreto," no page.

<sup>58</sup> Dagmar, *Sexuality in Europe*, 145.

<sup>59</sup> Lucia Purisiol, "Paola Pitagora a fumetti insegna a usare la pillola," *Corriere della Sera*, January 30 1974, 5.

<sup>60</sup> Aida Ribero, "Lui mi nasconde la pillola nel cassetto" (He hides my pill in a drawer), *La Stampa*, July 30 1974, 10.

<sup>61</sup> De Marchi and Zardini, "Bringing Contraception to Italy," 39.

such as sexual satisfaction, happiness, and freedom.<sup>62</sup> In other words, instead of basing the propaganda for contraceptives on the repressive logic of top-down instruction, the *fotoromanzi* exploited the popularity of the media and the entertaining function of photography and narrative to productively involve readers in their education, and thus promote self-policing practices. This kind of “motivational” propaganda, nevertheless, was not De Marchi’s “brilliant idea,” as Remondi and Dagmar suggest. His technique followed a model already experimented by American organizations and corporations, since the 1940s, to educate and train workers, soldiers, and the youth.<sup>63</sup> More relevantly, between 1973 and 1976 in Ecuador, the Peace Corps experimented with the use of “photonovels” (instead of films) to educate Ecuadorian peasants on “subjects as diverse as environmental sanitation, pre- and post-natal nutrition, malaria control, and family planning.”<sup>64</sup> According to a Peace Corps publication, titled “The Photonovel: A Tool for Development”: “Filmstrips, posters, and flipcharts were abandoned, after trials, in favor of the photonovel, because of its ability to communicate a detailed message through words and vision, while entertaining at the same time.”<sup>65</sup> The project was funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the same agency that in 1973 had provided Pathfinder with a worldwide family planning grant of 11 million dollars over 3 years, part of which was used to support the AIED’s campaign. Could it have been just serendipitous that De Marchi had exactly the same idea in 1974, when trying to figure out a more effective way to spread the use of contraceptives in a country where only 5% of the population made use of them?<sup>66</sup> Was the AIED’s initiative an example abroad, or, rather, was the Italian organization inspired by the work of the Peace Corps in Latin America (or instructed by Pathfinder)?

The Italian and Ecuadorian projects had many aspects in common. In both countries, *fotoromanzi* were widely popular, a cheap form of entertainment, and particularly liked by sectors of the population of low income and little education. What was really new in De Marchi’s experiment was the engagement with the media system and with the world of celebrities. The imminent publication of the AIED *fotoromanzi* was advertised in major newspapers. “Paola Pitagora a fumetti insegna a usare la pillola” (Pitagora teaches how to use the pill through comics) titled a full page report on the initiative in *Corriere della Sera*, which included interviews with Pitagora, Morandi and Valdemarin.<sup>67</sup> Pitagora revealed that she herself took the pill, while Morandi expressed his opinion in favor of contraceptives to fight illegal abortion. “Interpreti volontari non retribuiti” (volunteer and unpaid) these celebrities were said to be taking part of the initiative for “motivi sociali” (social reasons). Morandi stated that, “Ho assicurato la mia collaborazione all’iniziativa dell’AIED, inoltre perchè mi sembra che i lavoratori possano meglio lottare se non sono angosciati da una famiglia troppo numerosa” (I promised to collaborate in AIED’s initiative also because I think that workers will be able to better fight their cause when they are not worried about a large family).<sup>68</sup> Even though

<sup>62</sup> In the words of De Marchi, in his autobiographical book *Il solista*: “la contraccezione o come una valida difesa contro qualche evento temuto, o come valido strumento per la realizzazione di un desiderio profondo” (contraception either as a valid defense against some feared event, or as a valid instrument to realize a profound wish). See Luigi De Marchi, *Il solista* (Rome: Edizioni Interculturali Uno, 2003), 128-129.

<sup>63</sup> See for example: Vinzenz Hediger and Patrick Vonderau, *Films that Work: Industrial Film and the Productivity of Media* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009); Barry Cardwell, *Film and Motivation: the “Why We Fight” Series* (Carlisle Barracks, Pa.: U.S. Army War College, 1991); Ken Smith, *Mental Hygiene: Classroom Films 1945-1970* (New York: Blast Books 1999); Devin Orgeron, Marsha Gordon, and Dan Streible, *Learning with the Lights Off* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

<sup>64</sup> Daniel Weaks and Eliza Sola, *The Photonovel: a tool for development* (Washington: Action, Peace Corps, 1976).

<sup>65</sup> Weaks and Sola, *The Photonovel: a tool for development*, 12.

<sup>66</sup> Ribero, “Lui mi nasconde la pillola nel cassetto,” 10.

<sup>67</sup> Lucia Purisol, “Paola Pitagora a fumetti insegna a usare la pillola,” 5.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

Morandi did not act in “Noi giovani,” the main character (also named Gianni) appears to be modeled on his star persona in the so-called *musicarelli*.<sup>69</sup> Gianni is not only the one who urges Maria (the female protagonist) to go to the lecture; he also voices the youths’ concerns towards their parents, and their wish to not “make the same mistakes,” by postponing parenthood and enjoying free love. In his behavior, Gianni may recall the rebellious and charismatic protagonist of *In ginocchio da te*, interpreted by Morandi, and even though “Gianni” is not Morandi, such transmedia cross-references seem intentional to make the character (i.e., the user of contraceptives) a more likeable and positive model to young readers.

Eventually, Gianni will be interpreted by Ugo Pagliai. The casting of Pagliai is again very significant, since he was in a romantic relationship with Paola Gassman, who played Maria. Pagliai and Gassman had been together since 1967 and often in the spotlight for their steady and passionate relationship.<sup>70</sup> Considering that they were both in their thirties, the couple did not seem appropriate to interpret the role of college students, however, their private life together may have been more relevant here in order to bridge the fiction of the *fotoromanzi* to the reality of readers. Their modern relationship was not institutionalized (they were not legally married) but lasted a long time; they had a child together, and lived as a family with Gassman’s daughter from a previous relationship as well.<sup>71</sup> Pagliai publicly declared that he did not know whether he would marry Gassmann but that he valued his family’s happiness more than “la carta bollata” (a piece of paper). Morandi and Pitagora were also known for their sentimental affairs, even though in a very different way. Pitagora’s celebrity persona was built on being both sexually attractive and a feminist. As explained in an interview with *Corriere della Sera* in 1975, titled “Alle femministe piacciono gli uomini” (feminists like men), Pitagora was known for being frivolous and exhibitionist, on the one hand, and politically engaged, on the other. In her responses, Pitagora argues that from her perspective, taking part in the AIED’s *fotoromanzi* was “una cosa civile” (something civil) however negatively viewed by many. She calls herself a feminist, and explains that her feminism consists in a new kind of womanhood: “più libera e consapevole” (freer and more informed).<sup>72</sup> In this sense, Pitagora’s role in “Il segreto” played on her existing star persona that, in turn, may have influenced a feminist reading of the *fotoromanzo*. Her initial pairing with Morandi in the announcement of the campaign could have further influenced similar expectations. In 1973, Morandi allegedly had an affair with Pitagora, when the two of them starred in the musical *Jacopone*.<sup>73</sup> On the cover of *Grand Hotel* from July 1974, the three of them are portrayed together; the title reads: “C’è ancora l’ombra della Pitagora...fra Morandi e Laura” (There is still the shadow of Pitagora...between Morandi and Laura).<sup>74</sup> The news of the affair had increased both Pitagora’s and *Jacopone*’s popularity (the show had failed at the box office), but had also made Pitagora and Morandi’s joint participation in the AIED project quite more intriguing from the point of view of their fans.

<sup>69</sup> *In ginocchio da te* (Ettore Maria Fizzarotti, 1964).

<sup>70</sup> Achille Ciccaglione, “Innamoratissimi a Capri Paola Gassman e Ugo Pagliai,” *Corriere della sera*, July 21 1973, 4.

<sup>71</sup> Milena Cardarelli, “Dimentica Lisa non Paola” (He forgets Lisa, not Paola), *Corriere della sera*, October 22 1976, 3.

<sup>72</sup> Carlo Brusati, “Alle femministe piacciono molto gli uomini: Intervista provocatoria con la provocante Paola Pitagora” (Feminists like men very much: A challenging interview with provocative Paola Pitagora), *Corriere della Sera*, July 29 1975, 3.

<sup>73</sup> Directed by Ruggero Miti. “Morandi porta sulla scena la vita di Jacopone” (Morandi brings Jacopone’s life to the stage), *Corriere della Sera*, September 18 1973, 13. Pitagora later denied the affair, making the news once again when suing Morandi’s wife, Laura Efrikian, for slander a few years later. See “Paola Pitagora querela l’ex-moglie di Morandi” (Paola Pitagora sues Morandi’s ex-wife), September 29 1979, 17.

<sup>74</sup> Morandi and his wife had at the same time appeared in a propaganda short film in favor of legalizing divorce (voting ‘NO’ at the 1974 Referendum): “Gianni Morandi spot elettorale referendum sul divorzio 1974.” YouTube video, 02:42. Posted by Fabrizio Domiziani, October 10 2010. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hg4cBFJXOkM>



In this light, the AIED's use of celebrities mirrors the project's mixed position with regard to gender roles and sexuality. On the one hand, the AIED's *fotoromanzi* promoted traditional ideas of true love and fidelity; on the other, they openly supported modern types of relationships (i.e., not institutionalized). Additionally, both female and male stars appear to have been chosen for their looks, thus paying attention to the affective rather than the intellectual engagement of both male and female readers. Pagliai was certainly a favorite "divo" among women, as stated in 1971 in "Il mondo della donna" (A Woman's World) a special section in *Corriere della Sera*. An acclaimed theater performer, but popular for his roles on television (he played among others Casanova, "l'irresistibile conquistatore di ruoli femminili" [the irresistible Latin lover]), Pagliai allegedly received even more letters from fans than Mastroianni ever had, and was one of the celebrities most photographed by paparazzi.<sup>75</sup> Mario Valdemarin, who plays the protagonist in "La trappola," was hailed "il Montgomery Clift italiano" (the Italian Clift) by his young female fans who followed him on the show *Lascia o raddoppia*, where he was a contestant in 1957.<sup>76</sup> A theater actor, Valdemarin earned a living as an employee of the national railways when he entered the contest as an expert of Westerns; at the end, he won five million lira and a film contract, as well as the attention of fans enamored with his looks.<sup>77</sup> When he participated in the AIED initiative, Valdemarin's fame as actor in films, television serials, and *fotoromanzi* was established (he was also a testimonial for Alka Seltzer in *Carosello*) but many probably remembered him as the handsome man who rose to stardom from an office desk thanks to a quiz. Symbolically, on his first day after the victory, Valdemarin was immortalized as he descended from a train wagon (on which he had not really traveled) in a newsreel produced by the Ministry of Transportation.<sup>78</sup> His past certainly gave more validity to Valdemarin's claims regarding the need for the government to take care of birth control for the sake of the working class to which, once upon a time, he had also belonged.

In conclusion, De Marchi's motivational strategies appear to entail different tactics: not only did the *fotoromanzi* advertise contraceptives on the basis of individual's motives, but they also capitalized on the use of celebrities. Therefore, I argue that the case of the AIED campaign is not only relevant because it sheds light on competing social discourses regarding birth control and contraception (especially, in relation to sexuality); in addition, the way in which such campaign was conceived and conducted sheds light on "the societal and cultural embedding of celebrity" in 1970s Italy.<sup>79</sup> In other words, the case of the AIED campaign shows how "a long-term structural development" of "celebritization" took place in those years, in continuity with the on-going process of modernization (of both society and the media system) taking place since the aftermath of War World II.<sup>80</sup> The *fotoromanzo* had been at the forefront of cross-media strategies of production and consumption since the late 1940s, fostering participatory culture and absorbing conventions as much as human capital from other media industries. The AIED campaign further extended the role of *fotoromanzi* in celebritization, by engendering its migration. Collaborating with the AIED in the campaign for birth control, celebrities like Pitagora and Morandi who had already migrated within

<sup>75</sup> Mimma Quirico, "Un uomo tranquillo con qualche tormento" (A quiet man, sometimes in agony) *Corriere della Sera*, August 21 1971, 13; "Ugo Pagliai (Casanova) evade" (Ugo Pagliai [Casanova] escapes), August 3 1972, 9.

<sup>76</sup> Alfredo Pigna, "Sette ragazze alla conquista del telequiz" (Seven girls conquering a quiz show) *Corriere della Sera*, April 11-12 1957, 9.

<sup>77</sup> Giuliano Gramigna, "Ha conquistato i cinque milioni il giovane esperto di 'western'" (The young Western expert won the five million lira prize) *Corriere della Sera*, April 12 1957, 9; Alfredo Pigna, "Tra le quinte del telequiz" (Behind the scenes of the quiz show) *Corriere della Sera*, March 29-30 1957, 9.

<sup>78</sup> V.B., "Primo giro di manovella con Valdemarin alla stazione" (Cranking the handle for the first time with Valdemarin at the train station) *Corriere della Sera*, April 13 1957, 6.

<sup>79</sup> Olivier Driessens, "The celebritization of society and culture: Understanding the structural dynamics of celebrity culture," *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 16, no. 16 (2013), 644.

<sup>80</sup> Driessens, "The celebritization of society and culture," 645.

the media field by diversifying their activities in the film, television, music, and *fotoromanzo* industries, also migrated into an area that was not previously associated with fame. Regardless of whether this decision helped such celebrities in boosting their popularity or (like in the case of Pitagora) actually damaged their images, the migration of celebrities at work in the AIED campaign signaled an important moment in the history of Italian culture and society.

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