The Real Scarpia
Historical Sources for Tosca

DEBORAH BURTON

A name is a terrible thing.
—Victorien Sardou, as quoted in Blanche Roosevelt,
Victorien Sardou: A Personal Study

What if Scarpia had been real? The murderous character from Puccini's opera Tosca, and the Sardou play La Tosca on which it was based, has been described in two recent works of fiction as if he had been real, overstepping the fictional boundaries originally set for him. In Susan Sontag's best-selling The Volcano lover Scarpia meets with the historical personage Lady Emma Hamilton, and the Italian novel Vissi d'amore, by Paola Capriolo, takes the form of Scarpia's diary, revealing his motions and emotions before and during the events of the drama. It would truly be horrific if such a man had existed. Unfortunately, he did.

More precisely, he was two men. Sardou's plays are peopled by a mix of factual and fictional personages. But even the fictional ones were often based on characteristics drawn from two or more actual individuals. Usually, the personal history of a character would be taken from someone's real life, while his or her name would be appropriated from someone else. We will see below how the stage villain Scarpia, and other characters from Tosca, including the heroine herself, were created in just such a way.

A word of warning is perhaps necessary to those readers who feel squeamish during the offstage torture scenes of Tosca. The history of the period, and the biographical details of the historical figures described herein, are far more savage and bloody. At that time, the two young republics of Naples and Rome had fallen, and the restored Bourbon monarchy was quelling any signs of antiroyalist, or Jacobin, sentiment. The Austrian-born Queen Marie-Caroline (sister of Marie-Antoinette) and her husband Ferdinand IV of Naples, were still battling Napoleon and felt no mercy toward the French, or the French-inspired republicans. There were innumerable summary executions, tortures, and other unspeakable horrors; most of the brightest cultural and intellectual leaders were
lost. Brutal mob violence became commonplace, as we shall see below, and the Court-appointed judges and executioners showed not much more restraint. In compiling the research on these sources, special attention has been paid to works that Sardou could have consulted: those available in French and published before 1885. Perhaps not surprisingly, those versions of historical events (the many firsthand accounts of these events differ considerably in the details) also contain verbal quotes which are almost identical to bits of dialogue utilized in the drama.

Scarpia

In the libretto for the opera *Tosca*, the character of Scarpia is not outfitted with description much beyond his title as Chief of Police, and Cavaradossi’s furious account of his evils: a "bigoted satyr who uses devoutness to hide his libertine lust and, to implement his lascivious talent, acts as both confessor and hangman." Angelotti refers to him as *sceletterato* (wicked). Cavaradossi’s denouncement of Scarpia in the play is more vivid still than the one in the opera: "Ah, the wretch! Under an exterior of perfect courtesy and fervent devotion, with smiles and signs of the cross, what a vile scoundrel he is, sanctimonious and rotten, an artist in villainy, refined in his evilness, delighting in cruelty, blood-thirsty in his orgies! What woman, daughter or sister, has not paid with her honor for coming near this impure satyr?" Indeed, in the play, the Marchesa Attavanti herself has had to flee from Scarpia's grasp.

Sardou also supplies us with further information: "NAME: Baron Vitellio Scarpia, RANK: Regent of Police, recently dispatched to Rome by the Court of Naples, DESCRIPTION: Sicilian, with a reputation for dispensing merciless justice."

In tracking down the source of Scarpia's name, it was useful to recall that Sardou often changed real names only slightly, often anagramatically. It is not difficult, for example, to guess who the real person might be behind the name of another Sardou heroine, the Russian Princess (Fedora) Romazoff. In the case of Scarpia, an anagram was used. There was a baron in Italy at that time called "Sciarpa" (or "scarf") which was the alias of a man named Gherardo Curci. He had been given the title of baron by Ferdinand IV, King of the Two Sicilies, less than a month before the Battle of Marengo—and the action of the play—on 24 May 1800. The tide was a reward principally for Sciarpa's actions in the battle of Casteluccio. That town had been surrounded by the enemy when Sciarpa put the following proposition to the inhabitants who were gathered in the local church: "Now, there are only two things you can do: either flee like cowards, or defend yourselves like heroes. In the first case, I will leave the village with my men and we will draw back to the mountain, abandoning your wives and children to you; in the second case, I will place myself at the head of your group, and with God's help, I will lead you to victory? The crowd cried in uni-
son for war, and won the battle, much to the surprise of the enemy commander, Joachim Schipani.

This war tale might seem to attest to Sciarpa's honor and courage. But in fact, prior to this, Sciarpa had personally offered a deal to Schipani: he would unite his troops with those of the republic, as long as they would pay a price for his defection equivalent to what he would lose abandoning the Bourbon cause. Schipani responded: "I came here to make war and not to negotiate; I am a soldier not a merchant."6

Sciarpa's moral fiber, it seemed, was not very pure. Indeed, in almost every text of the period and later, including Colletta,7 Cuoco,8 Fragoletta9 and Lomonoco,10 he is mentioned in the same breath with Gaetano Mammonc and Michele Pezza, the latter known as Fra Diavolo.11 These men were two of the most vicious creatures ever. Both are mentioned in the Sardou play as well. Sciarpa also had the striking habit— one which identifies him all the more with Scarpia— of outwardly displaying signs of extreme religious devotion. As Fragoletta writes, "He affects a profound disinterest and a complete scorn of luxury. For footwear, he never wears more than a piece of pigskin, badly attached with a string."12 Yet in church, he seemed to show a quite different demeanor: "Something mocking in his attitude betrayed the superiority he Sciarpa, who was born in Polla, near Salerno, was originally captain of the civilian troops of his city.14 After the republican revolution, he tried to enter the ranks of the republican gendarmerie, but was refused- Alexandre Dumas writes that Sciarpa, "not being able to offer a sabre to Championnet [the French general], offered a dagger to the Bourbons." He was turned down with these words: "The republicans have no need for filthy cops among them." Dumas goes on to say, "The Bourbons accepted; they [did not have] stomachs as easily disgusted as those of the republicans."15 Sciarpa did eventually switch sides, and served Joseph Bonaparte, Napoleon's brother, as head of the "Compagnie Franche."1*

Descriptions of Sciarpa's character leave little doubt as to his villainy. Cuoco writes that Sciarpa was "one of the greatest and most lethal counter-revolutionaries."17 Dumas names Sciarpa as one of the assassins, killers and thieves who supported the royalist cause, and who were greedy, vengeful, and blood-thirsty.18

Sciarpa was a cruel, amoral mercenary who feigned religious fervor. Yet he does not completely fill the description of the fictional Scarpia. He is not Sicilian, his given name is not Vitello, and he was never in a position to track down state criminals or pass judgment upon them. For the missing pieces of this puzzle, we must turn to another historical figure, far more infamous than Sciarpa, by the name of Vincenzo Speciale (sometimes spelled Spezial). This man was a Sicilian, a judge during the Bourbon Restoration and, not coincidentally, had the same initials as Vitellio Scarpia.

It was like Sardou to keep something of the actual person's identity, such as
the initials, intact in the fictional version. Thus in need of a first name for Scarpia starting with "v," Sardou chose "Vitellio" probably in reference to the cruel Roman Emperor Vitellio (15 A.D.-69 A.D.) who gained lasting fame for continually humiliating and castigating his conquered legions.1

Vincenzo Speciale was infamous in his own time and far into the next century. He was immortalized in popular songs and works of fiction, under his own name, before Sardou lighted upon him. There was, for example, a play written in 1860 by Cesare Riccardi entitled La Ristorazione del 1799 ossia I Martin di Napoli, in which he was a main character.20 A satirical poem written in 1800, contemporaneous with the events of the drama at hand, also mentioned Speciale: it was an irreverent version of the Te Deum, by Gian Lorenzo Cardone, entitled Te Deum De'Calabresi," and written in Calabrese dialect, and addressed to God.21 Here is the section which mentions Speciale: "You tell the learned / That there is no evil in the world. / All is good?! What about / Guidobaldi and Speciale, / The Queen, Monsieur Acton, / Signor Fabio the idiot? / These are nothing. Your Eminence? / Long live God, the most wise!"

Vincenzo Speciale (b. 1760, Burgio-d. 1813, somewhere in Sicily) had been a judge in the Pretorian court of Palermo, Sicily. This office, writes Lomonaco, "was only given to men who had little merit and much miscredy23 He was one of three Sicilian judges asked to be part of the State Junta of 1799 in Naples,24 where he developed his reputation for cruelty. Lomonaco continues: The principal organs of the bloody tribunal were Speciale and Guidobaldi In times when the court needed a wicked man it searched through the dregs of the populace and found one in Speziale."25

Speciale also held the post of Fiscal Attorney of the Supreme Council of War in Sicily.26 The function of this rather euphemistically entitled position was to insure the full application of the law, which implied overseeing the use of torture. Indeed in the opera Tosca, it is the Fiscal Judge, as he is called in that version, who accompanies Cavaradossi with the others into the torture chamber. Speciale would have lived up to the name Vitellio had he been given it.

According to Coppi, "he had a taste for rudely insulting the incarcerated and their families, and he sometimes altered the trial proceedings to prove an undemonstrable crime."27 "What a monster was this Speciale!" exclaims Cuoco, "Never did his atrocious soul know any other pleasure than to insult the unhappy. He delighted in going each day to the prisons and tormenting and oppressing with his presence those whom he could not yet kill."28 Lomonaco even accuses him of drinking human blood,29 but is probably confusing him with Gaetano Mammonc, who was infamous for that.

Cuoco laments: "Under the direction of such a man, one can guess the manner in which the imprisoned were held. How many times those unfortunates desired and invoked death! But my mind is too tired to be occupied with the evils of humanity. My heart is already trembling!"30 Lomonaco also has his say:
From one neighborhood to another, one could hear the sounds of terror, which had already become epidemic: and there was no corner of those wards that had not been part of the most horrible tragedy of our hemisphere. While the neighborhoods were reduced to such a sad state, in the center of Naples the members of the State Junta, men as deprived of name and fame as they were filled with turpitude and ignominy, sentenced ten, twelve people a day to the gallows, not counting those who were butchered by the barbaric agents of [Queen] Caroline. In such a way, the counterrevolutionary scythe reaped me heads of all those honest and virtuous citizens. In this way, royalism was like someone with dropsy: the more it swallowed human blood, the more its greed for it grew.

By an unusual coincidence, Giacomo Puccini's grandfather, Domenico Puccini (1772-1815), was in Naples in January 1799 to study with Paisiello. He wrote a long four-page letter to his father which described the chaotic events there: "Here we are then in the most detestable anarchy, with everyone in mortal danger, especially we poor foreigners, who, if heard speaking differently, are immediately called "Jacobin" and given a shotgun "pill" in the chest—not the most pleasant medicine in the world."

While the mob outside was burning and cannibalizing the unjailed republicans, Speciale, wrapped in ermine, sat on the velvet seats of the Tribunal, condemning the imprisoned ones to death. The trials were a sham; the sentences were decided beforehand. Any and all means were used to reach a guilty verdict. The defense had twenty-four hours to prepare, but even at that, its testimonies were often not admitted as evidence, mere was no cross-examination of witnesses, no scrutiny of written evidence was permitted, and no allowances were made for age—even sixteen-year-olds were executed.

The job of the State Junta was to condemn to death almost all those the monarchs found suspicious, including all officials of the fallen republic, all those who assisted in planting the trees of liberty, and all those who spoke or wrote terms offensive to the royal family. There were about forty thousand citizens threatened with execution at the same time. Of the thousands of Speciale's victims, we have space here only to mention a few. The following histories, often recorded by firsthand observers, recall bits of Tosca.

For example, two memorable moments occur in the second act of the opera. After Cavaradossi is removed to the torture room, Scarpia suggests to Tosca, "And now let us talk like friends"; and later, "Would you like us to find a way to save him together?" In the Sardou play, Scarpia says almost the same words, "Let us speak as friends, all right?" and "We can discuss the Cavaliere Cavaradossi in a more relaxed manner, and find the best mode to help him out of this unfortunate situation." Is it possible that Sardou's dialogue was inspired by actual words?

Let us look at the case of Nicola Fiano, a man who was perhaps a bit too for-
tunate: the Tribunal could not find evidence of his guilt. But, according to orders, he had to die. As Cuoco reports, Speciale had him brought directly to his private chambers from jail and had him freed from his chains. The judge then exclaimed, "Ah, Fiano, to see you again in such a state! When we tasted the delights of youth together, I would never have suspected that the time would come when I would be the judge and you the offender.... Let's forget for the moment my office and your misery. Speaking as friend to friend, let us find ways to save you." (Do these words have a familiar ring?) Fiano then began to weep and embraced Speciale, who proceeded to give this explanation: "But, to save you, you must tell me what you have done. These are accusations against you. In the trial, perhaps it was better to deny them; but whatever you tell me the Junta will not know." Fiano trusted Speciale and confessed. Speciale assured him that it was better to write his confession down, to serve memory. So Fiano wrote. He was then sent back to jail and in two days went to his deaths.

Another case involved a man named Antonio Velasco. There are various versions of this story, but the one most interesting to us is in French, by Fragoletta. He quotes Speciale as asking the accused to name his accomplices, or he would send him to his death. A window was open due to the extreme heat; the prisoner ran, climbed on the marble buttress, and threw himself from an immense height, while a sentinel positioned at the foot of the walls, saw his shadow pass. The prisoner's last words were "J'y vais! Mais non pas sur ton ordre." [I am going! But not on your orders.] In Sardou's play, what were Floria Tosca's last words? "J’y vais, canailles!" [I'm going, rogues!] The similarity of phrasing seems more than a mere coincidence.

For those who recall Scarpia's orders to Spolctta regarding the "simulated" execution plans ("like Palmieri"), we can report that there was indeed a victim by that name. His name was Eusebe Palmieri, a lawyer who tried to defend himself by claiming that the whole situation was the fault of the royalists: "You left [Naples] like cowards; the country was invaded, so we had to ask our best citizens to lead the government. In your absence, they accepted, out of devotion, to maintain order and peace, and to save your homes. Now you come back and assassinate them. How noble is the court's justice!" He was executed.

The list of Speciale's victims, and their piteous stories, is a long one; some were famous, some anonymous. For example, Domenico Cimarosa, the composer, was brought before Speciale. He asked the court:

For what can I be reproached? A hymn for the Republic? I did not read the words. I was commissioned; we musicians hardly ever worry about the words. I also wrote cantatas for the birth of the last royal princess. I composed masses for the cathedral. I wrote operas in Vienna and in St. Petersburg. I have never had malice for one side or the other. If I must be punished further, sirs, is it not enough that they threw my poor piano out of the window?
Cimarosa was fortunate to be listed among these second group of prisoners—those who were simply "seduced" by the cause—and he was allowed to live.43 The most heart rending story among those of the ordinary people is of a mother who begged Speciale to release her innocent son. "If he is innocent," replied Speciale, "he will have the honor of going last [to the executioner]."44 The judge also gave false hope to a young wife, whom he told not to worry, her husband would only be exiled not killed, and to wait a few days. When she returned, she discovered her husband had been condemned to death. As Cuoco writes: "Who can describe the desperation, the laments, the cries, the reproaches of that unhappy wife! . . . [Speciale replied,] You don't even take the trouble to know your husband's destiny.... I understand—you are beautiful, you are young, go find another husband. Addio.'W4S

Despite his horrific deeds, Speciale did not die at the hand of the vengeful woman. He died in Sicily, scorned, and having lost his mind. At his funeral, there was so much public hatred exhibited that his shamed family stifled their tears and refused to wear mourning.46

What then inspired Sardou to have Scarpia stabbed? Perhaps it was an account, written in French, about the Director General of the Police in Modena, Besini, who was a "dogged persecutor of ideas and opinions."47 On 15 May 1822, he had condemned about forty individuals, of whom nine went to their deaths. That night, he was accosted and stabbed to death by a young man.48 Lomonaco called the Italy of this period—his own—a "theater of horrors and desolation."49 Sardou could not have chosen a better backdrop for his dramatic plot. The bargain the fictional Scarpia offers to Tosca, could well have been preferred. As Colletta writes:

The women, who were scorned, in ministers' chambers, driven from the prison doors, subject to the outrageous and unfortunate lasciviousness of the scribes and the judges, patiently tolerated the offenses; and without impudence or cowardice, returned the next day to the same rooms, to the same doors, disguising their sickened reactions to those affronts with modesty or with tears. If anyone escaped his scheduled death, or if others reduced the penalty, it was due to the care and piety of women.50 Even if no real Floria Tosca could be listed among the above, a real woman—or real women—did exist, and supplied Sardou with what he needed to construct a great heroine's biography.

**Floria Tosca**

Sardou tells us that Floria Tosca was found as a child by the Benedictine monks of Verona, while herding sheep. They took her in, taught her to read and pray, and not much more. She began to study music with the convent organist, and, by sixteen, became a local celebrity. Cimarosa heard her sing and wanted her to
leave the convent and sing opera. A feud ensued in which the Pope himself had to intervene; he gave her permission to enter the secular life, saying, "Go freely my girl, you will cause all hearts, like mine, to shed sweet tears ... and that is also a way of praying to God." She went on to debut in Paisiello's Nina and sang at La Scala in Milan, San Carlo in Naples and at La Fenice in Venice. At the time of the drama, June 1800, she is considered an exquisite interpreter of Cimarosa and Paisiello, and is currently singing at the Teatro Argentina in Rome. In addition, we know that Floria Tosca is very religious, is on friendly terms with the queen and other members of the court, despite her love affair with the antiroyalist Cavaradossi, and is, of course, very jealous.

In 1856, Marie and Léon Escudier published a book in French entitled, Vies et aventures des cantatrices celebres. This book, which Sardou could have read, contained a description of a well-known Italian soprano named Angelica Catalani. It claims she was born in Venice (not far from Verona) in 1785, and while still very young, entered a convent in Sinigaglia. There she sang and developed her voice, while the monastery took charge of her education. She seemed to be destined for this quiet life, when a dramatic event opened the door to a career for her.

The director of the opera house La Fenice in Venice, Caros, was preparing the opening of the Carnival opera season, when the prima donna who was the principal attraction, unexpectedly died. He could not find a replacement immediately because all the important singers were already booked, and the replacements on hand were mediocre. He was prepared to close the theater, when the copyist of La Fenice, Zambo, made a suggestion. He knew a young woman who showed much promise and had a voice which could handle well a long series of performances, if she were able to leave the convent for the stage. They left for Sinigaglia and listened to the girl sing in church—they had found une mine ficonde de succes."51 Negotiations ensued, with magnificent offers being made to the girl's father, and she left the convent immediately for the operatic stage.52 There are striking similarities here to Sardou's story of Cimarosa and Tosca.

Other accounts of La Catalani's life differ somewhat in the details, but offer further information. Fetis, for example, describes her character: she had a noble and decent attitude and the carriage of a queen. She had His Hain for the new court of Napoleon, he continues, and was very pious, generous, and charitable.53 A contemporary writer, Giacomo Gotifredo Ferrari, seconds this opinion: "Madame Catalani was always religious, modest, and renowned for being so by all who knew her; for every holiday she had a mass held in her house."54 The 1855 edition of the Nouvelle Biographic GJnervJe, while not mentioning the Pope, names a Cardinal Onorati as the girl's protector. Cardinal Onorati had originally placed her in the convent, and was opposed to her singing outside the church, for fear of her public praise causing a scandal.55 La Catalani was quite famous in her time. Even Goethe wrote these lines on 14 August 1818, about a concert she sang:
In Zimmer, wie im hohen Saal [In a room or in a great hall
hort man sich nimmer satt, one listens insatiably,
denn man begreift zum ersten Mai, understanding for the first time
warum man Ohren hat.56 why one has ears.]

Ludwig Spohr heard her in 1817 in Naples and reported subse-quent
diary that the public happily paid seven times the usual entrance price to hear
her. Paganini found her voice strong and agile, but lacking in deep interpretation.
In fact he wrote that during a performance of hers at La Scala in 1833, he
"yawned a lot."57 Interestingly enough, the impresario Strakosch made this
comment: "La Catalani had a potent voice, but her jealousy had the same vol-
ume as her voice. The least rivalry disturbed her."

We know that Madame Catalani sang at Rome's Teatro Argentina during the
revolutionary period because reviews of her performances exist A newspaper,
the republican Monitors di Roma, on 9 February 1799, printed:

The execution [of Mosca's Ifycnia inAiduU] was, in general
astonishing; but above all else the prima donna, Citizen Angelica
Catalani, stands out. She adds to the sweetness of her voice, which has
no natural defects, an infinite attention, an agility without equal, a
vibrato among the more vigorous ... [a voice] of which the expression,
the portamento and me bravura stand out... she has given the People
one of those performances which leave one hungering for more.59
The opera was subtided, "Ferdinand IV, Conqueror of the Roman Republic," and ridiculed the King's actions prior to 1799. As Rinaldi writes, this "proba-
bly cost the author dearlyf60

La Catalani sang music written both by Cimarosa and Paisiello, as well as by
others of her time. She was especially known for her own variations on
Paisiello's "Nel cor piu non mi scnto" and for singing elaborate variations origi-
inally written for violin. She was also on good terms with royalty and was even
famous for having once been seated for dinner between an emperor and a
king.61

Was Angelica Catalani the real Tosca? The evidence would seem to say so:
her life in the convent, her "discovery^ her religiosity, her jealousy, her friend-
ship with royalty and her celebrated performances all over Italy including the
Teatro Argentina in Rome. But then, whence the name, "Floria Tosca"?
"A name is a terrible thing" said Sardou shortly before La Tosca was to go
into rehearsals and he had not yet found his heroine's name. "I am haunted
night and day. I've gone through every family name in Venice from the Doges
down The name I want must be short; it must suit her; it must be like, very
like the character, and it must end in 'a."

Sardou reveals much here about what he looked for in Tosca's name, but not
how he eventually found it. He probably began by searching drough Vcnet-
ian names because he thought Angelica Catalani had been born in Venice. Perhaps then he moved further down an alphabetical list of cities to "Verona." "Tosca" is a name particularly associated with Verona because of a Saint Tosca who lived there. There is even a church in that city named for Saints Tosca and Tucteria. This knowledge must have led Sardou to make that city Tosca's birthplace. However, "Tosca" is invariably a first name in Verona, not a family name. Could Sardou have used an anagram for his heroine's name as he did with Sciarpa? Although she lived a century too soon, an Italian singer did exist whose family name is an anagram of "Tosca" and whose given name shares its initial "f" with "Fiona." Francesca Costa lived in the early seventeenth century and was possibly the sister of another singer (and poetess) Margherita Costa. Both women were successful in their careers, which, in that age of castrati, made them all the more unusual Additionally, both had special relationships with the current queen.

Francesca performed for the queen as Eurydice in an Orfeo in 1646 in Livorno. Afterwards, when she told the sovereign she intended to move to Rome, she was promptly provided with a glowing letter of introduction. The other Costa, Margherita, is remembered today mostly for her writings and for her reputation as a bit of a courtesan.

According to a French contemporary, Goulas, Margherita was known for "selling" her beauty and therefore was not allowed to be received at court. One day, the queen asked a lady of the court, Mme Barbarin, if she had not invited La Costa to visit her villa in Rome. The lady did not answer at first, but when pressed by Her Majesty, added, "If she had come diere, I would have thrown her out the window!" Perhaps Mme Barbarin would have enjoyed a performance of La Tosca.

Bearing in mind Sardou's requirement that his heroine's name "must suit her; it must be like, very like the character? we can suggest a possible second source. If one examines the juxtaposition of our heroine's two names, "Fiona" and "Tosca," a sharp contrast emerges. "Floria" connotes flowers, while Tosca" is akin to "tosc " (toxic) in some Italian dialects. A similar contrast can be found in the name of another singer of the period, Celeste Coltellini, or "heavenly" "little knives" words which recall both Tosca's religiousness and her stabbing of Scarpia.

La Coltellini was born in 1760 in Livorno, and became an internationally known mezzo-soprano. She sang at La Scala in 1780, in Venice during Carnival 1780-81, and, later in 1781, settled in Naples. Here she became closely associated with the works of Cimarosa and Paisiello. Emperor Joseph II of Austria heard her in Naples and invited her to his court in Vienna. There, from 1785, she sang works by Mozart, Salieri, and, again, Cimarosa.

Like the fictional Tosca, Celeste Coltellini sang the title role in Nina, pazza per amore by Paisiello, but Coltellini was chosen for the premiere, on 25 June 1789. She was a fine actress by some accounts, full of spirit and vitality, and possessed of a moving and emotive voice. She was Paisiello's preferred singer.
was also on friendly terms with Lady Emma Hamilton, at whose home she sang for guests on at least one occasion. In addition to having an appropriately vivid name, Celeste Coltellini also shared biographical details with the fictional Tosca. She was a major interpreter of Cimarosa and Paisiello and she was on friendly terms with aristocracy.

No matter how closely some details of their lives resembled those of the fictional Floria Tosca, none of the women mentioned above—Catalani, Costa, or Coltellini—shared her dramatic fete. Therefore, one cannot say with complete assurance that one of them was Sardou’s model. The task of sorting out which bits of historical information Sardou appropriated is slightly easier in the case of Angelotti, however.

Cesare Angelotti

Most operagoers who attend Tosca, know only that the escaped prisoner Angelotti is "The consul of the suppressed Roman Republic," as Cavaradossi exclaims when he recognizes him. Angelotti’s history, as given by Sardou, is more extensive. He was a landholder, a citizen of Naples and a former lover of Lady Hamilton, whom he had met in England. He participated in defending the short-lived Parthenopean Republic of Naples. But after revealing his former liaison with Lady Hamilton in public, his house was ransacked and two illegal volumes of Voltaire were planted there. As a result, he was sentenced to three years in the hold of a ship. After he served his prison term, he fled from Naples to Rome, thereby avoiding the dreadful ends met by other republicans. But when the French ceded Rome to the Bourbons, he was thrown into the dungeon of the Castel Sant’Angelo, from which he has just escaped at the time of the play, with the help of his sister, the Marchesa Giulia Attavanti. Had he not fled, he would have been sent back to Naples to be hanged, as a favor to Lady Hamilton. During the course of the drama, he eventually commits suicide rather than be taken prisoner again, but Scarpia, in order to protect his reputation, hangs the corpse on the gallows.

Both Hcriot and Maehder identify the real Angelotti as the doctor Liborio Angelucci (1746-1811), who was indeed a consul of the Roman Republic. He was a cultured man, and had even edited the first Roman edition of the Divine Comedy. A Roman by birth, he had been arrested and imprisoned at the Castel Sant’Angelo in May 1794 for his connections with France: as a surgeon and an obstetrician, he had served the French colony in Rome. He was released from prison after a possible suicide attempt but was re-arrested in August 1797 for participation in a conspiracy. He remained in the fort at Civitavecchia until the French liberated him later that year. By that time, Angelucci was considered one of the leaders of the philo-French movement, and when the republic was established the next year, he was named as provisional consul (on 22 February 1798) and then as one of the five permanent consuls (on 20 March). When
the Roman Republic fell in September 1799, he was not captured, as Angelotti had been, but fled with the French. He returned to Italy after the Battle of Marengo but never went back to Rome. He died long after the time frame of *Tosca*, in 1811 in Milan.71

Angelucci was part of a circle of intellectuals who were interested in the new democratic ideals. Being quite conscious that the old order was changing, they debated new political ideas amongst themselves. Justice, social equality, prosperity, and work for all were their noble goals.72 Angelucci was one of the more audacious of the group—he wanted a revolution.

The intellectuals, once in power, tried to "enlighten" the people in ways which often backfired. At one public function, Angelucci, fulfilling his responsibilities as consul, appeared with other officials on the Spanish Steps to ceremoniously burn the *libro d'oro* (the registry with which aristocratic families verified lines of descendancy and inheritance.) Speeches were made and, after a drum roll, three half-naked boys, wearing wings and carrying torches, descended the stairs. They lit the fire, while the figure of Truth—a naked woman—appeared above, torch in hand and rays emanating from her head. Screams erupted everywhere, and then whistles, and finally even stones were thrown.73

Liborio Angelucci fits Sardou's description fairly well, but he was not from Naples and nor was he killed in an escape attempt. A few years later, there was a Neapolitan man actually named Angelotti (Francesco) who was jailed for conspiracy against the government. He was arrested with several others including Cesare Rossaroli and Giuseppe Romano. The latter two made a suicide pact, so that, if discovered, neither one would fall into the hands of the executioner. They shot each other, but only Romano died. Cesare Rossaroli and Francesco Angelotti were then condemned to death. The King commuted their sentences to prison terms, but when Angelotti tried to escape in 1839, he was killed.74 Thus this Angelotti was from Naples and killed in an escape attempt, like the fictional one. Additionally, the appearance here of the surname "Angelotti" in historical juxtaposition with the given name "Cesare," belonging to his friend, raises the suspicion that Sardou was once again stealing from the chronicles.

Mario Cavaradossi

The Mario Cavaradossi of Sardou's *La Tosca* is the scion of an old Roman family. His father Nicholas spent most of his life in France, however, and married the French Mademoiselle de Castron, a grandniece of the philosopher Helvétius. While his father was engaged in the social circle of the Encyclopedists, Mario attended school and remained in Paris throughout the Revolution. He studied art in the studio of Jacques-Louis David, who was considered to be the Revolution's (and later Napoleon's) official artist. Mario moved to Rome just before the French ceded that city to the Bourbons, and he remains there, at
great personal risk, because of his involvement with Fiona Tosca. Although his republican sentiments are betrayed by his doming (no breeches or buckled shoes, but boots) and his hair (no powdered wig with ponytail, but long loose hair and a beard), he has protected himself somewhat by offering to paint the wall of the church of St. Andrea gratis, thus making a peace offering to the papal authorities. But, despite this, he becomes involved with the authorities as the drama unfolds. He is tortured, imprisoned in the Castel Sant'Angelo, and finally executed.

The fictional Cavaradossi is half Roman and half French. Both of the historical figures who could have served as models for this character also have bina
tional backgrounds. One, Joseph Chinard (1756-1813), was French, but he lived and studied in Rome. The other, Giuseppe Ceracchi (1751-1801), was Roman but spent much of his life—including the moment of his dramatic death—in France. Both men were artists, both had ties to the artist David, and both were quite celebrated in their day for their political activities—especially their confrontations with the authorities.

A sojourn in Rome was part of the education of many French artists of the late eighteenth century. They lived dormitory-style in the Palazzo Mancini; they were young, and afire with the new democratic spirit. Chinard had come to Rome from Lyons. By 1791, he had embraced the ideals of republicanism and, while still in Rome, had created two sculptural groups which expressed a revolutionary spirit. One of these was a depiction of Jove striking down the allegorical figures of Theocracy and Religion. The pontifical government now looked upon him with suspicion.

On the evening of 22 September 1792, Chinard and Ddefonso Rater, another French artist living in Rome, were arrested, accused of impiety and of spreading subversive propaganda. The two were imprisoned in the Carceri Nuovi, where they were allowed a certain amount of freedom and where visitors were permitted, but they were soon taken to the Castel Sant'Angelo. A document from the secret archives of the Vatican explains the reason: "There will be many interested people who, under the pretext of carrying out errands and inspections at the Carceri Nuovi, come to see and speak to them. It might be better, therefore, to relocate them in the C. S. A. [Castel Sant'Angelo]." The Chinard-Rater Affair threatened to become an international incident between Italy and France, whose relations had not yet deteriorated as they would a few years later. Chinard's mother, who had a certain amount of social prestige and influence, used every means she could to free her son. The two artists were eventually released from prison and thus were able to leave Rome. Chinard did return to the Eternal City in 1800, but apparently without further incident.

The history of Giuseppe Ceracchi does not have such a happy ending. The son of a goldsmith, he lived with his wife in a building on the via del Corso (where Goethe also resided from 1786 to 1788). Ceracchi was part of the burgeoning Roman intellectual elite, which included members of the French colony and intellectuals like Liborio Angelucci.
In *La Tosca*, Sardou's play, Angelotti and Cavaradossi had not known each other previously, as they had in the operatic version. But the real Angelucci and Ceracchi were certainly acquainted: Ceracchi sculpted a bust of Angelucci's wife, Caterina Nazzarri Angelucci, now housed at the Museum of Rome.82 After a trip to Paris, Ceracchi became more overt in his democratic sentiments. He later wrote (in French), "upon returning to Rome, I became a proponent of the new principles."83 Ceracchi soon fell under suspicion; friends and relatives began avoiding him. Having been invited several times to come to the New World, he decided the time was right to depart.

In 1790 he embarked for the United States, where he was well received. He achieved a fair amount of success by working intensely for two years, and became acquainted with Washington, Hamilton, Jefferson, Adams, and Lafayette.84 He created busts of Washington (now in the New York Public Library and the Metropolitan Museum) and Jefferson (in Monticello), and an alabaster profile of Madison (at the State Department, Washington).85

In August 1795, Ceracchi traveled to Paris, the capital of the Revolution, where he wrote to the French governmental authorities suggesting that the time was ripe to invade Italy and the Papal states, that France had much to gain strategically, politically, and financially.86 Bonaparte accepted his plan, and from that time forward, Ceracchi became one of Napoleon's most trusted counselors.87 Napoleon was impressed with the artist, especially the "purity of his patriotism and the justness of his opinions."88 Unfortunately it was these unshakable democratic sentiments which ultimately led to Ceracchi's downfall. Ceracchi would not abandon his Jacobin principles, and when he saw that Bonaparte was heading towards a dictatorship, his love for him turned to hatred, and he channeled his energies towards the salvation of the republic of France: he tried to assassinate Napoleon.89

The assassination was to have taken place on 11 October 1800, at—where dsci—the opera. Moreover, the murder was to have signaled a general insurrection. The attempt failed and Ceracchi, with three others, was sentenced to death.

Ceracchi never betrayed his principles even at the end, nor did he seek help from his friends. Napoleon himself visited Ceracchi in prison, but Ceracchi never asked for a pardon. Defiant, he declared, "I will ask it of the Supreme Being, but never of a man."91 As he approached the guillotine on 31 January 1801, reported the *Journal de Paris*, Ceracchi talked and laughed with one of his companions.92

Neither Chinard nor Ceracchi have names that are overly similar to "Cavaradossi" but they each have biographical details or character traits in common with Sardou's creation. The Mario Cavaradossi of the play (not the opera) is especially like Ceracchi—completely unemotional and unswerving in his beliefs as he faces death. Furthermore, both of these men and their troubles with the law were well publicized in France; Sardou would certainly have known of them.
The name "Caravadossi," an anagram of "Cavaradossi," did exist in France. It belonged to a noble Italian family transplanted to Nice, whose members participated actively in the politics of the day. Giovanni Caravadossi was mayor of Nice in 1492. Felice Caravadossi was a fighter in the Italian War for Independence of 1859 and, like Cavaradossi's father, married a French woman. Although Sardou could have known this name, there is no real evidence so far that he used it for the hero of La Tosca, and not, for example, an anagrammatic variation on "cadaver."

Te Deum

One detail of the play and the opera that can be verified historically is the singing of the Te Deum, which ends the first acts of both works. At the end of May 1800, Queen Marie Caroline stopped at Livorno, on her way to Germany. While still there in June, she received news from General Melas that he had won the battle of Marengo, defeated Napoleon, and would send further information later. She ordered a Te Deum sung in church at 5 pm on 16 June to give thanks for this victory. As Tosca audiences know, the second communique from Melas contained the information that Napoleon was the unexpected victor at Marengo.

In Sardou's play, the queen reads the second letter aloud at the fête in her honor at the Palazzo Farnese, saying:

This, gentlemen, comes just in time to crown the fête. This is a letter from General Melas which relates new details about his triumph. I do not wish to give anyone else the pleasure of letting you hear this victorious news bulletin. I will read it to you myself. From Alexandria, midnight from the 14th to the 15th of June. Madame. At sunset, the enemy, reinforced by a new army, after a battle in the same plains of Marengo during most of the night, has defeated our troops... [the queen falls into her seat, and her voice impaired and enfeebled as she proceeds in her reading.]... victorious during the day. At this moment, encamped under the walls of Alexandria, we are rallying the unfortunate debris of our army... and we will deliberate about... [The queen faints as Scarpia calls for a doctor.]

As fanciful as this scene may seem, Sardou did not invent it himself. Colletta writes:

Awaiting the second report, [the queen] left orders to be awakened when the news arrived, no matter the hour. Thus it happened that in the middle of that same night, the message arrived; she was awakened and, while opening the letter, said: "Let us read of the end of Bonaparte's presumptuous military exercise." But when, stupified and incredulous,
she read the news of Melas5 defeat, she had to re-read it to confirm for herself the sad message. Then, her voice failed her, and she collapsed on the woman who had awakened her. Revived, she saw the loathed letter once more and fell ill. 95

During this era, the Te Deum was the hymn of choice for offering thanks to God; one can hardly open a historical account of the times without finding mention of it. As Scholes describes the Te Deum:

The ancient traditional plainsong to the Latin hymn is of a very magnificent character; it has a great popularity amongst the peasantry of Italy.... Naturally the hymn has inspired innumerable composers of all periods and many of their settings, from the late seventeenth century onwards, have been on extended lines, with solos, choruses, and orchestral accompaniment, in the style of the oratorio A solemn Te Deum is ordered on all occasions of rejoicing in Christian countries, so that throughout history nations opposed in war have used the same hymn to thank God for their alternating victories over one another.96

The last sentence was quite true around 1800: the Bourbons ordered the Te Deum sung almost daily during some periods,97 but the Napoleonic forces also used it. On 2 December 1798, for example, a Te Deum was sung as part of a celebration at the Vatican for the deliverance of the Holy City — into Republican hands.98 Napoleon used Paisiello's Te Deum for his coronation in 1804, and, at the sixth anniversary of that event, at the Pantheon on Rome, a Te Deum by Haydn was performed.99 Hayward describes one Te Deum during the republican era which must have been odious to the Papal authorities:

A sort of frenzy reigned in Rome The Pope and the cardinals were watched and guarded in their palaces by French troops, and a number of them, terrorized, attended a mass celebrated by Monsignor Passer, vicar of Rome, who was then held hostage. This was followed by a Te Deum which thanked God for having restored liberty to the Roman people!100

Perhaps Paisiello prodded his student, Domenico Puccini, to compose in that form. In the year 1800 alone, Puccini's grandfather wrote two Te Deums for Lucca: one for the church of St. Paolino with two choirs, and the other for the church of St. Martino with two choirs and two orchestras.

This latter Te Deum was written for the occasion of the victory at Genoa of the Austrians over the French — just days before the Battle of Marengo — and was performed on 8 June 1800. As we have seen above, the Te Deum called for in Tosca was actually sung in Livorno on 16 June 1800, and Domenico Puccini's took place only eight days earlier and only twenty-five miles away. The opening vocal parts of both works also share the rising perfect fourth that starts the original Latin hymn.
The Te Deum was a common enough part of daily life to be satirized. In 1787, Gian Lorenzo Cardone (1743-1813) wrote one full of sarcasm entitled, "H Te Deum de' Calabresi," which he updated after the bloody events of 1799. One can easily recognize a rebellious spirit in lines addressed to God such as, "You created the Neros, the millions of tyrants. Are these in Your image? How beautiful! What fine examples!"101

The Chapel

At the opening of the play La Tosca, the curtain rises on the church of Sant'Andrea degli Gesuiti, designed by Bernini. One should see large arches, white and red marble pillars, and a chapel with a grille. The name given here is obviously false ("degli Gesuiti" is incorrect Italian), but clearly Sardou was thinking of the Church of Sant'Andrea of the Quirinale, which is a Jesuit church designed by Bernini, and whose original name was Sant'Andrea a Monte Cavalli dei Padri Gesuiti.

In the play, the chapel is that of the Angelotti family, complete with the family coat-of-arms: three silver angels on an azure background. Sardou did come close to me actual coat-of-arms of the Angelotti family: it was azure with a single silver angel, and also showed a red band surmounted by a sun between two silver lilies.102

In the opera, the chapel does not belong to the Angelotti family, but to the Attavantis: me family into which Cesare Angelotti's sister Giulia married. The name "Attavanti" did exist in Rome, but the family had died out by the end of the sixteenth century. Additionally, the church in the opera is Sant'Andrea della Valle. Moving the location of the first act was a propitious decision: Sant'Andrea della Valle is a much larger church and therefore is better suited to the play's action; it is also much closer to the Castel Sant'Angelo. An escaped prisoner would have had an easier time reaching that destination than Sant'Andrea on the Quirinale.

I have examined here only a few of the historical elements of Sardou's play: there are innumerable others, such as the central plot device of Scarpia's bargain, which Sardou himself has said was inspired by an episode in sixteenth-century France.10? Often, the names of the characters are just transparent variations of real ones, such as Princess Orlonia, which is without a doubt based on the name of Princess Torlonia. Some characters are actual historical personages, such as Paisiello, Don Diego Naselli, and Queen Marie-Caroline. However, since the play has long since disappeared from the repertory, I have limited this discussion only to those details retained in the opera.

In some ways Tosca toys with our perceptions of art and reality: Tosca is an
opera singer, portrayed by an opera singer. In her moment of onstage grief, Scarpia says, "Onstage Tosca was never more tragic than this!" The knowledge that these characters and events were based on reality certainly increases the resonance of those perceptions: perhaps we have moved from "verismo" to "verita."

NOTES
3. The "novelization" of a drama, however, is not new. In feet, two such works appeared in the U.S. in the late 1880s based on Sardou's La Tosca.
11. Fra Diavolo was the tide subject of an 1830 opera by D. F. Aubct
17. Cuoco, Saggio storico, ed., Nicolini, p. 15m.
20. Cesaic! Joaid,LaRist9razionedel799 ossia I marm di Napoti (Milan: M.P. Visaj,
21. Gian Lorenzo Cardone, "It Deum de Calabresi" in G. Fortunato, INapoli dim dl 1790 (Florence: Barbera, 1884), pp. 79-85. (I thank Carlo Quacetti for bringing this source to my attention and aiding in its translation.)


29. Lomonaco, Rapporto, p. 108.


31. Lomonaco, Rapporto, pp. 33-34.

32. Domenico Puccini, letter to his father, Antonio, from N; es, 29 January 1799, Archivio di Stato ci Lucca, Legato Ceru 94/19.


37. Ibid., p. 201.

38. Colletta, Storia dd name, p. 381.


40. Ibid.

41. Fragoletta, Naples et Paris, p. 293. Fragoletta identifies Nicolo Pahimba as the THE REAL SCAB. PI A =5 victim here. In reality, Pahimba, another quite famous martyr, died on the gallows.

42. Ibid., pp. 287-88.


44. Cuoco, Saggio storia, ed. Nicolini, p. 198.

45. Ibid., p. 203.

46. Coiletta, Storia dd name, pp. 471-72.


48. Ibid.

49. Lomonaco, Rapporto, p. 45.

50. Coiletta, Storia dd name, p. 382.


52. Ibid., pp. 240-41.
57. Ibid.
58. Ibid.
60. Ibid., p. 329.
64. Ibid., p. 139.
75. A popular song of the day reflects this tonsorial trend: "Se vuoi conoscere ile Jacobin, / E tu tirali il codino; / Se il codino ti viene in mano, / Questo e veto repubbblkano!" [If you want to know if someone is a Jacobin, / And you pull on his pony-tail; / If the pony-tail comes off in your hand,
/ Then this is really a republican!] From Benedetto Croce, Cantico Udit ddpopol
napolitano (Naples: Tipografia Gennaro
Priore, 1892), p. 44. (Here, again, I thank
Carlo Oausetti.)
76. Nouvdk Biographie, s.v. "Chinard,
Joseph."
77. Angeli, Storia tvrna, p. 204.
78. Ibid., p. 205.
79. Ibid., p. 207.
80. Ibid.
81. Dianoario biogmfiu>, s.v. "Ceracchi,
Giuseppe."
82. Ibid.
83. Renzo De Felice, Italia giacobina
(Naples: F^irinni scientifiche italiana, 1965),
p. 65.
84. Ibid.
85. Dianoario biografia, s.v. "Ceracchi,
Giuseppe."
86. De Felice, Italia, p. 68.
87. Ibid., p. 76.
88. Ibid.
89. Ibid, pp. 87-88.
90. Ibid., p. 89.
91. Ibid., p. 92.
92. Ibid., p. 93-
8 6 DE B ORAH BURTON
93. Enddoptdia Storuo-NoMiart Indiana
(Milan: Ediztoni Eoddopedia Storico-
Nobiliarc Italians, 1929), s.v. "CanrvadossL*
94. Collcm, Storm dd ream*, pp. 412-413.
95. Dumas, IBorbm., p. 212.
96. Percy Schoks, The Chford Companion to
Musk, 9th cd, s.v. "It Dcum."
97. Acton, I Berboni, p. 455.
98. Hcriot, Us Fntnfltis, p. 239.
99. Fermad Hayward, LeD*nierst)dede
laRttiuPortftifaile (Paris: Payot, 1927),
p. 229.
100. Ibid., p. 104.
101. Foitunato, /tfdaafu, pp. 79-85.
102. EnddopediaAruldicaltaUtma (Genoa:
Studio Riccrebe Storiche, n.d.), s.v.
"Angdotn."
103. Mosco Camci, Puami: A Critical
Bugmpby, id cd. (reprint, New York:
Holmes and Meier, 1988), pp. 348-49.