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To cite this article: Ivo Blom (2017) Unaffectedness and Rare Eurythmics: Carl Koch, Jean Renoir, Luchino Visconti and the Production of Tosca (1939/41), The Italianist, 37:2, 149-175, DOI: 10.1080/02614340.2017.1332778

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/02614340.2017.1332778

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Published online: 11 Aug 2017.

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Unaffectedness and Rare Eurythmics: Carl Koch, Jean Renoir, Luchino Visconti and the Production of Tosca (1939/41)

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ABSTRACT

Tosca (1941) is a curious and intriguing case in film history. It was originally begun by French director Jean Renoir, but finished by his German screenwriter-turned-director Carl Koch. Koch’s wife Lotte Reiniger and the young Luchino Visconti contributed to the film, while its producer was the grand old man of Italian silent film, Arturo Ambrosio. While Visconti was always open about his French experience with Renoir as his aesthetic, moral and political revelation, he always denigrated Tosca afterwards. However, visual analysis of the film reveals striking similarities with his films, particularly Ossessione (1943). Moreover, reception research shows Tosca had a critical but not entirely unfavourable reception in Italy and in Germany, too easily overlooked in Italian and German post-1945 historiography. Additional sources from the Lotte Reiniger archive and the Federico Patellani photo archive deepen the research.

KEYWORDS

Film style; film reception; film history; Visconti; Koch; Renoir

Cher ami,

Je viens d'avoir votre lettre. Elle n'est pas gaie et pourtant elle a été comme un rayon de soleil, dans ce mois de septembre si gris. J'ai revu notre promenade à la villa Adriana, lorsque nous pensions tourner ‘la Tosca’ dans ces ruines romaines. Cher Lucchino [sic], je n’ai pas perdu tout espoir et je crois encore que nous ferons des films. Je vois envoie mes meilleures pensées. Bien affectueusement à vous, Jean Renoir.¹

Thus Jean Renoir wrote to Luchino Visconti on September 16, 1939. The French film maker cherished sweet memories of his first visit to the Villa Adriana in Tivoli in August 1939. Renoir had considered shooting part of his film Tosca, freely adapted from Victorien Sardou’s play, in the Roman ruins of Tivoli, but thought the project would find no further passage because of the outbreak of the Second World War. Fate, however, would take a different turn. In winter 1939–1940 Renoir returned to Rome and in January 1940 he visited Villa Adriana again. The famous location would this time also be prominently captured during a location shoot, extensively published in the illustrated weekly newspaper Tempo. The original photo negatives of this photo shoot
The film Tosca (1941) is a curious and intriguing case in film history. It was originally started by the French director Jean Renoir, but finished by his German screenwriter-turned-director Carl Koch. Koch’s wife Lotte Reiniger and the young Luchino Visconti contributed to the film, while its producer was the grand old man of Italian silent cinema, Arturo Ambrosio. What happened during the production? What were the respective roles of Jean Renoir and Carl Koch? Which version did Renoir want to make and what did Koch make of it? We have here an interesting case of ‘what if?’ In 1936 Visconti had worked in France as a trainee for Renoir, during the preproduction and production of Une partie de campagne. Even if the film was left unfinished, only to be edited and – modestly – released after the Second World War, Visconti was always open about his French experience as his aesthetic, moral and political revelation, although he always denigrated Tosca afterwards. However, visual analysis of the film reveals fascinating similarities with his films, particularly Ossessione (1943). My research into film journals and illustrated magazines has also shown me that Tosca had a critical but not entirely unfavourable reception in Italy and Germany at the time, which was too easily overlooked in Italian and German post-1945 historiography. In addition to the written sources, the visual evidence of Lotte Reiniger’s sketches as well as photo collections in Italy and Germany afford a deeper insight into the film’s production. The present article delves into the project of Tosca against the background of Franco-Italian collaborations around 1940. It then discusses in depth Renoir’s original vision and the production history of the film, directed first by Renoir and afterwards by Carl Koch. After a section on reactions in the Italian and German press, the article closes with a comparison of Tosca with Visconti’s films, in order to demonstrate narrative and aesthetic similarities.

Franco-Italian collaboration: Scalera and the project of Tosca

Tosca was a child of its times. In the second half of the 1930s it was quite fashionable in Italy to make films featuring opera singers and films based on operas. In 1935, Marta Eggerth had been successful in Carmine Gallone’s Casta diva. According to Francesco Bono, in 1938 a plan existed to adapt Giacomo Puccini’s opera Tosca and the homonymous play by Sardou, with Mario Soldati and Géza von Bolváry directing the Italian and the German version of the film, and starring Marta Eggerth and Jan Kiepura. The Italian company Era-Film, run by Vittorio Mussolini, son of the Duce, and the German Terra-Film company would produce the film. The production was blocked by Berlin, however, because of the Jewish parentage of the two leading actors. According to Gianni Rondolino, there had been another plan to have Augusto Genina direct Tosca, starring the French actress Junie Astor, and the popular Italian actor Amedeo Nazzari. This plan failed as well, as neither Genina nor the actors was available.

The late 1930s was a period when many Franco-Italian co-productions were made, especially by the Roman company Scalera, founded in 1938. Thanks to the protectionist distribution monopoly caused by the Alfieri law (1938) national production was favoured and curbed US imports – the Big Four (Paramount, MGM, Twentieth Century Fox and Warner) pulled out because of the monopoly on distribution. Therefore the presence of American film in Italian cinema was drastically reduced, while
the share of French, British and German films grew substantially. It is striking that within this framework French films were the most popular and the German films the least popular. As Jean Gili has indicated, 1939 was a peak year with 53 French films distributed in Italy. No doubt the collapse of imports of American films by the majors in late 1938 was influential here. The share of French film on the Italian market rose in 1939 to 18% in contrast to 5% the year before. French cinema was also very well represented at the Venice film festival up to and including 1939.\(^5\)

Against the background of Hollywood retreating from the Italian screens, Scalera was founded and supported by the regime. Scalera created its own studio and star system, based on the Hollywood model but also intended to replace the lack of Hollywood stars and films. Scalera immediately developed an internationally oriented and expansionary policy through coproductions with Germany, Spain and especially France. French directors, actors and technicians, such as Marcel L’Herbier, Jean Choux, Michel Simon, Madeleine Sologne and Viviane Romance, flocked to Rome to work in such coproductions by Scalera as *Papà Lebonnard* (Jean de Limur 1939), *Rosa di sangue/Angélica* (Jean Choux 1940), and *Ecco la felicità/La comédie du bonheur* (Marcel L’Herbier 1940). In its first years, Scalera gained prestige through adaptations of literature, theatre and opera, and through high production values in terms of setting and star systems. The French government stimulated these collaborations, in a (perhaps naïve) political strategy to strike deals with Italy for as long as possible, in order to retain cordial relations with the Fascist state despite the signing of the Rome-Berlin Axis in 1936.

In 1939 Vittorio Mussolini, son of Mussolini and a film executive, invited Jean Renoir to shoot *Tosca* for Era-Film in collaboration with Scalera. Mussolini junior was not only a film buff, but after a failed courtship with the Hollywood majors he had also become a major figure in the domestic film industry through Era-film and as editor-in-chief of the leading movie magazine *Cinema*.\(^6\) Renoir had become a household name in cinephile circles in Italy after *La grande illusion* (1937), which had been quite a hit at the Venice film festival but which afterwards was only allowed to be shown in Italian cine clubs and not in ordinary cinemas because of its pacifist and anti-nationalist message.\(^7\) Renoir must have seen the offer as a gift from heaven, as he had just suffered a complete critical and commercial flop in France with *La règle du jeu* (1939). It also fitted well with Renoir’s political shift away from communism and the Popular Front, of which he had previously been such an important representative. He tended now towards the liberal humanism of his faithful collaborator Carl Koch and his producer Pierre Braunberger, Renoir biographer Ronald Bergan writes. Bergan indicates that Renoir’s political shift coincided with a personal shift, trading his outspoken, communist friend Marguerite Renoir for the Catholic, modest Brazilian Dido Freire whom he had met during the production of *La règle du jeu*. Renoir’s former leftist friends and acquaintances, however, were not exactly charmed by Renoir’s Italian adventure.\(^8\) Renoir telegraphed his former intern Luchino Visconti to invite him again to become an assistant. In an interview with Costanzo Costantin, Visconti confirmed this: ‘Mi mandò un telegramma in cui mi annunciava che sarebbe andato a Roma per girare la *Tosca* e mi chiedeva di fare ancora il suo aiuto. Partii per Roma [...]’.\(^9\) Another Renoir biographer, Célia Bertin, writes that already during the shooting of *La règle du jeu* Renoir had received the offer from Scalera and the Italian government, which included an offer for Koch to collaborate on the script and for Visconti to become assistant director.\(^10\)
Bertin writes that Renoir, who had never been to Italy, left Paris on August 10, 1939, together with Renoir’s future wife Dido Freire and the German Carl Koch, whom Renoir had helped to escape from Germany and who had been Renoir’s assistant for films like *Toni, La grande illusion, La Marseillaise* (1938) and *La règle du jeu*. They met the Scalera producers Giuseppe Barattolo and Arturo Ambrosio – two old-timers in the Italian film industry – at the spa town of Montecatini Terme. According to Bertin and Bergan, Renoir and company arrived in Rome on 14 August and were welcomed by Visconti. He led the French around in Rome ‘which both Jean and Dido found exciting and romantic’, says Bergan. Visconti biographer Laurence Schifano also wrote: ‘While Michel Simon filled his days photographing the frescoes of the baroque palaces and touring the brothels of Rome, Renoir and Koch were guided by Visconti to Villa Adriana and all other locations that could serve as a backdrop for *Tosca*’. Thanks to him, Renoir would say, ‘his stay in Rome became a real discovery for me. I owe him the understanding of that whole so sensitive Italian world’. Within a week of their arrival in Rome, Renoir and Koch had finished a synopsis. Since Renoir left Rome on August 24, an initial joint visit, together with Luchino Visconti, to the ruins of Villa Adriana in Tivoli must have occurred shortly before. Renoir’s departure on 24 August was certainly caused by the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact the day before. The pact gave the Nazi regime reassurance it could focus on the Blitzkrieg in the West. Renoir was deeply shocked by the Russian behaviour and returned to France. On 31 August, Renoir wrote from his country house ‘Les Collettes’ in Cagnes-sur-Mer near Nice to Visconti, asking him to help him with the money from Scalera. The money was deposited in an Italian bank, so Renoir could not take the money abroad and also because in an emergency Scalera would not lose money. Whether Renoir got his money in the end remains unclear. After Renoir’s departure, Koch stayed in Rome with his wife, the German animation film maker Lotte Reiniger, who had arrived in Rome on 1 September 1939 and who obtained a film contract for an animation film, as she wrote:

The Scalera management clearly wanted Renoir to come back and thought if it would be friendly to us, he would return because of his friend Koch. And so after eight days I had a contract for *The Love Potion*. The managing director of Scalera was an opera jester.

On 1 September, Germany invaded Poland, and two days later France and Britain declared war on Germany. In mid-September 1939, Stalin occupied eastern Poland and in early October 1939 Germany and the Soviet Union fully occupied and annexed the country. War in Western Europe was deferred until May 1940. As Italy remained neutral, Renoir was allowed to return to Rome after a short time in the army (he was 45 years old in 1939). The French government thought Renoir’s filming could be an important mission to stay friendly with the Italians. So by Christmas 1939 Renoir was back in Rome and in January 1940 he revisited Villa Adriana, in addition to other locations, in the company of Koch, Ambrosio, Visconti, and others.

**Preparing the film: Patellani’s photos and Renoir’s vision**

In February 1940, an article appeared in the new illustrated magazine, *Tempo*, entitled ‘Quattro giorni con Jean Renoir’. It was richly illustrated with pictures taken by the young, up-and-coming Italian photographer Federico Patellani, who would become one
of the most important neorealist photographers after the war. Patellani had accompanied Renoir and his crew during their location scouting. A handful of these pictures have been used over and over again in publications on Visconti and Renoir, but while researching for my book on Visconti, thanks to art historian Giovanna Ginex I discovered that a collection of over 200 negatives of Patellani’s sopralluoghi is now part of the Patellani Collection at the Museo di Fotografia Contemporanea at Cinisello Balsamo near Milan. The photos clearly show the possible locations Renoir or the crew and producer Arturo Ambrosio had in mind when preparing the film and Renoir’s desire to film in real locations. For a time it was thought that the photos of Renoir, Koch, and Visconti, walking through the grounds of the Villa Adriana, recorded the first visit of summer 1939, about which Renoir was so nostalgic. However, the photos of Villa Adriana and other locations show a rainy Rome, muddy paths, bare trees, and men wearing overcoats – winter weather for Rome, and thus referring to January 1940, when Renoir returned to finish the film.

The photographs in the Patellani collection first of all show the pictures accompanying the article in Tempo. We see Renoir and Koch in Castel Sant’Angelo, the prison of Angelotti and Cavaradossi and Scarpia’s headquarters; on the roof terrace where the executions take place; in Bramante’s loggia; in the courtyard between the stone cannon balls; and along with costume designer Gino Sensani in the castle. We subsequently see images of Roman sites, with or without Renoir and Koch: Via della Pace and the exterior of Santa Maria della Pace (which passed for Sant’Andrea della Valle, where Cavaradossi works as a painter and Angelotti hides in the family chapel); Santa Caterina dei Funari (which was used in the final film in place of Santa Maria della Pace). We see the streets of Rome which were living movie sets according to Renoir. The crew then moved to Tivoli where they had devised a tracking shot at the Villa Adriana, so when Mario Cavaradossi was tortured you would see the ancient ruins in the background. There Renoir and Koch were visibly accompanied by Luchino Visconti, dressed in dark raincoat, hat and carrying an umbrella; by the short and rotund Arturo Ambrosio, once the producer of Ambrosio Film, but from 1939 working as artistic director for Scalera; and a scenotecnico (set designer), presumably Amleto Bonetti or Gustavo Abel. It is clear how hard it had rained. Analogous to Henri Cartier-Bresson’s famous photograph Derrière la Gare Saint-Lazare (1932), Renoir has to pass over a mud puddle with great difficulty.

What we don’t see in Tempo, though, is the abundant documentation by Patellani of photos without Renoir’s crew: street urchins in non-recognizable popular areas, steep streets in the countryside – in one picture the place name of Tarquinia is visible – and a simple farmhouse (a possible option for the Mario Cavaradossi house). These are pictures that seem to foretell Italian neorealism but are also reminiscent of the photography of Walker Evans. The Patellani collection holds many unpublished photos of Renoir and his associates at Villa Adriana, in Castel Sant’Angelo and elsewhere. The final stage of all these peregrinations in and around Rome, unpublished for obvious reasons but abundantly captured, is of course, the whole company collected around a good Italian meal, in which we can recognize Renoir, Koch, Visconti and Ambrosio.

Attached to the Tempo photos was a short text by Renoir himself: ‘Tosca in 24 ore’. In order to escape the monstres sacrés of Puccini and Sardou, Renoir wanted a crime drama, all unfolding in the same 24 hours, from the execution of Count Palmieri to that of
Cavaradossi and Tosca’s death, one day later at the same time. In this way, Renoir stuck to his principles of unity of time, space, and action, a neoclassical unity we also encounter in Visconti’s films.24 Renoir wanted to give the film a documentary-like character, hence the emphasis on location shooting: ‘La mia ambizione sarebbe di dare allo spettatore la impressione che il cinematografo esistesse già nel 1800 e che le strade di Roma apparissero come facenti parte di un documentario girato dell’epoca’.25

Renoir wrote of Tivoli:

Luogo ideale di lavoro è in tal senso Villa Adriana, presso Tivoli; nel quale la diversità delle rovine, delle costruzioni, la bellezza dei panorami mi permettono di raggruppare in qualche centinaio di metri di pellicola gran numero di inquadrature. Poiché non bisogna dimenticare che i continui spostamenti sono quelli che maggiormente gravano sul bilancio delle pellicole.26

One wonders whether these are truly Renoir’s words – they rather seem the words of a producer. It may well be that Villa Adriana was a suggestion from someone else, such as Visconti or Ambrosio, but strangely enough Villa Adriana hitherto did not enjoy a tradition as a film location, except for some early scenic films.27 Regarding the costumes for Tosca, Renoir noted in Tempo that he did not strive for historical accuracy: the Neapolitan court should therefore be more dressed à la Louis XVI, while the partisans should have short hair, trousers and boots, in order to accentuate the differences between the groups. Costume designer Gino Sensani seems to have cast aside all restraint for the costumes and wigs of the queen and the ladies-in-waiting. Queen and court do not look very credible, either in costume, or in performance.28

In early 1940 Renoir also gave classes in film direction at the brand-new building of the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia, the Roman film academy, designed by architect Antonio Valente and inaugurated on 16 January 1940.29 As an exercise he let the students play a scene from his screenplay of Tosca, in which the queen poses for Cavaradossi who explains how he is going to fix her in an allegorical representation. The courtiers applaud delighted. Then Baron Scarpia walks in, who immediately responds to the situation as an experienced courtier and policeman; the camera carefully tracks with him. In the film, the scene was modified: the camera remains with actor Michel Simon (Scarpia), tracking him while he passes from a crowded hall to the throne room. It is only then that we see the queen for the first time. Cavaradossi was replaced by another, more anonymous painter who is clearly a servile, ugly and weak little person; the counterpart of the good-looking, passionate, romantic and honest Cavaradossi, whom we only see at work in the church. According to the magazine Film, during his directing lesson Renoir opposed his own improvisational working method to the working method of René Clair, who worked out everything in his script in advance, up to the camera movements. Renoir explained that he, on the other hand, modified the camera movement to the expressions that he gradually managed to elicit from his actors. In reality, Renoir was less the improviser he wanted others to believe, in particular regarding the preparation and documentation of his film production.30

Together with Koch and Dido Freire, Renoir rented a large apartment near the church of Santo Stefano Rotondo, which Koch and Renoir painted with jungle scenes, as homage to Dido.31 Renoir resumed preparations with Koch and Visconti, but progressed slowly. The choice of the actors changed. For the role of Cavaradossi Renoir first wanted the actor
Georges Flamant – an actor in Renoir’s *La chienne* (1931) – but he was on military service. In January 1940 Renoir still had Viviane Romance in mind for the title role: Romance had just played the lead in *Rosa di sangue*, but in the end the choice fell on the Spanish actress Imperio Argentina. Her costars were Rossano Brazzi, a young but already established Scalera actor, as her love interest Cavaradossi, and the Franco-Swiss actor Michel Simon, who had worked with Renoir in the early 1930s, as the arch-villain Baron Scarpia. According to Bertin, Visconti gave good advice about which Italian actors to choose. On the set of *Tosca*, Visconti met Massimo Girotti, who had a very small part as Angelotti’s assistant who releases him from prison (he is actually called Massimo in the film). Girotti would become the protagonist of *Ossessione*. On 28 April 1940, Renoir and Koch finished the script.

**Renoir and Koch shooting the film**

The first shots of *Tosca*, which are also the first images of the film after the credits, were completed on 6 May (see Figures 1–6). The camera makes a fluent movement from the balcony of the Palazzo Farnese to the gate underneath, where two cavaliers come out riding horses. The nightly filming received much public and critical attention in Rome. Renoir filmed the cavaliers in the streets, on the Capitoline Hill, crossing the Bridge of Angels with Bernini’s famous statues, and finally arriving at the gate of Castel Sant’Angelo, Scarpia’s residence and the city prison. Renoir stuck to live sound recording, such as the clicking of the horses’ hooves on the cobbled streets, in contrast to what was then common practice in Italy – post-filming recording and syncing. Later,
Visconti would also use live sound recording for his fishermen’s drama, *La terra trema* (1948), and for *Bellissima* (1951). In his review of *Tosca*, the critic Giovanni Paolucci would afterwards praise both these nocturnal takes and the live sound recording.39  

The horsemen pass antique statues on the Capitoline Hill, like one representing the river Tiber with Romulus and Remus and one of Minerva. They matter neither narratively nor geographically – they are not on the actual route between Palazzo Farnese and Castel Sant’Angelo – but the statues on the Capitoline Hill set the tone, just like Bernini’s angelic statues. From a close-up of one of these angels, the camera moves to a panorama of the bridge with the gate of Castel Sant’Angelo, where we notice the cavaliers arriving. And so a prologue is completed which is, both content-wise and visually, a unity. Not only do these images relive the past, they also reanimate the city of today, as Jacques Rivette remarked. He notes:

> There is nothing in this well-crafted work which is unworthy of the opening, but neither is there anything which attains the enchantment of the five or six opening shots of nocturnal riding, where the magical baroque spectacle suddenly comes to life. Under the close scrutiny of the camera the stones seem to pulsate and merge with the movement of the drama. *La Tosca* is no longer a realistic opera; it is reality become opera.40

Just as Renoir was shooting these opening scenes, the international situation worsened – the ‘Phony War’ ended. After Germany conquered Denmark and Norway in April 1940, they turned to the Netherlands, Belgium and France in May. The Italian fascists were prepared to support the Germans and attack the Allies, as Renoir experienced first-hand.41 On 13 May, he was attacked in the streets by fascists after buying a copy of the
Vatican newspaper *L’Osservatore Romano*, the only paper not controlled by the fascist censor.42

Shocked, Renoir told his friends about his misfortune and left Italy on 19 May.43 Visconti escorted Renoir to his train, and the goodbye was heart-breaking, according to Renoir himself.44 Renoir’s flight ended the long-lasting collaboration between Koch and himself, and spurred a long standing revulsion against him by Simon, whose chance to flee to the States had vanished because of the production of *Tosca*.45 Simon, Argentina and Koch could all stay in Italy, as they were Swiss, Argentine and German nationals, respectively. Ironically, an author using the initials D.R.G. wrote in the magazine *Film* at Renoir’s arrival in Rome in January 1940: ‘Facendo appunto un bilancio degli stabilimenti di produzione europea, Jean Renoir ha affermato che solo l’Italia, pacifico e laborioso centro produttivo, può creare il film mediterraneo da contrapporre a quello americano’.46 Italian pacifism quickly disappeared, just like Renoir’s alleged dislike of the American film industry.

Mussolini declared war on a collapsing France on 10 June 1940, a move seen by the French and its allies as a stab in the back. The next day, the order came down to finish *Tosca*. Scalera signed a contract with Carl Koch to take over direction from Renoir, an offer he could not refuse. On 12 June, shooting recommenced with the scene of independence fighter Angelotti (Adriano Rimoldi) in prison. It continued with ups and downs, and Koch even gave an enthusiastic interview in the November 1940 issue of *Film*, praising the expertise of the cast and crew.47 While Renoir had wanted to film at Villa Adriana, Koch and his crew did not and stayed in Rome, filming on the Palatine Hill and near the Terme di Caracalla. A big photo published in *Tempo* in January 1941 accompanied an article that dealt with Koch’s production, and was lavishly illustrated with other photos taken by Patellani.48 Apparently Koch was given a smaller budget and less freedom to shoot, because in the finished film Cavaradossi’s house seems like a studio set. It is a pity Koch was unable to shoot more indoors and outdoors in real locations, even if the number of location shots in *Tosca* was much higher than in the average Italian historical film of those years.

On 17 December 1940, Koch had to shoot scenes that represented summer. Reiniger wrote: ‘Once again we went out into the ice and snow to fake a carefree summer life in the idyllic Palatinate countryside, which also succeeded with the help of some sheep and horses’.49 Those are the shots actually filmed on the Palatine hill when *Tosca’s* carriage drives along, pursued by Scarpia’s horsemen, with sheep and shepherds as a picturesque entourage. In one shot, when Scarpia’s knights are spreading out to surround the house of Mario, the Basilica of Maxentius is visible in the distance. After that, the film was edited at a very fast pace – perhaps it was already edited when the December shots were completed. Six weeks later, on 30 January 1941, *Tosca* premiered in Rome and Reiniger concluded: ‘To everybody’s joy, the first night was a great success, and so a long chapter ended as well as it could’.50 According to the German film magazine *Film-Kurier*, the film began its release in the Roman Cinema Moderno, but was also shown in a special screening by Scalera for the German press, to which members of the German delegation were also invited. Koch pointed here to the artistic principles in the making of the film and praised the efforts of the Italian cast and crew.51

It is unfortunate that Renoir’s project to film as much as possible in ‘real’ locations was only partially realized. After initiatives such as the film *1860* (1934) by Alessandro Blasetti,
one had to wait until the arrival of the ‘cometa’ Visconti, as Gian Piero Brunetta defined him, to take the road towards neo-realism, or realism tout court, even in the historical genre.\textsuperscript{52} However, one must credit Koch for managing, despite the cold, to film these images of the Palatine and the Terme, in addition to other exteriors in Rome, such as Piazza Farnese, Santa Caterina dei Funari, Piazza Santa Maria in Campitelli, and particularly the interior and exterior of Castel Sant’Angelo. Even in Koch’s version, Rome still plays a leading role. We do not know how much Koch followed the script by Renoir and Koch himself ad letteram and how much Koch followed a style already determined by Renoir, as no script seems to have survived. For the formation of the young Luchino Visconti, \textit{Tosca} does not seem to have been without consequence with regard to his stylistic development, both on a narrative and on a formal level. However, certainly the experience would have had an even greater effect if Renoir could have finished the film in his own poetic and documentary-like style, using the locations documented by Federico Patellani.\textsuperscript{53}

\section*{Reception in Italy and Germany}

We cannot know if \textit{Tosca} was really a success in Italy in 1941 as there are no box-office data available. We do know that the film did not go unnoticed, either during its production or when it was released.\textsuperscript{54} The press was critical but also recognized some positive qualities. Filippo Sacchi, critic for the newspaper \textit{Corriere della Sera}, was particularly impressed by the location shots: ‘Delle tante Tosche, periodicamente girate da quando il cinema vive, questa si distingue per un carattere tutto suo particolare: d’esser cioè una \textit{Tosca} romana, immersa nel grande clima paesistico e architettonico della Roma barocca e papale.’\textsuperscript{55} His colleague Enrico Emanuelli of \textit{Tempo} thought that Koch had been too slavish to theatrical staging in the interior scenes but had shown his full talents during the exterior scenes, as in the pursuit of \textit{Tosca} and the scene at Mario’s house (even if part of the latter seems studio-shot).\textsuperscript{56} Italian film critics around 1940 were fed up with studio filming and praised practically every film that contained outdoor scenes – even period pieces. They were well aware, though, that mainstream audiences loved contemporary stories, but that in smaller cinemas costume dramas were preferred, as Luigi Comencini remarked in \textit{Tempo}.\textsuperscript{57} Producers clearly responded to that – and so did Ambrosio for Scalera.

The critic ‘Vice’, alias Giovanni Paolucci, was critical about letting go of Renoir’s idea of turning \textit{Tosca} into a straightforward film policier, instead of an opera, during the film’s climax. In Koch’s version, the almost straightforward action movie is interrupted by a series of images that suggest daybreak and during which we hear the famous aria by Cavaradossi, ‘E lucevan le stelle’. It slows down the action, the plot, and favours the melodramatic, emotional moment, yet this appeared to be Koch’s only slip, according to Paolucci because, as he wrote in the film journal \textit{Cinema}: ‘Il merito maggiore del Koch è d’essersi mantenuto sobrio, di non aver ceduto a un invito “documentaristico” ed estetizzante davanti a Roma, d’avercela data senza disturbare la corsa del dramma.’\textsuperscript{58} Paolucci also praised Koch’s technique:

\begin{quote}
La firma di questo regista sono i movimenti di macchina, d’una scioltezza e d’una euritmia rare; vi sono piani lunghissimi, della durata di più d’un minuto, durante i quali accadono cose e cose, compiuti senza staccare un momento la camera.\textsuperscript{59}
\end{quote}
This is a style that we also recognize in Ossessione with its long takes and its plan-sequences, but they are also traits of Renoir’s films like Les bas-fonds (1936) and La grande illusion. In particular, Renoir’s lateral tracking shots frequently return in Tosca. Also Koch, like Renoir and Visconti, often starts from a detail and then tracks back, enlarging the scene and the frame – a style that we also notice with other directors of the 1930s, e.g. in Anatole Litvak’s Mayerling (1936).

According to the critic ‘Volpone’, alias Pietro Bianchi, the film’s power lies in the contrast between the lively Tosca, Cavaradossi and Angelotti, who represented the new times, and the decadent, reactionary world of the Rome of the Pope and the Bourbon kings – two worlds that hate and do not understand each other. This was not an anti-fascist stand per se, because according to the fascist ideology there was a contrast between the old Papal Rome and the Third Rome of Mussolini, and between the old bourgeois and the New Fascist Man. Thus, both fascist and antifascist parties could recognize themselves in the film’s heroes. In relation to performances, Bianchi and his colleagues were generally negative about Imperio Argentina’s performance as the protagonist, while they praised that of her co-star Michel Simon.61

Enrico Emanuelli wrote in Tempo of Argentina: ‘Ma la devono aver troppo lasciato fare, qua e là. […] È una esuberanza sana, di forma magari un po’ scolastica e di cantante […] che alla lunga arriva all’opposto di dove vorrebbe arrivare’. He rather calls attention to Simon’s performance:

Egli rimane, tra i protagonisti, quello che dà la misura di quanta più sobrietà, più moderazione, più lievità ocurrono sullo schermo che non sul palcoscenico. Egli sa essere perfido anche soltanto con una occhiata, è drammaticamente lascivo con un gesto soltanto accennato.62

In Germany, the national film press kept the public informed of the production, i.e. from the moment the German director Carl Koch took over the directing – Koch’s antifascism was, of course concealed. The production of Tosca was probably first mentioned in Film-Kurier in October 1940, and was located within a wave of Italian historical films such as Alessandro Blasetti’s La corona di ferro (1941), Ladislao Vajda’s La congiura dei pazzi (originally created as Giuliano de’ Medici, 1941) with Spanish actors Conchita Montenegro and Juan de Landa, and Giovacchino Forzano’s Il re d’Inghilterra non paga (1941), which used history to call on Italians to settle their internal disputes and jointly attack the British enemy.63

The German character of Tosca was heavily emphasized in Film-Kurier in another article of October 1940, entitled ‘In Rom entsteh ein “Tosca”-film’ [In Rome a Tosca film arises under German direction]. It was written on the occasion of the visit of the German ‘Generalkonsul’ Walther Wüster and secretary of legation Theodor Blahut to the Scalera studios.64 The guests were received by Arturo Ambrosio and visited the studio where Koch was filming. There they saw the main actors Argentina, Brazzi and Simon, whose ties with Germany were emphasized. Simon was presented as Swiss (and not French, even though he felt more French than Swiss himself). Argentina had just worked in an Ufa-film (Andalusische Nachten/Nights in Andalusia, 1938), while a recent film with Brazzi had just been shown in Germany. The production designer Gustav Abel’s nationality was also emphasized (even though he was Austrian), as well as that of Koch’s wife Lotte Reiniger, whose animation workshop was also visited.65 The tour ended with a viewing of all edited parts of Tosca. Present also was the German actor Friedrich Benfer, who had just played an important role in the historical production
Lucrezia Borgia (Hans Hinrich, 1940) by Scalera. A group of German guests, along with Koch, Reiniger, Ambrosio, Abel, Benfer and film critic C.C. Schulte of Film-Kurier, were pictured in a photo alongside the article in the magazine.

The same article also mentions the problems there were around shooting in front of Palazzo Farnese, since it was the former French embassy. Permission was sought from the American embassy, which at that time represented French affairs in Rome. Scalera asked permission on behalf of the Americans from the Vichy government, but was refused. This anecdote seems apocryphal, because the first shots of the film, directed by Jean Renoir on 6 May 1940, were taken in front of the façade of Palazzo Farnese, while later scenes in front of Palazzo Farnese were filmed under the direction of Carl Koch, such as the launching of a balloon with a caricature of Bonaparte, mocked by the crowd, while in the background the carriage of Tosca rides into the palace.

Tosca was shown in May 1942 in Germany, more than a year after the Italian release. Friedrich Hoppe and Ötz Tollen were in charge of the German dubbing, while the main voice actors were Franziska Liebling (Tosca), Walter Holten (Scarpia), Hans H. Friedler (Cavaradossi) and Heinrich Sauer (Angelotti). The film was distributed by Bavaria Film Art and ran in Berlin in Tauentzienpalast, Atrium and UT Friedrichstrasse. We now know what the German version must have looked and sounded like as the Bundesarchiv Berlin possesses an original nitrate copy of the film, which was restored in 2010 and screened at the Cinefest 2010. The German version contains small but still significant differences from the Italian version. As mentioned, the names of Reiniger and Visconti are missing from the titles, while the names of the voice actors were added. The dubbing itself also caused differences. When all the courtiers are waiting in the hall of the Palazzo Farnese, the camera tracks along the different men who talk about politics. In the Italian version we hear different languages, besides Italian, also German and English. The court is an international court; French is missing, probably because it is spoken by the enemy. In the German version, the whole international court speaks exclusively German.

What is also striking is the scene in which Tosca kills Scarpia. In the Italian version, she stabs him – barely visible, a close-up was removed because it was too cruel – and he falls down. Tosca is first in shock, then recovers. She puts two candlesticks next to the corpse before she leaves. Apparently this famous gesture repeats the one introduced by Sarah Bernhardt in her performance of Sardou’s theatre version of Tosca (1887). The placing of the candlesticks in the German version is missing, however, and the picture is darkened when Tosca moves to do it. Could it be that the Germans thought the gesture too Catholic, too French? That the public was aware that the film had been changed in the German version, one might read in the words of Hanne-Lore Struck, who wrote in the Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger: ‘Karl Koch tastefully led this film even over dangerous cliffs’, a fact that, together with the German dubbing, secured a benevolent distribution in Germany.

Already in October 1940, Film-Kurier made it clear that Tosca was no conventional adaptation of the opera by Puccini, so not a film with opera arias but rather a film that merely borrowed the plot of the opera. This criticism was more fully discussed in the review of the film in Film-Kurier in 1942. While at the same time trying not to offend opera fans, Felix Henseleit wrote in Film-Kurier that Koch had done well to adapt the plot to the filmic medium instead of a half-hearted compromise between opera and
film, by modernizing the plot but still including the arias. Film is, ultimately, a realistic medium, according to Henseleit, and therefore does not have to dramatize in the same way as the stage. Henseleit considered the final scene in that regard as too theatrical. He praised the moody images of Koch:

Karl Koch’s production gives the dramatic moving images of serious and often nerve-racking happenings the touch of a picturesque gloomy mood, which gives the illusion of not just a rendering of the represented world, but rather one of time and its own world, by suggestive means. The camera, moving with a sense of the pictorial, captured pictures of extraordinary impressiveness. On the background of the historical scene (the silhouette of the Castel Sant’Angelo gives the film during various scenes a special character), images of strange, memorable force were created here.71

The praise for the pictorial qualities of the film, combined with a clear nationalistic and nationalizing perspective – one might ask what the antifascist Koch thought of this – was expressed earlier by C.C. Schulte in the Film-Kurier of February 1941, on the occasion of the Italian release of Tosca: ‘Through the combination of German thoroughness in screenplay and direction with southern beauty and a Romanesque, melodious game of forms, a work of rare harmony was created’.72 In short, while the Italian press praised Koch’s realism, its recognizable Roman exteriors and its cinematography, the German press instead praised its tasteful pictorial qualities and its lighting. Clearly, the film possessed both, and could thus please different audiences. In addition, it could be appropriated for both Italian and German nationalist causes.

**Tosca and Visconti**

*Tosca* oddly tips the scales towards the antagonist, instead of towards the protagonist – similar to Renoir’s *Le crime de M. Lange* (1936), where Jules Berry’s bad guy Batala dominates the film as long as he is around. Carl Koch’s direction confirms this in the two scenes in which we meet Scarpia for the first time.73 In the first, the cavaliers have reached the Castel Sant’Angelo and are introduced to Scarpia despite the late hour. They cross various doors and thresholds, while the camera follows them from behind, in shots that remind us of the opulent tracking shots through spaces in Luchino Visconti’s epic films like *Senso* (1954) and *Il gattopardo* (1963), but also his earliest features, the proto-neorealist film *Ossessione* and the neorealist film *La terra trema*. When the two men have arrived at Scarpia’s bedroom, the camera discreetly waits in the previous room, preventing us from seeing Scarpia; we only hear him, off-screen. His first introduction is only aural; the visual presentation is postponed, increasing our interest in this mystery man. The visual introduction happens afterwards. We notice a hand holding a sieve through which rice powder falls down. The camera tilts down and we see a man holding a cone in front of his face, while his wig is being powdered. Because of the cone, our view of the man’s face is blocked. Finally, the cone is lifted and we see Scarpia’s perfectly groomed face and head. Slowly the camera tracks back, showing us more and more of his body and outfit, surrounded by hairdressers and assistants. Clearly Scarpia is the centre of attention, as if he were a king. Stoically he receives the bad news from his police, walks into the next room where he confronts his entourage in a cold and restrained way while drinking his coffee, again as if he were the ruler of Rome (and quite soon we understand that he is). This whole strategy is
strongly reminiscent of another film where our view of the protagonist is deliberately withheld for a long time: in Visconti's debut *Ossessione*, our view of Gino (Massimo Girotti) is postponed as Visconti films him from the back, while his hat casts a convenient shadow over his face. His face is only revealed when the antagonist, Giovanna (Clara Calamai), sees him for the first time. It is then that the camera rapidly zooms on his face, suggesting the same awe on the part of the spectator that Giovanna experiences for this man.

Of course, Visconti had had his share of training in the preparation and on the set of Jean Renoir's *Une partie de campagne* back in 1936 but, in hindsight, the cinematography of *Tosca* seems more complicated with its mass scenes, extensive use of tracking shots, and even crane shots, e.g. during a 'Te Deum' in the church where Angelotti (Adriano Rimoldi) hides and Cavaradossi paints. With regard to Visconti's famous tracking shots, we can distinguish between those in depth (forward), in width (lateral, panoramic), and more diagonally or curved. We can see precedents for all three in *Tosca*. In addition to the forward tracking with the cavaliers visiting Scarpia, and the backward tracking when his face is revealed, *Tosca* contains a remarkable use of crane shots. For example, from the top of a scaffold at the church of Sant’Andrea della Valle, Cavaradossi observes the Marchesa Attavanti (Carla Candiani), sister of the escaped Angelotti who is hiding in his family chapel. In a single shot, the camera swirls from a high POV shot through the nave of the ship, explores the architecture, goes down to the Marchesa and her companion praying and kneeling, rises again and ends in an over-the-shoulder shot of Cavaradossi sketching the noblewoman (Figures 7–12).

When the Marchesa leaves the chapel, the camera ascends to the scaffold and shows Cavaradossi watching the two women leave. Later on, a multi-layered crane shot shows the 'Te Deum' in honour of the presumed victory over Bonaparte at Marengo. We see the well-filled church from above while monks, acolytes, and a priest under a canopy pass across the nave. Immediately, associations with *Il gattopardo* come to mind, such as when the Salina family walks in, under the eyes of the villagers, to another 'Te Deum'. There too, we look down from a bird’s-eye perspective onto the nave. In *Tosca*, though, the camera cranies down while the priest approaches with the holy Eucharist. When the canopy is about to pass the camera on the right, we notice Scarpia and his men in the background moving in an opposite direction among the kneeling believers, thus creating a nice deep-staged choreography of opposite movements in the image during a mobile framing of the camera. This is reminiscent of the even more complicated scene in *Senso* (1954) in which artillery, cavalry, farmers with hay-wagons and the Marchese Roberto Ussoni (Massimo Girotti) with his tilbury cross each other in opposite directions on the Ponte Visconteo at Borghetto sul Mincio.

In *Tosca*, after the procession passes, the viewer’s attention immediately shifts to Scarpia's gang standing in front of the Angelotti chapel. In the subsequent shots they search the chapel and find the Marchesa’s fan, which Scarpia later uses to make *Tosca* jealous. The crane shots in *Tosca* seem to forerun and influence those in *Ossessione*, such as in the opening scene when Visconti’s camera moves upwards, over the truck, to reveal Gino walking towards the door of the trattoria. The truck from which he is pulled would otherwise block our view of him. Instead of analytical editing, of cutting up the action, Visconti prefers to follow Gino’s walk in one smooth take, thus accentuating that
Figure 9.

Figure 10.
he is part of the location, that he is just as important as the environment and vice versa. We encounter this same exploratory mobile framing in *Tosca*.

In addition to the mobile crane shots, *Tosca* also features some backwards tracking shots – zoom outs, as it were – that make the subject part of the masses. One such shot follows after the church scene when a balloon is released at a crowded Piazza Farnese with a painted caricature of Napoleon hung on the gallows. First we see the balloon full-screen. The camera tracks back, revealing the masses applauding and cheering the balloon. It ascends and the camera pan tilts to follow it. This is immediately cut to a shot of *Tosca* in an open carriage, entering the gate of Palazzo Farnese and also cheered by the masses; the framing and editing thus combine the two events. Backward tracking (or zooming out) would also become part of Visconti’s vocabulary, as in the opening images of *The Damned* (1969) and *L’Innocente* (1976).

Koch situates two beautiful examples of lateral tracking inside the Palazzo Farnese. The camera follows the master of ceremonies, passing groups of Italian and foreign aristocrats discussing the political situation, but politics are set aside when Tosca arrives for her rehearsal and is quickly surrounded by the men. This lateral tracking is soon repeated when Scarpia arrives and the camera follows him through the palace, first in a curved motion, then in a long lateral track to the right, passing various rooms, and literally passing walls (as was common in silent cinema), until he reaches the throne room where we see the proud and vain queen posing for a portrait. In short, during the shooting of *Tosca*, Visconti must have had considerable first-hand experience of various types of tracking shots and crane shots, significantly more than during his internship on Renoir’s *Une partie de campagne*.

The fluent cinematography of *Tosca* was done by the experienced director of photography Ubaldo Arata, who began his career in the 1910s and who had been responsible for the tracking shots in Mario Camerini’s *Rotaie* (1929), for the special effects in the madness scene in Gennaro Righelli’s *La canzone dell’amore* (1930) and the fluent camera movements and deep staging shots in Max Ophüls’ *La signora di tutti* (1934). He had also been responsible for big productions like *Scipione l’africano* (1937) and *Luciano Serra, pilota* (1938). Immediately after these assignments, he joined Scalera right at its founding in 1938. *Tosca* was Arata’s tenth film for Scalera, where he had already filmed Rossano Brazzi in various films. After *Tosca*, he was director of photography for Mario Bonnard’s *Il re si diverte/ Rigoletto* (1941) with again Simon and Brazzi in the leads. Soon after, Arata was again Carl Koch’s director of photography for his *Una signora dell’ovest* (1942), again with Simon and Brazzi. In 1944–5 Arata would be the director of photography of Roberto Rossellini’s classic, *Roma città aperta* (1945).

According to Visconti’s biographer Gianni Rondolino, whether Visconti was satisfied with his experience on *Tosca* is not known, but in an interview in *Cahiers du Cinéma* in 1959 Visconti stated it was a horrible film: ‘C’est tout ce qu’on a pu faire’. In hindsight, we might think otherwise, in particular because Visconti seems to have appropriated certain elements from it. For a long time we have read a ‘légende dorée’ of Visconti’s formative years, stressing his 1936 experience with Renoir and his circle as both his artistic and political awakening, and playing down his experience with *Tosca*, no doubt partly fueled by Visconti himself. Having collaborated on a production that was made under the aegis of the fascist regime, and that was even visited by representatives of Nazi Germany, must have been an awkward part of his career afterwards, and unfitted
to both his own teleology and postwar Italian film criticism in general. The time now calls for a deconstructive look, without compromising the quality of the films of Visconti and his ideas.

Giuseppe De Santis, Visconti’s future collaborator on Ossessione, told Jean Gili that Visconti had been second assistant on Tosca when Renoir was still filming, and first assistant under Koch’s direction. De Santis befriended Gianni Puccini, editor of the journal Cinema, who had learned to speak German and could talk to Koch in his own language. Puccini took De Santis to Koch’s house in Via Settembrini, where he also met Visconti. Just like Renoir’s house in Rome before, Koch’s house was a meeting place for antifascist, leftist intellectuals, even if the production of Tosca was done by a company close to the regime. De Santis’ words suggest that Visconti’s contribution to the film must have been considerable. In the credits of the Italian version (but missing in the German version) Visconti is mentioned as assistant director, together with Lotte Reiniger. What exactly the work of Visconti and Reiniger consisted of, is unclear, but the photos by Federico Patellani and sketches by Lotte Reiniger show that both were present during the shooting of the film. In hindsight, Visconti even increased his own participation. In the interview in Cahiers du Cinéma he claimed Koch and he had finished the film.

Conclusion

We do not know how far Koch followed the script ad letteram, how far the film’s style was already established by Renoir beforehand, and if the production company imposed certain changes, such as the operatic scene with Mario in prison. For the enigmatic Carl Koch, his first direction of a feature film must have been quite an adventure, after years of such supportive work as enabling Lotte Reiniger to make her films or working as Renoir’s assistant. What would have happened had he pursued this career? It is almost impossible, however, to check the rest of Koch’s Italian career as his subsequent film Una signora dell’ovest seems lost, while the Reiniger-Koch archive does not hold any correspondence from the couple’s Italian years. Only circumstantial evidence like film journals or the archives of certain collaborators, or maybe even those of the fascist police might shed more light on the couple’s Italian career.

For the young Visconti, not only the experience with Renoir but also the production with Koch must have been formative with regard to his stylistic, narrative and technological development. Even if Visconti denigrated his experience on Tosca, and the vast literature on Visconti has always followed this line rather uncritically, close analysis of Tosca and Ossessione shows that, at least on a technical level, he must have learned more than during his internship with Renoir in 1936. The mobile framing in Une partie de campagne is really limited (apart from the ‘natural’ mobile framing of shots filmed on the rowing boats) and far from Tosca’s complex crane shots. While Renoir generally favoured lateral mobile framing – e.g. in the extremely long and complicated lateral tracking shot through a beer garden in Les bas-fonds (1936) – the motif of opening one door after another combined with a forward tracking camera is something Visconti witnessed on the set of Tosca. The postponed introduction of the protagonist Gino in Ossessione, finally, is very close to that of Scarpia, thereby accentuating his importance. Of course, Visconti may have seen these aspects in other films, such as
those by Renoir, but he had first-hand experience only with Tosca. Thanks to photographic proof we know that, whether passively or actively, Visconti closely followed the shooting.

Finally, until now film history has treated the film of Koch and Renoir unjustly. It may never enter the canon of film history because of its flaws, but its neglect is a denial of a fascinating moment in Italian film history.

Notes

1. ‘My dear friend, I just received your letter. It is not cheerful and yet it has been like a ray of sunshine in this gray September. I have revisited our walk at Villa Adriana, when we thought of shooting Tosca in these Roman ruins. Dear Lucchino, I have not lost all hope and I still believe we will make films. I am sending you my best thoughts. Yours affectionately, Jean Renoir.’ Cited in Gianni Rondolino, Luchino Visconti (Turin: UTET, 2006), p. 77. For a picture of the original postcard, see Album Visconti, ed. by Caterina D’Amico de Carvalho (Milan: Sonzogno, 1978), p. 93.


3. Rondolino, p. 76.


6. In 1935 Vittorio Mussolini founded with Hal Roach the firm R.A.M. Pictures with which they had plans to film classic Italian operas such as Tosca, but because of the Italian war in Ethiopia he became persona non grata in Hollywood. Reluctantly, Hal Roach had himself bailed out. The joint opera adaptations came to nothing, but one could say that, afterwards, in a way Scalera’s opera films such as Tosca were Mussolini’s response to the unsuccessful adventures with Hal Roach. Anon., ‘Foreign News: Mussolini’s Roach’, Time, 4 October 1937 <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,931644-1,00.html> [accessed 24 June 2017].

7. Giuseppe De Santis confirms that, at the time, French films shown in Venice but not allowed for ordinary distribution in Italy, could still be shown at the Centro Sperimentale or through other channels. Alle origini del Neorealismo. Giuseppe De Santis a colloquio con Jean A. Gili, ed. by Jean A. Gili and Marco Grossi (Rome: Bulzoni, 2008), p. 61 and p. 96.


11. Bergan, p. 212. According to Alfred Happ, Renoir had already travelled to Rome on 4 August 1939, and a first synopsis was was ready by 10 August. Happ claims they first met Visconti in Rome.

12. Laurence Schifano, Luchino Visconti. Une vie exposée (Paris: Gallimard, 2009), p. 233. Schifano claims Simon was part of Renoir’s company traveling to Rome, but Simon himself claimed he was already in Rome for the shooting of another film, La comédie du bonheur (1940) by Marcel L’Herbier, and was convinced by Renoir to stay on. The latter seems more likely, as Simon before Tosca indeed acted in La comédie du bonheur, which was released in December 1940 in both a French version and an Italian version, entitled Eco la felicità. Other actors in the film were former matinee idol Ramon Novarro, Micheline Presle and Louis Jordan. See Paul Guth, Michel Simon (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1951), pp. 117–18.


14. The letter is published in Visconti e il suo lavoro, ed. by Caterina D’Amico, Vera Marzot and Umberto Tirelli (Milan: Electa, 1983), p. 18. Les Collettes was Auguste Renoir’s last house; he died there in 1919. It is now the Musée Renoir.

15. Reiniger is known for her ‘silhouette films’ such as Die Abenteuer des Prinzen Achmed (The Adventures of Prince Achmed, 1926), a feature film, for which Koch did the technique, in addition to many shorts within the same genre of silhouette films or ‘Scherenschnittfilm’. Koch and Reiniger had met Renoir at the Paris first night of Die Abenteuer des Prinzen Achmed and remained in contact. In 1929 Koch, Reiniger and Renoir made the experimental film Der Jagd nach dem Glück (Chasing Fortune) together.

16. Happ, p. 54. Reiniger refers to an animation film that was made but not distributed: L’elisir d’amore (1939), undoubtedly based on Donizetti’s opera. The ‘Opernnarr’ is reminiscent of the fool in Verdi’s opera Rigoletto, an opera that Scalera filmed at the same time. Reiniger may have meant producer Arturo Ambrosio, or perhaps Scalera’s managing director Michele Scalera.

17. Schifano, p. 233. Happ (p. 54), quotes Renoir himself saying that the French government did not want to deny anything to Mussolini, hoping that these gifts would convince the Duce to keep out of the war.


19. In 1940 Federico Patellani (1911–1976) was still at the beginning of his career. In June 1939, after his return from Africa, Patellani joined the editorial staff of the then newly founded magazine Tempo, an illustrated weekly newspaper published by Alberto Mondadori and inspired by the American magazine Life (1936). Soon Patellani’s photo shoots marked the magazine, and until 1941 he was a regular photojournalist working for Tempo. In 1941 he left for the Russian front, in 1943 he documented the effects of the bombings of Milan, and until 1945 he was interned in Switzerland. After the war, he resumed his work for Tempo until 1952. Afterwards he worked as a freelancer, with occasional work for Tempo. See Federico Patellani. La piu bella sei tu/La plus belle c’est toi, ed. by Kitti Bolognesi and Giovanna Calvenzi (Milan: Peliti Associati, 2002), pp. 184–85.


22. In 2002 the Regione Lombardia deposited the Federico Patellani Collection at the Museo di Fotografia Contemporanea. Patellani’s heirs still have rights to the photos.

23. After the collapse of the film trust Unione Cinematografica Italiana (UCI), with which Ambrosio Film had merged, Arturo Ambrosio had withdrawn to Tuscany. In 1935 he returned to the film world with the production of a documentary in Palestine. Probably in 1939 he became artistic director of Scalera Film. Ambrosio’s own notes on his past (Archivio Mnc. A328/3, Museo
Nazionale del Cinema, Turin) speak of Tosca but in such a patchy and ahistorical way that they are not really helpful. According to document 328/2, A.A., ‘Cenni biografici Arturo Ambrosio’, at Scalera, Ambrosio was producer of Tosca, Il re si diverte and Carmen. Document A328/3 is a manuscript by Ambrosio himself, in which he mentions the titles Rosa di sangue, Tosca, Rigoletto [Il re si diverte] and Carmen. For this information I owe gratitude to Claudia Gianetto (Museo Nazionale del Cinema).

24. Good examples are Le notti bianche (1957), Morte a Venezia (1971) and Gruppo di famiglia in un interno (1974). The various scripts within the Fondo Visconti at the Fondazione Gramsci show that Visconti in his adaptations of literature such as Lampedusa’s Il gattopardo and Mann’s Der Tod in Venedig often cut out prologues and epilogues to have a unity of time, space and action, with just one location (the fictive city of Le notti bianche, Venice, the two apartments of Gruppo di famiglia in un interno), or at least a reduced number of locations (only Sicily in the film Il gattopardo, 1963). With regard to space, Visconti’s camera often closely follows his protagonists exploring spaces, in such a way that first-person and third-person perspectives are often combined, as Letizia Belloccchio has indicated – leaving the spectator to morally judge the actions and decisions of the characters. Letizia Belloccchio, ‘Identificazione e straniamento in Ossessione e La terra trema’, in Guarda bene, fratello, guarda bene. Kubrick, Pasolini, Visconti, ed. by Letizia Belloccchio, Mauro Giori and Tomaso Subini (Milan: CUEM, 2005), pp. 53–67.


26. Ibid.


28. ‘Tosca in 24 ore’, p. 31. This lack of credibility also applies to the art depicted in the film: both the sketch of the queen by the court painter, as well as Cavaradossi’s sketches of the faces of Tosca and Angelotti’s sister, are very twentieth century-style and bear little resemblance to an academic drawing tradition of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.

29. X.Y [=Mino Doletti], ‘Una lezione di regia di Jean Renoir (al Centro Sperimentale, su invito di Luigi Chiarini)’, Film, 30 March 1940, p. 4. A photo of Renoir’s visit to the Centro Sperimentale, taken by Federico Patellani, was published, with various other pictures by Patellani, in Tempo: Emilio Ceretti, ‘Una giornata al Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia’, Tempo, IV, 40, 29 February 1940, pp. 17–19.

30. While doing research on Visconti’s involvement in Renoir’s Une partie de campagne (1936), I noticed Renoir did extensive preparation for all of his films. Continuity was also well documented during shooting. In recent years, the image of the famously improvisational Renoir has been tempered by French film historians such as Olivier Curchod and Charles Tesson and by the recovered rushes of Une partie de campagne, compiled by Claudine Kauffmann at the Cinémathèque Française. Renoir was a meticulously prepared man and demanded the same from his staff. Only on the set did he allow them to improvise, and even then not very much.


33. Ibid. For Rosa di sangue, see e.g. A.L. [Alberto Lattuada], ‘Rosa di sangue’, Tempo, III, 27, 30 November 1939, pp. 22–23. Argentina was not the only Spanish actress playing in Rome then. During the war years the Spanish actors Conchita Montenegro, Maria Mercader and Juan de Landa were also prominently visible in Italian film productions. De Landa would later act as Bragana in Visconti’s Ossessione (1943). For De Landa’s films see e.g. Tempo, III, 27, 30 November 1939, for a photo shoot of the miners’ drama Il peccato di Rogelia Sanchez (Carlo Borghesio 1940). Alberto Moravia and Mario Soldati collaborated on the script, while De Landa played the lead.

34. In the early 1930s Simon had acted in various early sound films by Renoir: On purge Bébé (1931), La chienne (1931) and Boudu sauvé des eaux (1932).
36. Girotti is not even mentioned in the credits. Erroneously IMDB mentions him playing Angelotti, but that part was played by Adriano Rimoldi. Girotti would get a more substantial part in his next film, La corona di ferro (Alessandro Blasetti 1941), while he had his first leading part in Roberto Rossellini’s Un pilota ritorna (1942), his last film before he acted in Ossessione.
37. As scriptwriter, Alessandro de Stefani is mentioned in the credits, but he had only translated the French dialogues written by Renoir. The real script had been written by Koch and Renoir. Alessandro De Stefani was a productive Italian playwright and screenplay writer in the 1920s and 1930s.
38. Gianni Puccini, ‘Si gira di notte’, Cinema, 94, 25 May 1940, 355. For a photo of these first takes, see the article by Mario Corsi, ‘L’avventuroso cammino di Tosca’, Cinema, 94, 25 May 1940, 353–54. This is a text on the history of Sardou’s play and Puccini’s opera. The photo was taken by Aurelio Pesce on behalf of the production companies Scalera and Eri. The crowd is also confirmed in a drawing by Lotte Reiniger (see Happ), who in her sketchbook documented the stages of the production. This book is now held at the archive of the Stadtmuseum in Tübingen, Germany.
41. Schifano notes that Simon also experienced the tide changing. At the same time he was chased from his regular spot in a bordello by German-speaking people. See Schifano, pp. 235–36.
42. According to Giuseppe de Santis, the anecdote concerned a French newspaper. Alle origini del Neorealismo, ed. by Gili and Grossi, pp. 30–31.
43. The dates of 13 and 19 May are written on the sketches by Reiniger.
44. Schifano, p. 236.
45. According to Paul Guth’s biography of Michel Simon, Simon, who had already broken with Renoir after Boudu sauvé des eaux, had intended to emigrate to the United States after the shooting of La comédie du bonheur by Marcel L’Herbier, but Renoir had convinced him to stay on in Rome to act in Tosca. After that it was too late for Simon to leave and he would stay on in Italy during the war, until, almost starved, he managed to flee to Switzerland, as he still had a Swiss passport. Renoir himself managed to flee to the States in the autumn of 1940, with the help of Robert Flaherty. Guth, Michel Simon, pp. 117–18.
47. P. [=Gianni Puccini or Corrado Pavolini], ‘Roma, la diva più bella’, Film, 16 November 1940, p. 5.
48. Carl Koch, ‘Il fato di Tosca’, Tempo, V, 16–23 January 1941, 43–45. The various photo shoots by Patellani and the coverage of the production of Tosca by Tempo suggests the production company Scalera may have been involved. In that case, the articles in Tempo may be part of the rhetoric of the film company. I could not find any proof confirming this. Yet, while film journals such as Cinema and Film regularly wrote about the film, it was only Tempo which gave space to these large photo spreads by its own photographer.
49. Sketches and text by Reiniger, published in Happ, p. 62. Snow and ice is not visible in the photos by Patellani but it must have been very cold, as people wear thick overcoats, hats, shawls and gloves. Luchino Visconti is visible among these photos as well. See ‘Il fato di Tosca’, Il Tempo, V, 16–23 January 1941, pp. 43–45.
50. Ibid. How reliable is the information on Reiniger’s sketches though? According to the Italian database ANICA http://www.anica.it/arc/1941/41sv_633.thtml the first public screening in Italy was on 27 January 1941, while IMDb claims it to be 31 January: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0033177/releaseinfo> [accessed 24 June 2017].
51. C.C. Schulte, “Tosca”-Film mit Imperio Argentina in der Titelrolle erfolgreich gestartet’, Film-Kurier, 33, 8 February 1941, 3.
52. Gian Piero Brunetta, Cent’anni di cinema italiano, I, pp. 264–68.
53. Carl Koch made one more film for Scalera after *Tosca, Una signora dell’ovest* (1941). As far as we know, Visconti did not participate in this production, but the actors Michel Simon and Rossano Brazzi did. Koch and Reiniger went back to Berlin during the war and there they survived the hell of the last war years. See Happ, ‘La *Tosca*’.

54. In Paris the film was released more than a year later, on 2 October 1942, in the Cinema Lord Byron. So Renoir’s Parisian friends might have seen the film, but he himself was in America. In the United States *Tosca* was released only in 1947.


58. Vice [=Giovanni Paolucci], ‘*Tosca*, Cinema V, I, 111, 10 February 1941, p. 105. See also Rondolino, p. 78.

59. Ibid.


63. Anon., ‘Blick auf kommende Filme’, Film-Kurier, 253, 28 October 1940, p. 3.

64. [C.C. Schulte], ‘In Rom entsteht unter deutsche Regie ein “*Tosca*”-Film’, Film-Kurier, 256, 31 October 1940, p. 4.

65. Gustav Abel was production designer for Scalera from its founding to 1944, the year he returned to his native town Vienna. Abel worked on *Lucrezia Borgia* just before starting to work on *Tosca*. He would also do to the art direction for Koch’s film *Una signora dell’ovest*.

66. A costume designer A. Richter is mentioned in the caption to the picture, but this may have been a Germanification of one of the real costume designers, Gino Sensani or Domenico Gaido.

67. [Schulte], ‘In Rom entsteht unter deutsche Regie ein “*Tosca*”-Film’, p. 4.


69. Mario Corsi, ‘L’avventuroso cammino di *Tosca*’. The article contains a photo of the scene with Bernhardt as *Tosca*, standing next to Scarpia’s corpse and holding a chandelier in her hand. Concerning the iconization of the gesture, it clearly returns in the Italian diva film *Carnevallesca* (Amleto Palermi, 1918), in which Lyda Borelli’s character places chandeliers next to the man she loved and has just killed.


71. Felix Henselheit, ‘*Tosca*, Film-Kurier, 127, 3 June 1942, p. 2.

72. Schulte, “*Tosca*”–Film mit Imperio Argentina’, p. 3.

73. For my analysis, I have used both the recent DVD version by Cristaldi Film as well as an older RAI TV recording of the Italian version of the film. The German version I have only been able to watch once in projection at the 2010 Cinefest in Hamburg.

74. Jacques Rivette noticed these crane shots in the church as well in his text on Renoir: ‘No, there is no point in denigrating Carl Koch, whose direction, whether or not it follows Renoir’s plan, is consistently elegant and sometimes has great allure. *He is responsible for those broad movements in the chapel* and the final execution scene, where a brief dolly shot, following *Tosca* to where she throws herself into the void, leaves us face to face with Rome’. Nevertheless, Rivetted concluded, this was all overshadowed by Renoir’s initial images. Jacques Rivette, quoted in Jean Renoir by André Bazin, p. 260, my emphasis.

75. ‘That’s all we were able to do’: Jacques Doniol-Valcroze, Jean Domarchi, ‘Entretien avec Luchino Visconti’, Cahiers du cinéma, XVI, 93 (March 1959), 2. Reproduced in Rondolino, p. 79. See also Schifano, p. 236.

76. Quoted in *Alle origini del Neorealismo*, pp. 30–32.

78. Renoir did use forward tracking shots in other films, e.g. in La bête humaine (1938). In the key scene in which Roubaud discovers the body of his murdered wife Séverine, the composition was cited by Visconti in Osseionne with the man blocking our view on the woman, of whom we see only her legs sticking out. While the scene in Osseionne was shot with a fixed camera, in Renoir’s film the camera tracks forward focusing more and more on the pocket watch that Roubaud stole from Séverine’s godfather, the judge Grandmorin, whom he killed. The watch symbolises Roubaud’s greed, and its motif would be adopted by Visconti in Osseionne, symbolising Giovanna’s materialism. Renoir’s La bête humaine was shown at the 1939 Venice film festival and was released in Italy as L’angelo del male, either in 1942 or 1943. While De Santis reviewed the film positively, Aristarco initially considered it a ‘sick film’. Giuseppe De Santis, ‘L’angelo del male’, Cinema, VIII, 159, 10 February 1943, pp. 86–87. Guido Aristarco, La Voce di Mantova, 1 September 1939. Lino Miccichè, in his Visconti e il neorealismo. Osseionne, La terra trema, Bellissima (Venice: Marsilio, 1998/1990), pp. 68–69, treats similarities in content but not in style.

79. Recent film-historical literature has discredited any suggestion that Visconti may have collaborated on other films of Renoir in France than Une partie de campagne. Michèle Lagny, ‘Une partie de campagne à Paris ou les oreilles débouchées’, Cinéma, 5 (Spring 2003), 79–88. See also Michèle Lagny, Luchino Visconti. Vérités d’une legende (Paris/Courbevoie: BiFi/Durante, 2002), and Olivier Curchod, Partie de campagne: une étude critique (Paris: Nathan, 1995).

80. An earlier, less extensive version of this article was published in German as “Mit nur einem Blick perfide sein”. Carl Koch, Jean Renoir, Luchino Visconti und Tosca, in Tenöre, Touristen, Gastarbeiter. Deutsch-italienische Filmbeziehungen, ed. by Francesco Bono and Johannes Roschlau (Munich: edition text + kritik/Cinegraph, 2011), pp. 80–92.

Acknowledgements

For the present article I owe thanks to Catherine O’Rawe in the first place, also to Francesco Bono, Raffaele de Berti, Gian Piero Brunetta, and Stephanie Schönbeck (Cinegraph).