

called for stating publicly that the United States has looked at Mexico “as its back patio.” National media lambasted him for offering an opinion contrary to Mexico’s official policy of “friendship and cooperation” with the United States.

For Mexicans to imply that they are our sociocultural equals, however, is a rather long jump from the dysfunctional reality of their society. Stupid is as stupid does; if Mexicans wish to behave as *Untermenschen*, they should expect to be treated accordingly.

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Four months after this article was originally penned, the Morelos state government of Sergio Estrada Cajigal Ramirez (of the PAN/Partido Accion Nacional/ National Action Party) faces the possibility of total collapse, because of official connections with the Juarez cartel of narcotraffickers. PAN candidates (including President Vicente Fox) rose to power in the 2000 elections on a platform of ending corruption, but their actions have given the lie to their rhetoric.

On April 6, the Mexican Attorney General’s Police arrested Morelos Police Chief Jose Agustin Montiel Lopez and sub-director Raul Cortes Galindo and charged them with heading a protection ring for the Juarez cartel. Montiel and Cortes protected twice-weekly flights of drugs from Colombia to state and regional airports in Morelos and provided the transshipments with Ministerial Police escorts on the interstate toll road. The video surveillance cameras at the toll plazas turned off when the convoys went through.

Estrada Cajigal denied links with narcotraffickers and involvement in the circle of corruption around him, but former Ministerial Police officers Idelfonso Ortiz Alatorre and Marco Enrique Yopez Uribe, now imprisoned, testified that Estrada Cajigal was a virtual employee of the Juarez cartel and that State’s Attorney for Justice Guillermo Tenorio Avila was a key figure in arranging the “settling of debts” between federal and local officials and narcotraffickers. They and other witnesses have further declared that Governor Estrada Cajigal is romantically involved with Nadia Patricia Esparragoza, daughter of Juan Jose Esparragoza Morenos, one of the Juarez cartel *jefes*. The PGR stated that Nadia Esparragoza is the “key link” between public officials of Estrada Cajigal’s administration and the Juarez cartel. (Nadia Esparragoza enjoyed Ministerial Police escorts in

Morelos.) Another critical link is the official police protection of Anibal Carillo, cousin of Juarez cartel boss Vicente Carillo Leyva, revealed in the testimony of Agustin Montiel and former commander Alberto Pliego Fuentes, now both imprisoned.

On April 12, Governor Estrada Cajigal ordered the disarmament and removal of the entire force of Ministerial Police and their replacement by Federal Preventative Police, forces of the Mexican army, and new police-academy graduates.

On April 14, ex-State’s Attorney for Justice Alejandro Hernandez Arjona was arrested for his involvement in the assassination of drug dealer Benjamin Gomez, allegedly ordered by Governor Estrada Cajigal.

As the political crisis unfolded, State’s Attorney Tenorio Avila resigned on April 17 as demanded by the state Congress. Estrada Cajigal’s “strong man,” Morelos State General Secretary of Government Eduardo Becerra Perez, followed suit two days later.

On April 21, the PGR reopened an investigation into Estrada Cajigal’s possible involvement in the murder of Gomez and of ex-coordinator of the Ministerial Police, Luis Alain Pano Vega.

The evidence against Estrada Cajigal goes beyond political affiliations, directly involving family as well. Estrada Cajigal’s ex-father-in-law, Enrique Baring Diaz, director of the Tetluma Airport, and brother-in-law Gerardo Gomez de la Borbolla have been implicated in the narcotrafficking scandal by allowing drug flights to land on protected runways, according to witness testimony. Morelos State Secretary of Government Eduardo Becerra—a former auto-repair shop owner like Estrada Cajigal—and former Becerra employee Gomez de la Borbolla have also been implicated in a car-theft ring that stole luxury cars to trade in Central America for cocaine. As David Aponte of *El Universal* writes (“The File of the Governor’s Brother-in-Law,” April 22):

The Morelos Government never went deeper [in investigating] the links between Gomez de la Borbolla and . . . [Juarez cartel boss Carillo Leyva’s cousin] Anibal. Montiel never arrested [Anibal Carillo] despite a rap sheet for fraud since 1994. Everything stayed in the family, between friends, among the protected.

The Morelos state Congress proposed to try Governor Estrada Cajigal, which was nearly assured until the April 22 defection (ostensibly after the receipt of \$200,000, according to his former party colleagues) to the PAN of PRD representative Juan Nolasco Sanchez, a swing vote that altered the balance of legislative power.

V. Groginsky writes from Mexico City.

Letter From Italy

by Alberto Carosa

“Peaceful” Immigrants



The Catholic Church as a whole does not support illegal immigration, at least in principle. However, an increasing number of clergy and prelates, especially in Italy, do grant *de facto* support to illegal immigration. For example, the bishop of Caserta, Msgr. Raffaele Nogaro, was one of the first high-ranking prelates to support a protest by three Combonian missionaries and a nun who, in early June, chained themselves to the gates of the police headquarters in this city in Southern Italy near Naples. They demanded that any efforts to deport illegal immigrants be immediately halted. Their protest has expanded to at least 17 cities, including Rome, Florence, Bari, Milan, Palermo, Benevento, Avellino, and Naples. It is now supported by nine bishops, including Milan’s Dionigi Cardinal Tettamanzi, and at least 33 religious-related NGO’s. Some of the clergy are calling for illegal immigrants to be offered shelter in churches, monasteries, and other religious institutions.

The Vatican has also weighed in on this heated immigration debate, which has split the center-right government of Premier Silvio Berlusconi, by reminding politicians that immigrants need to be treated with respect and compassion. Msgr. Agostino Marchetto, secretary of the Pontifical Council for Migrants and Refugees, told the press that it is a “political duty to regulate immigration but a Christian duty to help those who suffer.” He stressed that, although the Catholic Church does not support illegal immigration, she regards respect for the dignity of immigrants as a fundamental part of

immigration policies.

Reform and Devolution Minister Umberto Bossi's party, the devolutionist Northern League (commonly known as "Il Carroccio"), has threatened to pull out of the governing coalition if Berlusconi does not do more to halt the surge of arrivals on the country's southern shores. The League, which is often criticized as anti-immigrant, regards cracking down on illegal immigration as a fundamental part of its pact with voters and with the other parties in the governing alliance.

The League helped write Italy's (at least nominally) tough immigration legislation in 2002 but has since complained that the government has dragged its heels on introducing key measures. It is also furious over the surge in the number of immigrants who have been arriving on Italian coasts, in particular on the island of Lampedusa to the south of Sicily.

Bossi triggered a political storm by saying that "The navy and the coastal guards should defend our coasts and use the cannon," although he later sought to distance himself from these comments. "We are a populist party, we go around and listen to what people have to say and the people get angry when they see these thousands of immigrants arrive," Bossi said.

In addition to calling for the resignation of Interior Minister Giuseppe Pisano, League House whip Alessandro Cè lashed out at the Church and Catholic relief organization Caritas, saying they were among those who "betray the population by appealing to silly 'enlightened' principles." On June 26, 2003, the official Vatican daily *Osservatore Romano* ran a scathing response: "Yesterday was a black day for the Italian parliament . . . it is difficult to remember when there has ever been such a detailed attack on the church which is busy trying to serve those who are less fortunate."

Il Giornale reported (June 27, 2003) that Cè also blamed the postconciliar Church for Her stand on immigration, and, in this, he enjoyed the support of his party colleague and deputy, well-known young Catholic traditionalist Federico Bricolo, who, more specifically, pointed out that "new, 1968 revolution style priests were born of the Vatican II" and, therefore, "only the return to tradition could save the Church." Needless to say, these statements further exacerbated the political climate, unleashing a storm in government and opposition ranks alike.

The Northern League's all-too-easy success in attacking the so-called religious

freedom bill, now tabled in the Italian Parliament, has increased the League's unpopularity with the religious and political establishments. The real aim of this bill is to put Islam on the same footing as other faiths, especially Christian religions, which can strike accords with the state and receive public funds.

The Northern League's success resulted more from a series of disquieting events than from its disproportionate clout in the government coalition: the removal of an imam who was accused of inciting and extolling violence in his sermons; a spate of terrorism-related arrests around Milan, including the arrest of the imam of Gallarate; and the July 8, 2003, prosecution of 35 alleged terrorists, including the imam of Milan's Islamic center in Via le Jenner, who were ordered to stand trial on December 9.

In today's climate, excerpts from a sermon by an imam in which Allah is implored to "destroy the houses of the enemies of Islam," "allow Islamic fighters in Palestine, Chechnya and elsewhere in the world to triumph," and "help us annihilate the enemies of Islam" may not sound shocking. The problem is that these words were not uttered in a remote mosque in Sudan, Saudi Arabia, or Pakistan but in the main mosque of Rome in the Monte Antenne area, which is the largest not only of the 215 mosques in Italy but of all the mosques in Europe, the construction of which was justified by appeals to the need to foster dialogue, peace, and fraternity with Islam. After these inflammatory messages were reported in the media, Minister of the Interior Giuseppe Pisano had no choice but to ask for the imam to be removed and for all other mosques in Italy to be "purged of all those who preach violence, seek recruits for 'holy war' or act as agents for foreign interests in Italy." Two days after Pisano's statements, the imam was removed. The Monte Antenne mosque falls under the aegis of the Islamic University of Al Azhar in Cairo, and the imam's replacement will have to come from there.

According to the postcommunist mayor of Rome, Walter Veltroni, "the imam suspension is a gesture of great responsibility and sensitiveness which can contribute to ease a possibly tension-laden climate" (*Il Messaggero*, June 14, 2003). This might have been the case had the imam been removed on the initiative of the Islamic community before his incendiary sermons caused such a stir. Instead, Al Azhar has issued a press release

defending the removed imam, saying that he was not extradited by the Italian authorities but had to leave because of the campaigns waged by the media against him. This measure, the statement continued, was taken only "to extinguish the fire of the debate," since Al Azhar is of the opinion that "the sermons by the formerly Rome-based imam for the Jihad to be invoked against Islam's enemies have nothing against religion and he has the right to continue his mission in another country."

These developments not only confirm the League's fears but vindicate the alarm sounded by Centro Culturale Lepanto (CCL) at the time of the opening of the mosque in Rome ten years ago, which was hailed as a milestone in Islamic-Christian dialogue. The dangers posed by its presence right in the heart of Catholicism, including the possibility that it would be used as an outpost of terror propaganda (Islam admits no distinction between the religious-spiritual and temporal-secular realms), were forcefully decried in a national campaign. This campaign soon assumed international proportions, following the turmoil caused by then-speaker of the Lower House Irene Pivetti, who heeded the call by CCL and joined its members and supporters in a rosary of reparation in the nearby church of St. Aloysius Gonzaga.

Some imams do not limit themselves to preaching. According to Minister Pisano, as reported by ANSA (June 12, 2003), "terrorists are often able to hide themselves using illegal immigration networks and sometimes find shelter or at least some form of hospitality and varying levels of sympathy in Italian mosques." This appears to be the case with the other two imams mentioned above, who are accused of being involved in a range of crimes, including supporting and financing terrorism, aiding illegal immigration, tax fraud, and receiving stolen cars. In particular, the arrest of the imam of Gallarate, Muhammad El Mahfoudi, has caught many by surprise, because he is said to be a staunch supporter of interreligious dialogue. Incidentally, the first Al Qaeda-linked cell in Italy was discovered in Gallarate.

Alberto Carosa is the editor of Famiglia Domani Flash, a pro-family newsletter published in Rome.



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THEATER

Delightful Murders
and Sheer Torture

by James Moses

While “off Broadway” is often the destination for the worst sort of stage-direction anarcho-anachronism, with *Othello* in spaceships and all-lesbian versions of *Macbeth*, it may surprise the non-New Yorker to learn that it is often the place to discover classic drama played absolutely straight (in all senses) and flawlessly acted.

Such was the case recently with a production of John Webster’s *The Duchess of Malfi*, presented by the Kings County Shakespeare Company at Brooklyn’s St. Francis College. The play, first staged in 1614 at the Blackfriars and Globe theaters, has since become the most-performed non-Shakespearean tragedy in the English language. Based on a true story about an Italian duchess who suffered a cruel fate at the hands of her two brothers, Ferdinand and “the Cardinal,” for secretly marrying beneath her station, the drama contains at its core a triangular relationship between the Duchess, her steward-husband Antonio, and Ferdinand, who is captive to an incestuous passion for her.

The Duchess is a “right noble” woman, whose “discourse,” Antonio claims, “is so full of rapture / You only will begin then to be sorry / When she doth end her speech,” and her “days are practiced in such noble virtue / That sure her nights, nay more, her very sleeps, / Are more in heaven than other ladies’ shrifts.”

In the Kings County Shakespeare Company’s production, the role of the Duchess is played by Renee Bucciarelli, a “right noble” woman herself, who, had she lived in the age of the madrigal, would certainly have inspired the full flowering of that art. The Duchess of Malfi is one of the greatest (and, likely, the earliest) of the great romantic heroines of English drama—impulsive, impatient of social proprieties, warmly elegant, and profoundly feminine—and this is an actress who realizes all of these attributes to perfection.

The other star is Juilliard graduate Matt D’Amico as Bosola, the henchman of the brothers, who covet their sister’s inheritance. D’Amico pulls off the neat trick of being simultaneously slimy and sympathetic. Once he has been the undoing of the Duchess, her husband, and her children, he expresses heartfelt remorse for his base deeds. Bosola is both part of the action and outside it, villain and avenger—and even impresario, since he opens four, and closes five, scenes in the play. From being the brothers’ hired spy and executioner throughout most of the story, he becomes, in its waning moments, the avenger of the sister’s wrongs.

A veteran of Shakespearean drama, Jon Fordham is the cold, heartless Cardinal, while Ferdinand is played by Andrew Oswald. The latter’s rage throughout is the fire to Fordham’s ice.

More so than that of other Jacobean dramatists, Webster’s art seems continually to shift perspective, which can make the artistic unity of his plays difficult to define.

One who had no trouble defining Webster was Bernard Shaw, who contemptuously dismissed him as “Tussaud laureate.” He saw the playwright as an exploiter of sensational violence who pandered to his audience’s basest voyeuristic instincts. In the film *Shakespeare in Love*, John Webster is the gruesome little boy who finds the Bard’s plays not sufficiently bloodthirsty.

Indeed, I have it on good authority that some modern stagings have been quite colorful, with blood gushing everywhere and chained women with bared breasts. In this production by Jemma Alix Levy, only the stage is bare, with hardly a piece of furniture set down among the players.

However, placing madness and murder at center stage (the play concludes with a stage-clogging, five-corpse pile-up) should not give offense. Webster’s works are vital, at times excessively so. His world is inhabited by people driven, like animals, only by their instincts. In the case of Ferdinand, the twin brother of the Duchess of Malfi, Webster collapses the divide between human and animal when Ferdinand’s wolfish instincts transform him outright into a *lycanthropos* (a “wolfman”).

Webster admitted that *The Duchess* presents “a gloomy world,” and its gloom

emanates from Italy, a convenient punching bag for many English playwrights, who portray Italy as a sink of iniquity, depravity, and corruption, both religious and sexual. It is not the Italy of their own 17th century, baroque and Spanish-dominated, that they describe but the Italy of the 15th century. In the end, though, Italy and Italians stand less for a real country and her people than for a climate of feeling and action.

Soon after my enjoyable experience of theater in Brooklyn, I ventured back into Manhattan for what might be termed a “subversive” production of Strindberg’s *Miss Julie*. *New York Times* theater critic John Rockwell has assured us that “some ‘subversive’ productions are brilliantly unforgettable, like [Robert] Wilson’s account of ‘A Dream Play’ three years ago at the Brooklyn Academy.” (Several years ago, I found Wilson’s “subversion” of *Lohengrin* on the Metropolitan Opera stage “unforgettable” for the way in which he had the lead singers refrain from even the slightest interaction with one another.)

According to Rockwell, “Mr. Wilson revealed facets of Strindberg that Strindberg could never envisage, making for a compelling dialogue across time.”

Well, in this production in a tiny theater converted from an office space near Times Square, facets were revealed, but not those of Strindberg. They were, rather, the exposed breasts of Cleveland, Ohio’s own Miss Julie Saad, acting in the title role. Why Miss Julie’s “Miss Julie” had to appear topless, I cannot imagine, but, then, neither could I imagine what predisposed the company founded by this sylph-like redhead, the inaptly named “Blush Productions,” to set this 19th-century Swedish play, about the master-servant divide and the clash of the sexes, in New York City on the Fourth of July with the cast and audience anticipating the approach, not of Miss Julie’s aristocrat father, but of her Hollywood-director dad. Throw in a reference to a pet rabbit needing an abortion, and you have 90 minutes of incessant torture.

Which is too bad, because Strindberg is a towering figure in world drama. He was alternately a Darwinist, Rousseauist, Socialist, Nietzschean, and Christian mystic; but, whatever his transformations, at the core was an immense personality: sensitive, irreconcilable, occasionally