

SUPER BOWL XXXVI, proclaimed by the National Football League to be a tribute to September 11 (themed “Heroes, Hope, and Homeland”) underscored the fact that there is something inauthentic about a spectacle that allows sports-bar patrons to experience masculinity vicariously by watching well-padded millionaires smash into one another for control of a leather ball.

The Fox Television Network, which had exclusive rights to broadcast the game, had promised “the most stirring, patriotic and emotionally charged Super Bowl ever.” Indeed, it proved to be a wartime pep rally, with spots made by players saluting the troops, satellite images from Afghanistan, and delegations representing police and fire departments as well as the Armed Forces. And while Irish rock band U2 won the prize for most testosterone-filled act—notwithstanding the irreverent spectacle of fans wildly cheering lead singer Bono, leather jacket lined with Old Glory, preening beneath the names of those killed by the terrorist attacks projected onto a giant bedsheet—the pregame show won the prize for most patriotic.

The pregame show was a film in two parts, with ex-NFL stars reciting excerpts from the Declaration of Independence, and the former living presidents (Nancy Reagan filled in for her ailing husband) celebrating Abraham Lincoln in his own words.

The announcer began the show with the question, “Just what is the cornerstone of . . . the much-envied American way of life?” The answer, he replied, is “the Declaration of Independence, which guarantees every individual life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” Actually, the Declaration—a political act, not a legal charter—does no such thing. It is the Constitution’s Bill of Rights that guarantees our rights under the banner of “life, liberty, and property,” the “pursuit of happiness” being a flowery phrase that withers under examination: What makes one person happy might constitute a criminal act.

The first part opened in Independence Hall with actors depicting several Founding Fathers reciting famous lines. It then shifted to ex-NFL stars reciting the Declaration’s more stirring passages. Included in the roster were ex-Buffalo Bills

quarterback Jack Kemp, speaking from the Capitol’s rotunda, and ex-Seattle Seahawks quarterback Steve Largent, now a Republican Congressman from Oklahoma, who spoke from a Western art gallery before a bronze of an Indian war chief. All of this was accompanied by a martial score by John Williams, heavy on the horns and drums.

Lest anyone miss the theme of multicultural unity, the line “all men are created equal” was repeated three times, ending with a group shot of people who looked as if they were swept from the waiting room of an INS office, including an Arab Muslim wearing a white head wrap. This theme was reinforced when a stern-looking black soldier recited the line “It is their duty to throw off the old government and provide a new future of security,” flanked by four other diverse but unrepresentative soldiers: two men (white and black) and two women (white and Asian).

The first part closed at the Jefferson Memorial, which is inscribed with several quotes, including “I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just; that His justice cannot sleep forever.” But reciting that would have seemed darkly incongruous, so another was chosen in praise of a uniform American identity.

To the grave tune of Aaron Copland’s “A Lincoln Portrait,” part two celebrated Lincoln, that “gaunt figure striding across the American political and philosophical landscape like a Colossus” whose “patriotic philosophy is especially apt right now.”

The former presidents and Mrs. Reagan quoted Lincoln expounding on the virtues of democracy and equality and the need to reject “the dogmas of a quiet past [that are] inadequate to a stormy present.” Images of pastoral America bathed in the setting sun—a mountain lake, a windmill in a golden field of corn—clashed with such martial shots as the Vietnam War Memorial, the flag raising on Iwo Jima, and, of course, the crumbling World Trade Center Towers. The message was clear: Retribution against terrorists will help us recover an idyllic America.

While the pregame show lived up to Fox’s claim of the most patriotic Super Bowl ever, it should not be forgotten that

selectively chosen words divorced from their historical context and glorified with powerful and pleasing images and music are the stuff of propaganda. Details that would have sullied the nationalistic triumphalism were excluded, such as Lincoln’s vow to win the Civil War “whether it meant freeing all the slaves or none of them” and his well-documented belief in the inequality of blacks—not to mention his prosecution of a bloody and unconstitutional war that allowed the federal government to become the colossus it is today. But a great nation needs heroes to enshrine in marble temples and worship in time of war, even if their mythic stature ignores their weaker human natures.

No mere words could better illustrate the pregame show’s sentimental idealism than what immediately followed: the singing of “America the Beautiful.” To continue the Capra-esque theme, I had hoped for a wholesome singer like Kate Smith, of whom Franklin D. Roosevelt declared, “She is America.”

Instead, the 180 million viewers worldwide were subjected to the combined caterwauling of a skankily dressed woman (singer Mary J. Blige) with bulging breasts and a bare arm showing a tattoo of a cross, and a slinky girly boy in sunglasses (Latino pop star Marc Anthony). The illusion of Norman Rockwell’s America ended with the rude introduction of America the unbeautiful.

—Matthew Rarey

AFTER SEPTEMBER 11, several important stories continue to be ignored. Here, to a lay observer, is the shape of the past fall’s most overlooked developments.

The two biggest sponsors of terrorism in the Middle East are Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. The intelligence community has known this for years. The recent kidnapping and slaying of a *Wall Street Journal* reporter is only the most recent incident.

Our bombing campaign against Afghanistan was not really a “war on terrorism.” Afghanistan (“Pipeline-istan”) is basically a big vacant lot, not formally recognized as a nation by the U.S. government, dominated by squabblers with guns; its training camps and similar operations were founded, staffed, and financed by Saudi Arabia and Pakistan,

our instant partners in the “war against terror.” Afghanistan’s Taliban government was also established and supported by Pakistanis, including Pakistan’s secret service, with Saudi (and CIA) money.

The fourth hijacked plane on September 11, brought down in Pennsylvania by passengers who realized that it was headed for a target somewhere, was headed for the Pentagon. For years, as reported in the international press—including Arabic newspapers available in translation—hijackings and rocket attacks have come in pairs; the attackers struck in paired planes in New York City, and they intended to do so in Washington, D.C.

After spending a trillion dollars and opening the fiscal dam for anything deemed “defense,” our military did not realize that the Pentagon could be a target. Is anyone asking why the airspace over the Pentagon was not defended?

Those anthrax letters were sent by someone without a scientific background who possessed both samples and a grudge—probably some military-installation employee who received the anthrax vaccine and didn’t appreciate it. Forget about looking for Dr. No. The person who mailed these letters did not realize that finely milled anthrax could leak through ordinary stationery; this nonscientist became discouraged and quit when his infectious letters leaked on the wrong targets.

The investigation of the September attacks and the anthrax mailings has been coordinated at the national level directly from the White House, not the FBI. White House operatives are good at what they do—manipulating the press, opinion polls, members of Congress, and judges—but they are not trained investigators. This is one reason why the anthrax mailer, the Taliban’s Mullah Omar, and Osama bin Laden have not been found.

Osama bin Laden, by the way, is dead. No one bounces back from renal shut-down, and all indications are that, if he were alive, we would be hearing from him. This is common knowledge in Pakistan (which supported bin Laden and the Taliban). Here, it was fed to the supermarket tabloids. Osama bin Laden did not “mastermind” the September attacks. He was not a mastermind and was never treated as such by any Arab writer, even those who supported the military strikes against Afghanistan; his supposed “nuclear weapons” documents turned out to be a well-known internet hoax.

The attacks were half-baked as well as

vicious, but they were neither random nor “symbolic.” A bunch of young Saudi (mostly) wannabe professionals went for broke trying to knock out the U.S. stock market and the Pentagon. It might be more appropriate to call the anthrax mailings “symbolic,” since they were mailed to addressees apparently in the delusion that they would target senators and newscasters individually. But news reports do not customarily treat home-grown terrorist attacks as “symbolism,” though they routinely react to anything of Oriental or Middle Eastern origin as florid and incomprehensible.

The attacks of September 11 were supported, passively and otherwise, by the secret services of our allies. Terrorist operations in the Middle East and Europe for years have been permitted or supported or carried out by the secret service of Pakistan, the Gulf states, Russia, and Israel.

Two sources for the brownshirt phrase “Homeland Security” seem to be the Anser Institute for Homeland Security, in Northern Virginia, and the Reverend-Moon-sponsored *Insight* magazine. The Anser Institute—a non-profit, despite its patents and its large government contracts—and *Insight* were touting “Homeland Security” and making reference to a “second Pearl Harbor” before September 11.

The attacks of September 11 were not an “act of war”; they were a mass crime. Calling them “acts of war” gives them undeserved dignity; calling them “crimes”—or, as the United Nations refers to them, a “breach of security”—would enable investigation.

We are not at war. If we were at war, those long *Washington Post* articles showing the innermost workings of the White House and the CIA in crisis would also be security breaches.

Still, it can be said that, amidst all our current problems, there are some bright spots—especially President Bush’s public support for a Palestinian state. It is high time; the establishment of a Palestinian state is in this nation’s and the world’s best interest.

—Margie Burns

DARTMOUTH MEDICAL SCHOOL has published the results of research concerning parental influence upon children’s behavior in the journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics. Lo and behold: Parents’ “preaching” works! Their lectures have a “positive impact”

on teenage behaviors such as smoking and drug use—even when parents themselves engage in such activities.

Similar findings are cited by the National Institute on Drug Abuse and the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, among others. Analysts even go so far as to say that straightforward messages and high expectations of parents actually blunt the effects of peer pressure.

“We overrate the rebelliousness of teenagers. . . . Parents underestimate their influence on their children,” reported Dr. James Sargent, associate professor of pediatrics at Dartmouth Medical School. “[Parents] have an overly heightened concern about coming down hard on their kids.”

Well, of *course* they do. After 40 years of being inundated with admonitions from child psychologists against “preaching” (“kids won’t listen”), about children being “decisionmakers” (“let them discover their own values”), and citing the disadvantages of moralizing (“teens will do it anyway”), parents have concluded their wisdom is more destructive than helpful. Heaven help the parent who says “no” to peer activities deemed inconsistent with his youngster’s maturity level. Overprotective, you see . . .

For four decades, parents have been treated as well-intentioned nincompoops lacking behavioral-science degrees; now, suddenly, they are supposed to exercise their prerogatives, set standards, and administer “tough love.”

Did you happen to catch the new public service ads on TV by the Drug-Free Schools bunch? A prepubescent youngster tells adult viewers: “I’m going to fight you. In a few years you won’t even know me. *You* have to be the adult.” I bet our grandparents wouldn’t have heard such talk in their day.

Since the 1950’s, when child “experts” started floating malarkey in women’s magazines, parents have gotten nothing but raspberries for exercising common sense. When I was an education major, my professor in educational psychology told us outright that “there’s no such thing as common sense.”

Today, school counselors are still intimidating parents who exercise adult judgment. And they can do a whole lot more than deliver verbal raspberries. They can take children away from good homes through Child Protective Service agencies, require genital exams for 11-year-olds on school property, and instigate lawsuits on a child’s behalf if discipli-

nary measures are deemed “excessive.” Any credentialed teacher or counselor has more legal influence than a child’s family.

It is small wonder that parents live in fear, not only of their own children, but of school authorities and social workers. Almost anything can trigger a knock on the door by agents of the state serving up frivolous accusations of child abuse—which are never purged from permanent records even when a parent is exonerated. Parents spend precious hours countering baseless charges and thwarting reckless school activities that undercut their values.

Peruse any bookstore; what do you see? Shelves of “parenting” (not *child-rearing*) books, spouting mostly hogwash, by “experts” sporting Ph.D.s. The latest revelation? From the American Psychological Association: Adult-child sex is not harmful if it is consensual.

This wisdom, however, doesn’t exactly square with the mission of colleagues in the social-work industry who aggressively incite charges of child sexual abuse. They get schools to disseminate provocative questionnaires, scrutinize students’ “personal journals” (read: diaries), and pass off encounter sessions as substantive curriculum—all to ferret out anything that might be construed as sexual abuse.

Ironically, the “Me Generation” is the primary recipient of the news flash from Dartmouth Medical School. As first-wave products of experts’ asinine advice, we might well wonder how many of our progeny would have been spared addiction, unwanted pregnancies, AIDS, and criminal records had we been the adults our grandparents were, folks who demonstrated the courage of their convictions.

Meanwhile, the mental-health industry is busy concocting new “diseases,” hawking psychiatric drugs and behavioral-screening instruments, and rushing to the scene of every tragedy with mandates for mental-health counseling. Psychologists are now fixtures in the schools, the courts, the workplace, even many churches, intimidating these institutions to buy their wares.

What does society have to show for this crusade against parental authority? Classrooms filled with out-of-control, disrespectful, and dangerous kids; hordes of “rehabilitated” killers scouting neighborhoods for more victims; babies tossed in dumpsters; epidemic sexual diseases; roving gangs of fatherless children.

Now Dartmouth tells us that parents

have clout. Gee, thanks for nothing.

—B.K. Eakman

“AMERICA HAS CHANGED” has been the media’s new mantra since September 11. But what has America changed into? Reporters have fanned out across the country seeking those changes, and they have filled the airwaves and pages with their findings. Some who have been interviewed talked in the abstract about how they do not take as much for granted now. Others say they have become more spiritual; still others claim they have drawn closer to their loved ones. Many have remarked on the swelling patriotism within the country and how unified we all seem.

Whether or not America will truly “change” is a question to be answered in years rather than news cycles. But an AP story written by Ron Kampeas may show that the media is simply indulging in wishful thinking.

Americans are not joining the military in increased numbers, according to the Pentagon; nor are more of them going to church—unless you count mosques. Laura Bush told a group of New York women that “Divorce cases have been withdrawn at higher rates and more people are buying engagement rings and planning weddings.” But in Reno, Nevada, the “Marriage Capital of the World,” there has been an 11-percent drop in marriage-license applications since September 11. Murder and theft have increased in Washington, D.C., and Denver. An alleged post-September 11 baby boom, Kampeas argues, is just an “urban myth.” According to a survey by advertising network Euro RSCG, 36 percent of American women who have dogs are spending more time with them after September 11. Only 20 percent are spending more time with their husbands.

September 11 could have caused this country to change, because it was the kind of sudden event that often leads to shifts in historical and cultural currents. The first armed attack by foreigners upon the continental United States since the War of 1812 and the destruction of the country’s two largest buildings, right in the heart of its financial district, should have caused people to stop what they are doing, look at themselves, and look at their country. Such a horrible event could have caused the citizenry to demand of our elected leaders different policies on immigration, abortion, and

America’s role in the world, and should have caused us to realize the effects of U.S. foreign-policy decisions and to rethink a government so big that it couldn’t prevent 22 terrorists from slipping into our country unnoticed and hijacking four planes to use as missiles. It could have caused the public to take a hard look at this country’s institutions and ask if they are worthy enough to pursue justice for the deaths of so many innocents—and if not, how they could be reformed to be so.

But before that could happen, President Bush told the citizenry that he wanted their lives to return to normal, and the media joined in his efforts. It became our patriotic duty to “go back to normal.” The terrorists would win if we didn’t become “normal” again. So how can we have changed if everything went back to normal? Your guess is a good as mine, but it seems that the public took the President’s words to heart. And normal before September 11 was divorce, abortion, birth out of wedlock, political correctness, illegal immigration, multiculturalism, murder, empty pews, drug abuse, an overstretched military, corruption, casinos, Enron ripping off its stockholders, the United Nations, Howard Stern, Britney Spears exhibitions, 500 channels, ESPN, Wal-Mart, and *The Jerry Springer Show*. If President Bush was so eager for the country to return to normal, he obviously didn’t find much wrong with it before September 11.

Don’t expect the subsequent war on terrorism to change much in America, either, unless it turns into an utter disaster. Once upon a time, the nation literally *did* go to war. Millions were mobilized into the Armed Forces, millions more went to work in defense plants, and millions more had their food and gasoline rationed, bought war bonds, saw sporting events cancelled, gave up luxuries and travel, and participated in civil defense. Scientists, businessmen, lawyers, journalists, celebrities, and plowmen all played their parts in the war effort. Such mass mobilization of the American people was bound to affect culture and values in any number of ways—perhaps mainly for ill. We would not have had a civil-rights movement without World War II; we would not have had astroturf without the Korean War; and Muhammad Ali would have been just another heavyweight boxer without Vietnam.

Since Vietnam, we have left war to the professionals. While the results have

been officially positive (we haven't been defeated since), wars have lost whatever cultural meaning they once had. An all-volunteer force means that most Americans will not have to worry about the loss of a loved one in battle; they can just follow the war from their TV sets or computers as if they were watching a sporting event: the United States *versus* the Taliban (or Somalia, or Iraq, or Shangri-la, if it happens to harbor terrorists). Most Americans will not have to worry about all the disruptions wartime caused for previous generations, unless some fanatic decides to detonate a nuclear warhead in downtown Chicago.

We no longer even *declare* war. Our elected representatives in Congress just pass a resolution in support of the President's policy and then go back to their main interest of dividing the take. It's a nice little technicality that allows us to avoid the Geneva Convention when we're dealing with Taliban prisoners. Lebanon, Grenada, Libya, Panama, the Persian Gulf, Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo, Somalia—all of these resemble the colonial campaigns and conquests of the British Empire more than they do the wars of a republic. Maybe that's the idea after all—the British colonial forces were all volunteer, too.

Reflecting on the Gulf War, I remember that patriotism was strong. People flew flags everywhere, tied yellow ribbons around trees, held parades for our returning heroes, and sang songs. Some earnestly hoped that America would be changed by the experience and become a better country. Two years later, Bill Clinton was elected President.

Change doesn't happen in a vacuum, nor does it happen just because we wish it. It happens when men are willing and when they know what they want to become. So far, the real winner of this "war" has been the *status quo*.

—Sean Scallon

OBITER DICTA: In George Carey's review "A Conservative in Crisis" (March), we mistakenly altered the title of the collection of articles by Francis Graham Wilson, which should have read *Political Philosophy and Cultural Renewal: Collected Essays*. We also omitted Professor Carey's listing of the editors: H. Lee Cheek, Jr., M. Susan Power, and Kathy B. Cheek. We regret the error and the omission.

Our poet this month is Alfred Nicol.

His poetry will be included in an anthology titled *Contemporary Poets of New England*, edited by Robert Pack and Jay Parini. His work has appeared in the *New England Review*, *Atlanta Review*, the *Formalist*, *Rattapallax*, *Pivot*, and *Commonweal*. A member of the Powow River Poets, he lives in Amesbury, Massachusetts, where he teaches poetry and creative writing at Sparhawk School.

Chronicles is illustrated this month by St. Petersburg native Anatol Woolf, who, in addition to freelance work, has de-

signed sets for theaters in Russia and provided illustrations for St. Petersburg Textbook Publishers. Since coming to America in 1987, Mr. Woolf has been a frequent contributing artist to *Chronicles*, as well as to the *Washington Post*, the *Washington Times*, *Policy Review*, *National Geographic Traveler*, *Legal Times*, and *Cricket*. Mr. Woolf works with a variety of materials, from watercolors to pencil to acrylic. Further samples of his work are available on his Web page: www.netcom.com/~a.woolf/.

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by Thomas Fleming

Recessional

If drunk with sight of power, we
loose
Wild tongues that have not Thee in
awe,
Such boastings as the Gentiles use,
Or lesser breeds without the Law—

George W. Bush's "axis of evil" address was a remarkable performance in many ways: It simultaneously marked the zenith of American triumphalism and the nadir, not only of presidential speech-writing, but of U.S. pronouncements on foreign policy. That otherwise intelligent men in the Cabinet allowed this farce to be performed is a very disturbing indication of the depths of cynicism to which our leaders have descended. I had thought Albright and Clinton had reached rock bottom, but I was wrong.

One of the minor annoyances of growing old in a dying civilization is that we are constantly aware of how rapidly downhill everything is headed. Even the conversation about civilizations and empires, their rise and fall, their conflicts, has become steadily more stupid. In our grandfathers' days, people were talking about Nietzsche and Spengler, and taking up the white man's burden was the theme of speeches by Teddy Roosevelt and Winston Churchill and poems by Rudyard Kipling; now we are reduced to Benjamin Barber and Samuel Huntington and the editorialists of the *Wall Street Journal*. Even as a raving maniac, Nietzsche was a product of [our civilization] (I put it in brackets because I have not yet said what I mean by it). What is Mr. Huntington but George F. Babbitt with a Ph.D.? He is but one in that long series of American "exceptionalist" gurus whose wisdom consists of saying what everyone has already been taught to believe.

We all learned the story from fifth-grade world history and ninth-grade civics. In the beginning, all was darkness, except for some little pockets of organized life in China, India, and the eastern Mediterranean. Then light broke upon the Aegean Sea, and the Greeks discovered democracy and the worth of the individual. The light was almost extinguished by Christian superstition but began to shine all the brighter in the Renaissance and Refor-

mation, bursting into flame during the Enlightenment, which culminated in the American and French Revolutions, and, since then, Americans (and their European followers) have marched unswervingly in their progress toward Huntington's "liberty, equality, individualism, democracy, rule of law, private enterprise"—to say nothing of free abortions, jacuzzis in every Holiday Inn, international human rights, gourmet food you can heat up in the microwave, fresh Mexican fruit from a market run by illegal Korean aliens, freedom from religions that claim to possess the truth . . .

Brekekekex ko-ax ko-ax

If you want to suck up more of this pap, read John Dewey, watch Jim Lehrer or Wolf Blitzer, subscribe to *Foreign Affairs* or the *Public Interest*, but throw this magazine away. We did not invent civilization; we inherited it. And, so far from improving upon our inheritance, we have proved ourselves unworthy of it. Civilization, and hence the clash of civilizations, began with the Greeks.

As curious as they were about other cultures, the Greeks divided the world between Greeks and "the others," whom they referred to as *barbaroi*, a word that may be an onomatopoeic rendering of foreign babble. Although the term "barbarian" certainly included such wild peoples of the North as Illyrians and Scythians, it was more typically applied to the degenerate subjects of the great empires of the East, especially the Persians.

Herodotus, who was the first extant writer to have taken up the conflict between the two civilizations of the Mediterranean, spent a fair amount of time hopping from island to island, roaming through Egypt, and living among the barbarians. The results of his casual investigations (or "histories," as he called them) form the most entertaining (and perhaps even the most honest) work of history ever written. As a Greek, Herodotus had no doubts about the superiority of his own civilization, but he had grown up cheek-by-jowl with Carian *barbaroi*, and he was fully aware of the splendid virtues of the Persians and of the cultural antiq-

uity of the Egyptians. His openness to alien cultures extended to the point of gullibility, since he appears to have uncritically accepted nearly every preposterous story told to him by Egyptian priests.

Greek history, according to Herodotus, is the story of conflicts between East and West. Making the best sense he can of myths and legends, he concludes that women are at the bottom of the East-West feud. Phoenicians began the struggle by stealing the king of Argos' daughter; Greeks later retaliated by abducting Europa and compounded the crime when the Argonauts ran off with Medea. Priam's son Alexander (Paris) was only seeking revenge when he seduced Helen and started the Trojan War. This is the Persian view, he assures us, and the Persians, in attacking the Greeks, were only retaliating against earlier aggressions.

Even in this silly preface to his work—parodied brilliantly by Aristophanes—Herodotus reveals what he is all about. Although his theme is the triumph of the Greeks in the wars against Persia, he insists upon listening to the Persian version, which puts the blame on the Greeks. Although he understands the importance of trade and commerce—that is what, after all, these Greeks, Phoenicians, and Trojans were doing when they were not stealing each others' women—he is also aware of the significance of irrational attachments, both sexual passion and national myths.

Herodotus is no multiculturalist, but he finds barbarians fascinating, whether they are Scythians, who get stoned dancing around a bonfire of hemp plants; or Egyptian princesses working as temple prostitutes; or power-crazed Persian tyrants like Cambyses, who killed the priests of Apis when a sacrifice went wrong and went on to murder his brother and sister; or Xerxes, who, when a bridge collapsed in a storm, killed the architects and scourged the sea for interfering in the Great King's plans.

The Greeks he portrays are not necessarily braver or nobler than the Persian aristocracy, but they are different. Greeks had the normal human desire for wealth and fear of poverty, but in their private lives, they lived in modesty and restraint,