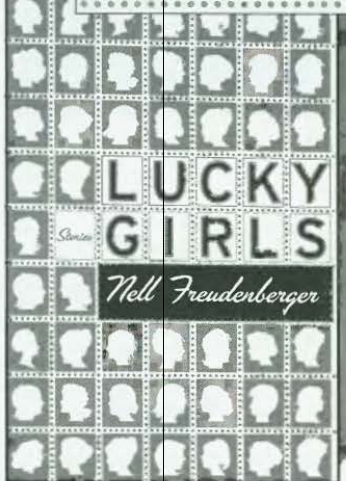


First Highlighted in
The New Yorker
 Fiction Issue,
 Nell Freudenberger's
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THE MAIL

THE CHURCH IN AMERICA

Louis Menand, in his thoughtful Comment on the battle over displaying the Ten Commandments in a court in Alabama, gives Thomas Jefferson credit for introducing the metaphor of "a wall of separation" between church and state into American political discourse, in 1802 (*The Talk of the Town*, September 8th). Jefferson was, as it happens, drawing on an earlier tradition. In 1643, Roger Williams, a clergyman and founder of Rhode Island, who had been banished from the Puritan Colonies for challenging theocratic authorities, wrote that there should be "a wall of separation between the garden of the Church and the wilderness of the world"—by which he meant the predations of sectarian political leaders. The difference between the two is that, while Williams felt the wall necessary to protect the church from the state, for Jefferson the greater need was to protect the state from the church.

Lloyd Burton
 Professor of Law and Public Policy
 University of Colorado
 Denver, Colorado

ARTISTS ON STRIKE

Adam Gopnik views the strike this summer by unevenly employed French performing-arts workers with something like despair and a little bit of contempt ("The Anti-Anti-Americans," September 1st). Unemployment benefits for interim arts workers are indeed generous by American standards. Right now, it takes only three months of work in a year to qualify, although the sums involved are modest. But they provide a safety net for some hundred thousand artists and technicians in film, theatre, dance, and the circus, allowing them to work with a modicum of serenity and continuity; to accept artistically challenging engagements that are poorly paid; to work in the schools; and to bring the arts to poor areas. The question isn't so much why France is so generous with its artists but why the United States is so

reticent about financing the arts. That the arts workers' willingness to fight for such benefits should be so disparaged by Gopnik is extraordinary. Is Richard Grasso's take-home pay a more brilliant example of the Good Society?

Paul Golub
 Meudon, France

THE WATER RACKET

In "City of Water," David Grann refers to the city's eighteenth-century private water carters as "racketeers . . . gouging customers" (September 1st). This is not fair to the storied Teawater Men, who provided the only clean and reliable spring water in New York for fifty years, at a time when the city's wells, the only other supply, were dangerously polluted. Grann does not mention the real racketeer in New York's early water history: the Manhattan Company, Aaron Burr's bank disguised as a water business, which effectively had monopoly powers. The company, which was an ancestor of JPMorganChase, provided intermittent doses of horrid water from a reservoir on Chambers Street, while thwarting improvements during the first four decades of the nineteenth century, when the city grew infamous for epidemic disease and epic filth.

Gerard Koepfel
 New York City

CORRECTIONS: A Talk of the Town story in the September 15th issue stated that the Yankees won the pennant in 1984. In fact, the team had no pennant victories between 1981 and 1996.

The Book Currents column in the September 22nd issue conflated two Robert Shapiros: a former defender of O. J. Simpson and a former C.E.O. of Monsanto. They are not one and the same.

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