

Names and Naming Tell an Archetypal Story in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*

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In *The Handmaid's Tale*, a dystopian novel about the oppression of its citizens by a theocratic regime, Margaret Atwood foregrounds matters of names and naming, making them central hermeneutical concerns. Through the use of generic names drawn from the Bible, names drawn from advertising, and symbolic given names, Atwood creates archetypal overtones for her story. Names and naming point to themes of the victimization of the weak by the powerful and the objectification of women. Naming practices, including the paucity of terms of direct address and the lack of nicknames and terms of endearment, further suggest loss of community and identity.

One element in the highly wrought art of Margaret Atwood, and one that deserves careful attention, is her use of names to illuminate character and present theme.¹ Atwood herself has remarked on the special concern she has for her characters' names:

I'm very interested in their names. By that I mean their names don't always readily spring to mind. I have to go looking for their names. I would like not to have to call them anything. But they usually have to have names. Then the question is, if they are going to have names, the names have to be appropriate. Therefore I spend a lot of time reading up on meanings of names, in books like *Name Your Baby*. ("Tightrope Walking" 212).

Names 41.3 (September 1993):143-157

ISSN:0027-7738

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Although Atwood does not specifically refer to *The Handmaid's Tale*, that novel is noteworthy for its careful use of names, which, in addition to being "appropriate," have symbolic significance. In *The Handmaid's Tale* Atwood uses naming practices and name usage to create meaning. The significance and value of names and naming in the human experience is an important focus in the novel where symbolic naming and the characters' use and awareness of names are tied to important thematic concerns, for example, the oppression of the weak by the strong, the struggle for identity, and the necessity of human communication and meaningful human relationships.

Michel Grimaud has commented on the problems of a literary onomastics that explores only the symbolism of proper names as isolated entities and fails to relate names to the structural features of the text. He calls for an onomastics that embraces the multiple dimensions of naming as a "deeply social, psychological, and linguistic act" ("Onomastics and the Study of Literature" 17). Grimaud stresses the need to "integrate the study of proper names within a discursive framework of actual usage, thus taking fully into account the many ways we refer to people and address them..." ("Whither Literary Onomastics?" 6). This essay, building upon Grimaud's comments, thus has a dual focus: an analysis of the symbolic use of names and a study of the narrator's and characters' naming practices within the text. In *The Handmaid's Tale* Atwood foregrounds matters of names and naming, making them central hermeneutical concerns. While symbolic naming, including the use of generic names drawn largely from the Bible as well as highly significant personal names, is important in the novel, the characters' use of names for each other (or their failure to do so), the use of titles and generic names, and the portrayal of naming in this future society, are equally important. The symbolism of names, naming practices, and constraints on name usage are part of a major theme in the novel — power and powerlessness.

In *The Handmaid's Tale*, Atwood depicts a dystopian society called Gilead, formed in the twenty-first century when Christian fundamentalists seized power. All citizens, especially women, live under an oppressive theocratic regime whose rise to power has

been facilitated by a number of related crises: a dangerously polluted natural world, a concomitant population decline caused by sterility, and rampant sexual permissiveness. The elite of the ruling hierarchy have commandeered fertile women (male infertility is denied) for use as forced concubines. Called "Handmaids," they are robbed of their identities and even their given names. The protagonist-narrator of Atwood's story, the Handmaid Offred, was stripped of her own name, forced to bear the name of her master, Fred (thus "Of-Fred"), and made to endure his ritualized sexual attentions. Offred's narrative reveals the terror of living under a regime of brute power. A complicated network of spying deprives people of all privacy and personal freedom, and resistance to the approved ideology can result in death. The sexual behavior of all citizens is regulated by repressive rules, but these are routinely flaunted by the regime's rulers, who also enjoy the state-sanctioned use of concubines.

The names in *The Handmaid's Tale* are drawn from a variety of sources. Generic names used in Gilead, such as "Commander" and "Martha," are drawn from the Bible. Atwood also utilizes names from nineteenth- and twentieth-century advertising. Characters' given names, like the generics drawn from the Bible, have special importance in the novel, not only in aiding characterization and advancing theme, but also in creating archetypal overtones for the story. Archetypal names are appropriate in *The Handmaid's Tale*, since the import of characters and events is closely related to the novel's mythic quality. The novel is a fable for our time, showing us the fundamental flaws in our society and warning us about the future that we may be creating. This fable can be read in part through the names of Atwood's characters.

Gilead's rulers, who call themselves "Commanders," have named themselves and everything else. By employing Biblical names for classes of persons in their society, the rulers of the Gileadean theocracy proclaim their godliness. The reader detects, however, that they also thereby unwittingly reveal their arrogance and hypocrisy. The Biblical echoes are the source of a pervasive irony in the novel, which repeatedly calls attention to the discrepancy between the society's claims to righteousness and its cruel abuse of human dignity. For example, in the Bible, the place

known as Gilead is a fertile region known for its spices and medicinal herbs (the famous "balm of Gilead").² The Gilead of Atwood's novel is polluted and disease-ridden, a place of physical as well as moral corruption.

The names with biblical associations always have overtones of irony in the novel, but I emphasize here the function of the generic names to underline the theme of power and powerlessness. The rulers of Gilead have chosen to call themselves "Commanders," a name which denotes power and a desire on their part to be held in awe. (They could have used the terms "leaders" or "governors," also with biblical precedents but with quite different connotations). The title "Commander" — most often used to refer to military leaders — occurs in the King James Bible (Isaiah 55.4) and it is frequently found in the Revised Standard as well (see Gen. 21.22 and Num. 31.14).³

In Gilead, Commanders rule over a rigidly hierarchical society. Men and women are divided into classes, most of which have been given names with biblical sources. "Angels" are soldiers in the wars against the regime's enemies (e.g., Baptists, Quakers); and "Guardians" stand watch, keep order, and perform other functions, such as chauffeuring. Both generics are from the Bible: angels are, of course, mentioned frequently in the King James Bible (e.g., 2 Samuel 24.17) while "Guardian" is used in the Revised Standard Bible (e.g., 2 Kings 10.1,5). (Angels act under the direct command of God in the Bible, but in Gilead they are subordinate to the Commanders).

Men occupy positions of authority; women serve and obey, and have names appropriate to their subordinate status. The classes of women include wives of Commanders; concubines (or "Handmaids"); household servants, known as "Marthas;" wives of lower-class men, called "Econowives;" and — lowest in the hierarchy — "Unwomen," old women and unrepentant nuns who clean up contaminated waste dumps and battlefields. The last two terms, "Econowives" and "Unwomen," have no biblical antecedents, but nonetheless exemplify the importance of naming in producing the novel's effects. The name "Econowives," which brings to mind the term "economy car" (an all-purpose but low-cost model), is indicative of their husbands' lack of status. The

cleverness of the coinage also reminds us that advertising executives (as we learn in the epilogue) are among the rulers of this society. "Unwomen" is another striking name and suggests that women unwilling or unfit to serve men are not women — or persons — at all.

The Old Testament account of the barren Rachel, maneuvering to have a child by her maid (Gen. 30.1-4), provides a precedent for the Commanders' use of "Handmaids" and serves as an epigraph for *The Handmaid's Tale* as well. The story of Rachel sending her maid Billah in to her husband Jacob so that he might impregnate her is cited by the Commanders as a justification for their institution of forced concubinage. Like their other appeals to biblical authority, this one is cynical. There is nothing in the biblical account to suggest that God approved of this maneuver; in fact, it led to much family dissension. Handmaids are threatened with demotion to "Unwoman" status if they do not conceive. Resented and despised by women of other classes, Handmaids are forced to wear nun-like red costumes, are not allowed to read or write, and are cut off from any meaningful human contact. The fact that they are deprived even of their given names signifies their loss of personhood. They are mere wombs with powers of locomotion.

The name "Martha" refers to Luke's account of the woman who, during a visit from Jesus, busied herself with household preparations while her sister Mary sat at Jesus' feet listening to his words (Luke 10.38-42). Jesus rebuked Martha, but the Commanders find it acceptable that there is an entire class of women who devote themselves to housework, performed solely in the service of men. Marthas are not allowed to leave the dwellings of their masters even to go shopping. This task is assigned to Handmaids, whose attempts to conceive and bear children might be enhanced by regular physical exercise. These arrangements suggest how completely the women of all classes exist to fulfill the needs of men.

A knowledge of the sources of other biblical names enriches our experience of Atwood's text and also, as in the examples above, enables us to apprehend an irony that points invariably to the arrogance, cruelty and hypocrisy of the Commanders.

Jezebel's is the name given to the brothel maintained by the Commanders for their own use and for the entertainment of foreign businessmen. (We note the ease with which these men compromise their principles when "business" requires). Jezebel, wife of King Ahab, led the king and Israel into gross immoralities (2 Kings 9). In this case, it is the Commanders who have forced the women at Jezebel's into prostitution and who must bear all moral responsibility for what goes on there — their own adultery to be sure, but also the criminal confinement and forced copulation imposed on the unfortunate women.⁴

Names for automobiles likewise suggest the Commanders' penchant for power and authority. They ride in glossy and powerful cars described as "black, of course, the color of prestige or a hearse, and long and sleek" (23). The cars are called "Whirlwinds" — with biblical echoes of majestic and terrifying divine authority. God speaks to Job (Job 38.1) and Elijah (2 Kings 2.1) from the whirlwind, and the whirlwind is often invoked as a metaphor for immense and terrifying power (Jer. 4.13). Less important men ride in lesser cars, the "Chariot" and the "Behemoth." The "chunky, practical Behemoth" (23) is presumably an economy car of little distinction. The biblical behemoth is a massive animal mentioned in Job 40.15.⁵

Atwood is equally painstaking in her choice of the personal or given names of her characters. By reading these names carefully and considering them in conjunction with the biblical names discussed above, we can construct a fable-like or archetypal tale of victimization of the weak by the powerful. The protagonist is known as Offred, a name imposed by the regime. The practice of calling her by a name that indicates which man she belongs to of course epitomizes her objectification. The name "Offred" also suggests the word "offered." She is indeed offered, or given away, with no control over her fate. As the Handmaids are transferred from one posting to another, their "given" names change. The significance of their namelessness — their interchangeability in the eyes of their masters — is made especially clear in one incident involving the Handmaid with whom Offred is paired for daily shopping excursions. This woman, Ofglen, who has been active in the underground, suddenly disappears. (We

learn that her underground activities have been discovered, and, fearing that under torture she may incriminate others, she kills herself). Offred goes to meet her at the prearranged street corner and is met by her replacement. When the frightened Offred asks, "Has Ofglen been transferred so soon?" the replacement replies, "I am Ofglen" (363).

Offred does have a given name, though she refers to it only once and then so obliquely that few readers notice it. She treasures her "real" name, associating it with her self-hood and individuality. She fantasizes about being called by her own name, and she says that she tells it to her lover, Nick. We know what this name is or at least can infer it. It must be June because the name June is mentioned in the list of names whispered from bed to bed in the training center early in the novel (5), but we hear nothing subsequently about anybody named June, although the other names — Alma, Janine, Dolores and Moira — belong to characters who figure in later episodes of the story.⁶ "June," from the Latin for "Junius," the name of an important Roman family, is also the most popular of the names based on the months of the year and one which suggests youth and innocence. Thus the name, and its loss, are quite appropriate, since Offred (or June) could be said to represent despoiled innocence or victimized womanhood.

Judging by their names, Offred's companions and peers are "generic" women also. Janine, a form of Jane, is the feminine form of the Hebrew "John," meaning "God is gracious." "Jane" is noteworthy for being one of the most common women's names through the ages. "Dolores," from Spanish, refers to the sorrows of the Virgin. "Alma" is from Italian and means "kind" or "nourishing," (c.f. "alma mater"). The name of Cora, the housemaid, comes from the Greek for "maiden;" Kore is a title for Persephone. The name of Rita, the cook, is a diminutive of Marguerite, a form of Margaret, which means "pearl." The friend Offred looks to for the inspiration to keep up the fight as well as for the support of friendship is called Moira, Irish for "Mary," the most used of all Christian names. These names give an almost allegorical dimension to the tale Atwood tells. It is women as women — innocent in themselves — who are the victims of a power-mad and brutal society, which Atwood suggests through the use of variations on

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the most common names for women and through such suggestive name meanings as “maiden,” “nourishing one,” “sorrowful one,” and “precious one” or “pearl.”

In *The Handmaid's Tale* (as in her other novels dating to *The Edible Woman*), Atwood has focused on the subjugation and victimization of women, but she has also shunned a philosophic essentialism that would categorize all women as natural victims and all men as evil. Some women in *The Handmaid's Tale* have allied themselves with the values of the Gileadean patriarchy and joined in oppressing other women, and some men oppose the evil male majority. The women who occupy positions of authority in Gilead, the “Aunts,” train the handmaids at the Rachel and Leah Center and also occupy visible leadership positions during public events such as births and executions. The Aunts — Sara, Elizabeth, Lydia, and Helena — are appropriately named for biblical women of importance. The names bring to mind Sara, the wife of Abraham; Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist; and Lydia, who was Paul's first convert in Europe. Helena is the mother of Constantine and the discoverer of the true cross. But their names have other associations that undercut the biblical or Christian connections, serving instead to mock or trivialize these women. There is a suggestion in the Epilogue that the Commanders chose certain names for the Aunts because they “derived from commercial products available to women in the pre-Gilead period, and thus [were] familiar to them — the names of cosmetic lines, cake mixes, frozen desserts, and even medicinal remedies” (391). The references are to Helena Rubenstein and Elizabeth Arden cosmetics, Betty Crocker foods, Sara Lee frozen desserts, and Lydia Pinkham's medicine for female complaints. The association of the “Aunts” with advertising and consumer products suggests their function of manipulating other women in the interests of the dominant powers. The names suggest the complex ways in which women have been socialized to their roles as consumers, housewives, helpers, and sex objects — partly through the efforts of other women who have gained some status by allying themselves with men in power. Not incidentally, the fact that Atwood alerts us in the Epilogue to the significance of the Aunts' names suggests that she is consciously using names in symbolic ways.

The last powerful (or relatively powerful) woman in *The Handmaid's Tale* is Serena Joy, the wife of Offred's Commander. Embittered and jealous, she radiates anything but serenity and joy. She evidently chose this pretentious name herself when she was a gospel singer and Christian celebrity much like Tammy Faye Bakker, who has gained notoriety in our time. The fact that Serena is also the name of an early Christian saint provides further irony since Serena Joy is cruel, mean-spirited, and vindictive.

Names of males also relate to the struggle of oppressors and victims. There are three important males in the story: Nick, the Commander's chauffeur and later Offred's lover; Luke, her lost husband; and Fred, her Commander. We learn that Nick may be a part of the intelligence corps (the "Eyes")⁷ and that he may also be part of the underground resistance, the Mayday movement. When Offred is in grave danger at the end of the novel, he arranges to have her "rescued" or at least taken away in a van. Although neither she nor the reader knows at that point whether she is going to safety or captivity, a certain amount of comfort is provided by his name. "Nicholas" refers to one who leads his people to victory. There seems ample evidence in the "Historical Notes" that Nick has indeed saved Offred. (For one thing she survives to tell the tale).⁸ Luke was not only the third evangelist; he is also noted as having a particular interest in the oppressed, especially women and children.⁹ Frederick — a compound from Old High German for "powerful" and "rich," and "peace" — was a name of German emperors and Prussian kings. Atwood's Fred, active in the sect wars against Quakers, Baptists, and others, is in no way a peacemaker, but the suggestion of power certainly fits.

The concluding section, "Historical Notes on *The Handmaid's Tale*," allows us to read the meaning of the novel in its names. That section consists of a transcript of a symposium on Gileadean studies held at the University of Denay, Nunavit. In this elaborate pun (deny none of it) Atwood is evidently asking us to look squarely at the discouraging "facts" of abuse of women that she presents in her story. In "Future Tense Making History in *The Handmaid's Tale*," Arnold Davidson has shown the importance of a close reading of the "Historical Notes" to an interpretation of

the novel. The location of the symposium in the far North (we note the Inuit-sounding name)¹⁰ suggests the shift of power to that area, where presumably a less polluted environment is the basis for a new locus of economic power. The names of those participating in the symposium represent broad ethnicity. Maryann Crescent Moon and Johnny Running Dog are people of importance at the conference, suggesting a new authority for native peoples. A main speaker is James Darcy Pieixoto of Cambridge University, and other speakers include Knotly Wade, also of Cambridge, Gopal Chatterjee (another pun?) of India, and Sieglinda Van Buren of the Republic of Texas (more evidence of a shift of power). James Darcy Pieixoto's name is a combination of Anglo and non-Anglo elements, with Darcy suggesting Jane Austen's hero in *Pride and Prejudice*, while the surname is clearly non-Anglo. The names in the "Notes" suggest a cosmopolitanism and apparently a new egalitarianism, but, as Davidson points out (118-119), there is a great deal of evidence that the values and attitudes that made Gilead possible still prevail.

The assumptions and prejudices of the speakers at the symposium are revealed through the same old sexist jokes (puns on "tale," for example) and, pervasively, the construction of Offred as object. There is also a depressingly familiar aura to the academic setting, which is characterized by a jostling for power and influence and, worst of all, a moral obtuseness as, in the name of intellectual detachment, Pieixoto enjoins his listeners "not to judge but to understand" (383). Thus, noting the contradiction between the names and the realities, we find in the "Historical Notes" not hope for a future of greater justice and equality, but rather a perpetuation of our own flawed beliefs and attitudes.¹¹ Atwood has used names to show the cyclical nature of male/female oppression. History repeats itself — what happened in biblical times has been repeated many times throughout history and can be expected to recur in the future.

Names are also directly relevant to a thematic analysis of *The Handmaid's Tale*. Atwood's novel belongs to the genre of dystopian fiction and, as such, is a type of *roman à thèse*. A dystopia (like a utopia) uses fiction to engage ideas, and thus theme is likely to be more important than character. Characters'

importance derives less from their individual natures and personal idiosyncracies than from their roles in advancing thematic concerns. Names in ideological fiction are likely to be quite important (in *Candide*, for example). The fact that no family names exist in Atwood's tale contributes to its fable-like quality. Michel Grimaud is quite right in questioning whether research into the symbolic meanings of names is likely to reflect the reader's experience of a text and whether such research is central to an understanding of a given work ("Whither Literary Onomastics?" 1), but fiction of ideas is a somewhat special case, in which the symbolic use of names can be directly relevant to thematic concerns.

The Handmaid's Tale tells the story of powerful and self-seeking men oppressing people of good will. "Commanders" named for Prussian kings are assisted in their cruel acts by women who have gained limited power for themselves — as have the originals of the names they bear — by attaching themselves to powerful men and acting on their behalf. Those who suffer oppression are a multitude of "Janes" — of maidens or archetypical women. Some males ("Nicks" and "Lukes"), work on behalf of the oppressed and attempt to bring an end to their suffering, winning our admiration but appearing to have little success. An analysis of names in *The Handmaid's Tale* makes it clear how emphatically the struggle between power and powerlessness structures Atwood's novel.

However, names in *The Handmaid's Tale* point to meanings in other ways as well, meanings apart from their symbolic or allusive nature. The crisis of Gileadean society can be viewed as a crisis of direct address. People rarely call each other by name, often do not know how to address each other, and sometimes learn each other's names by stealth. The personal name of a Handmaid is a secret and a treasure. Names are whispered from bed to bed in the training center. After Offred leaves the center, she is isolated from everyone who knows her real name. She reveals in her narrative that she tells it only to Nick, the chauffeur, who becomes her lover.

Offred lives in a household made up of the Commander, his wife, three servants, and herself. Except for the two female

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servants, none of these people seems to know how to address the others, nor do they do so very often (except for Offred in her eventual intimacy with Nick). Offred refers to the Commander and his wife by title or generic name only — “The Commander has hold of my right hand, as if we’re teenagers at the movies” (301). Offred has secret assignations with the Commander (they play Scrabble), but neither one addresses the other by any name. Serena Joy is referred to only as “the Commander’s Wife” until Offred remembers her name when identifying her as a television personality of the former society. Offred then uses the name Serena in her narrative — always with ironic overtones — but never addresses Serena directly. On one occasion Serena tells Offred not to call her ma’am, but offers no suggestion as to what form of address should be used: “I didn’t ask what I was supposed to call her, because I could see that she hoped I would never have to call her anything at all” (21). Offred is addressed as “Offred” only once in the novel — by Serena Joy, who, on that occasion, wants something from her. Calling Offred to her by name in the garden, Serena asks that she try to conceive by another man — since it is evident that her monthly copulations with the Commander have had no results. (Serena would gain prestige if the household had a baby).

Social niceties such as introductions are rare in Gilead. Offred has to infer Nick’s name: “I know this man’s name: *Nick*. I know this because I’ve heard Rita and Cora talking about him, and once I heard the Commander speaking to him: ‘Nick, I won’t be needing the car’” (24). Gone too are the subtleties of nicknames and endearments. Offred is once called “Honey” by a doctor who makes a pass at her, but the experience is more frightening than anything since, on the one hand, she can be sentenced to death for sexual promiscuity, and, on the other, she is subject to reprisals by the doctor, who could, for example, report that she has cancer and thereby cause her to be immediately deported to the “colonies.” Offred is not deceived by the term of endearment. She knows it is a generic term: “We are all *honey*” (79), she says. (This episode has a contemporary ring about it, and we may note here that one of Atwood’s purposes in *The Handmaid’s Tale* is to write about *our* society in the guise of writing about the future).

Terms of relationship, such as "Aunt," have been perverted. As much as Offred wishes for a "motherly figure, an older sister, someone who would understand and protect me" (21), there is no such person in her life.

Because (except for the Epilogue) the story is a first-person narrative told by Offred, we should consider to what extent the use of names is affected by the method of narration. Since we are always in Offred's head, is there less need for terms of direct address (or for the reporting of such address) or for a variety of nominal or periphrastic anaphora than in a novel with a third-person narration? More research into the discourse of naming as it relates to types of narration and point of view would no doubt be valuable, but I would argue that in this novel theme is what determines naming practices. Naming strategies always point to theme. When she describes people, Offred uses terms such as "Commander," "Aunt," and "Wife" that designate function (and hence indicate level of authority) because she consistently perceives people in terms of their power over her. Offred also relates scenes that include dialogue, however, and it is in these scenes that we see how infrequently people use each other's names and therefore how striking it is when characters are addressed by name, as when Serena uses Offred's name.

Naming is a discursive feature woven throughout Atwood's novel and contributes significantly to the novel's effect. Names in *The Handmaid's Tale* carry much more than the usual symbolism. Therefore research into the meaning of names in *The Handmaid's Tale* is more than a recondite exercise with little relevance to the major features of the text; names point to the central meanings in the story. The use of names contributes significantly to the construction of an archetypal tale of oppression and suffering, victimizer and victimized. Atwood's example suggests that literary onomastics is indeed of critical importance to the study of language and literature.

Notes

1. I would like to thank the anonymous readers for *Names* for their comments on an earlier version of this paper.

2. Janet Larson has pointed out in a review of the novel that the "balm of Gilead" has a parodic echo in the hand lotion the Commander gives Offred when she complains of dry skin.

3. The King James would most likely be favored by Protestant fundamentalists. (Strong's Bible Concordance of the King James Bible contains a forward by The Rev. Jerry Falwell). Atwood quotes from the King James in her epigraph from Genesis, but, in her portrayal of the Commanders as choosing titles which magnify their own power, she leans toward terminology from other Bibles in some cases (the titles "Commander" and "Guardian" are commonly found in the Revised Standard Bible). All references here are to the King James Bible unless otherwise specified.

4. In other biblical references, the shop names "Lilies of the Field" (Matt. 6.28,29), "Milk and Honey" (Exod. 3.8), "Daily Bread" (Matt. 6.11) and "All Flesh" (Gen. 7.15) are also ironic since in this moribund and poorly governed society, there is almost no meat and little bread. It is hardly a land flowing with milk and honey nor one in which one can expect to have one's needs taken care of like the lilies who neither toil nor want.

5. Verses in which chariots are mentioned together with the whirlwind, Isaiah 66.15 and Jeremiah 4.13, may be Atwood's sources for both these names.

6. To my knowledge Mary McCarthy was the first to draw this inference.

7. There is probably also a biblical source for the name "Eyes." Note, for example, "The eyes of the Lord are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good" (Prov. 15.3).

8. Given the preponderance of evidence that Nick is a savior of sorts, we can discount another association the name has — that with Old Nick, the devil.

9. *Harper's Bible Dictionary* notes that, in his gospels, a high proportion of Jesus' words deal with the duties of the rich to the poor (584).

10. The name "Denay" suggests variants such as Denai or Dene, which refer to the Indians of western Canada (as well as Alaska), all of whom are speakers of Athabascan ("Dene") languages. "Nunavit" is close to Nunavut, the name given to the Eskimo homeland created in the Northwest Territories in 1992. I thank my colleague anthropologist Gregory Reinhardt for his help.

11. Davidson feels that "The Historical Notes" illustrate the continuing hegemony of patriarchal discourse. He asserts further that academics must take responsibility for the meanings they impose on reality. (The analysis of

the twenty-first century symposium as indicative of the enduring nature of patriarchal discourse was first presented by Mary Wilson Carpenter in a letter to the *Women's Review of Books*, as Davidson indicates).

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