Names Are Awfully Important: The Onomastics of Satirical Comment in Martin Amis' "Money: A Suicide Note"

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There is a recent novel by Chuck Rosenthal about America (Loop's Progress, 1986) in which the mother of the hero Jarvis Loop (formerly Luphaus) always "shot directly at nothing and always hit." This paper is about another comic attack on America; in it the satiric author takes pot shots at just about everything and is usually (as his fellow Brits put it) "spot on."

Where Dr. Rosenthal has characters simply called Stinky, Jimbo, Funly, and such, the clever author of the book here under discussion is more wildly inventive, a good example (I think) of onomastic vigor and variety in the genre of satire, which has traditionally employed amusing and redende Namen. ¹

The book I choose to discuss is not approached with what John Wain has called "the foolish modern notion, fostered by the most irresponsible elements in our universities, that the best book is the one that needs the most explanation." Indeed, its onomastic strategies are copious and straightforward, not obscurantist. I cite them for their samples rather than their subleties, for I am bored with literary onomastic studies that try to make too much out of too little, and that too earnest,
arcane, farfetched.

Moreover, too many literary onomastic studies are devoted to practically unknown or long-dead writers. My subject is one of the most discussed current British writers and his subject is one that has primary appeal for Americans: he writes about us, though he regards America (to use a phrase which Peter Evans used to pinpoint London in the Sixties, in Goodbye Baby and Amen, 1969) as "a kind of upstart Sodom." We won't need elaborate explanations of his name games, as we might when reading another modern British work such as the prize-winning London play Up 'n' Under by John Godber. In that the amateur rugby team from The Wheatsheaf pub battles arch rivals from The Cobblers Arms. To get the point, one needs to know Cockney rhyming slang. Cobblers is short for cobbler's awls, which rhymes with balls, so that in London slang a load of old cobblers is the equivalent of our bullshit. And we'll be able to use our knowledge of things American in reading this British novel, just as we can bring to (say) Judith Kranz's I'll Take Manhattan a familiarity with a popular song. (Another comes in handy when we discover that, in Ms. Kranz's novel, the magazine Trimming Trades Monthly becomes, for more pizzaz, Buttons & Bows.)

One has to realize that playing the name game with clever authors the critic needs more than mere etymology; onomastics demands a detailed knowledge of the cultural
matrix, most especially in satires where the barbs strike deep. As the student of placenaming needs to know more geography than most people know, the student of literary onomastics needs to know many things about life in general that the specialized professor of literature may not even suspect are involved.

For instance, one must know that in "real life" there are names that make satire on the US difficult. United Diversified is one. Kleinsleep for a mattress company is another. Business slogans in New York make deliberate joking pale. Consider a discounter's "Mayflower Furniture: Not a Sale in Twenty Years," or a bank's "Once my future became clear, I put the Chase behind me," or Bankers Trust's "Excellence is achieved only through consistency and innovation," or the klutzy "Everybody doesn't like something, but nobody doesn't like Sara Lee." Satire has to function in an America where, for instance, two of this year's leading sports figures are named Christian Welp and Haile Selassie Washington, Jr. That Jr. is the last straw!

And US placenames (from Coalinga derived from "Coaling [Station] A" to Possum Trot to Truth or Consequences or even Young America) make Dylan Thomas' back, spelling of Buggerall or Tony Cafferky's Baulox (suggesting ballocks=balls again) look uninspired.

It is in this context, we must understand, that our
author has to operate. Reality both challenges him and
gives him a leeway someone unfamiliar with our strange
America might not imagine exists.

I contend that my author in all his novels to date
has shown extraordinary comic onomastic ingenuity, has
a great ear not only for his countrymen's idiocies but
also for ours (three Americans who turn up in his version
of the British country-house novel, entitled shockingly
Dead Babies, are named Skip, Marvel, and Roxeanne, which
is perfect), and in his novel that excoriates The Big
Apple he out-nooyawks New York while sticking close enough
to recognizable American name practices to be at once
credible and cutting, which I take to be the aim of really
good satire. Ideally, the truly stupid don't see there's
anything odd--like my Brooklyn College students who are
completely taken in by Swift's argument for abolishing
Christianity.

The writer of whom I speak is, as Jay McInerney said
in the Boston Globe, "wild and precise at the same time,
funny and intelligent" as he creates (as even the people
at People noticed) "a sharp, surprisingly credible portrait
of today's man at his most greedy, unpleasant and debauched"
in what the brilliant writer who goes by the name
Anthony Burgess has hailed as "a brilliant and frightening
novel, grim, accusatory, damably efficient and totally
devoid of such outworn properties as charm."
The author I want to discuss is the son of novelist Kingsley Amis (who made such a splash with *Lucky Jim* and is still making waves in America over a recent novel the feminists have been able to keep from US publication) and he is more controversial than the father. Here is what Charles Mitchener says of Martin Amis (age 37):

He has published five novels since he was twenty-four. A striking collection of journalistic pieces, *The Moronic Inferno and Other Visits to America*, has recently appeared in England and will soon be published in the U.S. His first novel, *The Rachel Papers*, won the 1974 Somerset Maugham Award for the best first novel, and was so enviable that it was plagiarized by another first novelist, Jacob Epstein, son of prominent New York literary parents. A glance at the blurbs on the inside flap of the English edition of his latest novel, *Money*, reveals that among the adjectives used by critics to describe his novels are enthralling, disturbing, powerful, obsessive, electrifying, compelling, brilliant, very funny and fairly nasty. He has held a number of
enviable jobs in the London literary world—
on the Times Literary Supplement, The New
Statesman (literary editor at twenty-
seven), and The Observer, where he is now
a special writer.

Norman Mailer has called him a "wimp," Gore Vidal
has dismissed him as a "cute little thing," Michener quotes
three jealous people who describe Martin Amis as "a little
shit," and fellow novelist Julian Barnes explains the
animosity he creates: "The combination of being very clever
and sexually successful is, in England, unacceptable to
right-thinking people."

If Dennis Potter is right in calling modern London
"a scum left by the receding bilge," then Martin Amis
is right on target in his description of it and of the
"moronic Inferno" that is New York City. "Determined in
his first novel to outtrace Daddy's excesses," alleged
Peter S. Prescott when The Rachel Papers hit the fan,
Martin Amis has specialized in shocking with Swiftian
satire and cruelly parading and parodying (with a puritan-
ical purpose, it must be added) lewd and lusty, shabby
and sleazy characters in novels that are nasty, British,
and short. In each of them onomastic tricks have been
employed to barb the satire and also as part of his in-
curable habit of playing with words, whether his subject
be adolescent sex or incest or anything else his obnoxious heroes (from Charles Highway in his earliest novel to John Self in his latest one) get into.

In The Rachel Papers the title suggests that the hero (Highway, a surname instantly identified in the book as appropriate for a "time traveller") is going to document his problems with girlfriend Rachel Noyes (all the noise is about their affair). In that book even the names underline the fact that "nice things are dull, and nasty things are funny." The comedy and the onomastics are both deliberately grotesque. In Dead Babies a sickening world of sex and drugs and violence is scathingly presented; Martin Amis "aims to shock and disgust" and (said the New York Times Book Review) "certainly succeeds." From the title on the pressure is on. The title was changed for the paperback to Dark Secrets, a hack in a reference book explaining: "as the original one was considered too morbid to have any popular appeal." But Dead Babies as a title was apt for "a high-pitched aaargh of a book, a moment of climax seized and then suddenly stopped: all fff and no ppp." The character names are well-chosen, too. At Appleseed Rectory some people get together for a "dirty weekend." The upperclass people have upperclass surnames (Villiers, Evanston, Barry, Coldstream) and the handy and attractive male is Andy Adorno. What may be "casually crude, scatological, and obscene" (in the New Yorker's view) in the early work
was at the least in "language never faltering" and in
Money is even more deliberate and delightful, in fash-
ion (too) as fictive names in recent satire (where the
hero of Monroe Engel's Fish is named Henry Karp and Auberon
Waugh improves on his father's naming of characters)
grow ever more clever.

From the beginning, when The Spectator noted that
Martin Amis was at pains to see that "accents and social
mannerisms are relentlessly exposed, while his own become
self-conscious in the extreme," the satire is pointed
up with carefully chosen onomastic devices.

Onomastic tricks are a large part of the "wit and
talent and mordant perception" which, Dennis Potter noted
on the dust jacket of Other People (1981), made Martin
Amis "surely by far the most interesting of the new English
writers." Now Amis has achieved that good style of which
Cyril Connolly spoke in his famous Enemies of Promise,
the style in which "language performs what is required
of it without shyness." The obvious onomastic points well
carry out the didactic purpose that Dr. Johnson wrote
about in The Rambler IV: "young spectators, by observing
[the hero's] behaviour and success, [can] regulate their
own practices, when they shall be engaged in like part,
though few people, even those leading lives of what James
Thurber called "noisy desperation," will ever face what
the protagonist of *Money* encounters (we hope), for John
Self (in New York planning a film alternately titled
*Good Money* and *Bad Money*) experiences all the worst that
The Big Apple has to offer, from the fast life to fast
food, from drink and dope to bad sex and suicidal depress-
on. Life in the fast lane has never looked worse or been
described with such skill, such verve, such on-target
precision, such an unflinching and unforgiving eye.

Amis' *Success* (which preceded *Money*) was a success.
*Money* is even more right on the money.

But it is high time to get specific about the hi-
jinks of this "suicide note" from Amis' fat (five-foot-
ten, 16-stone, aged 35) Self embroiled with others whose
names make "Wormold" (which you may recall from Graham
Greene's *Our Man in Havana*) or "Zachary McCaltex" (of Harry
Matthews' *The Sinking of the Odradek Stadium*) pale in
comparison. The moneymen with whom Self deals are, for
example, called Ossie Twain (the joke is in the story),
Steward Cowrie (suggesting shells as money), Bob Cambist
(derived from *cambio*), Ricardo Fisc (from *fiscal*), Tab
Penman (suggesting an accountant), Bill Levy (a Jew, with
the added suggestion of levying a tax, etc.), and Gresham
Tanner (where *tanner* is slang for a British penny and
Gresham's Law concerns bad money driving out good money).
In sum, these names also comment on the strange, interna-
tional bedfellows that financing expensive modern films
throws together. There is also the mysterious and frank Telephone Frank (or Frank the Phone), passing mention of a Nigerian writer called Fenton Akimbo and the Anglophile "Shakespeare and Blake" scholar Stanwyck Mills (which makes American academics sound like industries), personalities in the tabloid headlines such as "Dr. Sex" and "Midge," and the exotic Selinà, the strange Martina Twain, the happy-go-lucky Felix, and the actors that one encounters in the "luck and anarchy" of making a movie. One has the stagey name of Christopher Meadowbrook. One has the Hollywood moniker Nub Forkner. An aging leading man is called Lorne Guyland (suggesting the local pronunciation of "Long Island" and, perhaps, humble beginnings). Agent Herrick Shnexnayder (there's nadir in there) has a client called Spunk Davis, an actor our hero thinks ought to have a name change (spunk, he explains, meaning "semen" to the British). There's a leading actress (perfect in these days of actresses Michael Learned and Glenn Close and Morgan Fairchild and such) called Butch Beausoleil. There's a Terry Linex on the international wire. There's an Italian female movie star forenamed Caduta. Selina, by the way, is Selina Street, a kind of streetwalker with "High Street eyes." There's a Fat Vince and a Fat Paul, pluguglies. Cockneys speak of "Loyonel" and "Choynese" and "Froyday." Los Angeles is demoted to LAX. Placenames
such as Palm Beach and Malibu and colloquial Lex (for New York's Lexington Avenue) resonate. So does the "semi-crucial" character name Fielding: clearly he is both upperclass and playing some game (but I must not give away the plot, which is full of startling surprises).

The inventiveness which accounts for words such as alcothone for an extended spree and kamikazeed and hyper-unfaithful and much more of the same is certainly evident in the names of persons, places, and things throughout Money: A Suicide Note. Whether it be in the names of "two Southern actors" (Sod MacGonagall and Fart Klaeber) or periodicals Self reads (Morning Line, a tabloid; Tribeca Times, clearly The Village Voice; Scum, which is the sex paper Screw; Miasma, and more) or a book of lesbian short stories called The Ironic High Style or the Vantage Card (plastic money) or the clubs mentioned (The Berkeley, highclass; Krud's, lowclass; Parlour 39, which is Studio 54, but that UK u in there is wrong for a New York place) or a restaurant like La Cage d'Or (French, expensive, suggesting something like the birds in the gilded cage of New York's La Côte Basque) or Self's dismissal of feminist ideas as "Chick's Liberation" (one actress refuses to be portrayed doing housework on the screen) or Duke Ellington Boulevard in "niggertown" and other named and nicknamed New York places—throughout the name game is played with a vengeance, and to establish as well as demolish.
Let's turn the pages of this novel and note some of the narrator's ways with names, starting with the very first sentence: "As my cab pulled off FDR Drive, somewhere in the early Hundreds, a low-slung Tomahawk full of black guys came sharking out of lane and sloped in fast right across our bows." That "Tomahawk" is a Cadillac. Soon a discussion over the cabbie's desire to get "gunge" (guns) and "kill all the niggers and PRs" has the passenger calling the cabbie a "scumbag" and the cabbie calling the passenger a "fat fuck." We're off to a New York kind of start!

Self is turfed out of the cab on Ninety-Ninth. Scary. He finally gets a cab to his hotel on 45th, appropriately The Ashberry, "terrific value." Soon he has a call from actress Caduta Massi, then is talking to a B-girl named Dawn (and confesses he is John), around the corner from "Boylesk, assisted showers, live sex, a we-never-close porn emporium" and "the real thing...in prostitute form." Lorne Guyland phones. Alec (who turns out to be a smart alec) is recalled. The plot begins to thicken. Self meets Fielding Goodney (who turns out to be up to no good) at The Carraway Hotel. The Dimmesdale Room, in fact, there. Goodney starts to be friendly, calls Self "Slick," orders him a Rain King, and they get down to discussing actresses. Caduta Massi has finished _The Weird Sister_. Happy Johnson is in "the Hermitage" ("depression, deep, practically catatonic") and Sunny Wand at the "fat farm" ("two hundred
and twenty pounds") and Day Lightbowne is likewise unavailable (just out of two years of analysis she has been "date-raped in Bridgehampton by her weekend therapist"). It's going to be difficult to find a leading lady to play opposite Lorne Guyland (anxious to score after disasters in The Cyborg Sanction, obviously a Robert Ludlum thriller, and Pookie Hits the Trail, Dynamite Dick, and "space opera, road movies, good-ole-boy stuff, TV specials"). Even if you miss the insider stuff, the possible roman à clef material, the names create the proper "feel." So does Fielding as he departs in "a six-door Autocrat, half a block long, complete with zooty chauffeur and black bodyguard riding shotgun," the son of a man who "owns half of Virginia" and is named Beryl Goodney ("Maybe his mother is called Beryl, too, and owns the other half").

Around Times Square, Self checks out the arcades with electronic games called Launch Mission, Circuit Completed, Firestorm, Flashpoint, Timewarp, Crackup, Blackout. He picks up "a very young prostitute" and consoles himself with the thought that "along with a bottle of Je Reve, a carton of Executive Lights, and a punch in the tits, I'd be taking back a real wowser of a VD for Selina--Herpes I, Herpes II, Herpes: The Motion Picture." He continually entertains himself (and us) with names: girls seeking "melody and joy" (named, of course, Melody
and Joy). So does his mysterious phone freak (who seems to know all Self does). "Welcome to New York," the voice says, "Flight 666, Room 101." (For that you need to know something of The Beast in *Revelations* and the horrors of Orwell's *1984.*) "It was a local call," Self reflects, adding "It was very local indeed." Later: "I had fever. And I had Selina fever too." No wonder a commercial actor is Cash Jones, a cheap airline is Airtrack, and at "the House of the Big One" (read: Whopper) Self eats "Fast-furters." Then we get to page 50, out of more than 350.

Throughout the book Self is self-conscious, making puns, picking up on words ("Terminal Three was in terminal chaos"), reacting to names, in the plot trying to discover identities, naming and commenting on names (of Spunk: "maybe we can call him Scum"), using terms such as *Earthling* and *jekylls* and saying things like "I marked the poverty and the poverty marked me" and "It's like my name. It's --no matter what I do, what I earn, I'll always be the asshole. I'll always be the guy in the joke," the obnoxious hero, "swearing, fighting, hitting women, smoking, drinking, fast food, pornography, gambling and handjobs" and led deeper into destruction by friendly advice: "If you like black stuff there's a place on Madison. Ethiopia."

The women wear She-Gloss. A pub is The Shakespeare (great for a writer, even of commercials, of movies). On a toilet wall Self sees FUCK KOFF. "Who's KOFF?", he muses. "Yeah, well, fuck him, whoever he is."
Self's London car is a "purple Fiasco," a wonderful name for an Italian job that's always breaking down. American cars are Tomahawks (not so incredible in the world of Cutlass Supreme) and Boomerangs (because they are so often recalled to the factory? or repossessed?) and the Jefferson Succès (Lincoln Continental? Cadillac de Ville?). There is "an inconspicuous Tigerfish or even a little two-door Manaña." In Problem City the squadcar rushes off to "a faggot tiff or atrocity on Gay Street. One of Manhattan's bad puns, a bad joke cracked by Manhattan." Butch Beausoleil comments: "I can't think why they say gay. They all seem so unhappy!" Martina Twain "shows me around and tells me the names of things." Self discovers, as he lives "headlong at a desperate rhythm," "the place where all life has slipped its leash and now needs no names." But he keeps his wry sense of humor: "They're very difficult. They're not at all easy. That's why they're called hard-ons." Playing chess; "a total rabbit," "he beavered me," "I ottered him," "he racooned me," "I moled him." Or was that backgammon? But zugzwang (forced to move) does turn up when Self discovers he has been a pawn in the game. The company he had formed was not Goodney & Self; it was Self & Self. He had been spending all his own money. He was not even himself. Barry Self was not his father's name after all. He came to himself and tried to put an end to Self, to the deceptions, the
destruction. And all along we have been conditioned to expect "the joker in the pack," for Self (with his puns and his wild naming) has been a joker for us. The obvious onomastic tricks distance us from reality, but "the twentieth century is an ironic age," as Amis says. "Even realism, rock-bottom realism, is considered a bit grand for the twentieth century." The onomastic oddities help to create a credible but nightmare world, help to make the odyssey of Self an allegory, help to score the points of the satire and to enlighten as well as entertain the reader. They also are a big factor in endearing the obnoxious hero to the readers, creating an off-the-wall character going wild with sex and his US Approach credit card and picking up girls like Moby, a prostitute who is "fucking my way through college? English literature, at NYTE?"

Snatch of dialogue from one of John's whorehouse episodes:

'--Right then. So what are you selling?'

'Oh, anything you want,' she said, with no change in the speed of her voice. "What kind of tip you want to give?"

'Well let's see now. What's on offer?'

'Straight French English Greek Turkish. Or Half'n'Half.'

'...What's Half'n'Half?'

'Straight with French.'
'What's English?'
'Correction.'
'What's Turkish?--No, don't tell me....' 19

Teasing the reader. Characterizing through book titles:
I went next door and ran an eye over
my book collection: Home Tax Guide,
Treasure Island, The Usurers, Timon of
Athens, Consortium, Our Mutual Friend,
Buy Buy Buy, Silas Marner, Success!, The
Pardoner's Tale, Confessions of a Bailiff,
The Diamond as Big as The Ritz, The
Amethyst Inheritance--and that's about it.
(Most of the serious books are the ac-
cumulations of Selina's predecessors,
except for The Usurers, which I remember
buying myself.) 20

Denigrating with rhyming and confusable names: "one or
another of Selina's forerunners, some model or stylist,
some Cindy or Lindy or Judy or Trudy" and "the place
called Chequepoint or Chequeup or Chequeout where a caged
chick cashes cheques round the clock but seems to keep
half your dough as commission for this fine service."
Near Zilchester Gardens, Self has spotted a writer, "seen
him hanging out in Family Fun, the space-game parlour,
and toting his blue laundry bag to the Whirlomat....This
writer's name, they tell me, is Martin Amis. Never heard
of him. Do you know his stuff at all?"
So the author enters the novel *Money* under his own name, not as reporter (like P. B. Jones in Truman Capote's *Answered Prayers*) or thinly disguised under some other name (as in many autobiographical novels) but in *propria persona* (like Christopher Isherwood in some of his fiction). Why? He said in an interview: "To show someone who got the joke--the joke of writing the novel." In *Money*, in fact, the character Martin Amis is satirized by author Martin Amis. He affects the course of the story (by writing a screenplay for John Self's film-to-be) and is treated to the same kind of joking as Burger Den, Burger Hatch, Burger Shack, and Burger Bower, or Roger Frift "Dinky twenty-six-year-old, and hyperactive homosexual," The Butcher's Arms, the 35-minute prize-winning short *Dean Street*, the "haunchy drophead Acapulcos" driven by the likes of Jack Conn (presumably né Cohen), eateries like the Fancy Rat, Assisi, The Breadline, and Willa Glueck, "grand-a-night hooker, semi-retired," and The Happy Isles massage parlor and street people who mumble the likes of "Uh guh geh yuh tih ah fuh yuh uh yuh fuh ah ah yuh guh suh muh fuh cuh" (which is *obscenity*, if you can decipher it). In *Money* author Martin Amis makes character Martin Amis come off rather stupid, or at least getting the dirty end of the stick. We share the joke. We also sense in another way the author intruding on his fiction,
though neither is Self himself nor the Martin Amis character
Martin Amis the author of this book. The relationship
between the writer and the text and that between the writer
and the reader are both exploited and enriched by name
games. The little touches that in most fiction slightly
remind us as we read of the cleverness of the writer,
little inventions of wit (such as "the why-bovver boys,
the LA hotel called the Vraimont, references to 1984 and
Animal Farm and The Catcher in the Rye and to Voltaire
and Tennyson along with those to a "flashfried frazzfurter"
or the Daily Minute or "Monet or Manet or Money or some
such guy") here are deliberately confused. Which are the
author's, which come from himself and which from Self? 23

In a novel in which we are supposed to be drawn into
the action and believe it to be happening, such tricks
might be distracting. In a satire, which asks us to remain
critical as it persists in criticism of life, such devices
are appropriate, appealing, revealing. Mr. John Self Esquire
(as some American fool addresses him in a letter) even,
like a Molière character in a quandry who turns and asks
the audience what he should do next, occasionally speaks
directly to the reader, "brother," "sister," "pal." He
is more than frank with us. A sample (so brace yourself):

I've taken up handjobs again. You should
see me. I'm back with the rest of you--I'm
doing it too. Hello again. Well, here we all are, lying flat on our backs and strumming ourselves like bent Picasso guitars. This is ridiculous—but what can I do? You know how it is with the street women in hot cities, in concrete jungles. It's not that the weather brings them out. It's just that the weather takes most of their clothes off. In the snarling insanity of high-summer Manhattan, in the staggered ranks of the streets, women move in their extra being of womanliness, all this extra breast and haunch, and emanations, sweet transparencies, intoxicating deposits. Men creep palely through the fever.... He \textit{Fielding Goodney} keeps suggesting outlandish benders, Venusian brothel-crawls, home-delivery women, dialler women, takeout women. There's this chick, that fox, these birds, those diamond hookers. There are dancers, strippers, loopers, hookers. If I heard him right he even said he could swing a weekend on Long Island with Juanita del
Pablo [star of sex shows] and Diana Proletaria [movie actress, porn],

Names characterize lower Eighth Avenue, "a medium-poor people's district" when Amis wrote in the early Eighties but now more likely to have boutiques and cutsey restaurants (something they might call The Quiche of Death, I should say) than what he found: "Shoe Hospital, Asia de Cuba Luncheonette, Agony and Ecstasy Club, ESP Reader and Adviser, Mike's Bike World, also LIQ, BEE and BA."

Now there are snooty Italian restaurants, not so many of the Argentine ones where Self got a "Malvinas Surprise... a triple mixed grill swaddled in steaks." Names characterize the West Village, "where the streets have names." The license plate on his Fiasco (OAP 5) and everything else is Significant for Self, even Alphabetland (Avenues A, B, C, etc.) and The Village shops: "a Thai laundry, a handbag hospital, a delicatessen ('Lonnie's--For A Better Sandwich--'No Nukes'--'Sorry. Closed'), a florist's forest, a Zen knicknackery which welcomed all major credit cards, a diesel bookstore...." The lesbian bookstore is featuring the feminist Not on Our Lives by Karen Kranwinkl, who "believed that all lovemaking was rape, even when it didn't seem that way to either of the participants." Names tell you (through the roles he has played) all about the career of Lorne Guyland, movie hearthrob, and about Spunk's new
flick, Prehistoric. The girlfriend of the man we for a time believe to be John Self's father is Vron (for Veronica). That puts her in her class infallibly. She is found looking at *Sugar* and *Debonair* ("targeted at the manual worker's handjob, with many a salacious housewife or spotty-bummed Swede twisting herself in and out of chain-store underwear"). Character can be indicated swiftly and amusingly by the names of the places one eats or shops, by the titles of the magazines and newspapers one reads (Vron also likes *Lovedolls*), by the books that suddenly appear on a man's shelves (Selina "had three paperbacks to add to the shelves, *A to Z, Common Legal Problems* and *The Guide to Married Loving*"), books that predict what later we hear from her boyfriend or POSSLQ:

"I must marry Selina. If I don't, I'll just die. If I don't, no one else will, and I'll have ruined another life. If I don't, I think she might sue me for every penny I have."

And when you have your characters forever aware of onomastics ("John. What a name, eh? It means a can, it means a trick") you can keep your reader's eye open for the points you want to make, subtle and requiring a pretty close knowledge of the culture ("4 caravan holidays in Nailsea" sound the more unpleasant the more you know) or obvious ("Si Wypijewski at the wheel. Or maybe it was Wypijewski Si. New Yorkers will tell you that the surname comes first...")
on the cabbie's ID") or allusive and playful:

He talked for some time about a poet
called Rimbo. I assumed that Rimbo was one
of our friends from the developing world,
like Fenton Akimbo. Then Lorne said some-
thing that made me half-identify Rimbo
as French. You dumb shit, I thought, it's
not Rimbo, it's Rambot, or Rambeau. Rambeau
had a pal or a contemporary, I seem to
remember, with a name like a wine...

Bordeaux. Bardolino. No, that's Italian...

isn't it? Oh Christ, the exhaustion of not

knowing anything.

One of the pleasures of reading a book such as Money
is knowing something one can use to appreciate the
cheap eatery called Doner Hut or the pretentious cinema
named The Pantheon of Celestial Arts, the allusion to
Defoe in a servant named Thursday, the sociology of psych-
pathology in the West Village's "heavy faggot hangouts,
the Spike, the Water Closet, the Mother Load." ("They
called me a breeder, Fielding. What the hell is that
supposed to mean?") Maybe aspiring actresses are not actually
called "Veroica, or Enid, or Serendipity" or "Maureen,
or Euphoria, or Accidia" but many a true word is said
in jest. When Self tries to get Spunk Davis to change
his forename he suggests, in desperation, Spank.
'Spank? Give me a break. What kind of a name is Spank?'

'There are quite a few American names like that. Skip. Flip. Rip. Trip. Hank. Hunk. Hunk Davis,' I said experimentally. 'Or Bunk, or Dunk, or Funk, or...Junk, or Lunk, or--'

'You say one more word and I'll rip my ears off.'

'Or Punk,' I said. 'Or Unk.' I considered. When you come to think about it, it doesn't seem to be a very popular noise, that unk sound....

The challenge is to get the ordinary absolutely right: what else would an aunt and uncle in Trenton, New Jersey, be called besides Lily and Norman? Who else would run a place for "Dinner and Hostess Dancing" but a Zelda? What else would a health-food restaurant be called but New Born? Two new moneymen appear on the scene. Buck Specie and Sterling Dun. Of course. An attorney? Horris Tolchok. And the writer ("They're an odd bunch, sitting at home all day"): "Martin Amis was in the book alright--in fact he was there twice, once as Martin, once as M.L. Some people will do anything to get their names in print."

There are errors. Little Martin reads a lot but says he has not got to George Orwell (who changed his name from Eric Blair--Self says he sees why, but I don't) and yet adds,"I don't like coming up for air either," and
that's a title of a minor work by Orwell. Self is not supposed to be well-read either, but he makes allusions to Voltaire along with remarks about London feeling like "Blackpool or Bognor or Benidorm in bad weather" (which he surely has never visited) and can't keep track of all his quick tricks, "some Dolly or Polly or Molly" and yet can keep abreast (no pun intended) of the tennis-playing Sissy Skolimowsky (obviously Billie Jean King):"Sissy Skolimowsky turns out to be a diesel, and an ex-chick of hers is suing Siss for galimony." I see the movie assistant Micky Obbs is the kind to take the mickey out of yobs (which is Brit for taunting the proles, yob being boy backwards) but I don't know if his associate Kevin Skuse is a Scouse (from Liverpool) or full of excuses or what. What can you do with Des Blackadder? Do you agree that Americans "all got names like Orifice and Handjob. They don't notice. They think it's cool"? I believe that in US jails there might well be signs reading "Light's Out At Nine" and "One Cup of Tea or 'Coffee'" and "You Can NOT Spit" ("cannot two words and the not in capitals") in the library, but I doubt that a fashionable little "sex-chalet off Park Lane, well known and much patronized in ad-game circles" would be simply Smith's. ("I used to go there in the old days with my Debbys and Mandys, my Mitzis and Sukis.") The girls' names are right, but Smith's sounds as phony as Pizza Pouch (where you can get "a Big Thick Juicy Hot One" at the Furter Factory, nearmeat Long Whoppers, and
an American Way. Self speaks also of Wallys and Blast-burgers. Wally means nerd in Brit slang; it doesn't sound right for an American version of a Wimpy, though I admit a movie parody of Disneyland was very effectively named Wally World. Some of the car names are great. I'm not sure how you feel about cars called Culprits and Alibis, and the "little black Iago, a 666" is a bit too literary, like "he thinks that halibut rhymes with Malibu."

Martin Amis is rather sound on his theories of names; that bit about the unk, for instance. Or Martina's dog's name:

His name was Shadow, short for Shadow That Comes in Sight, an old Indian name, Apache or Cheyenne. I very much approved of this. You don't want dogs called Spot or Pooch. You don't want dogs called Nigel or Keith. The names of dogs should salute the mystical drama of animal life. Shadow—that's a good name.

Or his reaction to the term pooper-scooper: "Christ, you Americans." He notes "Twenty-Third Street, Chelsea, the world's end, where everything was unleashed, unmuzzled....no collars, no leads, no names on Twenty-Third Street," and "double-barrelled Park Avenue," and "the Tenderloin," and mocks our use of "challenged" for "crippled" and likes our use of Poppa Bear, Bozo the Clown, and "man, sis," etc.
Self's fascination with pornography ("I need pornography") sets him looking for Mouth Crazy, Brabusters, Flair, "an old Lothario or Plaything," searching people's bookshelves "fingers poised for the spines of New York Women, Victorian Lingerie, The Pim-Up, Stay Fit the Workout Way, Underlife, Bordello, Silk, Images--whatever." He has to settle (which tells us much about his sophisticated host and hostess) for "La Femme au Jardin, La Maja Deseuda and Aline la Mulatress." Amis creates the world of Self's public life with associates such as the "tubby berk from Soho" Alfie Conn, and Day Farraday, Connaught Broadener, Cy Buzhardt, Cheryl Thoreau, the "whizzkid editor" Duane Meo, and "money-women" backers like "Lira Cruzieros from Buenos Aires, we have Anna Mazuma from Zurich, we have Valuta Groschen from Frankfurt" and the would-be fashionable louts at The Bartleby on Central Park South, the Balkan Coffee Shop, a little to the left of Carnegie Hall. And the "money conspiracy," the whole imposture, comes crashing down when Self takes both the tranquillizers ("less addictive than all the Serafim I was putting away") from Martina Twain (on the prescription label: "Martina Twain--To Be Taken at Night") and the dictionary and looks up cowrie, valuta, dun and so on. The penny, as the English say, drops. Then Self has to fly--on Trans-American, PakAir, British Albigenesian, Air Budget, Airtrak--anything.

The jig is up. "Why me?" Self wails.
'Well, you fitted the bill in all kinds of ways. But I've got a hunch it was to do with your name.'

'What about my name?'

'Names are awfully important....'

The revelations continue. Barry Self gets his long-awaited revenge on John Self:

'Well, old son? Now we're quits.'

'You,' I said. 'You're my fucking father.'

'I'm not your father,' he said, and he told me who he was....

Fielding Goodney, a no-goodnik, winds up in "a correctional facility in Palm Springs." Spunk Davis is "signed up for a series of romantic comedies"; taking a shortened version of his middle name (Jefferson) "he's called Jeff Davis now." "My name is muck for now," Self realizes; he calls himself a "Muggins." He's drinking in The Blind Pig or Jack the Ripper or The London Apprentice "or maybe the Jesus Christ" or One Off the Wrist, "a new cocktail bar in Queensway." He lives off renting out his decent flat (he's moved himself to Ladbroke Grove) and his "father" and "what Fat Paul calls the National Elf." Things are tough all over ("If you ever go to earth--watch out") and in Poland "a guy with a name like a hangover cure is running the deal now," while we have "an actor" and
the British "a chick" in charge.

What general remarks can we make about the onomastic devices of Money: A Suicide Note? First, perhaps, that there is no pattern in the titles of Martin Amis' novels as there is in (say) those of Evelyn Waugh's son, Auberon Waugh, author of The Foxglove Saga, Who Are the Violets Now, Consider the Lilies, and A Bed of Roses —or in the novels of Robert Ludlum, whose formula titles Martin Amis parodies. Some may remark, however, that Amis' Success was followed by Money, and that the subtitle of Money gives a structure to the novel:

This is a suicide note. By the time you lay it aside (and you should always read these things slowly, on the lookout for clues or give-aways), John Self will no longer exist. Or at any rate that's the idea. You never can tell, though, with suicide notes, can you?

In the end, John Self is not his old self, but he continues what Amis calls his "time travel."

One of the several persons to whom the note is addressed is Vera (which means Truth).

"On the lookout for clues and give-aways," we "out there, the dear, the gentle" pick up many overtones from the book from the witty, bitter name jokes, both those made by the author and those attributed to his hero.
Though he uses a character for first-person narration, the author is present in his book both as a character and as the writer, which complicates the point of view and gives us a shifting perspective as well as the intrusion into the world of "fact" dangerous to the effectiveness of realistic fiction but common in the didactic mode of satire. Through onomastic inventions, as well as in other ways, the author puts into perspective and colors what he presents.

The use of real placenames and brand names helps, as it does in so many realistic modern fictions, to create an aura of authenticity; but these are mixed with parodic names, some intended to be jokes by Self, some clearly jokes by the author himself. This lends to the "real world" of the novel a (here appropriate) nightmare or surrealistic quality, mirroring Self's dizzying decline in a crazy world of TV commercial making (shooting a commercial in Paris for "a new kind of frozen horsemeat steak": "We used the equestrian studies in that gallery by the river. The idea was: boy meets girl in front of the Degas racetrack, then he takes her off to a swish brasserie for a slap-up dobbin rissole or nagburger or whatever the hell it was...") and the crazier, mad, mad, mad, mad world of movie-making. This would be disconcerting in a more realistic comic novel, a novel about a world in which illusion and
reality, fact and fiction are less thrown together. Names that constantly point up the author's contribution work against narrators whom we are supposed to come to believe are talking to us in their own voices, narrators like Holden Caulfield in a book Self recommends highly, The Catcher in the Rye. Names that are too apt make it more difficult for the reader of a "slice of life" novel to give it full credence or credulity. But significant names work well in genres which demand a distance, judgment, from the reader, such as comedy and satire.

Significant names do well in such modern fictions as want to challenge the readers (especially the critics or some other in-group) to match wits with the ingenious writer or to supply the cultural implications of real names such as Maida Vale or White City or "Sixth Avenue, Avenue of The Americas" or see the fun in Air Kiwi or "some other Tina or Lina or Nina" or (for a fat men's clothiers) "High, Wide and Handsome or High and Mighty or (let's be accurate) Rent-a-Tent" which is to be taken for Self's playing with real "big men's" shops in what he calls the US "calorie capital, Bulkville." That Self's parodies do not sound too strained or strange in a city where real pet shops are called Fish 'n Cheeps and a sneakers store The Athlete's Foot and a boutique for women The Emotional Outlet helps maintain a precarious balance with
credibility and allows Self to express himself, even to endear himself, without destroying the scenery.

At the same time the merely entertaining wordplay is supplemented with parodic names that underline, undercut, understand the "reality," what Conrad called "the destructive element," in which the hero is immersed. Martin Amis' name jokes have bite and point: through them he gives us Self's attitude toward his world and the author's evaluation of both his characters and their (often sordid) surroundings. One sees the familiar cityscapes, as it were, from strange angles, through distorting lenses, and the effect is rather cinematographic, like the tilting buildings in Das Kabinett der Dr. Caligari or scenes shot from down below when Orson Welles had holes cut in the sets' floors for the cameras. This is artistic, meaningful manipulation of the tools of the trade.

With such devices one makes auteur movies and fiction bearing the definite stamp of the author's personality, which is (I think) to go beyond the reportage of Realism. However, onomastic distortion cannot be used in fiction that wants to immerse the unthinking reader in a warm bath of relaxing entertainment or by authors of the I-am-a-camera (no Leica?) variety. These tricks are best in certain kinds of thinking man's fiction, of which satire is the most earnest.
In a novel in which some of the names depart from the expectable, it is all the more important to get the details right and to put in plenty of credible jargon of the trade: an agent says "we are talking five" when he means half a million dollars, a lighting-cameraman is involved with "the aesthetics of a Bulky Bar dissolve, a Rumpburger close-up, a Zaparama boom," all of which at least sound as if they might be actual terms. The physical descriptions, however exaggerated, have got to ring true. Here's Little Italy on the outskirts of New York's Chinatown as Self cuttingly catches it:

Local rumour maintains that Little Italy is one of the cleanest and safest enclaves in Manhattan. Any junkie or Bowery red-eye comes limping down the street, then five sombre fat boys with baseball-bats and axe-handles stride out of the nearest trattoria. Well, Little Italy just felt like more Village to me. The zeds of the fire-escapes looked as if they were used in earnest twice a week--they were grimed to a cinder. In these clogged defiles they could never wash off all the truck-belch and car-fart bubbling upwards in vapours of oil and acid and engine coolant.
The spelling makes clear that this is an Englishman's opinion, but the opinion is incontrovertibly one of a man who knows whereof he speaks. Indeed, he may see America more accurately than the natives do, as did Toqueville and Geoffrey Gorer. The goldfish in the bowl is unaware of the water. Satire is art, which Picasso defined as a lie about the truth; satire is more realistic than Realism, and distorted onomastics may be one of its sharpest weapons, along with other freewheeling language.

I have chosen to speak of Money for more reasons than one. Either it is familiar to you (and it is the sort of book that repays a second or deeper look) or, more likely, you have not read it (and I have no respect for criticism that does not want to make you go out and read what it takes as subject, or reread it) and you should. But, also, Money makes the kind of onomastic points that lend themselves to the nature and extent of the criticism possible here (which, I fear, a number of works discussed in LOS do not), with examples sufficiently copious and accessible to the non-reader as well as the reader of the literary work in question (sometimes another fault of LOS articles). This piece, I hope, can be useful in itself and some kind of model for other articles to follow, for all good literary criticism is at once particular and paradigmatic, personal and questioning or (preferably) extending the parameters of this odd genre of writing
about writing, whether it does so from a formalist base (after Kant and Coleridge, Eliot and Richards), an historical one (after Hippolyte Taine), or an archetypal, genre, reader-response or some other point of view.

I do not regard literary criticism as a parasitic art but as a parallel one to "creative writing," a necessary one, for (as Sartre says) "the operation of writing involves an implicit quasi-reading which makes real reading impossible" because the original author does not see the words he writes as the reader does "since he knows them before writing them down." The writer "projects," says Sartre; the critic finds "all is to do and all is already done." Text "presents itself as a task to be discharged." Literary criticism is enlightened reading and must give practical advice to other readers who seek enrichment in reading. Giving that guidance, the conscientious critic, if he believes that the text is more than a pretext and that art is communication and not mere stimulation, must now and then worry whether he is reading out of the text or reading (too much) into it.

When onomastic criticism declares it has found messages which I feel unsure about ascribing to the writer's intention, I grow uneasy, and there is a lot of that in our field, even in this journal. Therefore I have taken an author I believe is demonstrably using particular name devices
for particular ends in a didactic genre, satire, a mode in which intention and result have ideally always been more closely wedded than in most literary ventures. In that way I hope to be getting into the onomastics, not just getting off on them, or getting off the track with them.

I confess that names in satire are often easier to fathom than those in some other literary genres, but I hope by examining a sufficient quantity and quality of them in a work worth close examination like *Money* to show something of the rigor and richness that names scholars have to bring to all sorts of fiction in which names (even the significant absences of them) figure prominently enough to warrant onomasticians' attention. (*LOS* and The Conference on Literary Onomastics which feeds it too often concern themselves with works in which names are neither frequent nor adequately interesting.)

Briefly (at last): select literary works in which the author clearly and significantly works with names to achieve measurable and explicable results, works that can be substantially analyzed in the time given for the talk or the space allowed for the critical article. Show what he does, how he does it, and what we can learn that will enhance first our understanding of the work under examination and second all other literary works of the
same or similar type. Make every piece of onomastic criticism meaningful and a model for others to follow.

I hope to have done something along those lines in an entertaining way (for criticism, like fiction, must have an element of entertainment, however serious it be) with Money: A Suicide Note, a novel I recommend with enthusiasm and confidence, one in which I find (if this does not sound too pompous for a comic novel) what the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins found in the music of arguably the greatest English composer, Henry Purcell:

It is the forged feature finds me; it is the rehearsal
Of own, of abrupt self there so thrusts on, so throngs the ear.

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NOTES

1. These significant names are even beginning to appear in books for children (Mr. V. Bigg of Beanstalk Gardens is mentioned in a recent British one) and movies (Moron, a town in the San Joachim Valley, is said in The Best of Times to have changed its name to Taft in 1911) and as American serious fiction gets more cynical they become more common all the time, even surrealistic. In a recent novel a character in Greenwich Village is seen walking a dog named God.

2. As authors turn from classical references, familiar to critics or easily looked up, to references to popular culture, the more academic critics find literary onomastics more and more difficult and retreat into the works of long-dead authors where more knowledge of literature than of life may be thought useful.

Moreover, academic critics who write more in the publish-or-perish mood than the publish-and-be-damned one are leery of modern literature which is (as L. E. Sissman said of Amis' Rachel Papers in The New Yorker, 24 June 1974, p. 102) "casually crude, scatological, and obscene" and likely to outrage promotions committees.

3. The general public is aware of name fun, too. A novelist
has one Morris Zapp at Euphoric State University, but the students at actual colleges have taken to wearing sweatshirts from "Catatonic State," "Psychotic State," etc.

4. Burgess is one of the most linguistically adept and names-conscious of modern writers. His novels have titles like The Wanting Seed, A Clockwork Orange, Heavenly Powers. His brilliant guide to James Joyce's language is Joysprick (1973). His novel titled MF deals with Miles Farber, male/female, and motherfuckers. When Burgess calls a novel "brilliant," that's important.

5. Kingsley Amis' novel is Stanley and the Women and by getting itself banned it made its point about "politically correct" feminists.

6. Martin Amis was born in Oxford in 1949, the son of Kingsley Amis and his wife Hilary (Bardwell) Amis. He received a BA with honors from Oxford (1971) and became assistant editor of TLS and The New Statesman before turning to fiction fulltime.

7. The articles in The Moronic Inferno, mostly appearing first in London's Observer, are on AIDS, Playboy Key Clubs, writers (William Burroughs is "mostly trash," Gore Vidal unreadable, Saul Bellow "a great American writer," "in the United States, providing you are Norman Mailer, you can act like a maniac for forty years"), and American disasters from Diana Trilling to Palm Beach ("clogged, stifling luxury"),
along with neo-conservative reaction to "disintegration and chaos," with some attention to our American "willed raucousness." The same attitude informs his fiction. If in both reporting and fiction Amis creates portraits of America, they are portraits as John Singer Sargent defined portraits: pictures in which "there is something not quite right about the mouth."


11. Amis' obnoxious characters are intended to point a puritan moral. In fact, as George Orwell observed in "Inside the Whale", the novel was more or less invented for this purpose: being "a Protestant form of art; it is a product of the free mind, of the autonomous individual," and of the social and moral critic. One can catch Amis' social concern occasionally in interviews (*The Listener*, 15 August 1974, 219-220; *Sun Times*, 8 March 1981, p.43; *Time Out*, 27 March 1981, 20-21; the Michener piece mentioned above) and see reaction in

12. "My name is Charles Highway," the novel begins. "It's such a rangy, well-traveled, big-cocked name and, to look at, I'm none of these...."

13. Novelist J. G. Ballard once saw in Salvador Dali's art what character John Self faces in *Money*:"The great twin leitmotifs of our times -- sex and paranoia -- preside over his life, as over ours."

14. John Clute, reviewing *The Sinking of the Odradek Stadium* in *TLS*, 7 November 1986, relates onomastic tricks to plot: "Finally... the book ends by swallowing its own tale. Without revealing how, it might be noted that Mathews' title is an acronym for SOS." Actually, the reverse is true, but the point is important. The use of onomastics as plot device I have mentioned in earlier articles in passing and mean someday to address directly. Meanwhile, consider Christopher Hope's *The Hottentot Room* (1986), full of onomastic delights (Katie, who calls herself "a Jewish German" and not a German Jew, is dying of "Debussy's Disease"). Caleb Looper, a university radical, is blackmailed when it is discovered that he is a strandloper ("beachwalker" in Afrikaans, i.e. a Hottentot). To go deeply into the connection between names and plot turns in *Money* would be to spoil the book for those who have not
read it; the others will have noticed them. When Self himself sees the plot unfold, he chides himself for not noticing what you yourself may see in the names of financiers that follow in this paragraph. So apt, they had to be fake!

15. Not enough has been made in literary onomastic studies, which too often concentrate on etymologies rather than strategies, trying to explain meaning and failing to explain function in the fiction, how characterization is achieved by the use of names (Pakky, cunt, Slick, etc. here), their pronunciation (Loyomel, Vron, etc. here), or even what an author can accomplish (as here) by having an actor desperate for a job switch from cockiness to saying Sir. Names work in a fictional and a social context. They require more than translation.

16. Robert Ludlum's bestsellers include The Holcroft Covenant and The Acquaintance Progression, The Eiger Sanction, etc.

17. Herpes II suggests to Self a movie sequel (like Rocky II or Halloween II). Herpes: The Motion Picture mocks the pretentious way of referring to a film based on a book or "property" first known in some other "medium."

18. John Barth ("A Few Words About Minimalism," New York Times Book Review, 28 December 1986, 1-2) says recent American fiction, especially short fiction, is "terse, oblique, realistic or hyperrealistic, slightly plotted, extrospective, cool-surfaced....and both praised and damned under such labels as 'K-Mart realism,' 'hick chic,' 'Diet-Pepsi minimalism' and 'post-Vietnam, post-literary, post-
modernist blue-collar neo-early-Hemingwayism.'

19. French is oral sex, Greek anal, English discipline, and Turkish made up as a joke. Later in the story it comes up again and still remains undefined. What shall we call this literary trick of giving a name to the non-existent and teasing the reader with it?

20. Whose error is a book called A Diamond as Big as The Ritz? There's a short story by F. Scott Fitzgerald called "The Diamond as Big as The Ritz," which The Literary History of The United States terms "a notable parody of our American ruling class." Note the materialist trend in the books mentioned and Self's taste (he bought The Usurers). Another shot at Ludlumism in The Amethyst Inheritance.


22. Dean Street (London) is the address of the companies making the advertising shorts one sees in British cinemas.

23. Considerable knowledge of New York and more is demanded to catch the intent of The Fancy Rat (an expensive French restaurant is nicknamed by the rich "The Frog Pond"), Assisi and The Breadline (extravagant restaurants with small portions of nouvelle cuisine, little food as if for the poor), Glück (German "luck," American "get lucky" meaning to "score" in sex), the Vraiment being vraiment or truly imitation French elegance with the -mont suffix so useful in pretentious names.

24. Asia de Cuba (one of many restaurants Chinese refugees from Cuba opened, so that you can get fried rice and fried
plantains on the same menu), Agony and Ecstasy (title of a movie bio of Michelangelo adapted to a sado-masochistic private club), malfunctioning neon signs such as gave a sleazy hint in the title of Lanford Wilson's Hot L Baltimore (here LIQuor, BEEr, BAR, all suggesting unkempt drinking holes), Malvinas (recalling the UK-Argentine war, "don't give up the sheep" of "The Falklands"), OAP (British acronym for Old Age Pension/Pensioner), diesel = "butch" lesbian such as one might see in The Village's Womanbooks. The sign at 'Lonnie's' reminds me to quote Paul Fussell's "guide through the American status system," Class (1983), p. 166:

Proles of all types have terrible trouble with the apostrophe, and its final disappearance from English, which seems imminent, will be a powerful indication that the proles have won. "Modern Cabinet's," announces a sign in the Middle West.... Sometimes the apostrophe simply vanishes, as in Ladies Toilet. But then, as if the little mark were, somehow, missed, it, or something like it, is invoked anomalously as if its function were like underlining:

Your Driver: 'Tom Bedricki'
'Today's Specials'
'Tipping Permitted'
I reiterate that literary onomastics requires a sharper observation and deeper understanding of the culture producing the work than most literary criticism does—and most literary critics have. Anyone can see what Self or Scrooge or Sir Politick is about, but it takes more knowledge of linguistics to decipher Nym and Teazle (most eighteenth-century drama critics still miss the latter, not knowing old slang), and knowledge of society to see why (say) Sid or Krystyle are "cheap" names, why a mother who called her little girl Ashley might be crazy enough to talk her son into killing the little girl's rich grandfather.

The modern emphasis on realism in fiction, in the cinema, on television, has forced names to be more sensitive to the cultural context, less transparent and more "right." This is a challenge to literary onomasticians to know more than languages. They will have to resemble Self's girlfriend Selina who "understands. She knows the twentieth century. She has hung out in cities...."

25. The joke is on Verlaine (who was, as someone once said, "always chasing Rimbauds") and vermouth.

26. The Spike is a real "heavy leather" New York gay bar. The Water Closet, now closed, was The Toilet, and The Mineshaft (also swept away in the AIDS scare) was the actual name Amis parodies in The Mother Load, with a joke on load in the sex-slang sense of seminal discharge. Breeder is a San Francisco gay term for heterosexuals.
27. In Bret Easton Ellis' *Less than Zero* (1986), set in Los Angeles, where the hero Clay returns for Christmas, his friends are named Spit, Rip, Spin, Finn, Derf and Trent. "Sometimes the names prove too much to manage, or remember," one British critic wrote, "and they just call each other 'dude.'" Their girls are Blair, Didi, Alana; their cars are La Scala, Privilege, Parachute; and there are catalogues of brand names throughout. The title, *Less than Zero*, is from a song of Clay's idol, Elvis Costello, and refers to the nihilism pervasive in the book and the "comic terror" of "people being driven mad by living in the city....hungry and unfulfilled....violent and malicious."


29. Benidorm is a package-holiday destination of Britons with little money, not a place Self would go or maybe even know.

30. An obvious crack at The Russian Tea Room. Satirical names need do little more than indicate (safe from lawsuit) the name of anything or anyone the intelligent reader can be expected to find funny *per se*, such as Hemmed-in Phallus Hotel or Ronnie Ray-gun.

31. Americans would say "my name is mud." *Muggins* (from *mug*, victim) has meant "fool" or "person who is lumbered with coping with it" for a hundred years. An old Music Hall *song-deals* with Juggins the Muggins. Bill Muggins and Icky Muggins (German
32. The National "Elf" is a Cockney rendering of The National Health, socialized medicine. The point is that Self is reduced to charity, drinks in unfashionable pubs, a flat in an unfashionable area, penury.

33. Auberon Waugh has such heroes as Arthur Friendship and Nicholas Trumpeter, and minor characters named Stoat, Dooney, and Thomas Gray (a minor American black poet, stupid, conceited, and threatening the fire next time). In A Bed of Flowers (1972) we have As You Like It in modern dress and characters who take on the names and actions of Shakespeare's Flower Children in the Forest of Arden.

34. Michiko Katutani in the New York Times described Amis' world as "defined by Swiftian excess and metropolitan satire, a place where variously shabby characters partake of lust and violence and guilt in hopes of being allowed a second chance." As Money ends, we rather hope that poor John is saved, given another chance, looks on his dreadful experience as worthwhile, says with Gilbert Keith Chesterton, "I like getting into hot water, it helps to keep me clean." We like him, partly because he is so amusing about names. We hope only the Old Self is dead now.

35. Nicholas von Hoffman opening a review in TLS (21 February 1986, p. 183) of George V. Higgins' Impostors: She is a freelance writer and drives a BMW; he is the chief executive officer of a communi-
lations corporation and drives a Porsche 911. The brand name of every possession owned by the hero and heroine, and every other one-dimensional figure, in George V. Higgins' new novel about American corporate journalism is passed on to the reader. The characters describe each other by their trade marks: "But he does like the Armani suits, and the Italian loafers, and he's got the 40ft Chris Craft and the condo in St. Thomas, so Jack in a Corvette, at 55 or 6, well, it didn't surprise me."

36. This J. D. Salinger book is practically a shibboleth of taste, or perhaps generation. It is the middlebrow's idea of a high-class book and so famous (chiefly because it is assigned as high-school reading, where it is not banned as such in America) that it can even be appreciated by "reluctant readers" such as Self or non-readers such as teenagers: in the film comedy Mischief we get the joke:

"Have you read Catcher in the Rye yet?"

"No, I don't go in much for baseball."

37. Jean-Paul Sartre, What is Literature? (1949, translated by Bernard Frechtman), saw writing as moral ("choice," "engagement," "commitment," "responsibility") and concerned with "freedom" (the writer seeks it in expressing himself, the reader in surrendering more or less to the text).