

ANAGRAMMED PSEUDONYMS

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Writers and other public figures have for centuries anagrammed their names to form pen names. The most famous example is VOLT-AIRE, whose real name was Francis Marie Arouet, from which he anagrammed AROUET L.J. (Arouet the younger). In the old days, I and J were interchangeable, as were U and V. Henry OLDENBURG, a German writer who lived in England, transposed his name into GRUBENDOL. French jurist CHARLES DU MOULIN used the name CHAL-LUDIE (SIMON), changing the U to an I. Don Juan Antonio LLOREN-TE, a Spanish historian, wrote under the name NELLERTO.

During the Reformation it was a common practice of public figures, using noms de plume, to create satirical anagrams of their adversaries' names. The French humorist FRANCOIS RABELAIS published Gargantua and Pantagruel under the pen name ALCOFRIBAS NASIER. Theologian John Calvin, annoyed by Rabelais' decadence, rearranged the letters of RABELAESIUS (the Latin form) into RABIE LAESUS (afflicted with madness). In turn, Rabelais transformed CALVIN into JAN CUL (jackass), substituting J for I and U for V. Calvin created his own pseudonym by transposing CALVINUS into USINULCA or ALCUINUS, using V and U as identical letters.

PIETRO ARETINO, a Venetian writer, published his satirical writings under the name PARTENIO ETIRO, and a Florentine poet named AGOSTINO COLTELINI wrote under the transposed pseudonym OSTILIO CONTALEGGNI. Jonathan Swift chose CADENUS, an anagram of DECANUS (the dean), as his pen name.

In the last century or so, this type of wordplay has become less popular. Before CHARLES LUTWIDGE Dodgson adopted Lewis Carroll as his nom de plume, he considered, among others, EDGAR CUTHWELLIS and EDGAR U.C. WESTHILL. George BERNARD SHAW rearranged the letters in his middle and last name to form the nom REDBARN WASH. In June 1907, an article appeared in the National Geographic magazine by a writer named H.A. LARGELAMB, an anagram of A. GRAHAM BELL. And, for a really recent example, JIM MORRISON of the rock band The Doors, transposed his name into MR. MOJORISIN' in his classic song, "L.A. Woman".