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NOMS DE PLUME OF ESPERANTO AUTHORS

Richard E. Wood

All ethnic literatures, created solely or largely by native speakers of the language in which they are written, are rich in noms de plume, some of them of great significance. One need think only of George Sand in French Literature, of Novalis, in German; of Maxim Gorki, "the bitter one," in Russian.

In the closing years of the nineteenth century, but more particularly the twentieth century, have seen the emergence of a typologically different literature in a typologically distinctive language. This strikingly new, interestingly innovative phenomenon, is the original literature of the planned interlanguage Esperanto. The first textbook of Esperanto, the first book on or in the language, was published in Warsaw in 1887, while the Polish capital was still part of the Russian Empire. The first works of literature, translated and original, followed within a few years.

The original literature of Esperanto, preserved especially in three large libraries in Rotterdam, London and Vienna, is rich in literary pseudonyms. One noteworthy fact is that the language itself bears a name which itself is derived from a pen-name. It might be argued that pen-names in Esperanto thus have an importance somewhat

greater than in most ethnic or national literatures, although it cannot be denied that the majority of Esperanto poets, dramatists, novelists and short story writers have indeed published their works under their own names. Examples are Kálmán Kalocsay of Hungary, Baldur Ragnarsson of Iceland, Marjorie Boulton of England, William Auld of Scotland, and many more.

The particular interest of Esperanto literary and non-literary pseudonyms is that Esperanto is spoken, in very large measure, by those for whom it is a second language, not a native tongue. They have learned the language after their childhood, most frequently in their adult years. Although Esperanto is by definition a neutral language for all, by the consensus of its speakers not particularly their property but rather a common language for all, the cultural property of all mankind, its second-language users come to it from specific ethnic and first-language backgrounds. It therefore follows, inter alia, that these speakers of the neutral international tongue bear ethnic names reflecting the phonology and morphology of specific languages, and to a great extent also their history, the semantic content of the names, etc. The paradox is clear. Linguistically and in various degrees ideologically the writers of Esperanto are committed to a non-ethnic standard. But they bear names which are ineluctably ethnic and national.

Writers of Esperanto literature seek to reach an international

readership. They also seek to be international in their linguistic style. Internacia stilo, "an international style," is the yardstick by which the language of an original Esperanto work of literature is judged. The essence of the "international style" is that the author's nationality and native language may not be discerned from his usage in Esperanto.

Needless to say, if the literary work is "international" in style, the nationality of the author will not reveal itself. But if an ethnic name appears on the title page, the internationality will be lost from the beginning.

The solution, naturally, is the adoption of the nom-de-plume, and such is a lively tradition in the ranks of Esperanto writers. It began in 1887 with the modest Warsaw oculist, Lazarus Ludovic Zamenhof, who published the first textbook of the language under the title An International Language, by Dr. Esperanto -- the pseudonym meaning, as is obvious to anyone who has studied Latin or one of the Romance languages, "hoper, one who hopes." In this case, the allusion is of course to one who hopes for the adoption of the language as the solution to the world language problem. By a natural process, the language, which originally bore no other name than the general "International Language," Lingvo Internacia, came to be called "the language of Dr. Esperanto," then "the language of Esperanto," "the Esperanto language," and finally simply "Esperanto." Thus a simple

transfer from pseudonym of the author to name of the work occurred. Even after this change, however, Zamenhof himself was quite frequently known to the public as "Dr. Esperanto." The very earliest textbooks by authors other than Ludovic Zamenhof, e.g., in English, allude to "the language of Dr. Esperanto."

The example of Zamenhof, as well as the internationalist ideology which has animated many users of the language and adherents of the associated movement, including the literary movement, have led later authors to adopt noms de plume. For some, these adoptive names have symbolized the abandonment, partial or total, of their original language and ethnos. The question of the trappings of ethnicity, such as distinctive names, in a language which was designed to be neutral and by definition non-ethnic, has led to lively dispute within the Esperanto movement and is of great theoretical interest to the linguist, sociologist, political scientist, etc. Zamenhof himself declared that the day would come when Esperantists would adopt Esperanto names. These names would presumably be used among speakers of the language, which the original ethnic-language names of the speakers would be used in ethnic society.

The adoptive names of Esperanto authors may be grouped into three main types. The first, and the least interesting, is the simple pseudonym to ensure literary anonymity. Such names include initialisms, anagrams, abbreviations and acronyms. They also include assumed second

ethnic-language names in the language of the bearer or at certain times in a different ethnic language, as opposed to Esperanto.

These types are of course not unique to Esperanto literature and have numerous parallels in other languages. An early example of an initialism is that of the novelist Kazimierz Bein of Poland who adopted the ethnic-language (Polish, German, etc., but not Esperanto) letter names Kabe as his Esperanto literary name. He is still remembered as Kabe or Dr. Kabe by present-day Esperantists or at least by scholars of the movement's literature and movement history. Perhaps more interestingly, his name has been turned into a common verb, kabei in the infinitive, meaning "to be disloyal, to lose faith, abandon the Esperanto movement," based upon Kabe's later actions themselves, however, negated by his return to the movement when in his eighties. It is noteworthy that these are not the Esperanto names of the letters forming the initial sounds of his name, since all Esperanto consonants bear names which terminate, like Esperanto nouns common and proper, in -o. More specifically Esperanto initialisms are also found, an early one being Uoago, used by the British writer William A. Gething. This is a true Esperanto name, since it constitutes a regular, pronounceable substantive in the language. Other examples are Ada, pseudonym of the Bulgarian Asen D. Atanasov, and many more of little typological interest or variety.

Also within this general category are the rather numerous instances of change from one ethnic-language name to another in the

same language. A typical example is the Bulgarian Asan Grigarov (1903 -), who became the equally Bulgarian Marin Ljubin. Then there are changes from one language to another. A general trend is away from recognizably Jewish names. In England one also notes the change in the 1930's, a period of understandable unpopularity of Germany, by the German-surnamed Englishman K.R.C. Sturmer to the more typically English Kenelm Robinson. The contemporary Esperanto poet, residing in the United States, Julius Balbin, changes his name when in his native Poland from the original Lowy, officially citing in his legal application to the Polish authorities for change of name registration the desire to abandon a name of partial German origin and German connotation (Ger. Löwe "Lion") and invented the name Balbin, based in part upon the forename of his mother and upon Latin and other roots, bearing in mind also the ease of pronunciation of the chosen name in several different languages including Esperanto.

A second, and more specifically Esperantist, group of adoptive names is formed by those which are in partial or total agreement with the phonology and morphology of Esperanto, or which are generally meaningful in that language. To be totally acceptable in Esperanto, such names must, like all other nouns, end in -o. The Czech writer of Jewish background, who as a refugee in the 1930's moved to The Netherlands, in changing his nationality legally changed his name to its Esperanto equivalent in form and meaning. The original Sigmund

Prager upon attaining Dutch citizenship became Sigismundo Pragano. The suffix -ano, it may be noted, indicates citizenship or residency of a country, city, etc. Others have adopted only partially Esperantized names. For example, the American Charles V. Powers uses the pseudonym Karl Pov, dropping the obligatory substantial ending in both elements. Pov, or rather Povo "power," is a literal translation of the apparent meaning of his surname.

An interesting name, partially meaningful in Esperanto and partially Esperanto in form, is that of the German Herbert F. Höveler, a writer in the early 1900's. He is remembered as E. Ĉefeĉ, a palindrom which is said to have been based upon the English pronunciation of his initials H-F-H, themselves palindromic in type. The word ĉefa "chief" is connotated, as is the particle eĉ "even". Höveler was the originator of the Keys to Esperanto - basic guides to the language explained in many other languages - and the Ĉefeĉ Keys are still so called today.

Such pseudonyms as V. Elsudo, "from the South" are typical of this category. Although they do not carry the ideological or philosophical content of the Esperanto movement or culture, they are meaningful in Esperanto and formed from its component morphemes. Elsudo was the pseudonym of the pamphleteer V. Kolĉinskii (Soviet Union) active in the 1920's.

The third and most innovative type of Esperanto literary pseudonym is the pen name of both Esperanto form and content, derived

from the history, symbolism and cultural feeling of Gemeinschaft of the language itself. The earliest such name, Dr. Esperanto, "hoper, one who hopes," is the prototype of the third category. Such names are divided between pen-names and the noms-de-guerre, as one might say, of movement activists, particularly the militant anti-nationalist of the 1920's, a time when extreme radical tendencies, a strong movement in the recently-formed Soviet Union, etc., brought Esperantism into contact with general left-wing radicalism and the workers' movement in Europe and the Far East. Within the movement founded by Zamenhof, it is natural that some of his later followers should have adopted the esperanto form of his more commonly used forename, Ludoviko. Thus the Hungarian poet now active as Lojos Zarkany wrote in the 1930's as Ludoriko Totscho.

There is some erotic poetry in the international language some of it of a ribald, slightly pornographic nature but of great linguistic and other interest, the Sekretaj Sonetoj (Secret Sonnets). These are truly pseudonymous works, the identity of their author, Peter Peneter, being a matter of dispute for the last forty years. The reference in the ribald pen-name is to the male sexual organ. Amusingly, a sequel to the Sonetoj of the 1930's was recently published, the author now hiding under the pseudonym of Peterido "offspring of Peter," the suffix -ido has long carried sharp connotations in Esperantist circles, in such words, since the

schismatic movement known as Ido which split the ranks of supporters of the International Language in the 1900's. Peter Peneter - whose name, lacking the final -o, is not totally Esperanto in style - is undoubtedly the best known genuinely pseudonymous author in the language.

The symbolism of the movement is chiefly that of hope, espero, and its flag and emblem, the green star, verda stelo. The literature is thus reflected with such pseudonyms as Verdulo, "green one," Verstelulo "green-star wearer," and the like.

This necessarily brief discussion of pseudonymic practices among authors writing originally in the International Language has presented only an introduction to a fascinating field of literary onomastics. It has intentionally verified from citing numerous examples which would perhaps merely have obscured the general onomastic principles involved and which would have required detailed knowledge of Esperanto and other languages. The Enciklopedio de Esperanto (Budapest, 1933-34), contains a list of 85 pseudonyms of well-known Esperantists of that date and earlier, approximately a third of them being figures of literary significance. It may be noted that less than half are totally in accordance with Esperanto phonology and orthography. Today's students of the Esperanto movement now wait the forth coming totally new Enciklopedio to be edited by Ulrich Lins. Among many other topics, it will certainly reflect the developments in Esperanto

onomastics in the last forty years.

In further work in this field it might be fruitful to undertake a comparison with the adoptive names of Hebrew writers both in Europe and in Israel, since the Esperanto and Zionist movements both arose in Eastern Europe at the end of the nineteenth century; at times, Lazarus Ludovic Zamenhof was indeed active in both simultaneously. A different field of comparative work might be in the adoptive names of millenarian and utopian communities.

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