

# Bibliotekarstudentens nettleksikon om litteratur og medier

Av Helge Ridderstrøm (førsteamanuensis ved OsloMet – storbyuniversitetet)

Sist oppdatert 09.12.20

## Palindrom

(\_litterær\_praksis) Også kalt “speilord” (Weller 1977 s. 12). Et språklig uttrykk, en setning eller lengre tekst som kan leses både forfra og bakfra. Oftest er det den samme teksten (hvis en ser bort fra noen kommaer, ordmellomrom og lignende) som leses begge veier, slik som i dette palindromet: “A man, a plan, a canal – Panama” (Leigh Mercer).

“The *palindrome* is a special case of an anagram defined as words, phrases, verses or sentences that read the same backward or forward. Verse palindromes were known as early as the Middle Ages, e.g. in the works of Walther von der Vogelweide, Gottfried von Strassburg or Peter Suchenwirt, in the Baroque era e.g. in texts of Zesen and Schottelius, and even some Modernist writers such as the Expressionist Georg Trakl (1887-1914) composed palindromes. It is not surprising that Oskar Pastior devoted a complete book to the palindrome entitled *Kopfnuß Januskopf* (1990). Further palindromes can be found in *Contra-Texte* by Reinhold Koehler (1919-70), in Herbert Pfeiffer’s *OH CELLO VOLL ECHO* (1992) or in fascinating text-image palindromes by Brigitta Falkner (*TobrevierSchreiverbot*, 1996; *FABULA RASA oder Die methodische Schraube*, 2001).” (Jörgen Schäfer i <http://cybertext.hum.jyu.fi/articles/77.pdf>; lesedato 13.08.15)

På døpefonter i Hellas står ofte palindromet “NION ANOMHMATA MH MONAN OIN” som betyr (en litt nedkortet versjon av) “vask mine synder, ikke bare mitt ansikt”.

“Was it a cat I saw?”, “Are we not drawn onward, we few, drawn onward to new era?”, “Satan, oscillate my metallic sonatas”, “Yo, banana boy”, “Madam, I’m Adam” (Adams første ord til Eva), “Ma is as selfless as I am”, “Dammit, I’m mad!”, “Able was I ere I saw Elba” (om Napoleons eksil), “Agnes i senga”, “Ein Neger mit Gazelle zagt im Regen nie” (den siste er fra den tyske filosofen Arthur Schopenhauer; sitert fra Hocke 1959 s. 36).

Den sveitsiske maleren og dikteren André Thomkins lagde mange palidromer, bl.a. “Dogma I am God” og “Nie Reime, da kann Akademie rein”. “Fascinasjonen for palindromer, som Thomkins frembrakte gjennom nøye søken i språket, ligger i dens symmetri, som for Thomkins ikke uten ironi synes å gi et flyktig innblikk i den hemmelige, hellige verdensorden” (<http://www.spoerri.at/download/andre->

thomkins.pdf; lesedato 10.01.13). “Dogma I am God” uttrykker at alle gudsbeviser er sirkelslutninger, og at Gud bare kan nås gjennom tro, ikke gjennom logisk forklaring (ifølge den siterte nettsiden).

“A palindrome is any sequence of units that reads the same way in both directions. Although words and phrases are the most common form of palindrome to most of us, there are also numerical palindromes, art palindromes, and even biological palindromes. The word “palindrome” was first coined by English writer Ben Jonson during the seventeenth century from the Greek words *palin* (“again”) and *dromos* (“direction”). Palindromes as a literary form date back to at least A.D. 79, based on a Latin word square found at Herculaneum, which reads SATOR AREPO TENET OPERA ROTAS (“The sower Arepo holds works wheels”). This palindrome is particularly interesting in that it works both horizontally and vertically, as does a similar Hebrew palindrome.” (Sheila Singhal i <http://elephanta-day.blogspot.no/2012/04/elephant-no-196-palindrome.html>; lesedato 04.01.13)

S A T O R  
A R E P O  
T E N E T  
O P E R A  
R O T A S

“Linguistic palindromes are found in all languages, and in their earliest forms were particularly popular for religious inscriptions. Nor have they always limited to reasonably short forms. At least two full-length English-language novels have been written as palindromes: *Satire: Veritas* (1980) by David Stephens, with a length of 58,795 words; and *Dr. Awkward & Olson in Oslo* (1986) by Lawrence Levine, with a length of 31,954 words. Most palindromes, however, are short, consisting of a single phrase or sentence, such as the one most of us learned as children: “Madam, I’m Adam.” Similar sentences include, “Was it a rat I saw?” or “Never odd or even” or “A Toyota’s a Toyota.” [...] For many years, people appear to have delighted in coming up with the longest-possible palindromic words. Other languages far outstrip English in this particular context. The longest palindromic word in English is thought to be “tattarrattat” from *Ulysses* by James Joyce. Seems pretty good, until you see things like the Finnish word *saippuakivikauppias* (“soapstone vendor”), the even longer *saippuakuppinnippukauppias* (“soap dish wholesale vendor”), or my personal favourite: *koortsmeetsysteemstrook*, a Dutch word for “thermometer”.” (Sheila Singhal i <http://elephantaday.blogspot.no/2012/04/elephant-no-196-palindrome.html>; lesedato 04.01.13)

“A 1986 article called *Dr. Awkward and Olson in Oslo*, by Lawrence Levine, begins: “The long voyage between my first tentative effort at constructing a short palindrome of some 40 letters, and the eventual completion of a palindromic novel numbering 31,594 words (or approximately 104,000 letters) some 20 years later, was an unrelenting lesson in many disciplines. There were lessons in trial and

error...” Levine carefully states his creed as a creator of these bidirectional hunks of text: “One must not cheat by inventing words or coining new spellings.” ” (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2012/dec/17/higher-education-research-wordplay>; lesedato 08.01.13)

“One of the more bizarre forms of palindrome is the acoustical palindrome. This is when a recorded spoken phrase sounds the same played backwards or forwards. Composer John Oswald is credited with this particular discovery in 1974, when he was working on audiotapes of William S. Burroughs reading his works. Apparently, whenever Burroughs said “I got”, it still sounded like “I got” when played backwards. Music also abounds in palindromes. *Haydn's Symphony No. 47* in G has long been called “The Palindrome” because the third movement is a musical palindrome. It goes forwards twice, backwards twice, and ends up in the same place. Many other composers have also written musical palindromes, including Mozart (*Scherzo-Duetto di Mozart*), Stravinsky (*The Owl and the Pussycat*) and Berg (*Lulu* interlude). There is also the unusual table canon form, which is a rectangular piece of sheet music played by two musicians facing one another across a table, with the music between them. One is thus reading the music upside-down, similar to the SATOR AREPO square mentioned earlier. Popular music has also gotten into the act. Bands such as Soundgarden, They Might Be Giants, The Grateful Dead, and even ABBA have all incorporated palindromes in either album titles, lyrics or music. One of the more interesting popular music palindromes is a 2003 installation commissioned from sculptor Roman De Salvo and composer Joseph Waters for the city of San Diego, California. Crab Carillon took the form of 488 tuned chimes constructed as a safety railing on the 25th Street overpass. The chimes could be struck by pedestrians as they crossed the walkway, with a melody that played the same from either direction.” (Sheila Singhal i <http://elephantaday.blogspot.no/2012/04/elephant-no-196-palindrome.html>; lesedato 04.01.13)

“Comic books have also dabbled in palindromes. Volume 3 of *Les Terres creuses* by Luc and Francois Schuten features a mirror image for each frame. Similarly, *Watchmen* No. 5, “Fearful Symmetry” is more or less a palindrome from beginning to end, with the design of the first and last pages – then the second and second-last pages and so forth – mirroring each other until the centre spread, which is roughly symmetrical in layout as well. [...] In the world of numerals, a palindromic number is simply one that can be read the same backwards and forwards, such as 1221. Palindromic dates [f.eks. 01.02.2010] get people particularly excited, depending on how they are transcribed numerically. [...] Weirdly, the world of biology also appears to have naturally-occurring palindromes. DNA often has strands of nucleotides that always pair the same way, but in reverse order. In other words, the sequence ACCTAGGT will pair with TGGATCCA, forming a palindrome. Palindromes are also thought to be prevalent in proteins – which may be due to the similar structure of the RNA that directs protein synthesis.” (Sheila Singhal i

<http://elephantaday.blogspot.no/2012/04/elephant-no-196-palindrome.html>;  
lesedato 04.01.13)

Richard Cox' dikt "In Eden, I," i tidsskriftet *Word*, "takes the traditional 'Madam, I'm Adam' palindrome further. Each line reads the same forward and backwards. Here are some excerpts:

Eve. Drowsy Baby's word. Eve  
Madam, I'm Adam  
Named under a ban, a bared nude man.  
Miss, I'm Cain, a monomaniac. Miss, I'm...  
Diamond-eyed no-maid!

This goes beyond a clever trick to become real poetry. Some lines have an almost Miltonic meter: "Even in Eden I win Eden in Eve". Writing ordinary words in reverse order can completely change their significance." (<http://www.philobiblon.com/isitabook/games/>; lesedato 08.01.13)

Den tyske kunstneren Timm Ulrichs har lagd følgende visuelle palindrom, der det tyske ordet "stets" ("alltid") kan leses alle veier i en stjerneform:

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      s      s      s
      t      t      t
s     t     e     t     s
      t      t      t
      s      s      s
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(her hentet fra Weller 1977 s. 16). Den sirkellignende formen signaliserer noe evig, og t-ene ligner kors og kan minne om graver.

Den franske dikteren Michelle Grangaud har utgitt en rekke palindrom- og anagram-tekster. Hun ble medlem av den franske eksperimentelle forfattergruppa Oulipo i 1995. Den franske Oulipo-forfatteren George Perecs "Grand Palindrome" (1969) er 5,556 bokstaver lang.

Amerikaneren Barry Duncan, "master palindromist, was locked in an epic struggle with the alphabet. He was totally absorbed in the completion of a commissioned piece. [...] He'd been working on it for as many as twelve hours a day. Then, on

April 6, after an estimated two hundred hours of toil, Barry Duncan unleashed on this world the greatest palindrome of his life. “Far and away the best reversible work I’ve ever, ever done,” he calls it. You know palindromes – words or phrases that read the same forward or backward. “Party booby trap.” “Lisa Bonet ate no basil.” [...] “I’m just all the time doing it,” he says. “I write hundreds a day, probably.” [...] It’s true that Duncan has developed his own terminology and taxonomy for palindromes. One way that he categorizes them is by length. Those of one hundred or more characters are labeled simply “long.” Palindromes of one hundred or more words he calls “epic.” And palindromes of one thousand or more characters are called “mega.” [...] He’s also identified some guidelines for palindrome-writing. One cardinal rule to which he always returns involves “doubling in the middle,” which he calls a “near-fatal error” and the mark of an inexperienced palindromist. As he explained in our first conversation about palindromes, “If I say to you, ‘straw,’ and you thought, well, ‘straw warts,’ that’s a palindrome, but the w is doubled, so it only calls attention to the palindrome. What you want is for some letter to be the reversible hinge. So if you said to me, ‘straw,’ I would think, ‘straw arts.’ And then that w is removable, and it could be ‘strap arts,’ ‘stray arts.’ ” [...] Duncan even has names for different types of palindromes. Consider the following piece, which he wrote before a performance at the Cambridge venue Club Passim by a former colleague named Abdul-Wahab, who played the oud and was accompanied by a flamenco guitarist.

Miss apt A-W on oud?  
 No! Set a date, son:  
 Duo now at Passim.

Duncan refers to this type of composition as a three-layer vertical stack, or “3LVS,” and he considers it to be the “most visually and emotionally satisfying reversible arrangement.” The satisfaction comes from the tidiness: the third line is the exact opposite of the first line, and the second line is a self-contained palindrome that serves to “keep the peace between the first and third lines.” He says that he finds them “very tense and very elegant,” but that it’s rare for a palindrome to work out naturally as a 3LVS. [...] In order to share some of his writing, he produced a small collection, which he titled *Assorted Palindromes and One Song* [1994]. It wasn’t long before a close friend dubbed it “The Relationship Killer.” ” (Gregory Kornbluh i <http://www.believermag.com/issues/201109/>; lesedato 08.01.13)

Et eksempel på en Duncan-palindrom: “RE: NO GAS IN AGE? BEWARE.  
 Warren, old as sin, am red. Lost – or reviled – a female. (No, a hag!) Elder, it  
 passes old lot. Fossil. Lip sags, eh? Flesh sags. Poor devil! At one, nips. A store,  
 cafe, zoo. “Pops.” No, is elder, has gas till it’s late. Menace. No bristle, few warts  
 on nose. Hoots. Peels, eh? Park, late: talk, rap. He sleeps, too. (He’s on no straw.  
 We felt, sir: Bone. Cane. Metal.) Still, it sags. Ah! Red lesions pop, ooze. Face rots.  
 A spine, not alive, droops. Gash self? He’s (gasp) ill, is soft, old, loses sap, tired.

Leg? Aha, one lame! Fade. Liver rots. Older man is sad loner, raw. Era we began is a goner.” (siter fra <http://www.believermag.com/issues/201109/>; lesedato 08.01.13)

“Bill Bryson, in his history of the English language, *The Mother Tongue*, puts the form at at least two thousand years old, citing our knowledge of Greek and Roman palindromes. The word itself derives from the Greek palindromes – “running back again” – and Bryson dates its English debut to 1629. He even claims to have found the first recorded palindrome in English, by the poet John Taylor (“Lewd I did live, & Evil did I dwell”), though, as Bryson points out, the ampersand [= &] is a bit of a disqualifier. [...] The growing interest in palindromes themselves can be tracked, indirectly, by the exponential increase in length of the Guinness-recognized world’s longest palindrome: from 242 words in 1971; to 11,125 in 1980; to 44,444 in 1984, sometime after which they seem to have stopped keeping the record.” (Gregory Kornbluh i <http://www.believermag.com/issues/201109/>; lesedato 08.01.13)

“Welcome to the home of The Palindromist, a long running print magazine (since 1996) about palindromes and the people who write them. [...] You can join the conversation in our discussion forum: share your palindromes, discuss famous ones or how to write them, or talk about other fun kinds of wordplay.

[...]

- The Palindromist Manifesto

- The Authors List of Great Palindromes, a selective list of the best palindromes which gives credit to the gifted palindromists who created them.

- Sotades the Obscene of Maronea (275 BC) - Inventor of the Palindrome

- Political Palindromes

- “A Chronotype of Revolution”: a scholarly paper on palindromes in Russia and Eastern Europe by Erika Greber of the University of Munich.

[...]

The Palindromist magazine has been published since 1996 by Mark Saltveit. Major contributors include Jon Agee, John Connett, and Ove Michaelsen. [...] Mark Saltveit is widely recognized as one of the world's experts on palindromes. A Harvard graduate and standup comedian, he has written hundreds of palindromes, many articles on palindromes, and the book “A Man, A Plan .... 2002: The Year in Palindromes.” He gives talks on “The Mystical History of Palindromes” (recently at Gonzaga University in Spokane, Washington) and presents a workshop on “How to Write Your Own Palindromes” – soon to be a book – for school children.” (<http://www.palindromist.org/about>; lesedato 10.01.13)

“Here are a number of very old palindromes from children's magazines of the 1800s. Most were in letters to the editor. It's amazing how literary youngsters were before TV and video games.

Dora saw tides united under a red nude tin used; it was a rod.

– Herbert, “Our Letter Box” in Our Young Folks magazine, July 1868

Draw pupil's lip upward.

– Willy Wisp, “Our Letter Box” in *Our Young Folks*, Aug. 1866

Redroot put up to order.

– Charles T., St. Louis, MO, “Our Letter Box” in *Our Young Folks*, April 1866

Red rum did emit revel ere Lever time did murder.

– Edward A. J., “Our Letter Box” in *Our Young Folks*, June 1866

Snug & raw was I ere I saw war & guns.

– Submitted by W.G.S. (W.G. Scribner of Lincoln, NE?), “Our Letter Box” in *Our Young Folks*, April 1866

Star, live on. No evil rats!

– Meg, “Our Letter Box” in *Our Young Folks*, May 1867

Did I trap a rat & tar a part? I did.

– Henry S. P. (age 13), “Our Letter Box” in *Our Young Folks*, June 1866”  
([http://www.palindromist.org/about;lesedato 10.01.13](http://www.palindromist.org/about;lesedato10.01.13))

Amerikaneren John Agee har blant annet publisert *So Many Dynamos! and Other Palindromes* (1997), *Sit on a Potato Pan, Otis!: More Palindromes* (1999) og *Palindromania!* (2009). “Agee, whose previous palindromic volumes include *Go Hang a Salami! I'm a Lasagna Hog!* and *So Many Dynamos!*, makes another dizzying effort to exhaust the English-language palindrome supply. He provides animal lovers with the slogans “Revile liver!” and “Step on no pets,” along with some horses who cheer, “Yahoo! Hay!” City dwellers certainly will relate to the exclamation, “Dog doo? Good God!” while slackers will sigh along with, “No panic, I nap on.” Scrabble buffs might feel vexed by Agee's regular use of proper names (“Lee has a race car as a heel”; “Ed is loopy poolside”) and brand names (“Naive was I ere I saw Evian”; “Lonely Tylenol”). Novices can get in on the fun with simpler samples like “Petite P” and “Tip it.” Agee complements his palindromes with rough pen-and-ink sketches and gray wash on a white background; a spread of a prison-like stripe camouflage for “See referees?” takes the cake. He injects a note of mayhem with his liberal use of exclamation points and, judging by the volume's price, he gets the sales department in on the joke, too. Word-gamers are advised to proceed with caution into these verbal somersaults, which could ignite a serious compulsion to reverse spellings. Agee himself appears to be in an advanced stage of his self-imposed condition, considering his magnum opus: “A man, a plan, a cat, a bar, a cap, a mall, a ball, a map, a car, a bat, a canal: Panama.” Don't say we didn't warn you! All ages.” ([http://www.amazon.com/Sit-Potato-Pan-Otis-Palindromes/dp/product-description/0374318085;lesedato 27.01.14](http://www.amazon.com/Sit-Potato-Pan-Otis-Palindromes/dp/product-description/0374318085;lesedato27.01.14))

En utvidet betydning av palindrom innebærer at ordene leses opp-ned (arket med skriften dreies 180 grader). På en plakate foran en britisk svømmehall skal det ha stått denne beskjeden om at svømmetimedene heretter var avlyst på mandager:

NOW NO SWIMS ON MON

Ordene er identiske hvis de leses opp-ned. Dette kalles et ambigram: “A term coined by Douglas Hofstadter (see *Metamagical Themas* [...]) and friends for a graphic figure that spells a word or group of words that can be read in at least two different ways, usually symmetric when rotated 180 degrees (upside down) or when reflected along the vertical axis, as in a mirror.” (Joan M. Reitz i [http://lu.com/odlis/odlis\\_c.cfm](http://lu.com/odlis/odlis_c.cfm); lesedato 30.08.05) Teksten er altså leselig selv om ordene snus 180 grader. Dette har blitt kalt et symmetrisk ambigram, mens i et asymmetrisk ambigram er det andre, leselige ord som kommer til syne når teksten snus. Et eksempel på et (asymmetrisk) ambigram i tegneseriemediet er den nederlandsk-amerikanske tegneren Gustave Verbeeks *The Upside Downs of Little Lady Lovekins and Old Man Muffaroo* (1903-05).

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