THE MODEL A PALINDROME MACHINE

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This machine, the Model A palindrome (PD) generator, will permit you to make PDs as easily as spinning a pirouette on a kitchen stool and falling flat on your nose in the kitty litter, right in front of the Bishop. True, it will not allow you to create PDs without taking a little thought, but draw comfort in your great affliction from the fact that a completely automatic PD generator is currently in the works; keep watching that most cutting-edge of logojournals, Word Ways.

At this point, a figure rises from the well-populated peanut gallery and exclaims “Pah, your little kit consist of a mere hundred words, all of which start with the letter A. This is less than one per cent of the palindromically usable material in the English language, and quite useless!”

Is it? We shall soon see if this allegation is true...

To begin weaving your reversible tales of sorrow and glory, you need only follow these simple steps:

(1) Notice that each word or words in the first column (see the table at the end of this article) is the reversal of the opposite number in the second column. To start a PD, select a reversal from the first column that is preceded by a blank and a slash (e.g., 1 through 8, 13, 18 through 23, etc.) and write it down.

(2) Move to the second column where any word, courtesy of the letter A, will link up with your chosen reversal. Select a semantically promising word and write it down after the reversal.

(3) Look at the end of the second column word. If you see a slash followed by nothing, stop. (If otherwise, go to (4) below.) Examine the words you have written down. They will form either a complete PD (e.g., “Mad Adam”), or the first half of a PD (e.g., “Mad Aesop”). If the latter is the case, complete the PD by reversing the words and writing them down (e.g., “Mad Aesop, pose Adam”).

(4) If at the end of the second column word you see a slash followed by a free letter, look for reversals beginning with the same letter in the first column directly opposite. Select one of these and write it down after the previous word. Now return to (2) above.

This algorithm, combined with a little judgment and practice, will generate PDs like:

1. Drags Allah all Asgard?
2. Toll Aileen an eel I allot
3. Elba, Rod? Asia [led. Adela] is adorable!
4. I roll agelong. No leg, Allori!
5. I roll a ward raw, Allori
7. “Degauss Adonis, mad Adams?” I nod, assuaged
8. An, er…adrenal art’s Allah all astral. A nerd arena!
Note that, as in PD 5 above, some words in the columns may be parsed in more than one way. Thus, “along” (line 3) may become “a long”, “Alana” (line 5). “Alan a”, “abed” (line 18) “a bed”, and so on. Also, each word in the first column ends, in effect, with an invisible A which appears at the start of all words in the second column. This A may be treated as an indefinite article. (For examples, see “Nell, a” in PD 9 below, and “trap a” in PD 11).

If we wish to construct more complex sentences, one PD must be placed adjacent to another, the final result being a PD with one or more PDs nested within it. In the following examples, the beginning and end of internal PDs are marked with a slash:

9. “Stress aloof/ Allen,” Nell, a / fool, asserts
10. Along Asgard / Hall Alan, an anal Allah, / drags Agnola
11. Trap a / satin award, draw Anita’s / apart
12. Yaw! Allen, alive, / drags Asgard / evil an ell away
13. Er... if amiable / Dee’s in aniseed, / Elba, I’m afire!
14. Draw a / silly ram, Adelberta, / dim amid / a trebled amaryllis / award
16. Pose awash, sip a / non-anemone not at one. No men anon / apish saw Aesop
17. Nell, aspire not; Amaryllis / shall. Allah’s/ silly ram at one rips Allen
18. Pose ass, orc alien / drags Asgard / Neil across Aesop!
19. Slam in Adams a live / sun, an anus / evil as mad animals
20. Egad, Agnola, / sing Agnis / a long adage
21. Sing at Adam, / “Neil anal, an alien / mad at Agnis”
22. I roll a / fool, Agnola, along aloof / Allori
23. Ed, is Allori / along? Agnola / I roll aside

The differences in parsing I mentioned above may take more sophisticated forms, to the extent of causing words to appear ex nihilo, so to speak:

24. “Stress an air,” an Arian asserts
25. Nell AWOL, shall aloof / Neil, an alien, / fool Allah, slow Allen?
26. Pose as Al, a nerd as astral as an /alien. Neil, a / nasal art’s as adrenal as Aesop
27. Neil ate / Elba; Rod, an ass; orc / Anatola, / a trebled anemone; Eno, men; Adelberta, / a lot;
   Ana, / cross, an adorable ET alien

None of the italicized words appears in the Model A columns.

Words like add, Ann, asks, asps, assess, and assertress may be inserted into the center of PDs; if elsewhere, they must appear twice. Ditto words and suffixes like I, a, and the plural, possessive, or third-person s. It is possible, though perhaps not advisable in mixed company, to drag out Model A generated PDs, to quite some length:

28. Pose as Al, a nerd as astral, adrenal, as mad Asia. Long Adelbert, rob Agnis! / “Shall Adam’s Asgard enrobed a jar / trap,” a ward, / Nell, asks Allen, / “draw apart / raj-adorned rags as mad Allahs / sing, ‘Abort rebled Agnola’? Is Adam’s Al a nerd?” All art’s as adrenal as Aesop

The present writer denies culpability for any bloodshed resulting from such irresponsible exercises.
Any PD machine, including this one, may be implemented as a computer program. We invite those who have access to the requisite technology to attempt such an implementation. I have a list of over 200 more words that fit the Model A constraints; these I will gladly supply to interested inquirers. Write to the email address above, or (better) to this writer at 1319 Sycamore St #1, Terre Haute, IN 47807-2754.

The next step, as I suggested earlier, is the creation of a PD-generating machine that will require no verbal manipulation by the user. I believe that devising a suitable algorithm will be difficult, but not at all impossible.

GLOSSARY:

enrod (line 24) a neologism, meaning “to insert a rod into”
Allori (line 54) Alessandro Allori (1535-1607), Florentine mannerist painter
Agnis (line 81) Hindu god, personification of fire
Agnola (line 3) feminine forename, see Evelyn Wells, What to Name the Baby (1946)
Anatola (line 4) feminine forename
Alana (line 5) feminine forename

Crossword Word Play

Richard Lederer and Gayle Dean have combined forces to create a new crossword puzzle book, published by Merriam-Webster at $11.95 (ISBN 0-87779-663-7). As might be expected in a work by Richard Lederer, there’s a lot of word play here—anagrams, puns, Tom Swifties, palindromes and more, but the result is more a tour de force than a serious challenge to cruciverbalists. The theme clues are usually capitalized, making them easy to spot, and the non-theme clues are generally easy as well. The book should be fun for the mass market and those frustrated by the New York Times crosswords.