Sitting on our enclosed porch of steel plate, we rapped on the window with our AVRO-LEPEL (AVRO-spoon, named for the Dutch broadcasting company which gave them out as a bonus). As the gardener did not hear us, we tried using our KRO-VORK (by analogy, a non-existent bonus of a fork from the other Dutch broadcasting company) instead. Now he looked up; we indicated that he should place a DOORROOD (full red) colored PLUTO-TULP ("Pluto" variety of tulip) to the left of the PARTERRE-TRAP (first floor stairway). Our gardener knows well our predilection for symmetry -- did he not once give us a package of detergent with the title ECCE OMO (Omo is a well-known Dutch detergent and the double palindrome is a pun on "ecce homo", behold the man)? We were not amused.

Thanks to our good relationship with an advisory committee member of PTT (the Dutch telephone company, run by the government), our telephone number reads the same from right to left as it does from left to right. Do you have such a mirror number, too? At least one hundred readers of this newspaper should happily nod yes, for there are at least 100,000 telephone subscribers with six-digit numbers, and with a six-digit number there is one chance in a thousand of having a symmetric one. Please, do not call these lucky one hundred people. Soon we shall receive from the authorities a ten-digit personal identification number. Since the probability of a symmetrical number is only one in 100,000, only 150 out of 15 million Dutchmen will receive one. But alas! to avoid confusion, no two adjacent digits are allowed to be the same; in particular, the fifth digit cannot be equal to the sixth, preventing mirror numbers from occurring.

In the world of demons and ghosts, it is important to have a name which cannot be reversed to cast a spell. Poor REPELSTEEL (Repel-
steeltje, the Dutch Rumpelstiltskin, an unlucky gnome whose name was supposedly a secret) was obviously first called LEEDSLEPER (an imperfect reversal meaning dragger of misery).

Other examples abound. The Arabic tales are not by chance labeled "1001 Nights". In Amsterdam, the god Zeus is palindromically pronounced /SuIS/ (ui is a Dutch vocal). And of course the first powerful magicians for each of us are MAM (Mom) and PAP (Pop).

Before the war, the colonial masters in our Dutch Indies gave their bastard children their own surnames spelled backwards. As we are reminded in "Tong-tong" (literally, a gong -- the name of a Dutch East Indies former periodical), we remember DNARBEILLIHI, KJIDSMEIR, SNIRP, RENVREW and KNOV (reversals of common Dutch surnames). The last of these names can be considered an acronym for Koninklijk Nederlands Ondernemers Verbond (Royal Netherlands Employers Organization); Mr. Vonk, the president, recently appeared on TV with a banner at the level of his navel emblazoned VONK (KNOV). Men who were sur-named SNORFRONS or SNERTTRENS (both probably made-up surnames), however, kept to the straight and narrow path!

This raises the question of whether the fate of those who bear a mirror name might differ from that of other people. We think, if the reader will pardon our reminiscing, of ANNA who married the Prince of Orange, a descendant of OTTO von Nassau, in 1551. A later ANNA of Austria joined a convent in 1661. ADA, a duchess of Holland, died in 1221, and Sultan ALA received the Ottoman crown in 1331, King ASA reigned in Judah from 909 BC to 868 BC. REINIER the Third was exiled by OTTO the First in 959. ABBA the Second, a predecessor of AGA NASAN, became the second in a line of SHAHS in 1661. In the same year, the Chinese KOK conquered our Formosa. (Except for Asa and Otto the First, these are extremely obscure personages; it is likely that the author has modified or embellished history.)

After this OTTETTO (an Italian word for octet) of royal personalities with mirror names and dates, let us examine some intellectuals bearing such names. In 929, the PAAP (Papist) ODO became the second abbot of Cluny. Nicolas LEBEL invented in 1881 the gun which still bears his name. In the same year, the German engineer OTTO invented the ROTATOR for the four-stroke engine, Pierre LAVAL was born, ONNO Koekkoek, the son of J.H. Koekkoek, created the painting entitled "The EETSTEEU" (eating place, or dining room), and Maurits SNELLENS' POOLLOOP (a made-up word meaning polar trek) capped it: the first and only Dutch polar expedition, was found. (Here, it is clear that history is being invented -- Laval was born in 1883, not 1881; there was no Dutch polar explorer Snellens; and the only Dutch painter named Koekkoek lived from 1803 to 1862.) When one looks at all these bearers of mirror names and their dates, one thinks "how RAAR (strange)". But is it not clear that strange coincidences can, and often do, occur in all parts of the world?

Let us now come to the point of this rambling discussion. In the Dutch language, that invisible and rich structure in which we all live, there
exist a total of 303 mirror words, from simple ones like PAP (porridge) to remarkable ones like KORNETTENROK (a made-up word meaning, perhaps, the uniform of a servant to an officer in the colonial East Indian army). 101 of these mirror words have an even number of letters, such as TOPKOOKPOT (a made-up word meaning a cooking-pot cover or top) or REKKENNEKKE (a made-up word for someone who stretches necks). But 202 are odd, such as TRAMSMART (a made-up word meaning, perhaps, streetcar anguish, a variety of commuting blues) or LEVERWREVEL (a made-up word meaning liver spite, perhaps alluding to biliousness). What is the longest known crab word? According to the Dutch edition of the Guinness book of world records, this would be P.A.RTERRETRAP (the previously-encountered first floor stairway). Long ago at the University of Delft this was improved to P.A.RTERESERRETRAP (first floor stairway leading to an enclosed porch). Subsequently, the formidable lettersmith Piet Burger created the word EDELSTAALPLAATSLEDE (sledge of noble steel plate) which has 19 letters.

The reader expects more from us than this -- and we will give it to him. The creation of P.A.RTERESERRETRAP out of P.A.RTERRETRAP by squeezing a word in the middle is one way to lengthen a mirror word. Our enclosed porch happens to be made of steel plate, so this method leads to P.A.RTERRESTAALPLAATSERRETRAP, with 27 letters.

However, there is a second way to extend mirror words: place something in front, and its reversal at the end. The prefix "nep" (fake) can be placed in front of any Dutch noun, since anything can be a fake. However, the suffix "pen" cannot always be put at the end of a word. Sometimes it fits nicely, as in the dubious palindrome MALAGA-LAM (a made-up word meaning a lamb from Malaga), which is lengthened and improved to NEP-MALAGALAMPEN (a made-up word meaning fake lamps from Malaga). Sometimes a real fountain pen is possible, as in NEP-STAATSPEN (fake governmental pen), the pen that Carter did not use to sign a treaty. Sometimes "pen" can create a plural (when a noun ends in a P); for example, PAP (doll) becomes NEP-POPPEN (imitation dolls), and PILSLIP (a made-up word meaning beer-flecked lip) becomes NEP-PILSLIPPEN (fake beer-flecked lips, as those on a Hallo-we'en mask).

You didn't believe us when we told you that we NEDERTREDEN (came down) into our garden by a P.A.RTERRESTAALPLAATSERRETRAP? Then you must assert that these belong to the class of NEPPA.RTERRESTAALPLAATSERRETRAPPEN (fake stairways leading from an enclosed porch made out of steel plate), a crab word of 33 letters.

For the time being this is enough. However, the nice thing is that the nep-method leads us automatically to ever-longer mirror words. Once the 33-letter palindrome mentioned above has acquired general fame and recognition, the pen which we used to write this word will find a niche in the Van Buren Museum, with a sign identifying it as the "Neparterrestaalplaatserretrappen-pen". We will then confess that we did not use a pen but a typewriter, so the museum curator will be obliged to add the word "nep" in front of the long word on the sign, creating NEP-NEP a palindrome itself every five inhabitants with.

**SPELLING**

Written in thin paper with apel (400 years ago) an art of "Simplicity and wisdom" the milleniums have been misused to change the meaning to "the hater" some typical two different.

It is understood to be adopted a revision of the rules of words for "Words" that syn is more than some in yeerz symbols (4000 alphabet of century) writing pen are entirely.

If spelled as ed in Van Buren a new way.
AP (porridge) and meaning, a palindromic word of 39 letters. We estimate that this process will repeat itself every fifty years. We therefore hope that the world and its writing inhabitants will remain in existence for a long time to come.

NEP-NEPPARTERRESTAALPLATSERRETRAPPEN-PEN

SPELLING REFORM

Written Dialects N Spelling Reforms: History N Alternatives (Progressiv Publisher: Chicago, 1979), by Kenneth H. Ives, a thin paperback (112 pages) available for $5 from the publisher (401 E. 32, #1002, Chicago IL 60616), is an expansion of an article by the same author in the February 1971 Word Ways, "Simpler Written English is Possible." To summarize: spoken and written English have gradually drifted apart during the past millennium. Since the invention of printing written English has been more or less frozen, even though spoken English continues to change. The main reason for spelling reform is to help children to write and read; the main argument against is the enormous difficulty of changing from one system to another, necessitating relearning by adults, and the mental burden of reading two different systems of orthography for many years.

It is unclear which of the many proposed reform systems should be adopted. These divide into two major groups: (1) piecemeal revision, changing the spelling of a few (or few hundred) common words (as tho., thru) sometimes coupled with shorthand (as n for 'and' or I for 'the'); (2) a consistent reform of spelling so that symbols and sounds uniquely correspond. Since there are more than 26 phonemes, this necessitates using digraphs for some sounds (as in World English Spelling: 'Forskor and seven yeers agoe our faathers braut forthh.'), or inventing new symbols (SRA Phonemic Alphabet, or Pitman's Initial Teaching Alphabet). Piecemeal revision can be tailored to save a few per cent of letters (perhaps speeding typing and writing after a learning period); but full reform saves nothing unless new symbols are employed (about 15 per cent).

If spelling reform is ever adopted, much of the research reported in Word Ways will have to be completely redone; in effect, a new written language will have been created.