Possibly some other term may be in use for this particular verbal ploy, but for the purpose of this article I define a *homophone* as a word, phrase, sentence or passage in general whose sound is such that it may be written down and interpreted as regards meaning in two distinct ways. There is an obvious overlapping here with homonyms and charades, but the former term is really suitable for single words only, while the latter is certainly applied (see, for example, Dmitri Borgmann’s *Language on Vacation*, p. 112) to passages having the same sequence of letters differently grouped, irrespective of pronunciation. Thus, according to this usage, the following would be a charade sentence, although it is not a homophone:

I saw a pitiful lupin as aid.
"Is a wapiti full up?" Ina said

Howard W. Bergerson has remarked of charades that he considers them “to be the obverse side of the coin of which palindromes and reversals are the reverse side,” and this I think is true, whether they are homophonic or—to coin a word—identicoliteral. In both charades and palindromes each new verbal brick added appears simultaneously in two different forms, having two distinct meanings, both of which must fit; in both charades and palindromes we constantly find a need for specially listed words and phrases, particularly those incorporating what Leigh Mercer has called “hanging letters.” Thus, in palindromes the word CIGAR, associated with the hanging letter T, gives us the reversal TRAGIC; in charades (of the homophonic variety) the word HISPANIA, used in conjunction with the hanging letter L, gives us HIS SPANIEL.

According to a competition once set in the *New Statesman*, where a translation was asked for, the following homophonic passage is to be attributed to Victor Hugo.

*Gall, amant de la reine, allo, tour magnanime,*
*Galamment, de l'arène à la Tour Magne, à Nîmes.*

which we may perhaps freely and playfully transform into:

**WORD WAYS**
Gallic lover, accursed user of royal tea-urns (wait, O great hour!):
   Gall, 't o're, a cur, seducer of Royalty, earns way to Grey Tower.

This is suggestive in two ways. Firstly, it reminds us that a homophonic passage has two forms of equal length necessarily ending with identical rhymes, which hints at verse; secondly, it shows that these two forms need not be separate entities, but may be connected in meaning and even, as in the above example, fuse into one continuous whole. Here too reversals and palindromes find their counterpart. (By the way, the repeated 'of' in the above 'translation' merely parallels the repeated 'de' in the French original. In general, repetition of words in corresponding positions is to be avoided.)

But enough preliminary. Now for my examples, which if mostly nonsense, may at least serve to stimulate more talented readers to produce something of real merit in this field.

1) Heathen's cauldron bored a lad in serge.
   He thence called her on board Aladdin's Urge.

2) Filthy I felt our withering offences.
   You would!
   Fill the Eiffel Tower with a ring of fences—
   Yew-wood.

3) An island she-scalded
   (Hon. border-brigand's lure):
   Anile, and she's called her
   On board a brig and slew her.

4) Wheat, rye—two fined. In bread
   Chaff in chunk'll pip it.
   We try to find inbred
   Chaffinch, Uncle Pipit.

5) "A narrow pier," says Jill. "Ted, see?" Leah screamed. I scream:
   An arrow pierces jilted Celia's creamed ice-cream.

6) You picked your eye-sore, Archibald, intentionally.
   U Picture. I saw Archy, bald, in "Tension Alley."

7) Healthy parlourmaid's inconstancy:
   Hell, the parlour made sin constant, see?

8) On a new day
   (Fishy Friday)
   Alistair's "trouble" died.
   Honour nude, eh?
   Fish he fried, eh?
   Alice stares, troubled-eyed.

9) Die jesting? Hammond, do not say
   "My known newscaster's Yoga."
   Digesting ham on doughnuts, eh?
   Mine own, use caster sugar!
10) Andrew Y. Fletcher (honour
an eye for pictures) arose
and drew (wife-lecher) on her
a knife or picked yours a rose.

11) Wee Canadian wherry's foundering,
Coral I sunder.
We can aid Ian where he's found a ring—
Cora lies under.

12) Harry ate an ice. Peace
offered, you cluck! He
made an evil invocation.
All ovet!
Harriet, a nice piece
off a Duke-lucky
maiden, Evelyn. Vocation:
a lover.

13) Aztec Island. Picnickers sup...
Billberries, aired ale.
As tec I land, pick knickers up;
Bill buries airedale.

14) New dandy canary's kin
Are Ena's for bidding Leigh a cent.
Nude, Andy can air his skin,
Arenas forbiddingly asent.

15) "Toucan's Trip" (Cezanne) underestimated.
"Two can strip," says Ann. Undressed, he mated.

16) Herodias weighs her petty form:
Flesh she knows, rash is an ounce;
Her odious ways herpetiform
Fleshy nose-rashes announce.

17) Can he compose a, can be perform a
Great Op? Not at all, Otto, man!
Canny composer, canny performer.
Grey top-knot, a tall Ottoman.

18) Millicent, a long herpetic oats-gatherer, flees.
Millie sent along her petticoats—gather her fleas!

19) SHIPS AND DOGS
Icy Mycelium thawed out,
Ho, Tel, Hispania loses,
I see my sealyham Thor doubt;
Heated, his spaniel oozes.

20) INFERNAL EXHORTATION
Go, shapes of endurance,
Weaken, do malices!
Gauche apes offend your aunts,
We can doom Alice's.
Come for treason, ingest
Manure, betray, deceive!

WORD WAYS
Comfort reason in jest!
Man, you're betrayed! Is Eve?
Goat-angle in breeding glorious imp. Laura!
Go, tangle, inbreed, inglorious implores!
Gauche ambling monkish apes
Of Endor—disturbance!
Go, shambling monkey shapes.
Offend or disturb aunts!

Are you, too, on the homophone?

A Word Game of Triples

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Many words are conspicuous for their repetitions of a single letter, like the S in SASSAFRASS, the O in LOCOMOTOR, the D in DIDDLED and the A in ABRACADABRA. A guessing game can be contrived by deleting the dominant letter in each word, leaving AAFRA, LCMTR, ILE and RRCDBR, then posing the problem of restoration of the dominants—perhaps clued by a key word, which would be SODA for the first example.

The game would be too easy if spaces were left for the deletions, like —BR—C—D—BR—, or using very short words like BIBB, LULL, POPPY and RARER. For a sophisticated group, the game could be made difficult by including rare, archaic or scientific words, like ABAMA, IRIDIC and LILIALES, but for the average sleuth the task should be set within his vocabulary with just enough difficulty to afford him satisfaction in his accomplishment.

In the game which follows, the clues are 3- or 4-letter residues of fairly common 6- or 7-letter words from which 3 like letters have been deleted. The key letters, in order, will make sense. Answers on page 191.

NTAL ULE LYN OER SZG LNG NSAL OYX CCI IIG EEE
CCN ALE ASIS DOTC TRE POO RCC MIO PAE ENO GSB
AAL STH HOD LUY AES TEO NSPD EER OED SVR AES