ALPHABETICAL TRILITERALS

PALMER C. PETERSON
Lennox, South Dakota

Many Word Ways articles have dealt with words differing from each other in only a single letter (such as SHARE and SHORE, in which A is replaced by O and the other letters are left untouched). Word ladders of the form HEAD HEAL TEAL TELL... have been constructed for nearly a century (does any reader know of a reference prior to Lewis Carroll's Doublets which was published in 1879?). More recently, Ross Eckler (February, 1969) demonstrated that replacements can be found not only for the A-O pair but also for the other 324 possibilities. Dave Silverman (May 1970, February 1972) has been interested in both isolanos (words in which no letter can be replaced to form another word) and onalosis (words in which any letter can be replaced to form another word). Rudolph Castown (August 1968) and Leslie Card (November 1970, February 1971) have developed the concept of a garble group--a completely interlocked word set such as BIG BAG BUG BIT BAT BUT BID BAD BUD BIN BAN BUN.

Many years ago, the National Puzzlers' League compiled lists of three-letter words from a variety of esoteric sources. Examining these lists, one finds that there are four sets of 26 three-letter words in which two letters remain constant and the third letter runs from A through Z. Many of the words are found in the various editions of Webster's Unabridged Dictionary; I have indicated the most recent edition in each case. I have tried to provide more modern references where possible for the rarer words in the lists, but for a few examples (asterisked) currently-available references elude me. Perhaps Word Ways readers can help.

BOC obsolete variant of book (Web 1)
BOD British for fellow (Web 3)
BOE variant of bo (Web 3)
BOF alchemical name for quicklime (Foster, An Illustrated Encyclopaedic Medical Dictionary, 1888)
*BOJ (Encyclopedia of India)
BOK obsolete variant of book (Web 1)
BOL obsolete variant of bull (Web 1)
BOM variant of aboma (Web 3)
*BOQ (Baum, New Wizard of Oz)
BOR dialect British for neighbor (Web 3)

HAA obsolete
HAB obsolete
HAC obsolete
HAE Scottish
HAF obsolete
*HAI Variant
HAK Moslem
*HAO (Cyclopedia of India)
*HAQ (Balle)
*HAR obsolete
*HAU any of
HAV reformed
*HAX obsolete
*HAZ (Balle)

PAA obsolete
PAB variant
*PAE obsolete
PAG Yakute
*PAH exclamation
*PAI a Siamese
*PAJ (Time)
PAK obsolete
*PAK a carrot
PAO a variant
*PAQ (Bailey)
PAU complex
PAV school
PAX obsolete
PAZ obsolete

AAT obsolete
DAT obsolete
*IAT (Rand)
JAT an Indian
KAT a shrub
from, E, in 1879), that re- ched). been re­
'd that re­ or the

HAA obsolete variant of haw (Web 1)
HAB obsolete or dialect variant of have (Web 1)
HAC obsolete variant of ac (Web 1)
HAE Scottish variant of have (Web 3)
HAF obsolete variant of have (Web 1)
HAH variant of ha (Web 3)
HAI variant of hi (Web 3)
HAK a legal right or claim (Web 2)
HAL nickname for Harry or Henry (Web 2)
HAN a Chinese people (Web 3)
HAO a Chinese unit of weight (Web 2)
HAP chance, luck, fortune (Web 3)
*HAQ (Cyclopedia of India)
HAR variant of haar (Web 3)
HAU any of various tropical trees (Web 3)
HAV reformed spelling for have (Web 1)
HAX obsolete form of ax (Oxford English Dictionary)
*HAZ (Bailey, English Dictionary, 1721, 1782)

PAA obsolete variant of po (Web 1)
PAB variant of pob (Web 2)
PAE obsolete variant of po, a peacock (Web 1)
PAF second word in paf, a card game (Web 3)
PAG Yugoslav town SE of Flume (Times Atlas of the World)
PAH exclamation of contempt (Web 3)
PAI a Siamese unit of weight (Web 2)
*PAJ (Times Atlas of the World)
PAK obsolete variant of pack (Web 1)
PAM a card game (Web 3)
PAO a river in Venezuela (Times Atlas of the World)
PAQ a variant spelling of paca (Funk & Wagnalls New Standard)
PAS a dance step (Web 3)
PAU completed, consumed (Web 3)
PAV schoolboy slang for sports pavilion (Partridge, Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English, 1961)
PAZ a Brazilian river (Times Atlas of the World)

AAT obsolete form of oat (Oxford English Dictionary)
DAT obsolete form of daft (Oxford English Dictionary)
*JAT (Rand McNally Atlas)
JAT an Indo-Aryan people of the Punjab (Web 3)
KAT a shrub used as a narcotic (Web 3)
LAT a separate column or pillar in Buddhist buildings (Web 3)
NAT a class of Burmese spirits (Web 3)
QAT variant of kat (Web 3)
UAT another name for the Egyptian Goddess Buto (Cooper, Archaic Dictionary, 1876)
WAT a Buddhist temple in Thailand (Web 3)
XAT a carved memorial Indian pole (Web 3)
YAT corruption of that (Web 2)
ZAT a zax, or tool for trimming slates (Web 2)

QUERY

In German the letter W is pronounced like the English V; consequently, native Germans find it very easy to mispronounce English words beginning with W (such as VELL for WELL). In fact, this tendency formed the basis of one What's The Question? in Kickshaws: the answer "9-W" leads to the question "Do you spell your name with a V, Herr Wagner?" Albert Wilansky of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania comments that usually such mispronunciations lead to little confusion because there are few V-W homophonic pairs. He was able to come up with WISHES - VICTIOUS, and Dave Silverman added three more: WEAL - VEAL, WAIN - VAIN, and WILLIN' - VILLAIN. Can Word Ways readers supply Mr. Wilansky with others?