

# HAIL MARY, FULL OF CONSTRAINTS

ANIL

Perth, Australia

Cheer on poor Mary and her lamb as they suffer yet more pastiches in various constrained forms.

## 1. Monosyllabic trigrams:

“Mar” had pet ram kid, not big,  
His fur had Alp top hue,  
And all the way our Mar did jig  
The ram kid did jig too.  
Let out one day, kid hit her gig  
—But was not law! Too bad:  
Her pal set all did fun her big,  
And Mar and ram kid sad.

*(It is with great reluctance that I have blown the whistle on this beloved story, undermining its levity by revealing the aftermath: Mary's and the lamb's psychological distress from the teasing. Nursery rhymes can be so cruel.)*

Hyphenating Alp-top and pal-set would aid readability, but would they still be trigrams? Mar (“mare”) is a familiar form of Mary—with farmyard redolence! I owe Jeff Grant’s trigram-bigram version (WW 04-146) for the key words hue, way, law and fun (but as a verb, to tease laughingly). I chose ‘all the’ over Jeff’s superior ‘any’ for the added constraint and the pleasing concordance monosyllabism gives between words and beats. Using ram rather than ewe accords with the original ‘he’ (see later). I’ve outdone (or failed) the original rhyme scheme, ABABACAC v. ABCBDEDE, by using jig where run might be the more obvious but less poetic choice, and using gig for the school, Mary’s ‘job’ as a student. Or her adult job? The original verse doesn’t say Mary was a student; she may have been the teacher!

## 2. Strings of unequal palindromic pairs:

Mary-ram, lily li'l “Too Foot”,  
Went new to tot grade-darg,  
Met stem (“not on!” wall law) to,  
Got pal clap, a ha-ha [gang nag].

When lily-white little Too Foot (Mary’s nickname for her “me too”-footed pal) first went to her school he hit a discrimination barrier but earned applause and laughter [and chiding]. [That last bit is optional, intended only for those sadists who prefer the unhappy ending of the trigram version.] Line two offered an embarrassment of riches: I looked too hard and found an excess of ways to indicate Mary’s school. Readers may prefer one of these to my difficult choice of “[tot] grade-darg”: [tot...] ward (raw); ward’s draw; party trap; trad art work-row; giga-gig; test set (tasks at trad-art-girl rig).

3. Prime letters lipogram, limited to those letters which are prime numbers gematrially (mod<sub>26</sub>), ie, all the odd letters plus B (ABCEGIKMOQSUY), the toughest constraint hence the feeblest effort herein:

May's wee ice-back ewe goes as May goes.  
Ewe goes askew, seeks May, goes May's book gig,  
Sees kick-ass "Go away!",  
Makes 'sick' kicks come.

4a. Acrostic of the title:

|        |   |
|--------|---|
| Mary   | Mary's albino ram youth                           |
| Had    | Hounded and did                                   |
| A      | Academic  |
| Little | Law-breaking intrusion. Thereat the little extras |
| Lamb   | Laughed and merrymade boisterously.               |

The extras are from the movie version. Merrymake is in Web-3.

4b. Acrostic of the first two lines, a less commanding choice than 3a but yielding a fuller telling:

|        |   |
|--------|---|
| Mary   | Mary's albino ram youth                             |
| had    | hounded and dogged                                  |
| a      | adored  |
| little | lass. In time, the lamb escaped,                    |
| lamb,  | landed at Mary's brainwashing                       |
| Its    | Institution, thence scolded                         |
| fleece | for lawless educational excursion, causing everyone |
| was    | (who attended school                                |
| white  | with her) instant tickled excitement                |
| as     | and spontaneous                                     |
| snow.  | sport noising ovine wonderment.                     |

5a. Homophones of pronouns: "I, my, you, I, we, you, his, your, our, ourselves" reads:

"Eye Maya! Eye wee ewe!" hiss hewer-hour mice-elves.

Hewer-hour is schooltime, when children are 'chiselled into shape'—or whittle away their time! Mice-elves are the impish teasing little brats. It also works, less richly, without these two stretched metaphors, hiss going from verb to noun. If you think myself is not a word, you haven't met my other selves.

5b. And, lo, those pronouns *themselves* make a certain sense (I ‘my’ you, I ‘we’ you. His/your = our/my selves.), describing Mary’s unselfish, even mystical, relationship with the lamb. The following items serve to further further the idea that the rhyme might be a religious parable (despite being based on a true incident in 19th C Massachusetts): Mary ‘had’ the Lamb of God, immaculate as snow, and true believers who let Him into their secular lives will suffer public ridicule. This article’s title also alludes to that idea.

6. Divine revelation: This one was etched on a gold tablet I found in the desert. I spent hours trying to make sense of it, finally realising it’s an Anguish Languish reading of Mary’s Lamb which has nothing to do with little girls and ovine-free schools. Howard Chace, inventor of Anguish Languish, did the first such Mary, augmented by Richard Lederer in WW 97-142. It shares three words with this one (hatter, fleas, cool) but is patent nonsense while this one teasingly hints at saying something—about whether or not to supply hats to jumping marine parasites held captive inland? Must be an allegory. Meaning what? Is it possibly a discussion between God (Murray) and Mary about whether other animals deserve the ‘hat’ or halo of holiness entitling them to a place in heaven alongside the Lamb? If so, the limpets and their fleas don’t want it, apparently thinking it’s not cool.

Murray, hatter: “Lid a limpet’s fleas?”

“Where?”

“Whydahs know!”

“Endeavour worth it, Murray?”

“When dull, am wish herd dug.”

“Oh, heave hallowed herd task!”

... Cool won date: th’ hatwise hack hints they rue all lid,

“May ditch held ruing life in plateau, seal limpet’s cool.”

Pronunciation guide (as per WW 97-142):

Mary had a little lamb, its fleece was white as snow,

And everywhere that Mary went, the lamb was sure to go.

He followed her to school one day; that was against the rule.

It made the children laugh and play to see a lamb at school.

7. Satanic revelation: This one I found etched on a toilet wall. The constraints (assaults) here are many: on the story, on good metre, on good spelling and on good taste. It also has a bizarre rhyme scheme (AA’AA). I report it only grudgingly because of the tie-ins with the above. Coincidence?

Mary had a little lamb, she named him what she shouldna oughter,

And everywhere that Jesus went Mary cleaned up after.

She followed him up to the abattoir one day and witnessed Jesus’ slaughter;

It made poor Mary weep and moan but caused lamb-eaters great laughter.