

I'M NOW CHALLENGING ABYSMAL PEN

A. ROSS ECKLER

Morristown, New Jersey

Scarfin' Fatback's latest weapon of choice in the Word Ways word duel is the anagram, a treacherous tool for the wannabe logologist. Does he not realize that a sensible narrative is almost impossible to achieve when anagramming groups of 30 or fewer letters? I've read his Frostian parody of Mary's lamb three times and I still don't know what it says!

He tried to make it easy for himself by selecting letters in line A to anagram in line B. Do it right: take the letters of the original author to work with, and line-by-line anagram them into the new narrative. Of course, the anagrammed version must not re-use the nouns, verbs, adjectives or adverbs of the original line, but prepositions, pronouns and conjunctions are OK.

It's too much to expect that anagramming can reproduce the original story, but one can tell a new one. I show what is possible using the first verse of "Mary Had a Little Lamb", focusing on the fact that the "fleece...white as snow" was achieved only by giving the lamb, as well as Mary, a bath. Don't look for anything in the way of rhyme or meter:

Lady, ram: bath-time, all!
 To wash? If we sweat less, nice.
 A treat! We envy the ram when dry--
 Sweet glamorous bath!

Did you notice that the title of this article is an anagram of "Lamb Chops, My Weanling Eanling"? This phrase anagrams into many vivid images:

cheap small womanly beginning	we'll bang single nymphomaniac
nimbly challenge paganism now	shy nobleman campaigning well
hey, now--small pig in blancmange	by planning, Michelangelo swam
we'll plan gay-bashing mnemonic	my champagne labeling now sin
am planning well-chosen bigamy	help my nice snowball managing
now challenge my lesbian map	beginning small whale company
bye now--I'm changing small plane	well, I'm bogeyman planning cash
now smell my incapable hanging	he'll complain by managing news