

A vintage black and white photograph of a baby laughing joyfully. The baby is the central focus, with their mouth wide open and eyes squinted. The background is dark and out of focus, suggesting an indoor setting with some foliage or a patterned surface. The text is overlaid in a white, typewriter-style font.

Rumor Has It

and other
diversions

Ferrick Gray

RUMOR HAS IT

and other diversions

FERRICK GRAY

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xiv lines

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INTRODUCTION

This volume is not technical in the way **THE (STUDY OF) TREES** was presented, and is geared more to the general reader of formal poetry.

The title of this collection is named after the first major poem namely **RUMOR HAS IT**. The poem itself is a light-hearted observation of how society functions when it comes to the interaction of people in different walks of life.

The **DIVERSIONS** are simply other shorter poems on subjects that have caught my attention for one reason or another. Some of these are also using formal structures and other merely jostling the rime. One piece, **NEVER FORCE THE METER** is a discussion on one line, and how the meter plays an important role to keep the rhythm.

THE WANDERER is a very formal piece in Spenserian stanzas and it is something of a philosophical excursion inspired by some of Nietzsche's work.

The final piece consists of the introductory stanzas or prologue to a longer piece. A little taste of *ottava rima* in **THE TALE OF PABLO POE**.

In some lines, I have opted not to elide words. Words such as *memory*, *different* and *family* appear instead of *mem'ry*, *diff'rent* and *fam'ly*. Such elisions may become distracting, and generally it will be clear as to whether such words should be pronounced as two or three syllables.

This book has been set using Merriweather because it holds the correct placing of breves and macrons when used. Other fonts may not show them in their correct places.

Again, thanks for reading.

Ferrick Gray

from the villa

June, 2024

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THE TALE OF PABLO POE

—RUMOR HAS IT—

RUMOR HAS IT

I

So many times before, such stories told,
A tale of hardship—more of life and death.
Each act to ponder, wonder and behold—
The travesties! A cause to hold your breath.
Now why believe in stories such as these?
Must I that question answer? Well? O' please!

II

Incredulous! you say, but rumor too
Has slipped beyond society's four walls.
The love of Truth disparaged! How it flew,
Ignoring all the faint and futile calls.
The sound, the sounds—Those hateful, shrilling sounds—
Return ye not unto these hallowed grounds.

III

The scuttle-bug of socialites it seems
Can be somewhat distressing at the time,
For all of good and bad the gossip deems
Who should, not who it was! Feigned paradigm.
The hurtful blow, the cruelty of what's said,
Can lead the weak astray—demised—then dead!

IV

I know the reasons. Though I disapprove
Of flights of fancy hailed to be the norm.
All tainted by disgust, will never more
Their haughtiness in any shape or form.
They say it's best to leave and never try
Impose upon their glory! Wonder why?

V

Their status is—accords how numbers grow,
Their greater might and influence shall be
Inherited by each. The ebb and flow
Of these—Vainglory and Hypocrisy.

To greet each other in pretense. A smile
Of welcoming? 'Twas nothing more than guile.

VI

At times it's somewhat difficult to know
One's place in all these circumstances real,
And whether those you meet are friend or foe
To sympathize or merely make the deal.

Be first to use, or end up being used—
No cause to point the finger if accused.

VII

When hardships, harm and hell bring floods of woe,
When nothing seems to go the way it should—
We fools—self-castigation preaches low,
And base extremes with lies of what we could.

For want of freedom, pray thee from the heart—
But what of life? 'Tis finished 'fore we start.

VIII

The novice stands in awe at what they hear,
But seeing is believing what is so—
The prophecies once promised coming near,
And hopelessness becomes the status quo.

They say it's all we have—It's that of Hope—
Pandora's box once gave us ample scope.

IX

But of our kind, the cruelest of them all
That ever walked the deck of Noah's pride,
Is willing to respond unto the call—
Impede success at any cost. They lied—
 But no-one cared, and no-one made a fuss,
 The devil paid the bill. In God We Trust.

X

Each generation blames the one before
For things they've lost, yet never rightly owned.
A lesson learnt from politician's lore
Whom never once their heartless words postponed.
 "Society owes us our livelihood!"
 Is something I have never understood.

XI

Society—reflected by us all,
Perhaps you think it otherwise—'Tis true,
Especially when rumors run with tall
Accounts and stories, tailor-made for you.
 So thrive ye gossipers, your rime is trite,
 A backside's kiss for Jealousy and Spite.

XII

Uprighteousness—like people off to church—
"Oh look at me—Do what I say not do.
We hypocrites you know us well, besmirch
Most everyone around—Including you!"
 But God had left the building years ago,
 They never thought to ask, and they don't know.

XIII

O' cursed is one of whom a story spread
For no apparent reason, just the same
Retaliation, something they have said—
A little joke, if not a little game.

Then when you least expect it—here it comes
Afloating on the air, the ditty hums.

XIV

Come sing a song of heartbreak and despair!
And let the people feel heartbroken too—
Why keep all woe? Nay! Share without a care,
And thrive on the attention given you.

The Game of Woe! Pray tell who is to blame?¹
Or does it really matter?—All's the same.

XV

Imagination! How it reigns supreme!
A gift from God or gods—What e'er you choose—
Of Christian, pagan? Let the masses scream.
Makes little difference, only to amuse.

Now have you heard of this? Or maybe that?
Who gives a toss—'tis merely tit-for-tat!

XVI

Yet people take this sorry stuff to heart—
Upset, distressed and know not what to do.
To stay at home and hide—now there's a start,
'Tis sure to make the masses think it's true!

But I could think of better for my time—
Like "Childe Harold" with the Spenser's rime.²

XVII

If you are one who follows etiquette,
Or not be left behind in social fashions—
It may prove wise—remember, n'er forget
That many others follow with a passion.

So what you deem as proper may be wrong—
Lord save us from the never-sinning throng!

XVIII

To justify a cause requires little
Effort on the side of instigation,
All spluttering, observe the flying spittle
Land casually with rhythm of oration.

A smile or grimace, cherished what s prized,
And with this spittle, be ye all baptized!

XIV

A clique, a clique—my stories seek a clique!
Aye there's some facts, but mostly they are fiction.
To get the gossip, got to make it quick,
So let the story flow and mind the diction.

Add color and some flair, make it exciting,
And then the characters become inviting.

XX

Ah—true to form, the story takes a bend,
And what has happened never did at all—
Ridiculous it is, enough to send
You questioning the logic and the gall.

O' what to think. It really cannot do,
Especially when the story tells of you.

XXI

Everything's a blast when someone else
Is being lampooned—laughter fills the air.
So much the mirth. Hey, loosen up those belts—
It's lucky that the victim isn't there!

But that is generally how it always goes,
And most the time, the person never knows.

XXII

But what of those belittled by the tales?
Are they aware or will they e'er find out?
Of course they will, or else the rumor fails—
What's the point if nothing gets about?

Come sing a song, and let that story fly,
And leave it to the rest to wonder why.

XXIII

The rumor starts off slowly, then behold!
The ladies blush, the men just stop and stare—
Would he? Should he? Could he be that old?
And of the better half—Is she aware?

What difference does it make? Pray, tell me so—
Come give a better reason or let it go.³

XXIV

You see, it's hard for those to justify
The story they relay, from whence it came—
From so-and-so, so surely 'tain't no lie.
Yet so-and-so and lie are much the same!

But when a gossip's found, they look surprised,
And merely cast the blame as—ill-advised.

XXV

Regardless who you are, or what you do—
No doubt you've played this tittle-tattle game,
Of what's created, all this ballyhoo
Will never give you any claim to fame.

Of yesteryear, the culprit would be hung,
So bit one's lips, or better bit the tongue.

XXVI

O' let the truth play too and set it free!
Please—What's a little honesty to play?
Surely it is something that you see
Which complicates the matters—all they say.

Let it be, set it free—Thy will be done,
And let the bastards burn o'er stories spun.

XXVII

Responsibility lies in the rumor,
So many things are crippled in its wake,
Regardless of your lack of sense of humor,
Some hit the mark, and others give or take.

Yet other points can cause ostracization—
Some others still, a straight path to damnation.

XXVIII

Amusements people play to pass the time
Are varied, some according to the season,
Some goad the sainted breath from cloudless climes
For no apparent purpose, rime or reason.

A funny thing, the human sense of humor—
Appeals to each consumer, roomer, boomer.

XXIX

The narkiness of some is quite absurd,
The lengths they go to seek a form of vengeance,
Not taking kindly to another's word,
Intent in making sure there is repentance.

From either side, the point of schadenfreude
Takes precedence, and somewhat paranoide.⁴

XXX

But o' the fun, it really is a treat
To see the ruffled feathers and the spite
Come to a head as sulky moods compete
With hopes of kindred enemy benight.

The scowl is priceless, threats with biting thumbs,⁵
And all that's left? To see which threat becomes!

XXXI

The criticism of a person's looks,
In what they wear, or in their mean appearance,
Has filled a thousand, if not a million books,
But citing them would take some perseverance.

It's easy to pretend we are the better—
More difficult to carry off trend-setter!

XXXII

But dress is only one part of the jeer,
And physical taunts, the lowest of the low.
The law is nonexistent, none adhere
To holy books, the hypocrite's Dutch hoe.⁶

The harm? Plain as the nose upon your face.
Results? The shame, disgust and pure disgrace!

XXXIII

Morals, morals, morals—What are morals?
Does anybody know what they are for?
A lesson? Right or wrong? The tarnished laurels!
No longer any meaning anymore.
 The line ‘tween right and wrong a stipple gray—
 Those artful lies on conscience heavy weigh.

XXXIV

Ha! Speaking of morals, a politician
Has none! But does that come as a surprise?
A firm prerequisite and in addition,
No capability to compromise.
 The definition of a parasite—
 No chance of calling one of them contrite.

XXXV

The fact these fools would try to govern nations
Flies in the face of logic why we let them.
They say they understand, but in relation
To how the people live, we should condemn ‘em!
 Democracy died out with ancient Greeks—
 The people’s voice—the voice that Silence seeks.⁷

XXXVI

A rumor has it—Politicians lie!
But is it really rumor? Here’s the rub—
Their wages paid by us are far too high!
Who would have thought, and how—and win the drub.
 Yet what we always get are broken promises—
 Although they’ve no idea just what a promise is.

XXXVII

Of habits, speak of habits!—O' you jest!
Annoyances that make us who we are.
One cannot do without them or contest
The fact that we indulge them. How bizarre!
Some habits are disgusting, 'tis a fact—
And they're the ones that always will impact.

XXXVIII

Now what say you? Will habits do me in?
Depends upon the habit that you covet.
Not every habit is a deadly sin—
As for a certain habit, you may love it!
The fact remains that there are those who will
Always find a reason for the kill.⁸

XXXIX

For most a habit borders eccentricity,⁹
A quirky thing or action that is done.
It hasn't much to do with your ethnicity,
However, one can't say there isn't one.
A habit mayn't develop into rumor,
But will appeal to someone's sense of humor.

XL

A rumor has it—Where you live is crucial!
Whether it is or not is for debate.
Disdain the looks and O'—those lips protrusile,¹⁰
Bordering on dislike, inwardly do prate.
A touch of jealousy will top it off,
Resulting in the semblance of a toff.

XLI

In lowly slums or high upon the hill,
Inhabitants will talk about the other—
The highs and lows become a dirge-filled trill
That permeates the air, and seeks its shudder.
A shiver down the spine, just what we need
Reminding us of Jealousy and Greed.

XLII

Can character be judged by our abode?
Does where we live reflect persona fair?
As circumstances have it, we're bestowed
With attributes pertaining to our lair.
Accustomed to the way we have to live,
Not always choice, and yet not all forgive.

XLIII

A rumor has it—Attitude is choice.
The way we treat each other—With respect?
No highfalutin aspects in your voice
Would lessen every chance of being decked!
Depends on education? Maybe so,
But highfalutin hits a little low.

XLIV

Who believes in upper and lower class?
Such things exist, a history book will show.
But still today, the class will never pass—
Acceptance 'tween the two is full of woe.
When parents are well off, take heed, beware
Of spoilt brats that haven't any care.

XLV

Now how is one who's thought as antisocial
Fit into pleasantry and social being?
Perhaps their lack of presence is ambrosial,
Akin to never hearing but to seeing.
 Considering the rumors running rife,
 They much prefer the quieter side of life.

XLVI

But people think these people are quite odd—
By not participating in the throes
Of gossip or to give the casual nod—
Ha!—Silence is much better than oppose.
 For each and every kind there is another
 Ignoring gossip rather than discover!

XLVII

Of course the rumor, dangerous may be,
To get one's way and bring the other down.
Conniving every way for what they see
Is easiest to win the cherished crown.
 It matters not if what is said is true,
 But what is one who's innocent to do?

XLVIII

Well, one may run or one may hide and try,
And hope that what is said will fall away,
To fade into obscurity and die,
And leave one smelling roses lest belay.
 The chances of this happening are slim—
 Not in your life, and never at a whim.

XLIX

The curse of rumor, very much like fiction,
Will entertain the masses to a point.
Regardless of the motive or infliction,
The rumor monger will the horde anoint.
Ye hypocrite! The likes that visit churches,
Are hoping for forgiveness re: asperges.¹¹

L

If one is to believe in all that's said,
There's very little to believe at all—
So best beware the waters that we tread,
Else sink into the doldrums, walk or crawl.
The best advice that's given on the day—
What's said is done. It's best to walk away.

LI

Throughout the sordid history of mankind,
The rumor has appeared in different forms,
And people make them up when so inclined
To ridicule, insult those 'gainst the norms.
What is the fascination of the stories
That come to us in different categories?

LII

By word of mouth, more so the lying tongue—
The green-eyed monster, Jealousy runs rife,
And seeks the hapless victims from among
The many who possess a better life.
A matter of opinion which is better—
What is, is in the eyes of each green rhetor.¹²

LIII

Can one defeat the rumor? What is best?
To laugh it off and silently pretend
We couldn't give a toss and that we're blessed,
And in a way this rumor to befriend?
Perhaps the rumor turns to your advantage,
And in the end, a justified apanage.¹³

LIV

A rumor has it—Yes it always will,
Regardless of your station in these times.
Eventually the truth will finally spill,
And vindicate you from the so-called crimes.
But you're the one who's really in the know—
The best advice we have is: Let it go!

— DIVERSIONS —

CRUEL SOCIETY

.1.

O' Night's refrain! Come repetition! Nay—
The darkness comes, its hand placed n'er the same.
Its pat on shoulder ushers off the day,
In sense—Congratulations on the game!
But recognition—Well, what's in the name?
In truth it doesn't matter any more—
For sick or healthy, wealthy or the poor!

.2.

Obscurities that manifest at night,
Create confusion in a bitter mind—
Inclined to bitterness? Somewhat delight!
Perhaps unfettered—Everyone I find?
From time to time, they're always in a bind—
Concerned with what society will think,
As reputation teeters on the brink.

.3.

When things seem comfortable—deceived we are—
Complacency has run its wicked way,
And crippled now, one cannot run too far,
For they will catch you—Cruel Society.¹⁴
Regardless what it is or what they say—
It matters not, since Truth has long since died,
And now it's left to others—How they lied!

.4.

To wonder why? For what it's really worth?
I say what is the point? They know not why.
Yet editors sit round, increasing girth,

And wave it on with passions of a sigh.
But Truth it seems can only sneak on by
Lest be discovered by the seething herd.
Now move on quickly friend, and not a word.

.5.

How Understanding flees the bloodied scene,
And flights of Fancy speak in place for thee—
These calculated thoughts now craft my mien,
And take me back to where I loathe to be!
Yet O' the blind! Through my eyes they shan't see
Nor will they ever hear all that I know—
The touch of Silence! Let my memory go!

.6.

But what have I of Past's resurgence gained?
Of fact and fiction? Both meld into one—
The hypocrites revolt—the cursed and blamed
Ignore the many rumors idly spun.
“See those gallows? That's where Truth was hung!
The smell of blood, and all came out to see.
Yet none would lift a hand!”—cried Memory.

.7.

I nodded in acknowledgement and thought—
Does anything I do, a difference make?
Predestination? People got me caught,
Just maybe there's a little give and take.
Ah, then I change my mind—For Jesus' sake!
The battle-cry of all forsaken souls
Who shovel shit to fill forgotten holes—

.8.

The sanguine sight of memory's failing chant,
A blurred vision of a pantomime.
To trap inside or freedom freely grant,
And listen to the gory church bells chime.
Though all's a fascination—given time,
The cast of players fan the blazing stage—
Collapse incensed, and curse this poet's rage.

.9.

How can it be that Truth could e'er prevail,
When fools dictate the role of common man?
For thirty silver pieces, Truth's for sale,
And only those who gamble understand.
Defend against them now! For if we ran
Like timid sheep and bleat our heart's decree—
Once more 'tis only slaughter—You and me.

.10.

Our cursèd, sinful nature n'er repents.
We never learn—repeat ills many-fold—
At times 'tis true, we have such good intents,
But fail, and many times—Truth? Never told.
Soon to our detriment, left in the cold
And heartless world—This cruel society,
But we together stand, yes—You and me.

CATS

on Trousers

With cats around, one's trousers can't be black—

In fact, it does not matter what the color,
Their hair or fur, your trousers will attract,

Thus leaving others think you live in squalor.
But what's the matter? Hair and fur of cats—
Your cat won't care when donning noble hats.

“Ha! Noble hats you say—That does seem strange

That cats should wear a hat of any type!”

Hats help them fluff their fur and rearrange

Their grooming habits, avoiding all the hype.

And noble cats wear noble hats abroad—

Their breeding dictates those they can afford.

“That's quite absurd, cats don't wear hats at all!”

Perhaps they do or don't. That's how it goes.

The local park or going to the mall—

Is it made up? But hey! One never knows.

A cat will do, and do as cats will like,

And maybe ride a scooter or a bike!

They love to sit and lay, to lay and sit

On laps of whom they find are quite confusing—

To wiggle there, to snuggle here to fit,

And find their human's actions quite amusing.

For reasons, humans think they own a cat,

But cats know what the truth is—That's a fact!

For cats are never owned by anyone,
But people say this pet, this cat is theirs—
The cat knows who is boss. When all is done,
They do whatever they like—no qualms, no cares.
They feed, they groom—What so-called owners do,
They clean the litter-box! So who owns who?

I know a cat—a noble cat at that.
A very fluffy one I'd have to say—
A very naughty one, and loves my hat,
And likes to sit inside it every day.
A fur-lined hat. What more could I ask for?
To put it on, and hair—I have much more!

But trousers are the problem, that's a fact—
The shedding of her hair of gray and white,
It makes me wonder—How much less a cat
Is underneath the coat? It isn't right
That so much hair (or fur) is left behind,
And yet she looks the same. She doesn't mind.

'Cos sharing is all caring for a cat—
And it should be an honor for the treat,
To add a little something, something that
Impresses other people that we meet.
But heading down the street—shuffle and dance,
Removing hair from the seat of your pants.¹⁵

Amazing how it's present everywhere.
It seems invisible, but there's so much,
And where they leave it, cats don't really care—
It fixes on you at the slightest touch.
“Hey what's the fuss?” The cat will sit and stare,
And shed some more, completely unaware.

I think: Should I stop wearing trousers black?

Perhaps a cream or white may prove the better.

But then I find the lighter colors lack

That something that would suit me to the letter.

What that something is, I never know—

Have fun will travel, everywhere I go.

METER IS ORGANIZED RHYTHM

Too many words?
bardic prattle,
and tell-tale tattle,
peddler of pentameter—
pentameter preacher.

If I believed in everything I've heard—
a fool for a teacher
of all things absurd—
the metrical, the meter.

About what? of the ear—
and the words | that we hear
(anapestic no doubt)

So what's it about?

The mood, a thought
a feeling, expression
what should not, but ought
for rhythmic support
to make an impression
progression
confession
about what is metrically sought.

NEVER FORCE THE METER

My desk is kept in a minimal way.

Apart from being true! The line may sound or show that there is something iambus-pentametric about it. And yes, there is some iambicity—to a point.

In an attempt to force this line into iambic pentameter:

Mǔ dēs̄k | ǐs̄ kēpt | ǐn ā | mǐnī | mǎl wāy.

Everything appears to align, but we find that there are two words which make the delivery of the line very awkward. These are ‘a’ and ‘minimal’. To force the iambic pentameter requires an unnatural emphasis on ‘a’ and the second syllable ‘i’, **minimal** being *min-i-mal*. The natural stress would require less emphasis or stress on both of these since they consist of a shorter vowel sound. Just because there are ten syllables and an iambic start does not mean the line will be of iambic pentameter.

There is no disputing that the line starts with two iambs. However, the remainder of the line skips along quite quickly and quicker than three iambs would allow.

We would notice that the last six syllables are spoken quite quickly and in groups of three. This accords with the use of the anapest ([˘] [˘] ⁻):

ǐn ă mǐn | ǐmǎl wāy

Now we find the appropriate emphases on each of the syllables in the line.

It must be noted that this line would sit perfectly in a verse of iambic pentameter because the substitution of an anapest for an iamb is appropriate.

In saying this, it would appear then that line has only four feet. Well yes, but listen. Albeit only four prominent stresses, there is the illusion of five feet because it is of correct length and rhythm, and the readers sense of rhythm is not disturbed in any way.

Slight variations like this give a little more flair to a verse written to iambic pentameter, and provided the variation does not occur too often or in lines too closely together, the verse is still consider iambic pentameter.

The secret in reading is to never force the meter to something you want, or think it should be. The underlying abstract pattern is what guides the rhythm and the beauty of the poem. Naturally too, your choice and position of words!

A FOUNTAIN OF KNOWLEDGE

Parker, Sheaffer, Lamy or Pelikan—
What is your preference?
Well, what the helikan,
Everything written, appears the same!
What's in the name?
Is it a game?
Not much of a difference at the start
and who can tell?
Just as well.
But it doesnot help in writing better
perhaps the beginning of a letter
to send
to a friend
to see the face of the getter
would tend
to mend
a listless heart.

AND THE EYES BLINKED

And the eyes blinked—

In obedience with the norm.
What is expected by the herd.
Obedient to the word.
Altogether linked.
Cozy and warm.
Too scared to be different.
For what is the need?

And the eyes blinked—

And they all dranked.
As hope of resilience sinked.
In despair.
But why, and who would care?
Telepathically sent.
To sow the seed.

And the eyes blinked—

WILD MEN

Wild men: unkempt and unshaven,
stand on corners—and smile.

Some, a toothless smile of pretense.
Wild dirges they sing
and—watch you for a while.

It makes no sense—
Wondering how they might be you,
in society's haven.

What could they do?
All is lost—
They lost it years ago.
And the cost?
They know—

Was everything.

THE WANDERER

A Philosophical Excursion

I

The Wanderer am I, I wander far—
Throughout the land that dwells within my mind,
But as for some, they know not who they are:
A species same? Perhaps some other kind.
Why can't they see? Perhaps it is they're blind!
They cannot comprehend their own surround,
Their conscience mingles tightly in a bind.
And though with open eyes, they look around—
Ill-fate it is, with eyes that search the barren ground.

II

In troubled times, they utter no defense
To shield themselves from common words of pain,
Continue on as if there's no offense—
A sign to all, the world has gone insane.
Pathetic in excuse, does madness reign?
Admit defeat and trouble me no more!
Yet how plutonic, bravery to feign—
Quoting scripture verses: Watch them pour
As like the one who beckons me to ope the door.

III

So knock, it shall be opened up to you,
But ask yourself: What are you knocking for?
If it is given up, what will you do?
Perhaps it is, you'll curse the evermore!
You knock without a reason at this door—
You only knock because you have been told.
No other reason, only to implore,

To give you what you think is precious gold.
This gold, a gift, a promised message to unfold.

IV

For you, your greed and lust are unsurpassed
By your desire for eternity.
You want to take and live the ever-last,
Oh pride and ego—Oh, the vanity!
The silent sounds that seek insanity
Persist and thus a mind that splits in two
To wallow in the human cavity.
You wonder, given time, what to pursue
And ultimately cease: For what is there to do?

V

In solitude, we contemplate alone,
Such things that you and I can only dream,
And lazily we lie about and moan
About the things that we may care to deem
As pointless occupation. It will seem
A wasted effort much to be abused.
At other times, these pensive thoughts will teem,
Resulting in a mindset most confused.
Henceforth, reluctantly we say that we're bemused!

VI

But other thoughts may come to us amid
These wanton and simplistic times and hours,
And never knowing quite what was we did
Until that blessed time when genius flowers.
Yet what is it from these a brave man cowers?
To run and hide and be content with naught—
To find another takes the prize and sours
The victory of what was ours and ought

To have been ours! Too late—A melancholic thought.

VII

“Ah! So melancholic.” You may say.

“‘Tis surely not the end to all we know!”

How life demands this symptom to decay—

For sullen thoughts are not the way to go.

But can you answer me: From whence they blow?

What causes questions? How they come about -

The reason that provokes them. Just for show?

Now choose your actions well, without a doubt,

‘Tis true, you must endure the pain or go without.

VIII

Now deep within the human mind there lies

An untapped source of knowledge, rare and wild.

The ‘a priori’ origin defies

Our learnt reactions bought on as a child.

And though you can't remember all those filed

And pointless memories though back then they seemed

To guide and groom, perhaps they even styled

What was to come? Is this what God has deemed?

Perchance, it may be something more to be redeemed.

IX

These tempered thoughts are vanquished now and then

For something pleasing; more to greet the eyes,

Where knowledge and sensation both open

A deeper secret, wakened where it lies.

A timid yawn, a smile, that which belies

A hidden contemplation of the soul.

But steadily our conscience soon denies—

What was, what is, what will be mankind's goal.

Behold! The angel comes to tip your censured bowl.

X

In innocence we stand before the sun,
Our source of life and golden is the sight,
Prepares a celebration for the one
Who dares to rise and bid farewell the night.
Its golden rays stretch out from Heaven's height
And Zarathustra's star, a warm embrace,
To shower down, illuminate with light.
Oh, vanquish all the realm of time and space.
Great Star! Oh how you look upon us with your grace.

XI

All feelings unexpected stir within
Our troubled souls. In many ways we're caught
By indecision, dark and mortal sin,
But how do we behave the way we ought,
When 'pon ourselves this guilt and shame we bought?
We strive for betterment; a great ideal,
Yet what we have to show each other's naught!
It's what we do that dictates how we feel
And yes, there's man's interpretation. What is real?

XII

Of what we see—Reality we say.
That something cannot be, what isn't there—
And steeped in this, we move throughout the day
Taking for granted, life without a care.
Yet of our troubled souls we dare not bare
The scars, the truth and what we try to hide.
With glassy eyes we blink, we look and stare,
And think of all the instances we lied.
Now who have we deceived 'mong those who've lived and died?

XIII

Of what is right or wrong—Can we be sure?
Our fickle laws bid truth a fond farewell.
Authority has failed to find a cure;
Our just reward resembles living hell!
And now there comes the Wanderer to tell
Of his interpretation—call it Life
And with him comes the Shadow bent to quell
The superstitious rumors running rife.
So listen well, behold their sacrificial knife.

XIV

To cut away all notion of the rise
Of doctrine that mankind has held so dear,
And yet he always fails to realize,
Indoctrination soon promotes his fear.
But those who have an ear, oh let them hear
Both Wanderer and Shadow present come,
To tell of other woes that are so near,
To those not only possessed by some
But all. The truth will strike all unbelievers dumb!

XV

The Wanderer and the Shadow come to form
A pair that earthly climes will never part,
And through the lightning, thunder of the storm,
They soothe the madness and the racing heart
That in its anxiousness would feign to start,
A feeling now synonymous with pain
And so persuade all terrors to depart,
To comfort, love and dote, release the strain
Of it. The truth arrives amidst the pouring rain.

XVI

Now of their task? It is to educate
The ones that think that they are knowers all.
Perhaps to ponder or to meditate
On what is Life; to heed the beckoned call.
Perhaps a calling similar to Saul—
A blinding light enabled them to see,
Reducing all their efforts to a crawl
And rise as one they really ought to be.
This pair, they wander and they shadow by decree.

XVII

A moralistic view, we have of life,
All right and wrong, what's more, it's good and bad.
No matter what we do, the problem's rife
As we closely examine what we had.
Our poor justification sends us mad
To think of valid reasons to behold,
For why we should be happy, never sad
With what we have created, bound and sold
To everyone—Its value cherished more than gold.

XVIII

We have an understanding of the law,
But how we implement it can be strange,
We like to make comparisons before,
And take the time to implement the change.
However, the effects have greater range
Affecting different people different ways,
But dare we take the time to rearrange
The laws? The shock, the horror and the daze
Would startle people all, and some would say—Amaze.

XIX

For higher always rules the lower caste,
Opportunistic victors of the law,
Steadfast, to make the ruling family last,
To satisfy their greed for evermore.
Yet even through their squinted eyes they saw
The travesty and horror of their reign,
They never once neglected to implore,—
Their allies give, support their selfish gain.
They suck the life from all, and never bear the pain.

XX

With secrets quietly sleeping in the dark,
The worst of things apparent in the night,
All fantasies and wantings hit their mark
And reinforce addiction to their plight.
Behold! Some grotesque but yet welcomed sight
Has now appeared within their visions cruel,
And even though it doesn't seem quite right,
They'll implement their plans as like the fool,
And so, it now appears that good has lost the duel.

XXI

Religiously we fight for what is good,
But that interpretation may be flawed,
Yet what it is we do and what we should
Are different things and often stay ignored.
Now some will choose to live their own accord,
Forgetting those who battled once before,
And though they may present them self as lord,
The masses will detest, revolt, abhor
Their very presence and them curse forever more.

XXII

In saintly robes they stand and preach on high,
The grace of God bestowed on lesser men,
With dedicated lemmings passing by
Like little chicks around the mother hen.
A blessing here, a blessing there and then
The consummation of religious rite,
And more won't realize their fate 'til when
The crucifix is taken from their sight.
It's now that man has power over God and might.

XXIII

Yet what is God to people who've been told
That God controls their every waking hour?
It seems to them their souls have now been sold,
To tinker and amuse with godly power.
Predestination reigns and good men cower
Before a God who doesn't seem to care.
And so, belief and faith begin to sour,
Then suddenly religion seems unfair—
They justify their worth and seal it with a prayer.

XXIV

It makes one wonder who has most, the power.
Is't God or is it man? I wonder why
They question what was the creature hour
And come to no solution. How they try.
But man appears, that he dictates on high
To those believing plebs so earthly bound.
Now should we just accept this with a sigh,
And be contented with what is around?
The question never answered; poignantly no sound.

XXV

Now what has man created for himself?
A place to keep his innermost desires,
Where opportunity involves one's self
And everything he secretly acquires.
Yet there is one who constantly admires
His vain attempts to have his kingdom come,
And though his friends are disreputed liars,
He charms the inner sanctity of some,
A rule unto himself; unwritten rule of thumb.

XXVI

In friendship does the enemy come forth,
As if perchance all prior deeds annulled.
And as the borealis of the north,
So starry eyed, but with his conscience dulled.
And though with contemplation may have mulled
O'r many avenues that he would take
With some considered, others still are culled
Depending whose advantage is at stake.
A lesson learnt? Some say— Please try— For Heaven's sake.

XXVII

In visions softly sifting through the night,
Upon the giant's shoulders, here I stand,
An earthly view, beholden is the sight
With many things awaiting my command.
But what would earthly consciences demand,
If they are unaware of what it takes,
To take control of graduated sand
That flows in glass? The tempered vial breaks
And sand, the sand that flows, a timeless river makes.

XXVIII

The life of man is often like the flame,
The flame of dwindling candles in the dark.
A light that flickers softly to reclaim
Its will to live; it burns to make its mark.
Amidst their likeness, all are burning stark,
Their nakedness is hidden from their eyes,
As souls depart, a journey to embark
Into unknown days filled with surprise—
The unexpected question our conscience denies.

XXIX

Our purpose is not known at this time,
And time it seems has tightened its firm hold
On us to capture what we think sublime,
For time, it marches on from young to old.
To face our death is something to behold,
For we cannot accept it on its terms.
Some say its chance, for others its foretold,
Some say our grasp is loose and so confirms
Our flesh to dust, but first our body's food for worms.

XXX

Some make the effort to hold onto youth,
But youth is merely passing by our way.
Some try to lie and so ignore the truth
That they will age and finally die one day.
And yet they 'tempt to keep their age at bay
And hope to live on for eternity.
These fools are lost, regardless what they say,
They'll fade away into anonymity.
Oh life, oh pride, oh my! Behold our vanity!

XXXI

Our stubborn will, in solitude concede
That we no longer qualify to lie
To all, ourselves and so this life impede
Its path. To stop events that go awry?
A hopeless thought begets a hapless sigh
As we consider notions of defeat.
We sit with head in hands and wonder why
We harbor thoughts of evil and deceit,
And in some morbid way, believe we are complete.

XXXII

But shallow is our being, paper thin,
So shallow that we're mostly unaware,
Defiled by wicked ways and mortal sin,
So used to it that we don't even care.
We look into our mirrored life and stare,
With glassy eyes no longer filled with life,
A life that we thought covered; now it's bare,
But bareness doesn't cover what is rife.
Internally we fight through all our pain and strife.

XXXIII

Yet in our darkness, absent from the light,
The Shadow lurks, yet striving to come clear,
But 'fore the Shadow's presence, flee the night
That lives. The future for us coming near.
But everything in life we hold so dear
Is easily destroyed without a thought,
And in an instant, lo! The Shadow's here,
And once again, he follows as he ought.
Rekindles breath of life, again the Shadow's caught.

XXXIV

The Shadow always follows, never harms
The way we look at life or how we change,
Yet we will wander and forget his charms
That echo in our footsteps with a strange
But common song; its verse to rearrange
Each word, each note, a cadence in its fall—
To limit life? To limit vocal range?
To drag our life, and music, to a crawl?
The Shadow, always present—There for one and all!

THE TALE OF PABLO POE

Introductory Stanzas

—1—

A rogue by nature, fiendish in his ways,
He claims the world's his oyster —May well be,
But sycophant describes his crude displays,
And what he thinks is not what others see.
His life is such, to wile away the days
In leisure, irresponsible and free—
Larking or concocting here and there,
This mischief-maker idle, not a care.

—2—

His little secrets whispered in the night,
The likes that no-one hears, (but only he),
Though without malice, doesn't make them right,
No feigned pretense or heartfelt sympathy
Would dare to cross his furrowed brow despite
The havoc he may cause for you and me.
Pernicious he may be, but here's the truth;
The indiscretions of an idle youth.

—3—

Throw caution to the winds! The saying goes,
But with this act, a carelessness may rise.
And of the final act? Well—no-one knows
Until the flame is held before our eyes—
A flickering flame! and apprehension grows;
But what of it? The truth in harbored lies?
To take the chance is all that we can do:
Be honest to yourself, to self be true.

—4—

Yet honesty is not a simple thing,
 Though many know its motives to be true—
Religion's bells the pious often ring,
 But outside sacristies, the devils do
Whatever they like and in their mirth they sing
 A happy tune of love and skies of blue!
O' let the fiends have fun!—We hear them croon.
Though harmless, what is not, will come quite soon.

—5—

What of this guy? A gentleman or lout,
 Who always dons the smile of friendship first
With little knowledge what it's all about,
 Though popularity would quench his thirst!
No other motive? Nay, there is no doubt
 Of self-importance. Ego leaves him cursed!
But what of words? Some moving, some sublime—
Originality? He's not the time!

—6—

If ever there were stories to be thought
 Of romance, courting ladies or a maid;
The proper disposition as one's taught
 To tarry not and never be waylaid
Else run the risk of justly being caught,
 And through the murkiness of rumor wade.
But stories right or wrong, the truth beside—
The chances are, the fiend has probably lied!

—7—

A joke perhaps? But say it isn't so!

The voice that tends to laugh behind your back
In muffled tones so no-one else will know,
And quickly dissipate—avoid the flak
Of condescension, moving with the flow
Of crude absurdities or pointed crack!
But lo! If words were fired in their direction,
Be sure they would insist on some correction!

—8—

Yet who would act as such? To cast the blame
Upon an innocent and charming sprite.
And who? You ask—To offer up his name,
May seem a little forward, not quite right,
But then again, we too can play his game
Regardless of the name he's called—That's hight!
The man, his words are better known by some,
But of his works? Who knows what will become.

—9—

Now if we spare a glance across the vale,
A little house and even smaller room,
A figure sits, content to tell a tale
About his loveless life (a tale of gloom).
His ship has sunk before it set a sail,
And now he settles for impending doom.
But that is only one part of his life—
(No wonder he could never take a wife!)

So here we are, the prologue nearly done,
 (An introduction by another name),
With little jeers and sneers all meant in fun,
 No need to cast dispersion or to blame
A solitary figure, never one,
 Will history some time recount his fame?
Read on my learned friend, read if you dare—
This tale may well be more than you can bear!

—NOTES—

RUMOR HAS IT

[1] [Stanza XIV, line 5](#):

The Game of Woe! Pray tell who is to blame?

As opposed to *The Game of Life*. Some people's life is simply woe, or at least how they like it to be.

[2] [Stanza XVI, line 6](#):

Like "Childe Harold" with Spenser's rime.

Refers to Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* which he wrote using *Spenserian stanzas*. Spenserian stanzas are a nine-line stanza with the rime scheme ababbcbcc. The last line is a very awkward *Alexandrine* or in English poetry, an *iambic hexameter*.

[3] [Stanza XXIII, line 6](#):

Come give a better reason or let it go.

This line has eleven syllables, but sounds correct when read. The word *better* is read quickly and is actually an *amphibrach* for *iamb* substitution, with *reason* being a *trochee* for *iamb* substitution.

Cōme gīve | ă bēttĕr | rēasōn | őr lēt | ĭt gō.

[4] [Stanza XXIX, lines 5 & 6](#):

From either side, the point of schadenfreude

Takes precedence, and somewhat paranoide.

Schadenfreude (shaa·duhn·froy·duh) means to derive pleasure from someone else's misfortune. The English equivalent of this German word would be *epicaricacy*. It just doesn't have that sinister sound it. *Paranoide* is simply making the rime with *schadenfreude*.

[5] [Stanza XXX, line 5:](#)

The scowl is priceless, threats with biting thumbs—

Biting thumbs or to *bite one's thumb* was considered an insult or challenge to fight in Elizabethan England. This was accomplished by placing the thumbnail under the top front teeth and moving the thumb forward producing a clicking sound. How rude!

[6] [Stanza XXXII, line 4:](#)

To holy books, the hypocrite's Dutch hoe.

The Dutch hoe is a hoe that is used to push rather than pull.

[7] [Stanza XXXV, line 6:](#)

The people's voice—the voice that Silence seeks.

The people's voice was changed back to English for clarity of the line's message. At one point it was *vox populi*, likely more common but did not go with Greek. However, *I foní tou laou* is not obvious and *Η φωνή του λαού* even less so. It is also possible that this would not be in the correct context.

[8] [Stanza XXXVIII, line 6:](#)

Always find a reason for the kill.

This line is *clipped*, hence it starting with the stressed syllable.

^ Āl | wǎys fīnd | ǎ rēa | sǒn fōr | thĕ kīll.

[9] [Stanza XXXIX, lines 1 & 3](#):

**For most a habit borders eccentricity,
A quirky thing or action that is done.
It hasn't much to do with your ethnicity,
However, one can't say there isn't one.**

Both of these lines are those obnoxious *hexameters*, but in this case they are not as obnoxious as they could be if they appeared at the end of a stanza. The meld quite delightfully here!

[10] [Stanza XL, line 3](#):

Disdain the looks and O' — those lips protrusile,

Protrusile means capable of being thrust forward, as the tongue but in this case, the lips more pursed as an expression of disapproval. So pursed and thrust forward!

[11] [Stanza XLIX, line 6](#):

Are hoping for forgiveness re: asperges.

Asperges (not aspergers) is the rite of sprinkling a congregation with holy water. Normally done before the principal Mass on Sunday.

[12] [Stanza LII, line 6](#):

What is, is in the eyes of each green rhetor.

Rhetor is a teacher of rhetoric, an orator. Making the rime with *better* from line 5.

[13] [Stanza LIII, line 6](#):

And in the end. a justified apanage.

Apanage (sometimes *appanage*) is a rightful endowment, privilege or grant.

CRUEL SOCIETY

[14] [Stanza 3, line 4](#):

For they will catch you—Cruel Societay.

Making the rime with *way* and *say*. May also have a somewhat southern appeal.

CATS

[15] [Eighth Stanza, line 6](#):

Removing hair from the seat of your pants.

This line seems very awkward in a first reading. The previous line can be pseudo-iambic toward the end, but skips along a little differently leading into a different rhythm for this last line. Note that this line could well be forced iambic, but there will be very unwanted promoted stress on *the* and *of*.

Rēmōv | ĩng hāir | frōm **thē** | sēat **ōf** | yōur pānts.

These two words are doing what they have been metrically assigned, but speech-wise it is nonsense. The result is very mechanical.

We can hear that the first two feet are definitely iambs. What remains of the line are two anapests creating a faster but pleasant finish.

Rēmōv | ĩng hāir | frōm thĕ sĕat | ōf yōur pānts.

and even so, these four feet give the illusion of five and will sit very well in the stanza. Pre-reading is always suggested for any poem, especially if you intend to read it out loud to yourself or others.

STRUCTURED FORMS

RUMOR HAS IT

Venus and Adonis Stanza

This stanza is named after that used by William Shakespeare in his poem of the same name. It is written to *iambic pentameter* with the rime scheme *ababcc*.

CRUEL SOCIETY

Rime Royal

Rumor has it that this was a favorite of Chaucer. Seven lines with the rime scheme *ababbcc* using *iambic pentameter*. Each stanza could be either a quatrain and tercet or tercet and two couplets. But! There are no fixed rules, merely suggestions.

CATS

Venus and Adonis Stanza

As explained earlier. The difference being the indented lines.

THE WANDERER

Spenserian Stanzas

These are a nine-line stanzas according to the rime scheme of *ababbcbcc*. The first eight lines are written to *iambic pentameter*, and the final line is one of those obnoxious *English-style-Alexandrines*. You would be better to call it *iambic hexameter*.

THE TALE OF PABLO POE

Ottava Rima

An eight-line stanza according to the rime scheme of *abababcc*. It is written in *iambic pentameter*, and can be used for both serious and light subjects. In most cases, the structure leads itself to a more lively exposition.