

Melville Songs (2010)  
poems by Herman Melville

1. The Ravaged Villa

In shards the sylvan vases lie,  
    Their links of dance undone,  
And brambles wither by thy brim,  
    Choked fountain of the sun!  
The spider in the laurel spins,  
    The weed exiles the flower;  
And, flung to kiln, Apollo's bust  
    Makes lime for Mammon's tower.

2. The Garden of Metrodorus

The Athenians mark the moss-grown gate  
And hedge untrimmed that hides the haven  
green:

    And who keeps here his quiet state?  
    And shares he sad or happy fate  
Where never footpath to the gate is seen?

Here none come forth, here none go in,  
Here silence strange, and dumb seclusion  
dwell:

    Content from loneliness who may win?  
    And is this stillness peace or sin  
Which noteless thus apart can keep its dell?

3. The Weaver

For years within a mud-built room  
For Arva's shrine he weaves a shawl,  
Lone wight, and at a lonely loom,  
His busy shadow on the wall.

The face is pinched, the form is bent,  
No pastime knows he nor the wine,  
Recluse he lives and abstinent  
Who weaves for Arva's shrine.

4. Monody

To have known him, to have loved him  
    After loneliness long;  
And then to be estranged in life,  
    And neither in the wrong;  
And now for death to set his seal—  
    Ease me, a little ease, my song!

By wintry hills his hermit mound  
    The sheeted snow-drifts drape,  
And houseless there the snow-bird flits  
    Beneath the fir-trees' crape:  
Glazed now with ice the cloistral vine  
    That hid the shyest grape.

5. Shelley's Vision

Wandering late by morning seas  
When my heart with pain was low—  
Hate the censor pelted me—  
Deject I saw my shadow go.

In elf-caprice of bitter tone  
I too would pelt the pelted one:  
At my shadow I cast a stone.

When lo, upon that sun-lit ground  
I saw the quivering phantom take  
The likeness of St. Stephen crowned:  
Then did self-reverence awake.

6. C \_\_\_\_'s Lament

How lovely was the light of heaven,  
What angels leaned from out the sky  
In years when youth was more than wine  
And man and nature seemed divine  
Ere yet I felt that youth must die.

Ere yet I felt that youth must die  
How insubstantial looked the earth,  
Aladdin-land! in each advance,  
Or here or there, a new romance;  
I never dreamed would come a dearth.

And nothing then but had its worth,  
Even pain. Yes, pleasure still and pain  
In quick reaction made of life  
A lovers' quarrel, happy strife  
In youth that never comes again.

But will youth never come again?  
Even to his grave-bed has he gone,  
And left me lone to wake by night  
With heavy heart that erst was light?  
O, lay it at his head— a stone!

7. Misgivings

When ocean-clouds over inland hills  
Sweep storming in late autumn brown,  
And horror the sodden valley fills,  
And the spire falls crashing in the town,  
I muse upon my country's ills—  
The tempest burning from the waste of Time  
On the world's fairest hope linked with man's  
foulest crime.

Nature's dark side is heeded now—  
(Ah! optimist-cheer disheartened flown)—  
A child may read the moody brow  
Of yon black mountain lone.  
With shouts the torrents down the gorges go,  
And storms are formed behind the storms  
we feel:  
The hemlock shakes in the rafter, the oak in  
the driving keel.