

# Music In Shakespeare

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## 要旨

音のない詩は音のない音楽のようなものである。この論文は“poetry is music”（「詩は音楽である」）とはどういうことかを論じたものである。‘music’とは「ミューズ（詩の女神）」という意味である。つまり、詩とは詩人の神秘的体験であり、もともと神話を題材にした劇の形をしていた。仮面やコスチュームをつけて歌ったり、演奏したり、踊ったりした。‘verse’（韻文・詩歌）とか‘strophe’（ギリシャ劇のコロスで歌う歌）という言葉の語源もこのことと関係しており、どちらも輪を描いて踊ること、つまり「廻る」という意味から来ている。小論では古代ギリシャの踊りとバリ島の踊りとを比較し、詩がその効力を発揮するためには、朗唱がいかに大切かを例証しようとした。また小論で論者はシェイクスピア劇に出てくる歌を詳細に分析しその神話的な内容、および16世紀から20世紀までの作曲家たちがつけた曲についても論じた。それらの歌はどのような演劇の内容をもっているのか。作者が意図したことを、正確にそして効果的に実現するためには、それらの歌が役者や歌手によってどのように解釈されるべきか等々。小論で扱った作品は『十二夜』、『ハムレット』、『お気に召すまま』、『あらし』および『真夏の夜の夢』である。

## Poetry is Drama

Traditional drama tells a mythological story; the action is presented in musical form, in singing and dancing. This is true in Japan as it is in Africa today. In a village Kecak ceremony in Bali, the story is told antiphonally by two choruses, fifty men in each with a choregos, the chorus leader who intones the story, while they reply with emotional responses. The action is mimed in dances performed by ‘actors’ in elaborate costumes and masks: the chorus chants, the actors dance. In Barong ritual theatre, the chorus is of dancers only: all is dance-mimed in elaborate masks and costumes to music from an orchestra without singing. Kecak is very like Ancient Greek Drama of 2500 years ago, from which our modern theatre derives: it was sung and danced by dithyrambic double choruses in an *orchestra*, Greek for dancing arena. Later, actors in masks were presented on the *scena* (a raised platform) to mime and, later again, sing about their feelings in elaborate verse. Opera, when invented c. 1600 AD in Venice, was very like Greek Drama.

Poetry meant story-telling in *verse*, which means *turning*—in a circular dance—in one direction then the other. The Greek term *strophe* had the same meaning as Latin *verse*, but used to mean antiphonal singing and dancing, alternating between one

chorus and the other. In strophic songs each strophe is sung to the same music. Poetry was intended to be sung or chanted (French for sung) and often mimed in dance. Traditional stories later became stock in trade of minstrels as *ballads-dances* in French. Ritual dance became religious ceremonies, accompanied by chanting, in all temples, Hindu, Buddhist, Shinto, Christian or Moslem. This was also the nature of Greek drama, which retold and reinterpreted ancient myths of an earlier religious system in celebration of the God Dionysus or Bacchus, in a festival that was notably licentious in nature. Music means *of the Muse*, a goddess who inspired writers of this poetry: there was some magical, mystical element in the creative process. No religious ceremonies in which music or chanting is not an essential part, along with ritual drama, are found anywhere.

All myths of all peoples were memorized in verse form, since they dated to hundreds of years before the invention of writing. Religious books were written in poetic verse; musical forms are easy to memorize by repetitive chanting. The Koran and the Jewish Torah, that became the Old Testament for Christians, had to be memorized by devotees, who did so by chanting the verses. The meaning of the verses became obscure in the sense of hidden, so that only those who were instructed should know their original meaning; or interpretations by priests to fit new religio-political purposes as they changed over centuries. The Creation myth of Adam and Eve provides the classic case, where the iconography of Canaanite myth is reinterpreted to meet the needs of a monotheist cult. Samson was reinterpreted as a mythical hero for the Jews as the myths of Heracles/Theseus were reinterpreted by conquering Greeks.

Originally, there was no separation of poetry from music. This has happened only in the last 2000 years. Even the narrative verses of Homer and Hesiod were sung (and probably mimed) like medieval ballads. Music today is a magical, dramatic experience, without words and relying entirely on pace, drama, melody, rhythmic excitement, harmonic and tonal colour. And we recognise that music has *dramatic content* through our emotional responses. We still recognize in Indo-European tradition that poetry is a form of music. We expect to hear all the elements of music: pulse, rhythm, pace (fast/slow), form, phrasing, tune, patterns of sound. *Silent poetry makes as much sense as silent music*. William Blake always sang poems that he wrote. As there are words, meaning is an important element, effective in a mystical way through images and/or tensions that relate to the emotional content and the intentions of the speaker. A poem as a song has *voice*; it must be spoken aloud for it to work as a poem, using the right voice, pace, intonation—changes of stress and pitch — with a sense of how sound and rhythm all combine to convey meaning,. Hence, it is impossible to change a poem into some prose equivalent just as we cannot say what a picture or a piece of orchestral music *means* in words. The examples from Shakespeare below make this clear.

Poetry is music in that it needs interpretation to live. Both music and poetry

are silent on the printed page; reading it wrongly can destroy its magic. We are aware of the importance of interpretation when verse is spoken or sung dramatically on stage. Like music and theatre the effect of a poem depends not only on the writer but on how it is interpreted or by whom, be it only the private reader. A.E. Housman, English poet at the turn of this century, claimed he recited a poem as he was shaving to test whether it made his bristles stand erect.

We know that each poem also has a *dramatic context*: it tells a story or comments on action, expresses the feelings of someone *in a personal situation* or as a reaction to experience. In order to read the poem, we have to try to understand the context – we must *be* the person who is speaking the poem. The appeal is to emotions more than to intellect. In poetry, words work in a very different way from speech or written prose. In interpreting a poem, we must find the *effect the writer intended*, otherwise it may be meaningless.

## Songs

A song, by a good composer, is a poem in which the words are enhanced by *melodic line and rhythmic patterns* that make the poem more powerful in its effect. Of course, many songs fail to do that, and many use words merely as a vehicle for melodic invention, without regard to their intrinsic intention. Often enough, very poor lyrics, maybe strings of clichés even, can result in musical invention that is delightful to listen to. But even where composers write with true understanding of good verse, singers also fail to communicate their intentions by failing to understand how the song should work, usually because they fail to interpret the poem the way the composer did – or even to be influenced by the words at all.

When singers are taught how to sing art songs in particular, they are asked to try to *feel* the emotions of the speaker and the *context* in which they are expressing their feelings – *to make those words their own words coming out of their need to express what they are feeling in that situation* as they must obviously do in opera – and to use body language, too. Singers explore the music to discover how the composer set out to help them do that: to work with him, not against him. For want of a musical context I must be content with analysis of poems.

Exactly the same technique is used in getting actors to act! The words they speak have to be *their words*, spoken as if spontaneously in response to needs they feel which they must express in those words in that particular context. Singers who just make beautiful sounds with little regard to communicating meaning may be delightful to hear, but they affect the audience merely by the quality of the sound; they are like beautiful wooden actors. It is often true that composers only want that effect. Actors like singers have to hear the tune and cadence of the verse they are speaking. To be effective both must convey the effect intended by the poet.

Here I consider Shakespeare songs in which a marriage of words and music requires understanding of the context and intention of the poet; and performance stands or falls by a full appreciation of the context, or the meta-text—the underlying meaning, of the poem.

Many lyrics in Shakespeare's Comedies became 'pop songs' in their day and are still sung today. The songs he wrote are among the most popular Elizabethan music heard today. Composers in every age have set the verses in their own musical style; but some of the original music for songs used in Shakespeare's theatre has been preserved. Words in some songs echo those in traditional folk-songs like Greensleeves with a tune everyone even in Japan recognizes as English. 'Greensleeves' is the Lady of the Wood of the ancient witch-religion, romanitised by French troubadours, that is a meta-text in Shakespeare's songs.

Like most Elizabethans, Shakespeare grew up in a small town, really a village. As a country boy he loved the fields and forests that grew near his home. He learned traditional country stories, ballads, folksongs of his part of England; and also many others when he came to London at the age of 22 or so.

He probably joined travelling Players that went around the towns and great houses of very rich lords in England before coming to London. Players put on shows to make money in towns and houses where they went, rather like a travelling circus with tumblers and acrobats, and clowns who danced and sang very sexy songs and dances to make the people laugh. Often two clowns, one dressed as a woman. The dance-mimes were obscene versions of ballads that told a story of sexual betrayal and they used popular well-known tunes. When playwrights wrote plays for theatres, especially in their Comedies they used traditional dancing and singing clowns who began and ended the show with jigs. Shakespeare's Comedies are full of music.

The first two songs are from *Twelfth Night* written about 1601. Both songs are *jokes!* In the play Feste, the wise Fool, (sopho-more) who has seen all the follies of love, unerringly spots what each character is after. The song, *O Mistress Mine*, is aimed jokingly at Sir Toby Belch. Maid-servant, Maria, wants Toby to propose marriage to her - to make her his Lady, even though he is a drunkard and a leech. A girl in her mid-twenties, she was anxious that if she did not get married soon, she might soon be too old to marry; as she obviously had to fend for herself without a father to arrange a good marriage and offer a dowry to a husband. Hence, emphasis on the *present time*. The amorous lover reminds the girl that she is already twenty years old and had better take him now before she is too old for anyone to love her. The song is referred to as *Carpe Diem*: 'seize the day' - 'do it now!'. A love-chase in the greenwood is thinly disguised here.

When he was 18 Shakespeare had a sexual affair with a 26 year old woman, seduced by her perhaps, it is tempting to believe during a Greenwood Festival. He married her, probably against the opposition of his family when she told him she was

pregnant. Very similar servant girls to Maria appear in other Comedies: like Nerissa in *The Merchant of Venice*, Margaret in *Much Ado About Nothing*, hoping to marry to better themselves by means of a sexual affair, in both cases also with a drunkard. Feste gives Sir Toby the words Maria wants to hear him say to her. The audience may get the joke, the two protagonists do not; the words are of the lover calling to his Maid in the Greenwood May Day Rites, as he chases her in the 'maze dance'.

*O Mistress mine, where are you roaming?*

*O stay and hear! your true love's coming*

*That can sing both high and low;*

*Trip no further, pretty sweeting,*

*Journey's end in lovers' meeting —*

*Every wise man's son doth know.*

*What is love? 'tis not hereafter;*

*Present mirth hath present laughter;*

*What's to come is still unsure:*

*In delay there lies no plenty,—*

*Then come kiss me, Sweet and twenty,*

*Youth's a stuff will not endure.*

The pulse is trochaic, — — , that is, stressed-unstressed, in four measures (tetrameter in Greek): in lines 1 and 2, the up beat on O is not repeated in the second strophe. The third and sixth line are truncated (the last syllable lost). Rhythms constantly vary the stresses, 'dancing' in and out round about against the pulse (— — — —, — — — —); when repeated harder to maintain and so more urgent. The pace accelerates (— — — — / — — — — / — — — — / — — — —). The pulse is clearly quite different from the dance; we hardly need the tune to hear the rhythm of the dance. The sound is wonderfully mellifluous and easy on the ear. We have the original music that matches the stress of the words perfectly to enable the singer to get the meaning — and the joke — across by nuances of stress and rhythm. Melodic line in Elizabethan songs was flexible in its rhythms, a flexibility that was lost when composition on a bass began to dominate musical form from the middle of the 17th century. The song is sung and danced by Feste to a beat on a tabor he always carries.

*Come away, Death* in the same play is a cynical, satirical joke sung by Feste, laughing at the love-sick poet, Duke Orsino, and poking fun at all *romantic poets who are dying of love*. Orsino is pining for a distant cold beauty, Olivia. He is in love in imagination only, for he has not seen Olivia, sending others to woo her for him with poems he has written. Viola is pining for love of Orsino in the same scene to add to the fun. They hear in this song their deep longing and melancholy, while Feste *in a mock-tragic vein* is saying how hollow such sentiments are. The audience is invited to mock the lover rather than sympathize with him. The yew was a tree symbolic of death-resurrection, still planted in graveyards in northern Europe; the cypress with the same meaning in graveyards all over the Mediterranean, although named for the Love Goddess Aphrodite, a tree of resurrection, and for her island, a notable ancient source of copper.

*Come away, come away, Death,  
 And in sad cypress let me be laid;  
 Fly away, fly away, breath;  
 I am slain by a fair cruel maid.  
 My shroud of white, stuck all with yew,  
 O prepare it!  
 My part of death, no one so true  
 Did share it.*

*Not a flower, not a flower sweet  
 On my black coffin let there be strown;  
 Not a friend, not a friend greet  
 My poor corpse, where my bones shall be thrown:  
 A thousand, thousand sighs to save,  
 Lay me, O where  
 Sad true lover never find my grave  
 To weep there.*

The supposed lover is pleading with his loved one to come to him now before it is too late, before he is laid in his grave: when his lover will be sad—*Sad true lover will never find his grave/ To weep there.* The point is obvious if we compare Sonnet 71: *No longer mourn for me when I am dead/Than you will hear the surly sullen bell/Give notice to the world that I am fled/ From this vile world with vilest worms to dwell...* where the last couplet makes clear the poet's cynical self-mockery: *Lest the wise world should look into your moan/ And mock you with me after I am gone.* The rhythm and music of the song is dark and stately; a slow funeral march rather than the sprightly dance of the love-chase. *Shakespeare is very conscious of the pace of a poem.* The rhythms are unlike those of *O Mistress Mine*, so the effect is totally different; with dactyls and anapaests as in folksongs in the first four lines, then iambic/trochaic pulse.

The romantic lover of *trouvere* ballads, based on *Tales of King Arthur*, is in the service of a Lady (often his Lord's Lady), a cold, distant beauty who treats his love with scorn, rather than a sexy, hot-blooded Marian of romps in the woods. Maria in *Twelfth Night* in a blatantly sexual way throws herself at her man; but Shakespeare accurately paints Olivia as a cold virgin rejecting Orsino's overtures. The contrast in the moods of the songs is obvious.

Will Orsino indeed be a "sad, true lover"? In fact, he falls in love with a girl dressed as a boy, another joke of the play, but he does not realise it until he actually meets Olivia in the flesh. She meanwhile has fallen in love with the same boy/girl; she transfers her love instantly to his/her brother who is an identical likeness. All underlines the shallowness and folly of love at first sight; the love of an image in the mind rather than feet-on-the-ground realism.

The sound of the words emphasises the images of death and despair but with so much alliteration and assonance. For all its protestations the words sound false; the lover is pleading with the girl to take notice of him—*yew* is rhymed with *true*. The cynical tone is so cleverly disguised that, of course, the love-sick pair do take the song seriously, which makes it all the funnier. We do not have any contemporary musical setting. Settings of this song until recently have not recognised its cynicism and have made the song dark and sad. Clearly, the singer must be able to convince

the 'lovers' that he is reflecting the heart's anguish, but also convey to the audience the folly of it all.

In *Hamlet*, Ophelia, driven to madness, sings traditional songs. She enters, deranged, singing snatches of folk songs sung by girls abandoned by their lover, especially after yielding their virginity in a seduction. One such lover is dead: *How should I your true love know/From another one... He is dead and gone, lady....* The second is a song of St. Valentine's Day.

1. *Tomorrow is Saint Valentine's Day,  
All in the morning betime,  
And I a maid at your window  
To be your Valentine.*
2. *Then up he rose, and donned his clothes,  
And dupp'd the chamber door;  
Let in the maid, that out a maid  
Never departed more.*
3. *By Gis, and by Saint Charity,  
Alack, and fie for shame!  
Young men will do't if they come to't,  
By Cock, they are to blame.*
4. *Quoth she: 'Before you tumbled me,  
You promised me to wed.'  
So would I 'a' done, by yonder sun,  
If thou hadst not come to my bed.*

The song is playful, but also a cautionary tale for teenage girls; a not uncommon kind of ballad. Beside May Day, the Feast of St. Valentine, an obscure third century Roman priest, was traditionally a day on which girls might declare their love for a boy-taboo all other times: the day on which, in English folk-lore, birds choose their mates. It seems young Hamlet did more than protest his love for Ophelia. She declares he gave her '*tokens of love*': like Romeo's Juliet she had yielded her maidenhead to her lover.

The songs sung by Ophelia are traditional folk-songs such as were sung, and danced, on all festive occasions, whenever villagers got together, as tourists may see today in village Kecak dance dramas. Some were sung while people worked or to entertain children. English, Welsh and Scottish folksongs most frequently sing about love and lovers. Many are 'sung' by women whose lovers have left them, gone away to sea, to be soldiers or have died. No doubt, women were left like this, and it was they who most often sang songs and taught them to their children. They frequently make reference to seasonal changes. They are nearly all also set in an idyllic countryside.

In Shakespeare's day and certainly in his plays, the tradition was for men or boys to sing the songs. His words often recall woodland marriages and stories of Robin Hood. They celebrate a carefree country life, often in the forest, an idyllic life (a dream of happiness) very different from that of life in the towns. It was a very old tradition to think the carefree life of shepherds was a golden age in the past. It is at least as old as 300 BC in Greece; Greek songs of shepherds in love with shepherdesses,

Corydon with Phyllis, in Sicily. The Latin poet, Virgil, in our era transferred the idyllic landscape to Arcadia.

If we think about the words of songs: *Under the Greenwood Tree* and *It was a Lover and his Lass* from the play *As You Like It*; and *O Mistress Mine* and *Come away, Death* from *Twelfth Night* we can see Shakespeare is remembering his boyhood in these mature Comedies.

The simple country life is the theme of *It was a Lover and his Lass*.

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| 1. <i>It was a lover and his lass</i><br><i>That o'er the green corn-field did pass.</i><br><i>In Spring time.....</i> | 2. <i>Between the acres of the rye</i><br><i>These pretty country-folk would lie.</i><br><i>In Spring time.....</i>      |
| 3. <i>This carol they began that hour</i><br><i>How that a life was but a flower.</i><br><i>In Spring time.....</i>    | 4. <i>And therefore take the present time</i><br><i>For love is crowned with the prime</i><br><i>In Spring time.....</i> |

The song sounds very innocent, young lovers walking in the fields and enjoying just lying back and gazing at the sky to enjoy the new warmth of Spring. Another interpretation is less innocent: this song recalls a very ancient *fertility ritual; imitative magic*. After planting the seeds, the woman had sex in the fields with her husband in order to promote the fertility of the crops. He 'spilled his seed in the soil' like Onan in Leviticus in the Bible: he is condemned by later Jewish prophets as a symbol of ancient fertility magic that the Jews wanted to get rid of. Shakespeare idealises country life, but no doubt, in reality it was hard and very poor. *As You Like It* was written in 1599, and a madrigal using these verses was published at once in 1600 by Thomas Morley as a joyful celebration of Spring. Singers may, of course, convey to their audience nuances of meaning as they sing the verses; most of the madrigal is a long arabesque on *in springtime*. Shakespeare often returns to the theme of life as a flower-beauty that soon withers and dies. We may compare *O Mistress Mine* above.

*Under the Greenwood Tree* is also in a *pastoral* traditional idyll of shepherds in love. Robin Hood calls his followers into the greenwood, as had happened in Greenwood Festivals for centuries, for a life without hard work living on the fruits of the forest. Unlike Robin Hood of the ballads who was always fighting, here there is no enemy except the weather. An idyllic, escapist life is offered.

*Under the greenwood tree*  
*Who loves to lie with me,*  
*And turn (tune) his merry note*  
*Unto the sweet bird's throat —*  
*Come hither, come hither, come hither!*  
*Here shall he see*  
*No enemy*  
*But winter and rough weather.*

*Who doth ambition shun*  
*And loves to lie i' the sun,*  
*Seeking the food he eats*  
*And pleased with what he gets —*  
*Come hither, come hither, come hither!*  
*Here shall he see*  
*No enemy*  
*But winter and rough weather.*



The words are very simple to understand. Leave ambition behind; don't try to 'get on' in the court or the theatre, in business or in civic life. Why work? Come and lie in the sun with me under the trees and sing songs with the birds. This is the Arcadian dream. We do not have the original music, but it inspired a very famous setting by Thomas Arne in the 18th century. The pulse is iambic—, that is, a short or unstressed syllable and then a stressed one, except for the fifth line. Shakespeare plays on the ear with interesting rhythms against the pulse.

*Where the bee sucks there suck I*, sung by Ariel in *The Tempest*, concerns forest magic. Owls and bats are creatures of the night belonging to witches. The owl, symbol of wisdom and pitiless killing, was the fetish bird of Athene Parthenon, virgin goddess of wisdom and war in Athens. Ionians, Lydians, Phrygians and other tribal groups all over the Aegean and the Black Sea worshipped the Great Goddess, the Earth Mother, with different names that appear in the Greek myths. At Ephesus, a huge ruined city on the west coast of Turkey, she was Artemis, her statues carved with the many breasts of fertility.

The bee was invoked in worship of the Earth Mother, called Cybele in Phrygia. Queen Bees lie bloated at the centre of the hive, single fertile females that give birth to all the young. Worker bees are neuter and feed the Queen and her young; they leave their stings in the victim if they attack, sacrificing themselves for the hive. Males are idle drones that die after coupling with the Queen; they give their lives for their Queen, so male priests in the worship of Cybele danced till they were in a wild and ecstatic religious frenzy in which they castrated themselves with golden sickles shaped like a crescent moon. The ritual prostitution of young girls was also practised, recalling the identification of girls with the Great Goddess.

An Elizabethan audience might have felt the menace behind the playfulness of words in this song. Even an audience today can feel an uneasy threat behind the song's simplicity.

*Where the bee sucks there suck I,  
In a cow-slip's bell I lie,  
There I couch when owls do cry,  
On a bat's back I do fly  
After summer merrily.  
Merrily, merrily shall I live now  
Under the blossom that hangs on the bough.*

Bees suck nectar from flowers, but 'suck' has contradictory associations: babies at the mother's breast or blood-sucking leeches or insects. *Succubae* were female devils that clung to their host victims as against *incubi*, male devils that sat on the shoulder. 'suck I' sounds so like '*succubae*'. The very sound 'suck' has a sinister feeling.

'sucks there' is onomatopoeic – since the difficulty of saying the words clearly imitates the action. Owls and bats are creatures of the night associated with flying witches and their familiars. But the sinister images of the first four lines are quickly lightened by the repeated 'merrily' and the humming sound of so many 'mm' s. The verse is often sprung ( ^ — — — ), and the constant alliteration is hypnotic. The change to leaping rhythm in the last two lines is sudden and startling as it was meant to be.

The song is a spell, a ritualistic incantation. Repeated sounds with strong rhymes: 'I', repeated at the end of every line helps to produce the hypnotic effect that will send men to sleep—the enchantment of the music of the island. Ariel is the music of the island, a spirit of the Great Goddess; it is her island that Prospero has captured with his enchantments. Trance states are induced by dancing and drugs in very many religio-magical rituals world-wide. The effect of trance to produce a dream state occurs in all Shakespeare's magic plays.

He uses similar effects in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, less menacing—less magical. The effect is intended to be make-belief magic and the outcome comic not tragic. Oberon, King of the Fairies, enchants Queen Titania as she sleeps with a magic drug distilled from a pansy.

To Titania:

*What thou seest when thou dost wake,  
Do it for thy true love take;  
Love and languish for his sake.  
Be it ounce, or cat, or bear,  
Pard, or boar with bristled hair,  
In thy eye that shall appear  
When thou wak'st, it is thy dear.  
Wake when some vile thing is near.*

He does the same to Demetrius.

*Flower of the purple dye,  
Hit with Cupid's archery,  
Sink in apple of his eye.  
When his love he doth espy,  
Let her shine as gloriously  
As the Venus of the sky.  
When thou wak'st, if she be by,  
Beg of her for remedy.*

The rhymes at the end of each line of the enchantment of Demetrius sound wrong and forced, thumping heavily on the last syllable, end-stopping the lines in a clumsy way. It is deliberately banal and stupid with no effect at all except to make us

laugh. So different from Ariel's truly poetic magic! It is also of significance that the enchantments of Oberon were not set to music, whereas composers could not resist setting the poetic music of Ariel. But it is mock magic! Shakespeare is laughing at his own art. After all, he has just used one of his most mystical enchantments, in a dancing roundel song of fairies lulling Titania to sleep;

Chorus

*You spotted snakes with double tongue,  
Thorny hedgehogs, be not seen.  
Neuts and blindworms, do no wrong,  
Come not near our Fairy Queen.  
Philomel with melody  
Sing in our sweet lullaby,  
Lulla, lulla, lullaby; lulla, lulla, lullaby.  
Never harm  
Nor spell nor charm  
Come our lovely lady nigh.  
So good night, with lullaby.*

Chorus

*Weaving spiders, come not here,  
Hence, you longlegged spinners, hence!  
Beetles black, approach not near,  
Worm nor snail, do no offence.  
Philomel with melody.....*