The Persians (Opening Stanzas)

When all the Persian troops had gone
To conquer Greece, we old men known
As 'The Trustees' were left to guard
A rich and gold-glittering estate. •
Xerxes himself, high king, warlord,
(And eldest scion of the late
Dareius) ordered us to head
The empire while he is abroad, •
Trusting in our long years of service.

For some time now I have been nervous
For him and his gold glittering host- •
When will they ever come back home? •
The fortune teller in my breast
Has cried out with the voice of doom
Because the whole strength of the land •
Has set out eagerly yapping around
An inexperienced man, and still
No page or courier has come
With dispatch to the capital.

Dante’s Inferno translated by Robert Pinsky

Midway on our life’s journey I found myself in dark woods
The right road lost. •
To tell about those woods is hard, so tangled and rough
And savage, that thinking of it now I feel the old fear stirring; •
Death is hardly more bitter.

Midsummer Night’s Dream Act II scene i

The human mortals want their winter cheer •
No night is now with hymn or carol blest •
Therefore the moon the governess of floods
Pale in her anger washes all the air
That rheumatic diseases do abound •
And thorough this distemperature we see
The seasons alter; hoary-headed frosts
Fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose •
And on old winter's thin and icy crown
An odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds
Is as in mockery set. • The spring. • the summer •
The childing autumn angry winter change
Their wonted liveries and the mazed world •
By their increase now knows not which is which. •
And this same progeny of evils comes
From our debate, from our dissension
We are their parents and original.

**MacBeth  Act II scene ii**

**LADY MACBETH**
My husband!

**MACBETH**
I have done the deed. Didst thou not hear a noise?

**LADY MACBETH**
I heard the owl scream and the crickets cry.
Did not you speak?

**MACBETH**
When?

**LADY MACBETH**
Now.

**MACBETH**
As I descended?

**LADY MACBETH**
Ay.

**MACBETH**
Hark!
Who lies i' the second chamber?

**LADY MACBETH**
Donalbain.
MACBETH
This is a sorry sight.

LADY MACBETH
A foolish thought, to say a sorry sight.

MACBETH
There's one did laugh in's sleep, and one cried 'Murder!'
That they did wake each other: I stood and heard them:
But they did say their prayers, and address'd them
Again to sleep.

LADY MACBETH
There are two lodged together.

MACBETH
One cried 'God bless us!' and 'Amen' the other;
As they had seen me with these hangman's hands.
Listening their fear, I could not say 'Amen,'
When they did say 'God bless us!'

LADY MACBETH
Consider it not so deeply.

MACBETH
But wherefore could not I pronounce 'Amen'?
I had most need of blessing, and 'Amen'
Stuck in my throat.

LADY MACBETH
These deeds must not be thought
After these ways; so, it will make us mad.

MACBETH
Methought I heard a voice cry 'Sleep no more!
Macbeth does murder sleep', the innocent sleep,
Sleep that knits up the ravell'd sleeve of care,
The death of each day's life, sore labour's bath,
Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course,
Chief nourisher in life's feast,--

LADY MACBETH
What do you mean?

MACBETH
Still it cried 'Sleep no more!' to all the house:  
'Glamis hath murder'd sleep, and therefore Cawdor  
Shall sleep no more; Macbeth shall sleep no more.'

**LADY MACBETH**
Who was it that thus cried? Why, worthy thane,  
You do unbend your noble strength, to think  
So brainsickly of things. Go get some water,  
And wash this filthy witness from your hand.  
Why did you bring these daggers from the place?  
They must lie there: go carry them; and smear  
The sleepy grooms with blood.

**MACBETH**
I'll go no more:  
I am afraid to think what I have done;  
Look on't again I dare not.

**LADY MACBETH**
Infirm of purpose!  
Give me the daggers: the sleeping and the dead  
Are but as pictures: 'tis the eye of childhood  
That fears a painted devil. If he do bleed,  
I'll gild the faces of the grooms withal;  
For it must seem their guilt.