When sleep after long supplication,
Comes cooling my lids, Oh, beguile
And slay me in soft iteration,
Players of flutes from the Nile!

These words were said when living was a loss:
I want the mob to perish and to groan,
And let who laughs be nailed upon the cross!
My rage is turned against myself alone.

For I, the one, comprise the multitude.
As I am led by destiny, I lead,
And though my scourges strike them till they bleed,
They have their gladiators and their food.

When I forgot myself, when clad like them
I shared unnoticed in their empty round,
My hate for them, I fear, was not profound,
I had not gauged the harshness of my stem.

Then out I barred the rabble's hue and cry.
Without desires, mild and light I dreamed,
And almost like a sister's image seemed
The face a mirror showed my searching eye.

I must saddle ashen horses,
Race across the moors of dread,
Till the marshes end our courses
Or the lightning strikes me dead.

Many silent heroes whiten
In the fallow field, and flares
Of the firs are all that brighten
Corpse by corpse with sooty glares.
Red as brick the slender, shallow
Rivers run as straight as strings,
Sighs arise from them and hollow
Winds cavort in gusty rings.

Women's hair is loose and slashes
Through the pebbles, thickly sweeping,
Women's weeping cools the gashes,
Lavish weeping — honest weeping?

Agathon, close to my pillow bowed,
What your mouth concealed your lashes said.
What shall I do to brush away the cloud
— My brother and my friend — of tears unshed?

When veins abounding in radiance shrink
From dust and merciless wind, refrain
From rising against the gods who drink
Joy from the sight of heroic pain.

This your reward: Only you may guess
These proud limbs too dread ash and bones.
We never shall tremble in earthly distress,
We, who were born for the purple of thrones.

Somnolent peace, yet I cannot dispel
Rumble of riotous mobs, do I grow
Fearful of Ides the planets foretell?
Foul is the omen of serpents, but know:
Long before any has dared to rebel
Out of your reaches your ruler will go.

Music sifted
Down! A harp? Or horn that gave
Wings and lifted
Me, or thrust into a grave?