**The Murderer & Serapis**

A murderer spread his pallaisse

beneath a rotten wall

and in his dream came Serapis

and warned him it would fall:

*Jump for your life, wretch and be quick*

*or in a second you’ll be dead.*

He jumped, and tons of crumbling brick

came crashing on his bed.

The murderer gasped with relief,

he thanked the gods above.

It was his innocent belief

they’d saved him out of love.

But once again came Serapis

In the middle of the night,

and once more uttered prophecies

that set the matter right:

*Don’t think the gods have let you go*

*and connive at homicide.*

*We’ve spared you that quick crushing, so*

*we can get you crucified.*

*Palladus, c. 360 – 430*

*Trans. from Greek by Tony Harrison*