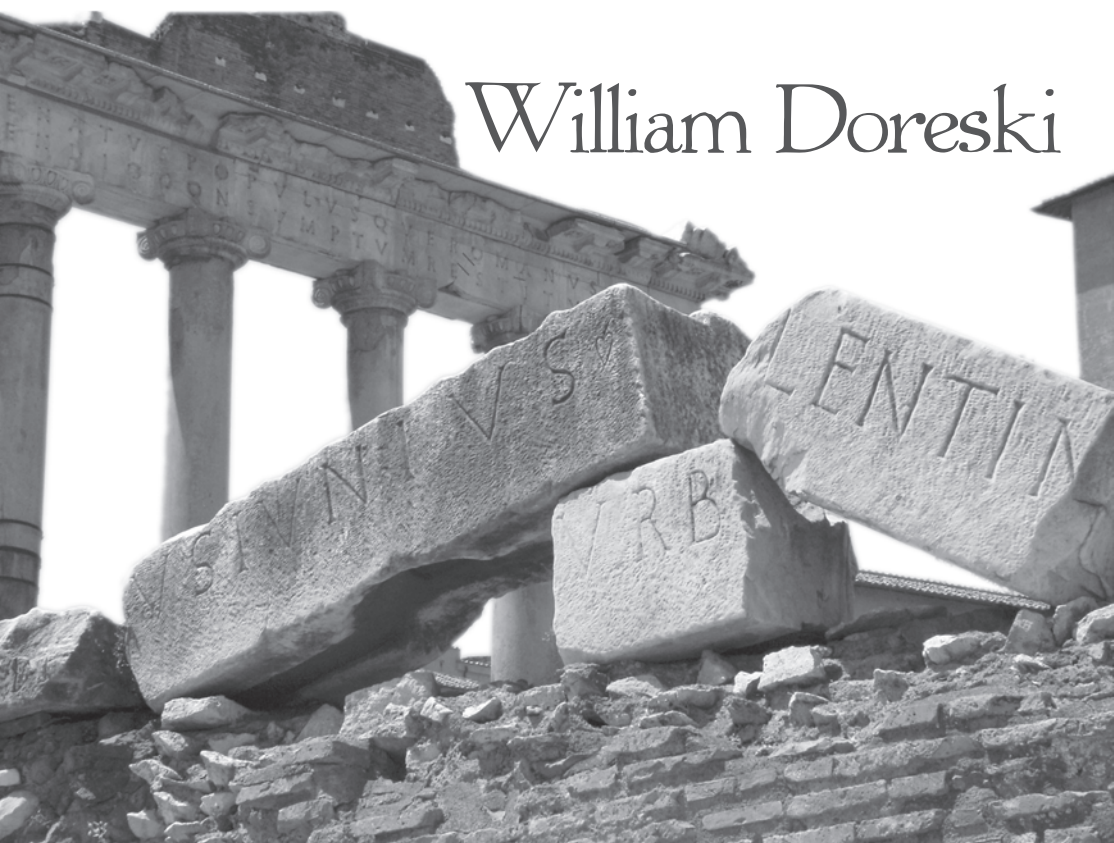


# Sacra Via

Poems by

William Doreski





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William Doreski

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*The threshold, Rome, and that more merciful Rome  
Beyond, the two alike in the make of the mind.  
It is as if in a human dignity  
Two parallels become one, a perspective, of which  
Men are part both in the inch and in the mile.*

—Wallace Stevens  
“To an Old Philosopher in Rome”



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I



## Oculus

The hole in the Pantheon's dome  
 corresponds to the hole I made  
 in your defeated airport gaze  
 six time zones away. I leave

my post-imperial self staring  
 up from inside at the sky,  
 the flattery of all that marble  
 impressing and suppressing the selves

I've fed at your expense. Outside,  
 by the taxi stand, Italian  
 dandelions explicate themselves  
 in the crumbling brick of a wall

that once stood parallel to  
 the temple's eastern flank. Steps  
 lead to a modern bronze door  
 and suggest how easily

I could phone and explain how  
 large the wreck of Rome looms,  
 despite the black leather Romans  
 scooting past in schools of Vespas.

I could phone and explain how small  
 I've become, five thousand miles  
 from the hole in the snow bank  
 we call home. I'd have to tell you

I've yet to see a cat, although  
the mass of young people preening  
on the Spanish Steps, the crush  
of tourists in the Pantheon,

and the ristoranti tempting  
with thin white pizza express  
the various plies of city  
through which I have to pass like

a kidney stone before I see you  
once again knitting your frown  
to parse the boundaries of the known  
or knowable forms of speech.