

## THE VIA NEGATIVA

(“It’s not catastrophes, murders, deaths, diseases, that age and kill us; it’s the way people look and laugh, and run up the steps of omnibuses.”)

Virginia Woolf, *Jacob’s Room*.)

The statue of a mounted Antony  
at Piazza del Campadoglio used to have,  
they say, a barbaric figure sprawled, debris  
beneath the conquering hero’s trampling hooves.  
Today, that vanquished form has been removed,  
defeated by the modern sense of tact.  
But still, the horse is smaller than the rider –  
this piece of Caesar’s arrogance reminder  
of the ghost of broken native stranger –  
just another allotrope of pride.

O may not ekphrasis of that negation  
serve to deny our works of mundane murder.  
Giving pride of place to such omission,  
by an apophasis show The Master,  
he before whom slaves and spoils parade;  
nor forget the fasces head the pageant.  
Spirit of the exiled, shunned, betrayed  
we patronize with pity, the unassisted,  
grant that we may bring to mind the missing,  
and guard us from unsuitable loves and hates.