



Writing | Symposium 2021

**The Burghers of Calais –  
*after Vaccination in hospital Atrium I***

By Cheryl Passanisi

I forgot the Burghers haunt  
the Quadrangle –

as I walk from hospital atrium  
where we gathered on our marks,  
in masks, move in folk dance  
quiet celebration, without music  
in the hospital atrium, cathedral-like  
where concerts performed over decades  
for patients to mend with music,  
a memorable ache sneaks up –  
how the ghost of music accumulates  
in the corners, degraded but remanent  
of vibration still grazing the skin –

now a place of vaccination –  
arm out, the shot, a quick wave of nausea.  
didn't eat this morning –  
“Non ho fame”, but a need  
to savor the moment walking  
the empty campus, in epic abandonment  
to remote learning,  
walk the labyrinth circuit  
near the engineering buildings,  
concentric paths modeled on Chartres  
Cathedral where pilgrims  
went to walk off sins...

I come around the chapel to the quad,  
and in the quiet  
without words  
the Burghers  
haunt the Quadrangle,  
behold –

their sorrows among the

# Medicine & the Muse

perennials in the gardens  
coming up from underground,  
from the deep stones of bronze,  
the bones cooled from earth violence  
shaved from the deeper stones of water  
and the veins in the neck,  
in the back of hands seek life,  
and life seeks the rushing waters  
and the hand, say Rodin's, freezes  
them there and they hold like dinosaurs  
caught in the blitz of meteors.

I walk among them.

II

I walk among them  
sun-sorrow fractured landing  
sharply features halo them,  
the sun chisel-sharp,  
forms rounded with the earth  
from which they seem to have emerged  
silhouette, sacrifice and polymer  
eyes of their children, hunger-dread  
and sunken worlds of mouths,  
the ropes of their communion,  
the keys, the keys sounding of bells  
from their belts pulling  
them down to earth like grain,  
as they hand over, turn over  
slipping into dust, novitiate  
of siege, negotiant pulsatile  
into redemption,  
their hands spark with musical tensions,  
their eyes inward to the contracting soul,  
the slump half step poise,  
the chest cavern's tremble –  
winged creatures flapping competitively  
to emerge from their mouths' devotion  
savoring air-full prayer the keys delivered,  
the ropes restrain, impel  
to the forced labor of the soul –

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noble final tattered robes  
Excalibur of wounds –  
the wound-sap fresh stigmata  
captured in cupped hands –  
One looks skyward, another to ground...

Pieta.

**Cheryl is a writer, poet, performer and NP. Her collection of poetry was published by Finishing Line Press in 2020. [Geraniums From the Little Sophias of Unruly Wisdom](#). In non-COVID times, she is active in community theatre and local opera. She works as an NP in hematology at the Cancer Center.**

There is an audio version of this piece on our website.