

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Reversal of Birth

R. Daniel Foster · Monday, September 27th, 2021

A few notes about this new video art piece/poem, *Reversal of Birth*:

My mother delivers the central line in my poem: “You’re not like all the other boys. Do you know that? What’s wrong with you?”

It’s not uncommon for parents to curse their children, either directly or in subtle, subterfuge, and in often unknowing ways. The child’s task: to unspool that perhaps necessary spell, unscrambling the myriad levels of subsequent emotion and reaction. This is the hard work of emergence, one of the poem’s themes.

The Hanged Man archetype that I assume in the video represents an extreme vulnerability. A life, a world, turned upside down. And yet amid this terror and agony, there is surrender to a kind of timeless suspension. The man’s expression is serene, suffused with equanimity despite his condition.

So—serenity amid terror. Perhaps serenity exists at the very center of terror. As Rilke wrote: “For beauty is nothing but the beginning of terror.”

This video also celebrates the queer body—at once cursed, spat upon, derided. But in the end, triumphant in its unshakable claim on its identity, far beyond its “right” to exist. Rather, that it simply does exist—in glorious aberration.

I’m grateful to the men of the Invisible Theater who helped me create the original Hanged Man performance piece. The Invisible Theater was an underground performance art space I co-founded with a handful of men that ran for ten years (1998-2007). We deemed it “theater by men for men.” Together, we opened up a realm of direct experience and initiation. A place where archetypes like the Hanged Man were revealed and moreover, activated. It was packed with an abundance of rare and raw moments—the cracked-open beauty of men in their vulnerability and strength.

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