

THE RAISING OF LAZARUS (Ronda, January 1913)

So: it was necessary for them all
that he perform it, since they needed signs
that cried aloud. And yet he had imagined
it must suffice for Martha and for Mary
to know he *could* do it. But none believed;
they all said: Lord, why are you coming *now*?
And he went to that place so he might work
the Forbidden on the quiet laws of nature.
In anger. His eyes narrowed in this wrath,
he asked them where to find the grave. He suffered.
To them it looked as if tears washed his cheeks –
avid for miracles they formed his wake.
Monstrous it all seemed to him as he walked,
a perverse move in a horrendous game,
but in him suddenly a contradiction
blazed up, a refutation of all those
empty distinctions that they made between
ideas of being dead, of being live,
so that hostility wrenched all his limbs
when his hoarse voice commanded: ‘Raise the stone.’
‘But he’s already stinking’, someone called,
as it was four days since the tomb was closed.
Yet he stood tensed, informed by that one gesture
that rose up in him, and against a great weight
lifted his hand (never more slowly was
a hand raised ever) till now it was fixed
rigid and luminescent in the air;
aloft it clenched itself into a claw:
for he was filled with sudden horror that
all the dead might now come flooding through
this grave-mouth he had sucked on: right in there
where something greyish rose as if to come – –
but then: only one crooked shape stood in the day,
and all could see how Life, slipshod and vague
as always, shrugged and let it in once more.

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