

## THE RAISING OF LAZARUS

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.

*Ronda, January 1913*

Translated from the German by Tony Stephens  
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