

Cesar Vallejo,

MASS

At the end of the battle the fighter lay dead. A man came to him
and said: 'Don't die! I love you too much!'
But the corpse, alas, went on dying.

Two came to him and again said:
'Don't leave us! Take heart!
Come back to life!'
But the corpse, alas, went on dying.

Then twenty, a hundred, a thousand,
Five hundred thousand, came, crying:
'So much love and yet so powerless against death!'
But the corpse, alas, went on dying.

Millions surrounded him,
pleading together:
'Brother, don't leave us!'
But the corpse, alas, went on dying.

Then, all the men on earth
stood round him. The corpse eyed them sadly,
overwhelmed. He got up slowly,
embraced the first man, started to walk...

Cesar Vallejo (trans. by Paul O'Prey)

Cesar Vallejo (1892-1937) was a radical exile from his native Peru, who fled to France and then fought in the Spanish Civil War. He died suddenly in Paris of an intestinal ailment.

1. Who does the dying fighter represent?
2. Why does he come to life again at the end of the poem?