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Poem After Cesar Vallejo

Boyd White

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Poem After Cesar Vallejo

The sorrow that splits the handle of the hoe
and buries the day under a rotting stump;
the sorrow of the disappeared
appears only at dusk
and makes its way carefully from room to room.

The sorrow that stains the palms of butchers in the market
and paints cobblestones the true color of the sun;
the sorrow of the tired
singes sweat into the skin
and collects the hair of the dead in small, deep sacks.

The sorrow that laces women's shoes in the morning
and scrubs tea stains from the bottom of chipped cups;
the sorrow of the lonely
shies away from mirrors
and hides with the beetles under the front steps.

The sorrow of the breath of men at sunrise
spills forth all their days like spit from their tongues;
the sorrow of the defeated
stitches its clothes from the evening
and bends tree limbs into elegies with birds who visit the dead.

Boyd White