Prayer for Vicente

You were vigorous, always speaking truth. They—the law, corridor and badge—chained your neck to a river stump and laughed as you choked on toxic water, sinking out of Argentina like a scuttled barge.

Now, free of all the attachments and turmoils I drink glasses of yellow liquid which dribbles, under pressure from a city tap and stinks of you, poetic amphibian, your brain confined to mud, lips gelatinous like the skins of priests; what exudes is truth, indulgent, strained—
the sharp mineral majesty of golden poison-cups.

God, hear me out:
that church, low-roofed, once beautiful
with children singing and the blind man’s well-fed gentle rat;
that holy annex now off-limits, crowded with contraband;
that purple cluster of flowers grown through the jeep track by the guardhouse, growing, pushing, wild things hopeless in their colours as the mandates of Nietzsche.
Christ, tell your father
of that fugitive—proud, unarmed,
arrested with rapid vanity, meeting torture
and death unfairly, struggling to the end
to continue breathing; tell him
of the boy soldier Vicente,
unable to fire the head-shot,
who gave the poet cigarettes until the bleeding
stopped
then rolled the corpse into a ditch, hitched
his long ride home on a manure truck
while generals with dyed hair and foreign whores
dined with cardinals.

SEAN BRENDA-N-BROWN