

For Benjamin Moloise

hanged in Pretoria, Friday 18th October 1985

"Life springs from death; and from the graves of patriot men and women spring living nations." (Padraic Pearse)

Moloise the world stands
to observe a silence for you
for your people

together we bow our head
around that stadium of suffering
your death now our bereavement your courage
our abhorrence of every repressor

of those who would attempt
to hide freedom in a cloud of teargas
to beat justice to its knees with the *sjambok*
to dangle Africa from a white noose
to bury in quicklime the poetry of youth

and the world's silence runs like blood
it fills their sad swimming pools
seeps into verandahs and through bricks
it hangs on their bullwire it
creeps across the gold vaults

and deepens
it becomes a scream
it enters our conscience too
with the wood of your coffin the
soft weight Benjamin of your life
as we take turns shouldering your remains
mourning yes but inspired as well at seeing
the spirit being true to itself an ideal
brandished like a burning spear

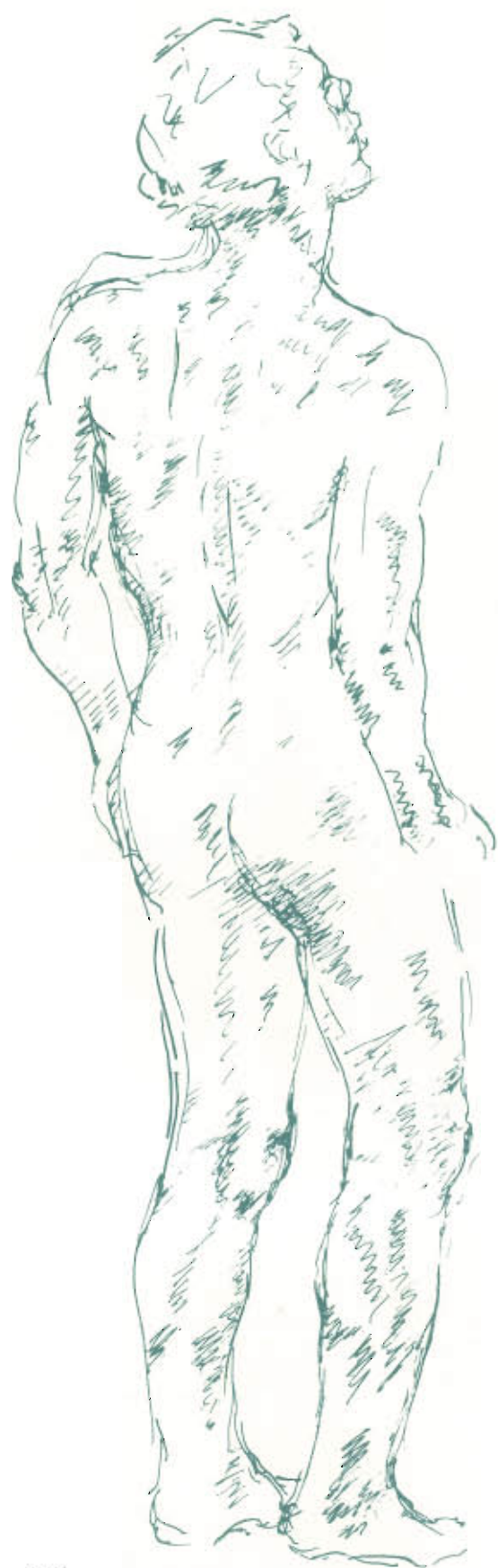
so that when they hanged you we all became black

the hangman peers and hides and looks at his list

we Irish could have warned him that no grave
would go deep enough to hold you
no more than it held Pearse
no more than it can hold any patriot

and though they tried to get rid of you
in the early hours when the world was asleep
the fools
they did not see your soul breaking over Africa
over the whole earth dawning behind their digging

Benjamin son of days



'85

Poem by Desmond EGAN

Drawing by James McKENNA

