

# JUDGMENT DAY

*The second canto of a South African Fantasy.*

by

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## I

Cape Town: the nineteen-eighties: in a season  
When hope is dying, if it isn't dead;  
A place the politicians breed decrees in,  
A once-fine chamber round a trollop's bed,  
Faded saloon-bar of the kelp and waves,  
The old-age home of liberals and culture,  
Watched by the ghostly silver-trees and graves,  
Each with an angel waiting like a vulture.  
Above all broods the bare and buckled Table  
About whose foot the crumbs of boulders lie,  
And further down, an oak, a beam, a gable  
Cling to a past not yet obliterated by  
Italian beetle and estate-exploiters.  
And here and there a rag of beauty flutters,  
And some forgotten grace still dreams and loiters  
By streams not yet converted into gutters.  
But the broad sun reveals in every quarter  
How man can triumph over site and shape  
And with his regiments of brick and mortar  
Complete the occupation of the Cape,  
Where now the architectural orthodox is  
Morgens of big and little sentry-boxes.

## II

But April's here, and the usual South-Easter  
Is wandering somewhere in the Great Karroo,  
The sun leans like a solitary feaster  
Over the Table above the Avenue,  
And from the mountain's dolomite reflectors  
Heat ricochets below to burn at will  
The necks of businessmen and meat-inspectors  
And bleach the beards of goats on Signal Hill,  
In the squat Castle guards admit defeat  
And ships drop off the end of Adderley Street.

## III

The ocean, with a calm sardonic titter,  
 Eyes what five centuries of trade have swirled  
 In tidal marks of civilizing litter  
 About "the fairest Cape in all the world",  
 And in its lazy humour is a subtle  
 Blend of the lispings sand and broken shell,  
 And sea-weed brushed where the red crayfish scuttle,  
 And the creaking of some long-lost caravel.  
 White bones in their green hammocks rock below  
 Where Indian and Atlantic mix their waters,  
 Careless that whites ashore should grow  
 Hot about who should wed their great-granddaughters  
 And pour out laws that lovers from the seas  
 Must match in skin the ladies on their knees.

## IV

Citizens swelter in their various housing  
 From Petersen's Shebeen to Ingle Nook,  
 Salt River, Woodstock, Mouille Point are drowsing  
 In essences of immemorial snoek,  
 While flowers incandesce at Kirstenbosch  
 And yellow flames burn on the cannas' wicks  
 Fat Coloured women nod above the wash  
 In slums from Ida's Vale to District Six,  
 While ladies, possibly of gentler birth,  
 Play long-drawn rubbers out in Kenilworth.

## V

North from the cemeteries of Woltemade  
 New suburbs make an apt continuation,  
 With tombs, then houses baking bleaker, harder  
 In a sort of communal cremation.  
 On hot, low brows for miles of hum-drum shops  
 There flickers a migraine of neon-lights,  
 Round lie the homes of teachers, clerks and cops,  
 The tents of the Afrikaner Israelites  
 Who storm the cities of the Promised Land—  
 The English, falling back upon the mountain,  
 Make a confused but decorous last stand  
 Beyond old Rondebosch's rusty fountain.

## VI

The Bantu, on behalf of Africa,  
The Coloureds—well—for Homo Sapiens,  
Watch from the urban undergrowth and are  
Indifferent how the tedious battle ends,  
And wry old men spit in the afternoon,  
Heat dreams around them like projected wrath  
Remembering many who have died too soon;  
Crouched down in alley or in shanty path  
Youth waits its chance, the dandy, tsotsi, skolly  
Plays dice, and smiles with knives at melancholy.

## VII

But stricken with the high cafard, the town  
Lies under heat as if beneath a feather quilt  
And every gasp's like breathing eiderdown.  
Even the gnus upon the mountain wilt,  
Down in a hundred business occupations  
The mind goes blank, dictating voices mute,  
And writers writing books on race relations  
Pause, falter in their feverish pursuit.  
The Cape Times columnist leans forward, nods  
Knocking askew his culinary bays,  
A local artist drops off as he prods  
To daub more colour on the Cape Malays.  
Sleep claims a score of Christian committees  
From plans to turn their Coloured neighbours out  
There's no more pleasant pastime in the cities  
Than pushing groups of other folk about,  
Or, clearing out from schools for little whites  
The duskier infants, sorting sheep from goats,  
Bravely risking that such human slights  
May make rejected children cut their throats.  
Yet others plot, some liberal old ladies,  
To prop our spineless liberty with stays;  
Such spirit at one hundred in the shade is  
Less drooping than their men's on cooler days—  
God knows if it's the ultimate solution  
To re-apply our corsage constitution.

## VIII

Ambitious, petty, greedy or defiant,  
 All were prostrated by that monstrous heat  
 Which like an apoplectic Hindu giant  
 Reclined on coals of burning roof and street.  
 The birds—they say they're M.P.'s transmigrated—  
 Who shrill all days in trees below the House  
 Break off whatever is eternally debated,  
 And gulp in silent session on the boughs.  
 But in the House one voice goes on and on,  
 Climbs hills of eloquence in bottom-gear  
 Like an explanatory automaton,  
 Though all now sleep who came to cheer or jeer  
 The voice of Franz Hieronimus Beleerd,  
 That male cicada in van Winkle's beard.

## IX

Lets go inside and sit among the bored  
 Reporters, damned to that worst of occupations,  
 Enduring mental stupor to record  
 The endless insignificant orations.  
 So you're reminded of a wagon-shed?  
 It's nearly what's intended to be thought,  
 Since they've replaced the relics of the dead  
 Empire with symbols of a less foreign sort.  
 That hooded bench on which the Speaker's perched  
 Is the true front portion of a tented wagon  
 In which the old republics' founders lurched  
 Their way across the Mountains of the Dragon.  
 And when that long-lashed whip is cracked, the sound  
 Restores a proper order in the place;  
 The Disselboom lies on the table crowned  
 With golden ox-horns, that's our local mace.  
 The top hat which now supersedes the wig  
 Was once Paul Kruger's State or Sunday Best,  
 The Clerk, in leather trousers, wears a rig  
 Exactly as the old Voortrekkers dressed—  
 And as a tribute to the role of British stock  
 The Sergeant wears plus-fours, like Bobby Locke.

## X

Such are the changes, benefits achieved  
 By the New National Ethnic Restoration  
 The "Neths", a party, by themselves, believed  
 The greatest boon God ever gave a nation.  
 This is a claim that's open to dispute,  
 Some say the people never did a crazier . . .  
 But I'm not here to barrack or confute,  
 Simply to note their Great Ideal's "Ethnasia",  
 A country which emerges when "Ethnosis"  
 Has been applied a hundred years or two  
 And those with similar skins and hair and noses  
 Are grouped according to the Race Who's Who,  
 And labelled by their statutory docketts,  
 In areas, states, reserves and special pockets.

## XI

Alone high up behind us on the wall  
 In place of paintings of discarded kings  
 Is hung the Ethnic Anthem, sung by all  
 The Neths at solemn feasts and junketings:

*"Ethnasia will last a thousand years,  
 Our land is studded with its glories,  
 Its monuments are separate bars  
 And segregated lavatories.*

*"God has through us ordained it so  
 Post offices are split in two,  
 And separate pillar boxes fix  
 That correspondence does not mix,  
 No one has ever managed better  
 To guard the spirit—and the letter.*

*"O ethnic trains and buses daily hurry  
 Divided hues to earn divided bread,  
 The races may not fornicate or marry,  
 They even lie apart when they are dead.*

*“God may award his just damnation  
For mixed or unmixed fornication,  
Down here we warn the citizen  
With whom it is a crime to sin,  
And no man takes, with our cognisance,  
A liberty without a licence.*

*“Yea, in our law men stand or fall  
By rule of thumb or finger-nail,  
So sensitive’s our Roman-Dutch  
It notes if lips protrude too much.*

*“We’ve split all difference so fine,  
No wider than a hair or skin,  
To foil the trick of traits and needs  
So shockingly the same in breeds—  
For such success in our researches  
We thank Thee, Lord, in separate churches.*

*“How wondrous is our work, our way,  
And thine as well, Great Separator,  
Who separating night from day  
Left us to sort the rest out later.”*

## XII

We won't stay long—this heat's too great—none see us  
And the good Sergeant's snoring with the best.  
Even the trump of Judas Maccabeus  
Would hardly move one double chin from chest.  
For there's Beleerd, still an attractive figure,  
Genial sometimes, but never entertaining,  
And still, with some gesticulatory vigour,  
Explaining, and explaining, and explaining.  
The pleasant voice is faulted with a treble  
That puberty forgot to take away,  
Frank, eager, student's face, a youthful rebel  
Beneath curled hair gone prematurely grey.  
Tall with aplomb, he lectures and predicts

While slight disarming smiles disturb his lips.  
None, when awake, know why he bothers so—  
His party's made three ayes for every no.

## XIII

But words, like alcohol with other men,  
Are his compulsion, theories, words, and schemes,  
Poured in dull rivers from his tongue and pen  
To sail his paper argosies of dreams.  
Bills, blueprints, proclamations, memoranda  
Bobbed in procession on his verbal flood,  
Behind them blows his restless propaganda—  
And all from a strange need of guts and blood.  
Statistics, numbers, races fill his vision,  
Ransacked from Europe, Africa and Asia  
And patched together with a schooled precision  
To form a bold methodical fantasia,  
His Hundred Year Design, His Master Plan  
To keep the Neths the masters—and their clan.  
Mistake not, he's a man of action, too,  
At least, his plans come finally to motions,  
He starts on what he says he'll carry through  
Ignoring rights and popular commotions.  
He's of the latest breed that's come to boss us,  
The combination captain-pedagogue  
On academic stilts, a mean colossus,  
Goes resolutely deepest in the bog,  
To rage there of designs for joy to come—  
And suck the reasons for them from his thumb.

## XIV

Did you not hear a curious grumbling sound,  
As if the tired earth had heaved a sigh?  
It seemed to stretch its muscles underground  
And yet take half its tremor from the sky.—  
No, it's weather mumbling in a misty beard  
Less certain of its projects than Beleerd.

## XV

Beleerd, the Ethnarch, Planner of Revisions,  
The Minister of Ethnical Affairs!

Great Chief of all the racial divisions,  
 Great wind that fathers all our separate airs!  
 From the Cunene to the Great Fish River  
 Ten million tribesmen, black and brown and yellow,  
 Abide upon the nod of this law-giver,  
 The Bull that can make chieftains with his bellow.  
 (Good heavens! If I go on in this strain  
 I'll get into his P.R.O.'s anthology  
 That snaps up any Bantu praise-refrain  
 Hailing Beleerd in civil mbongology!)  
 Well, anyway, he's race's life preserver,  
 Tradition's conservator, tribal jurist,  
 The very phallus of generic fervour,  
 The great divider, yet official purist.

## XVI

Study now this Great White Father figure,  
 Or kindly Governor of the black man's gaol,  
 Locations, and reserves, those somewhat bigger  
 Lock-ups, to put the blacks beyond the pale.  
 Chief Keeper of the Bantu, he discusses  
 Bold plans to modernise the penitentiary,  
 Even give ruptured tribes some legal trusses  
 And set them free inside a previous century.  
 Each race, or group, or tribe in like confinement,  
 Fruitful by androgynous gestation,  
 Develops its own lines of quaint refinement—  
 Culture begins with tribal decoration.  
 This very afternoon Doctor Beleerd  
 Is speaking to a measure that's designed  
 To build the black man's pride in his own weird  
 And boost his ethnic ethos, as outlined.  
 The bill might strike some latter-day recorder  
 As quite the masterpiece of its concocter;  
 It legalises in the state's new order  
 That fine old institution of witch-doctor.  
 Native F.R.C.S.'s and M.D.'s  
 Are scorned as imitation European,  
 But oaths not thought of by Hippocrates,  
 And bed-side manners of a different mien  
 Will help the Bantu sufferer in his groans  
 As more indigenous healers throw the bones.



## XVII

But listen to Beleerd.

“Science can glean  
 Much from the age-old knowledge of these men—  
 Buchu, for instance, and what about quinine?  
 They have a wide pharmacopoeia then,  
 Not bottles of grey powders on their shelves  
 Or rows of patent salves whose worth's unknown  
 To doctors or the pharmacists themselves—  
 The Bantu know six hundred herbs alone,  
 And their green bottles stand upon the veld,  
 Juices and tastes and scents of their own soil  
 Where the deep-rooted generations dwelt  
 And sacred long-descended snakes uncoil.  
 Their herbalist is the apothecary,  
 But the Inyanga, the witch-doctor's more  
 Like our own doctor, but where we'd be wary  
 In fields we're only starting to explore,  
 Psycho-somatic medicine for one,  
 These men have specialised for centuries.  
 Some honourable members may make fun  
 Of dances, monkey-tails, goats' ovaries,  
 They might as well scoff at the bed-side manner.  
 Surely no good practitioner will think  
 Man's a machine, adjustable by spanner,  
 A rapport's needed, trust, a psychic-link  
 Between him and the sick. At any age  
 It's mostly formed by sight of an appliance,  
 Stethoscope, thermometer, pressure-gauge,  
 They cure as much, perhaps, as any science.  
 Just the same psychological adherence  
 Results from bones, wands, little shields, and thence,  
 Aided by dance and song and strange appearance,  
 Inyangas build a healing confidence.  
 But such a nexus circles wider than  
 A brief accord between two minds, the whole  
 Environment and culture of the man  
 Preside to cure him through his tribal soul.  
 For the witch-doctor is the very nerve  
 Of Bantu feeling for his ethnic own,  
 They in themselves essentialise, conserve

Psychic symbols from which a tribe is grown.  
 So, when mirimbas sound and drums  
 And firelight makes shadows insecure  
 Then from the masked and whirling dancer comes  
 A social medicine, a psychic cure.  
 Witch-doctors' aims—and they resent it!—  
 Have, like Ethnosis, been misrepresented . . . . .”

## XVIII

At the rattle of that compelling word,  
 Like an old charger when the kettle's played  
 The Minister of Defamation stirred,  
 Gulped, lifted a long equine jaw and neighed.  
 By now the country's been defamed so long  
 One Minister's entire time is taken  
 Explaining why all journalists are wrong  
 And even Pope and President mistaken.  
 And heads of ministers on benches round  
 Rear out of somnolence with glaring eyes,  
 As owls are wakened by some daylight sound  
 Into an angry, yellow-orbed surprise.  
 A brief cantankerous stirring disarrays  
 The ranks, as if in times of high abuse,  
 When verbal berg-winds belly-ache the days  
 And all the bitter little braks are loose.  
 Before heads drop, note that line of jaws,  
 Each slowly chewing on a cud of power  
 And balding crowns that planned the strangest laws  
 Since Hammurabai stylused on a tower—  
 Easy to overlook them in a crowd,  
 But some, in curious ways, are well endowed.

## XIX

Smoke-darkened face, as subtle as a fist,  
 And eyes as clear—and just as deep—as glass,  
 There sits that forthright, smouldering chauvinist,  
 Gerhardus Brandman, canonized “The Baas”.  
 “Baas” is his favourite word, and “Baas” adorns,  
 Festoons his blunt republican romance.  
 Pretence, the prettier sophistries, he scorns

For ramrod logic—and an upright stance.  
 He's realised his plain straightforward dream  
 By devious tactics and by talking straight;  
 Once he was captain of a rugby team,  
 Which trained him to be captain of the state—  
 Though lacking the distinction found by some  
 In his precursor, Doctor van der Hum.

## XX

The closest friends of this upright sectarian,  
 Are Mutt and Jeff of this odd ruling set-up,  
 A long neurotic and a short vulgarian,  
 And each a master of the comic get-up;  
 Bills which opponents hold in gravest doubt  
 Are those which these two laugh the most about.  
 One looks an aging elongated fairy,  
 Or, possibly, a sort of bleached giraffe,  
 This minute agitated, the next airy,  
 A tape-worm's pallor and a horn-bill's laugh.  
 He's "Jolly" Staak, at heart a daring spinster,  
 Who peers, in hope, beneath the nation's bed  
 For moralising clerics from Westminster  
 Or (Help! Police!) a handy black—or red.  
 The Minister of Order he, who foils  
 Plots mostly laid in his imagination  
 And with a weird and spastic ardour toils  
 With agitation against agitation.  
 For the new order he has changed the law,  
 Replaced it with his own judicial system,  
 Police are practically his private corps,  
 And "communists" are those who most resist him.  
 Yet he can joke, and no one can be cheerier  
 Increasing floggings, sten-guns and hysteria.

## XXI

And there sits Tommy Vlenter, least a novice,  
 A sallow tokolos, but wordly wise,  
 With great dexterity and knack of office,  
 As head of Defamation, nails the lies.

He can be poisonous but never pompous,  
 His dignity escapes him like an elf,  
 He scoops the gutter first in every rumpus,  
 If praise is slow to come, he'll praise himself.  
 He has a human weakness for the press  
 And reads his speeches there with shining eyes  
 Those praising him he quotes to great excess,  
 The rest—distortions, calumny and lies!

## XXII

Professor Bobels isn't like these two,  
 Responsibility is what he bases  
 His public presence on, a broader view—  
 He has a trinity of public faces.  
 He is an elder of the Church, he can  
 Talk like a Ph.D. of Blake and Bosch,  
 And he poses as an English gentleman,  
 The legal kind, that comes from Rondebosch.  
 Yet he's a sort of caucus-Faustus who  
 Can conjure by strange measures from the murk,  
 Spare senators to show the doubting few  
 Democracy can still be made to work.

## XXIII

Bobels might lack the absolute belief  
 And Brandman, Staak and Vlenter may have found  
 A dialectic binder for their brief  
 Of prejudice, ambition and more profound  
 Drives and uneases of the soul rejected,  
 Even Beleerd, tormented by a fear  
 Of chaos within to master may project it,  
 But Dimmermans is through and through sincere.  
 Big, stammering, stupid, passionate man,  
 Falsetto voice and agitated beard,  
 He loves the blacks as much as any can—  
 The fine old servants, who have disappeared,  
 The ringed indunas, changing times have banished—  
 He calls for what has gone to be restored,  
 He cries for childhood's friends who've vanished  
 With a boy's clay oxen and treasure-board.  
 Visions roll out before his mooning gaze,

So deeply has this well-intentioned claque felt,  
Sees singing Bantu city-builders raise  
New Samarkands upon the tribal backveld—  
Whatever secret doubters there may lurk, he  
Gobbles up dreams like a prophetic turkey.

## XXIV

Some don't need delusions to prop invention,  
But see it clearly, white man versus black,  
Know from a past all bloody with dissension  
Where many blacks are cheap, whites get the sack,  
And since gold, war, time, poverty ordain,  
And mining towns were bone-yards of men's lives,  
Where old dreams die gaunt ribs of pride remain,  
The wronged were Afrikaners and their wives.  
So Joe Coetzee speaks out his visionless  
Hard logic of protection and mistrust,  
His syllogisms based on prejudice  
And axioms of racial disgust—  
And builds a system all the Neths agree  
Makes a Civilized Labour Policy.

## XXV

There's half a dozen more administrators  
Of less distinction than the ones I've named,  
Though quite as interesting as debaters,  
Well-spoken, but not generally acclaimed.  
And round about them spread like doodle-marks  
Are variations on the standard faces.  
Some look like angry ants, some patriarchs,  
Some earnest fellows from up-country places.  
A smattering of patriot professors  
Give with the usual academic unction  
More polished apologies than their lessers  
And thus perform a sort of cultural function.

## XXVI

There's nothing new about these chaps, their game is  
Played everywhere in Africa today.  
Nkrumah, Zik or Nasser shout the same as

They do to break the old imperial sway.  
 The sway's no longer here, but that's no matter,  
 Dead enemies are safer to attack  
 And vanished threats are easier to scatter  
 When others have already hurled them back.  
 Thus round that staunch dead president, Oom Paul,  
 These pitch their stalls, and now their silk pavilions,  
 With enterprises tap a people's soul,  
 Find power—and, as well, the Kruger millions,  
 And still pursue with bonus, trust, debenture,  
 What Neth newspapers call "The Great Adventure".

## XXVII

But while they dream of riches and republics  
 Or of the future great, good Afrikaner,  
 Whose hand both lamb and lion-cub will lick,  
 Beleerd depicts the African Nirvana;  
 ". . . There will, of course, remain a need for numbers  
 Of ordinary doctors for a while  
 Though in no such proportion as encumbers  
 The smooth switchback to the old Bantu style.  
 Redundant blacks with medical degrees—  
 I have arranged, in case a qualm should lurk—  
 Can also turn witch-doctors if they please,  
 Or be employed as clerks, or other work,  
 They can't go on as carbon-copy whites,  
 Cluttering up the ethnic restoration  
 And whispering of foreign human rights  
 As if they cured the sick by agitation.  
 For rapid spread of the new personnel  
 The best Inyangas will set up a college,  
 And yield the secrets each concealed so well  
 To make a common fund of all their knowledge.  
 Nearby a Bantu industry will rise,  
 For since we've shot out of its habitat  
 The beast on which their medicine relies,  
 They'll need a plant for making lion fat.  
 Of course I'm not expecting many cheers  
 From members opposite who "love the Native",  
 They always keep their finest jibes and sneers  
 For anything constructive or creative.

They no more wish the black among his own  
 A man, than have him as their next-door neighbour,  
 But want him in some sort of neutral zone  
 To buy their goods and be cheap factory labour.  
 Our friends will cry, "A blow at freedom!" That's  
 Their usual line. But will they admit to you,  
 The British—they're the model democrats!—  
 Had state witch-doctors healing the Kikuyu.  
 Sometimes I pray that just one man with vision  
 Would rise one day among the Opposition . . ."

## XXVIII

Across the way the weary Opposition  
 Nods forty heads above one nice reflection  
 —A dream as well—to find a proposition  
 That's vague enough to win the next election;  
 And round this high abstraction, brisk  
 Old goats of happy expectation skip—  
 The Government across the way will risk  
 Too much, and crash from a stupendous slip.  
 Triumph (some say) is won with greater ease,  
 However many hearts and years it breaks,  
 If faith's not pinned to forthright policies  
 But hope is fixed on Government mistakes.  
 And to the Blacks they offer neither hand  
 Nor heart, for fear that someone might construe  
 This to admit that others share the land—  
 A fact they sometimes draw attention to.  
 They are exponents of elusive bonhomie,  
 Justice for all, but who gets what, none knows—  
 Theirs is a true political economy  
 Where all the enterprise must be their foes!  
 Besides, God knows what quarrels, splits, divisions  
 Might come among them if they took decisions.

## XXIX

Let's say, the Opposition knows the ring  
 And is, quite often, wily in debate,  
 They bob and weave and use the ropes to spring  
 The classic punches of the bantam-weight.  
 Even with rabbit-punches, jabs and butts

Somehow they still appear too orthodox,  
 While all the fans yell out for blood and guts  
 They seem to deal in dictionary knocks,  
 And, dodging, make their stand for "Integration"—  
 Their one great truth—their wordiest evasion.  
 And always when they're fiercest in the pressure  
 Spirit wanes, ardour suddenly gives out,  
 Their towering rightness shins it through a fissure  
 Their thunderous presence fizzles to a doubt.  
 They have an odd political disease  
 Like epilepsy at "Integration's" sound,  
 Abruptly see eternal verities,  
 Then fall deranged and rigid to the ground.  
 They can't decide to love or lose the black,  
 And so, to solve the irritating fix,  
 To free themselves and yet not feel his lack,  
 They want him "taken out of politics".  
 A Neth has only got to ask them "How?"  
 And they retire to caucus and a row.

## XXX

Three charming fellows lead the hopeful crew,  
 Each points his section's genius or flair,  
 One's Afrikaans, one's English, one's a Jew,  
 A farmer, lawyer and a millionaire.  
 Colijn's the captain and the figurehead  
 Of this reef-dodging lugger of a party,  
 He only swears in private, he's well-bred  
 And always on the deck and looking hearty.  
 And in the worst of weathers he's out front—  
 There's something rather feline in his style,  
 A bowsprit Cheshire Cat who bears the brunt  
 Shipping the long Cape rollers in his smile.  
 Or maybe he's another sort of cat,  
 As imperturbable, the puzzling Sphinx,  
 Whose riddle everyone keeps guessing at  
 But can't decide just what or if he thinks.  
 And though we ask what stirs the man? What hates?  
 What gods? What love or cause impels or pulls?  
 Colijn's best public passion dissipates  
 Itself on fodder and imported bulls.



But can he ride us through the storm, proceeding  
With no more rudder than a sense of breeding?

## XXXI

Oh, Jack St. James can always cut a dash  
Even without a horse, his gay whip teases,  
But will he turn out dexterous or rash  
When his delight amid the uproar rises?  
A Peter Pan of party politics,  
Came to it young, its kept him young too long,  
Now age looks in, still plays the same old tricks  
Impulsively, and still can play them wrong.  
But one more sad behind his mask regrets  
Himself lost leader of the English section,  
Those for whom the old red sun subduedly sets  
And maps grow chill with shadows of rejection.  
These million English are a vague communion  
Indifferent to leadership or goal,  
Their most accomplished children flee the Union,  
Search other countries for their cause and soul,  
And to the pioneer premise of their fathers  
Add on no better moral, finer story,  
Leave our crude glaring sun and savage weathers  
To bask, reflect in other peoples' glory.  
Most able men, not all, who stay behind  
Fix loyalty to man upon shareholders,  
The other whites are voters of a kind  
And blacks are some statistics in their folders.  
Man may diminish while they make their pile,  
Black generations brew in new diseases,  
What if the legislation stinks of guile?  
What? If the supertax reduction pleases . . .  
Their language is looked after by the Jews,  
Their politics thought out by Afrikaners,  
Their colleges embalm enlightened views,  
While they get on with business and gymkhanas.  
Who don't pretend to "county" status boast  
A brawny brotherhood of beer and games.  
Their paraclete is Queen Victoria's ghost  
And their philosopher is Jack St. James,  
Who betters most of them in grit and wit  
And patient waiting for the Neths to split.

## XXXII

For Frank Sidonia gold and diamonds gleam,  
 The richest man, the subtlest in the House;  
 Slight, diffident as silk and it might seem  
 The millions laboured and brought forth a mouse.  
 But yet he has a smoothness that can trick  
 Like razor-grass, and slice with a caress,  
 And cut the feet he seems about to lick  
 And trip with knots the Neth inventiveness.  
 But still, he stays too tentative, too shy  
 Of straight approaches, keeps preferring stealth,  
 Hears ever at his back the warning cry  
 Of pale directors nervous of their wealth.  
 And so he baulks, who sees the truth so clear,  
 At the same Rubicon where others shrink,  
 But sponsors for the hoi-polloi to cheer,  
 Like Dulles, demonstrations on the brink;  
 Yet offers nothing that will hold the heart  
 When the ethnic time-bomb blows the state apart.

## XXXIII

And round these men spread the sub-tropic latitudes  
 Where flatness, vacancy and wind are features  
 With old dry beds of liberal beatitudes,  
 The haunt of nervous, vegetarian creatures  
 And ostriches who swell their throats and mock  
 A lion's booming to the world around  
 But, when their heads are slipped into a sock,  
 Suffer indignities without a sound.  
 And, look, a row of pretty antelopes  
 Are like inverted tripods at the back,  
 Klipspringer liberals on rocky slopes,  
 Tread moral ledges safe from an attack.  
 Leaders prefer old wildebeests or gnus  
 Or pole-cats who can raise a stink at will  
 And curse well-bred constituencies who choose  
 This lofty breed that nibbles principle.  
 However, they, though posed upon their niches,  
 Climb down when called to toe the party line  
 And then climb back to dream of final ditches,  
 A crisis when they really do resign.

Regard them now in their uneasy slumber,  
A little drooping like a horse at tether,  
For liberals there have been in any number  
But few kept principle and seat together,  
And yet because they once were innocent  
Their muse sings them this lullaby-lament:

## XXXIV

Ten little liberals waiting to resign,  
One went and did so, and then there were nine.

Nine little liberals entered a debate,  
But one spoke his heart out, and then there were eight.

Eight little liberals saw the road to heaven,  
One even followed it, and then there were seven.

Seven little liberals caught in a fix,  
One stayed liberal, and then there were six.

Six little liberals glad to be alive,  
One turned a somersault, and then there were five.

Five little liberals found they had the floor,  
One spoke for all of them, and then there were four.

Four little liberals sitting down to tea,  
One choked on a principle, and then there were three.

Three little liberals looking at the view,  
One saw a policy, and then there were two.

Two little liberals lying in the sun  
One turned dark brown, and then there was one.

One little liberal found nothing could be done,  
So he took the boat for England, and then there were none.

## XXXV

But leave all sleeping in their fitful plight  
Each listening to a little siren-song,  
Two parties of mistrust, one shrinks from right,  
The other fears their folk may shrink from wrong.  
(Alas my country in your fateful years  
That these two eyes of our one people's vision  
Should be, as the last chance of choosing nears,  
Squinting fright and bleary indecision!)

Down deep in their subconscious thickets none  
Suspects his time, his destiny is reckoned,  
Nor sees pale hands press downwards from the sun  
And shadows rising round him by the second.  
Many illusions throng the human head,  
The seed from which all light and darkness grow,  
And here's a shade of minds, the forest bed  
With trunks of darkness standing round them now.  
Beleerd goes on, their tone-deaf nightingale,  
It almost seems, indeed, that from his lips  
Grey concepts, all the sift of time, exhale  
The haunted dimness of a great eclipse.  
On far long paths from all the world he takes  
Our time's half-truths and monstrous tall confusions,  
Fulfilling all our politics he makes  
An elephants' grave-yard of man's delusions.  
And such a weight of old grey errors grow,  
A shudder seems to run below the floor.  
Beleerd ignores a passing vertigo  
And struggles on to add one reason more.  
"Thoughts of old ritual murders cause misgiving  
To some. But I can state on their behalf,  
Modern witch-doctors leave their "victim" living  
And now make muti from his photograph . . .  
Whites must, of course, make sacrifices too,  
Witch-doctors who once found our cows and sheep'll  
Be fully occupied in pastures new,  
The great adventure, serving their own people . . ."  
At which the earth which lay around the House  
Wriggles as lips do that repress a yawn  
Then yields and opens its defeated jaws,  
Swallows the building and surrounding lawn.

Policemen on the gate with dazed suspicion  
 Gape at the gape the House has fallen through,  
 One, holding fast, in terror, to tradition,  
 Shoots at a black man in the Avenue.  
 The civil servants wake in buildings round  
 Stare out, then clutch in panic at their eyes,  
 And hear how a great underswell of sound  
 Breaks outward through the town in frightened cries,  
 And some look up and see a strange dust trail  
 Like a torpedo or long finger-nail . . .

## XXXVI

In the descending House the members stir  
 A sense of sway disturbs them—or of sinking?—  
 But see Beleerd still talking through the blur,  
 Drop off again, resolved to cut their drinking.  
 One, wandering to the Lobby for an airing,  
 Sees huge three-headed women, taloned, clinging  
 Outside the windows, eyes of yellow glaring,  
 And ghastly moaning voices reach him bringing  
 Weird utterances urging his improvement,  
 All intermingled with inchoate bellows.  
 Fearing another women's protest movement  
 He dodges back among his dreaming fellows.  
 Past winged horrendous freaks of divination,  
 Through chaos and old night they floated on,  
 Through all the lost week-end of first creation,  
 Down the dark gullet of oblivion.  
 And like a box-kite slowly hauled to ground  
 From heavens stippled with appalling fowl  
 The House descends the fabulous profound  
 To a landscape like a face within a cowl.  
 Throughout, their minds half-troubled by a creaking,  
 The members drowse, Beleerd continues speaking  
 The swan-song of their earthly politics,  
 And acts their Charon down a falling Styx . . .