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# ON THE DEATH OF OUR PRIME MINISTER

## PART I

'He shall return no more to His house  
Neither shall this place know Him  
anymore.'

—*Job, Ch. 7, v. 10.*

This man, the first among us  
Shall not come back  
From our common dust  
Across the wingspan of the sun.  
He shall return no more to his house  
Nor this place longer know his footsteps:  
The arrangement of papers on his desk,  
The shrug with which he answered  
The impassioned argument  
Of an honourable gentleman:  
The brief disclaimer of his hands  
As he rose to a question,  
This place shall not know him anymore.

His time is up.  
No one quick enough to catch  
The Speaker's eye to ask extension  
The wind is full of silence  
They stroll through empty benches  
Who yesterday banded jests with him  
Across the aisle — the cut and thrust  
Of Parliament almost his religion —  
Yet no fanatic  
Nor strong in opinion.

Not for him the assault of heaven  
The lightning's way, the hawk's  
Flight to the millenium:  
The sudden siege of hell  
From passion's barricades  
Nor glory's drunken tales  
Choked with the idea's rage.

Rather he went the way the world went  
Bowed to its rules — a man the world  
could trust—  
He walked within the ritual that it knew  
At ease in its narrow streets  
That twist and turn yet reach, in the end,  
to the sea.

He stood to speak and reasoned  
Not to convince men's hearts  
Mirror brilliance in another's glance,  
But to cajole agreement.  
Fitted his motions, like a loose jacket  
To the general grasp, with room  
For things to take their course:  
His gift to know how  
Not to interfere too much.

Who was much concerned with ceremony  
That things be done with a proper nicety  
And wore decorum like a tie.  
No fit subject, one would have thought,  
For God to set his mark upon  
Like Job:—  
Nor tragedy play a part  
In this man's pragmatic art.

But all men have their fiction  
By which they endure to live:  
Politics was his.  
He too took his place  
In the blindfold carnival about the grave;  
And sat in state — acted out his role—  
A front bench seat his throne  
His wreath of gold the mace.

All men have their fiction  
By which they endure to live:  
Politics was his.  
Caught up in her service he died, believing  
That life was more than this —

A jazz procession  
To a lonely hour when the heart seizes  
Stars melt like points of ice  
And a trumpeter formed of mist and dew  
Wraps his bulk about a horn  
Slides into a lament, cool and blue

For all that lives  
Butterflies that dance  
—Quick shadows on the grass—  
Out of the sun's eye, over  
The edge of the light and into the dark.

—SYLVIA WYNTER