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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