

## ODE TO DON

The days continue, and you are not here.  
The icebergs melt, the deserts grow, and where are *you*  
To show us all a clear way through,  
To strive, to seek, to find, and go past fear.  
The days continue, and you are not here.

We list what we remember, and we mark it well –  
The rings, the wok, the cook book, the white safari suit,  
The day the sea declined to swamp Glenelg  
Because you stood your ground like King Canute,  
The brief, rare hour of love that was Adele.  
We list what we remember, and we mark it well.

Your death-day lengthens, and you do not pass.  
The Shakespeare nights, the Norwood fairs, Italian feasts, Greek dancing,  
The feared Queen's Counsel, speech austere and lancing,  
The Fiji half-breed, it was said, who went his bumptious way,  
The pink shorts in a parliament of grey  
(We know *you* now, but who were *they*?)  
The snob-school rebel who betrayed his class.  
Your death-day lengthens, and you do not pass.

We list what we can list, but space forbids.  
The multicultural, meals on wheels, the gay and union rights,  
The festivals and oysters and wine drunk late at nights,  
A conversation city, where all new thought delights,  
A destination city, to live and raise your kids.  
We list what we can list, but space forbids.

We see you astride the elephant, then falling off,  
Or reading Ogden Nash in a lions' cage,  
Conspiring brave new worlds with Mick and Gough,  
Planning not for a year but for an age,  
Denying lusts like those of Murphy's bull,  
Gardening, weight-lifting, living to the full,  
Playing late Beethoven in a rage,  
The buccaneer, the artist and the toff,  
The dandy-maestro-warrior with an unearned smoker's cough,  
A Prospero still writing his last page.  
We see you astride the elephant, then falling off.

And here we are, dear Don, though you are not,  
With no way left for you to speak or hear,  
While serving in your restaurant, or playing a sonata,  
Or boning up on Tennyson, or a Land Rights Charter,  
Or cooking up a storm with Maggie Beer,  
Or growling how on refugees John Howard lost the plot,  
Or planning one more film with Peter Weir,  
Or telling of the future, and marshalling the data  
Of what henceforth mankind must know and hear  
To strive, to seek, to find, and go past fear.  
The days continue, and you are not here.