

THE LATE EVENING NEWS

When the last poet had been denounced
and the last race called, and the news announced,
my uncle, looking grim as fear
poured out another glass of beer;
'Well, that's the lot,' he said, and then,
the Teevee jammed on Channel Ten
and fused; the sky lit up in a glow,
and Uncle said, 'Don't worry, I'll go
and see what's up'. He vaporised
at the corner, right before our eyes.

Aunt shut the window, out of respect
for Uncle; the children nervously pecked
at peanuts, asking what was wrong
with the Teevee set; 'You won't wait long,'
my Aunt said, 'for an amazing show,'
and she washed the dishes and started to glow.
And then Rose said 'She told us so',
and Harry started to glow as well
and Penelope said 'There's a terrible smell'.

Penelope fell to the floor in a pool
and Pop woke up in his Teevee stool,
and said 'What's on? Are the races done?
Is *Homicide* on? Has *Scoop* begun?'
Harry was starting to melt at the knees,
and Aunt just said 'Sit quiet, please,
they'll have the set working as soon as they can
in time for *The Last American*'.
'What time is *Tales of the Unexpected*?
Pop said, as Harry went mauve in the head;

Aunt said, 'Pop hold your horses and sit;
I'll go out and see if the aerial's hit'.
Pop nodded off with a grumble, while she
went out through the door and was struck by a tree;
I began writing: the way that things go,
Pop's taking on an unearthly pink glow,
and anytime now, as the sky goes bright red
someone will say that it's past time for bed,
and although *Our World's* over, I still can't see
what's the matter with staying up watching Teevee.

MICHAEL SHARKEY

A Time To Choose:
Australian Pets and Artists
Express Their Desire For a
Nuclear-Free World

Anti Nuclear
Petty Book Collective
1984

HOW WILL I MEET THE DARKNESS?

I planted four trees on a hill-top
stroked by the shimmering air,
sure that my love would one day
lie with me there.

But how can I meet the darkness,
the black enormity of death
when the plumes of air are heavy
with radio-active breath?

I saw a thousand new-born calves
sink in a river of blood
as if the words of prophets
had never been understood.

And how can I meet the darkness
in a land whose sovereignty
waits on a golden platter
for everyone but me?

The air is heaving with danger,
the polluted waters boil
and the taint of strontium-90
penetrates leaf and soil.

O how can I sleep in the darkness
of this familiar earth
if I am a silent witness
to uranium's heedless birth?

I hear four children calling
as if they are my own,
four children with hollow faces
wasted in every bone.

So I must meet the darkness
when nuclear warships come
and spill their fearful vomit
on the doorstep of my home.

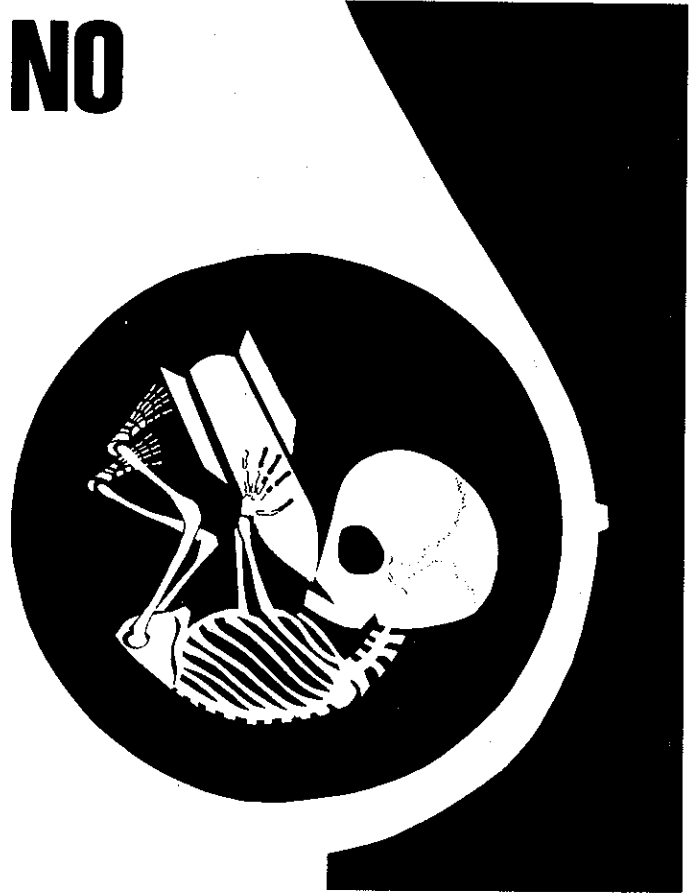
I left those trees on the hill-top
swept by the turbulent air,
knowing my love would never
lie with me there.

The hour of protest comes closer
with darkness of war around —
I'll meet my love with banners
on the shores of Cockburn Sound.

JUSTINA WILLIAMS



NO



Mariette Perrinquet

**TWO SONGS
FOR THE WORLD'S END**

I

Bombs ripen on the leafless tree
under which the children play,
and there my darling all alone
dances in the spring day.

I gave her nerves to feel the pain;
I put her mortal beauty on.
I taught her love, that hate might find
its black work easier done.

I sent her out alone to play:
and I must watch, and I must hear,
how underneath the leafless tree
the children sing and dance with Fear.

II

Lighted by the rage of time
where the blind and dying weep,
in my shadow take your sleep;
though wakeful I.

Sleep unhearing while I pray —
Should the red tent of the sky
fall to fold your time away,
wake and weep before you die.

Die believing all is true
that love your maker said to you.

Still believe
that had you lived you would have found
love, world, sight, sound,
sorrow, beauty — all true.
Grieve for death your moment; grieve.

The world, the lover you must take,
is the murderer you will meet;
but if you die before you wake,
never think death sweet.

JUDITH WRIGHT

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