

## **the attack on Baghdad**

in the evening a rising wind  
knocked the black peaches  
from the laden branches

one by one they dropped  
and some fell into the roses  
where thorns tore at their flesh

and some fell onto the bank  
and rolled down towards the river  
gathering dust and bruises

the dark sand was stained  
black with peach blood  
and when wasps arrived  
and were excited

the air crackled with their lust

First published in *Hazmat Review* (USA, 2006)

## **how to dress for peace**

unbuckle your ammunition belt  
undo your scabbard  
and remove your holster

unlace your military boots  
and peel off your khaki socks

unbutton your flak jacket  
pull off your pullover  
take off your shirt  
and lower your trousers

fold your underpants neatly  
and place them (with your singlet)  
in the dumb-waiter

if you have a dog tag  
hang it on the hook  
on the back of the door

beside the bed you'll find  
a long silk shift  
it is white and has been  
neatly ironed

pull it on  
there are no  
buttons zips or ties

on the dresser  
there is a small yellow harp

don't leave without it

First published in *Hazmat Review* (USA, 2006). Later anthologised in Spanish translation in *Prometeo* 86-87 (Colombia, 2010)

**the song of the belly button man**

after the painting *Belly Button Man* by Pam Helm

unseen on the foreshore  
by a jelly-rolling ocean  
where apple-bellied seals  
sleep on watermelon rocks

and where flighty spotted shags  
crouch like parking meter wardens  
in a sedentary sun  
leaking yolks of yellow clocks

I'm the belly button man  
and my lotus-husky voice  
mutters blue-bottle nothings  
from a fennel-scented hill

until the lilac-coloured evening  
you will only know that whisper  
like a trilobitic lovesong  
from some prehistoric swill

but in the bladderwracking darkness  
through the static of the breakers  
you will sense my phosphorescence  
you will hear my voice of flint

I'm the belly-button man  
and my fingers will infest you  
with a barracuda fastness

you think at first is lint

my smile is full of pincers  
my eyes are full of pinpricks  
and my navel is the pain-song  
of a flounder in a pan

I'll come up on you crabwise  
when the moon is swimming naked  
in the jelly of the ocean  
I'm the belly-button man

my navel is the pricksong  
my navel is the purse-seine  
my navel is the black hole  
that will surely suck you in

then you will be my flatfish  
in a belly-pan of darkness  
in the liver-oily vastness  
of a midnight pelican

First published in *The Song Of The Belly Button Man* (Artsenta Anthology, Dunedin, 2002). Later anthologised in *When the Moon is Swimming Naked: Australasian Poetry for the Chinese Youngster with a Chinese language version* (!) ed Kit Kelen & Mark Carthew, ASM Poetry (Macao, 2013)