

**Apirana Taylor**

*Poems*

***Dragons***

beneath a canopy of blossom trees  
an Asian student dances this way and that

in the shadows and light  
she stoops to gather pink and white petals

that fall like snow  
she presses them into her book

old wind blows her exam papers homework and notes  
into the air they disappear over the Southern Alps

and she simply darts about gathering each delicate petal  
no bigger than her thumbnail

she will imprint these flowers in her heart  
when they are dry paper-blot of colour

she'll give them to her friend or lover  
oh tell the world there's hope

she's remembered for a time what's important and what's not  
as we file our teeth, arm for war and destruction

and the battle dragons come to drink our blood  
in a cold blind world, slow to see the beauty of colour

and quick to forget

***The bomber***

***(suicide bomber Middle East 2002)***

carrying the bloody egg  
taking everyone  
for one last ride  
leaving a hole  
ribbed with guts and torsos  
she dresses for the kill  
announces her protest against oppression  
and the slaughter of her tribe  
with a bang  
and a puff of smoke  
eighteen summers old  
she's happy to pay the price  
of a ticket to death

with madness and hate  
equal to that of her oppressors

R.I.P.

rest in peace

rip

***Startled birds***

the sky flecked  
with the flight of birds  
in a moment gone

clouds sail over the horizon

we do not stay, we come and go

like startled birds  
and drifting clouds

We are  
we laugh we dance  
we sing we fight  
we love squabble and squawk  
we hunt and are hunted  
we dream and fly across the sky  
we are birds

Walls of the night  
in our whare tipuna (1)

woven into the stars  
old black and white photos hang

we have placed them amid  
the firmaments

uncle Tamati, cousin Hoera  
Mum

death divides us

Roimata Toroa (2)  
tears of the albatross fall down the walls of the night

**NOTES:**

1. The whare tipuna is a traditional Maori ancestral house where we meet on community occasions. These houses contain the carvings of our ancestors and we hang the photo's of our dead loved ones on the walls.
2. Toroa means the albatross. Roimata Toroa means the tears of the albatross. It is a traditional pattern woven on to the walls of our traditional houses

**Apirana Taylor** was born on the 15th of March 1955. He is a Maori from New Zealand. He is from the Ngati Porou, Te Whanau a Apanui, and Ngati Ruanui tribes. Apirana is a poet, playwright, novelist, short story writer, story teller, actor, painter, and musician. Many of his poems are frequently studied in New Zealand. Some of his poetry and prose has been translated into several languages. He lives next to the sea in Paekakariki New Zealand, with his wife and partner Pru.