

## Rangi Faith

### Poem Notes

#### ***Mokihi***

In early Maori times the mokihi – or flax raft – was an efficient way of negotiating the rivers of Canterbury in the South Island of Aotearoa. Pita Paipeta was a respected elder and Ratana minister from Arowhenua near Temuka. He would have shown Hugh McCully, an avid collector of artefacts throughout South Canterbury, how to make the raft. I compare it to a child's pram – and the way in which Maori children would have looked over the side of the raft as it was being ferried across a river – in a sense it is timeless and crosses generations and cultures.

#### **Origin Unknown**

A greenstone mere was found by recreational divers in deep water off the coast of Kaikoura. I have illustrated the poem with a warrior running from the fortified pā sites on the Kaikoura Peninsula to his canoe, but being intercepted. The mere falls from the warrior's hand and both it and the warrior fall into the grasp of Tangaroa, the blood being washed from both.

#### ***Walking The Land***

This poem was written after the February 22, 2011 earthquake in Christchurch, Aotearoa. The main actor in the poem is Ruaomoko, the god of earthquakes and volcanic fire. In the poem he walks across the land but he never leaves – the tremors and aftershocks still occur. He leaves the door open.

#### ***The Archaeologist and the Developer Discuss an Old Document***

Maori artefacts and evidence of occupation are often uncovered during development of housing subdivisions in prime locations. In his archives the archaeologist has found a map of an area being excavated and developed. He describes the locations of various sites and their importance to the tribe. He ensures that the developer understands protocol and manaakitanga by respecting any objects uncovered by the blade of a bulldozer.

#### ***Little Black Number***

This is a lighthearted poem about a poetry reading that is compared to the atmosphere of a fashion catwalk. Here – just as in fashion – the best poets strut their stuff! Just like a fashion designer they have worked hard enough to deserve that recognition.

### Poet Notes

Rangi Faith (Ngāi Tahu) was brought up in Temuka, South Canterbury, Aotearoa. A reviewer, anthologist and retired teacher, he has been published in a number of literary journals and anthologies in New Zealand, including Jaam, Real Fire, Into The World of Light, Essential New Zealand Poems, Whetu Moana, Poetry Aotearoa, Spirit Abroad, and others. His own books include Unfinished Crossword, Rivers Without Eels, and Conversation with a Moahunter and is presently preparing a new book of poetry. He has lived at Woodend, Pigeon Bay, Kaikoura and Lake Brunner, and since 1988 at Rangiora, New Zealand.

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## Origin Unknown

*(Object: Patu. Material: Greenstone.  
Found: Kaikoura Peninsula)*

It would make a good story:

the frantic running  
over the tidal flats

through seals, birds  
& rain

into the canoes  
wedged in the rocks;

the capsize  
into the cold waters

the patu falling

the blood  
& broken wristband  
streaming behind

the patu sliding down  
the swirling walls of kelp

through the last shafts of light

& settling into the sand  
& Tangaroa's hand.

## The Archaeologist and the Developer Discuss An Old Document

This village is still remembered -  
and there is a legend;

this broken line is the old swamp -  
the way to the hunting grounds offshore;

these crosses are  
the beached canoes;

these squares are the houses  
under the shelter  
of the sacred hill;

this was the factory floor  
where the greenstone was hammered  
into shape;

so

prepare yourself  
for that rock  
curiously out of place,  
the chiselled wood,  
that burnt layer of shells,

& if there are bones,  
cover them gently  
& let us know.

## **Mokihi, Canterbury Museum**

*(To Pita Paipeta and Hugh McCully)*

From a man who knows  
to one who wanted to know –

this is how it began  
this is how it was done;

& here it resides  
for viewing  
in its finished state –

folded & knotted & askew  
as if on a river bank  
awaiting passage;

today a pram stops  
by the display case –  
a baby moored against the glass  
in her cane-woven waka -

her head lifts up,  
her little hand grasps the gunwale  
of her boat,

she peers over  
into the depths  
of the passing sea.

## **Walking The Land**

*(Christchurch, February 22<sup>nd</sup> 2011)*

Listen -  
Ruaomoko  
walks the land

he shakes the world  
he alters the moko  
of landscape

there is pain

his first steps close,  
violent,  
his last echoes

he treads down the hallway  
he moves away

he leaves the door  
open

## **Little Black Number**

There's a lineup  
of nervous poems  
backstage  
awaiting delivery -  
all lovingly styled  
and sent down the runway;

this little black number  
has the goods -  
from the wings you can see  
the wallets opening in the front row;

the poet who was called out  
deserved the credits -  
he is not surprised -  
his slinky strong lines  
held together in the face of  
some desperate stuff salvaged  
from the cutting room floor -

but they all deserve  
a good audience -  
so -  
bring them all out,  
is the cry,  
bring them all out!