

The veil of time: Te arai

Eyes rimmed red, chin hair not yet luxurious
Grubby jeans and gumboots: clothes not of Wellington Central.
Long hair, tangled and wild.
Afro still ruled you know!
But no match for the Wellington Southerly.

We'd been on the road . . .

We were looking for a pub
You were looking at us, into us with your smile and happiness
Showing through
No downward averted gaze for you e Pa
You were seeking far off recognition in our young stranger faces.
Remnants of the hippy days we were, like your friends from places far off eh! The bearded
one perhaps?

Your smile I can still see from a veil of nearly 30 years.
Huge and beaming, it didn't matter that you didn't know us, because you knew all too well
who we were

Something about you made me take the proffered hand
The hongī was exchanged and mauri mixed.
Firm grip from you, I guessed at the time a working man.
You looked deep in me and said

“stick it up them mate, stick it up them!”

I knew you weren't talking of women

I mumbled something and carried on . . .

I turned and watched you walk down Cambridge Terrace
Cravat knotted, silk shirt proud and taut
I knew something awesome had just happened but I was buggered if I knew what it was

You, on for your next engagement perhaps
Us, for the pub

The funny thing was e Pa
That morning I had picked up Rowley Habib hitching to Wellington....

Gavin Reedy