

Three Lexicographical Pieces

Desmond Hurley

Victoria University of Wellington

1. The downfall of icon

Icon is a word which has become something of a cliché. It appears in newspaper and magazine articles almost daily and very few of these use it in its classical sense which, as *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines it, is

An image, figure, or representation; a portrait; a picture, 'cut', or illustration in a book; esp. applied to the 'figures' of animals, plants, etc. in books of Natural History. *Obs.*

In this meaning, it has been used since at least 1572:

The Icon, or forme of the same birde, I haue caused thus to bee figured. [J. Bossewell *Armorie* III. 1572 23b]

A second, and perhaps better-known meaning, is that of:

An image in the solid; a monumental figure; a statue. [1577-87 HOLINSHED *Chron.* (1807-8) II. 147 The pope ment, by causing such ikons to be erected, to prefer Thomas as a perpetual saint to all posterities.]

And in the Eastern Churches it is used for

a representation of some sacred personage, in painting, bas-relief, or mosaic, itself regarded as sacred, and honoured with a relative worship or adoration. [1833 R. PINKERTON *Russia* 227 Behind them were carried...six censers, and six sacred ikons.]

Many older readers may regard this last as being, until quite recently, its most common meaning. However, for the computer-literate generation this has been superseded by the *OED*'s

small symbolic picture of a physical object on a VDU screen, esp. one that represents a particular option and can be selected to exercise that option. [1982 *Computerworld* 29/9/70 p. 2 Star's screen displays black characters on a white background. These are known as icons on the Star and are equivalent to the familiar physical object in an office.]

More recently, *icon* has been adopted to cover anything or anyone considered important, significant or out-of-the-ordinary. This expansion of its meaning (or watering-down, depending on your point of view and, probably, your age) has been commented on, amongst others, by Frank Haden (who does accept its use for computer images)

[A correspondent] reacts sharply to reports that the late Possum Bourne was an icon of motor sport. She asks for the record to be set straight and an alternative word offered.

An icon can't properly be any more than a copy or representation of something, a likeness, even when it is a revered painting in some Eastern Christian Church. [*Dominion Post*, 14/5/2003, p. B3]

I'm afraid this is a battle Mr Haden has already lost.

The New Oxford Dictionary has already picked up the widened meaning:

a person or thing regarded as a representative symbol of something

This is re-iterated by the *Australian Oxford Dictionary*:

an object of particular admiration, esp. as a representative symbol of something (a literary icon of the 1970s; the shed has become an icon in Australian culture).

while the latest *Macquarie Dictionary* (2001) covers all bases:

a person who is seen by a community as being closest to an admired stereotype ... an artefact, practice, etc., which is associated with a particular way of life so strongly that it comes to be seen as a symbol of it

Those of us who would prefer to be conservative in our usage, would nevertheless probably accept its use for people of significance. Few of us would object to Sir Edmund Hillary and possibly Colin Meads as New Zealand icons in this sense.

But even ignoring the dark side's excesses, the use of cultural icons like Sir Edmund Hillary in advertisements designed to ignite national pride couldn't help but raise the emotional stakes well beyond those of an ordinary sporting encounter. [*Dominion Post*, 7/3/2003, p. B4]

A less universally-acclaimed candidate would be Winston Peters

Perhaps [Peters] has entered the realm of icon, and is now as familiar and New Zealand-affirming as the Moro bar, the Morrie Minor and a row of rugby jerseys on the clothes line. [*NZ Listener*, 27/7/2002, p.16]

Possum Bourne has recently been nominated by some in the media. And, as Bruce Ansley has pointed out, these days

Nothing creates a Kiwi icon faster than an untimely death. Sir Peter Blake was already a hero, but his death on the Brazilian Amazon sanctified him. John Brittain, the motor-cycle designer, was well on his way (unique, enterprising, successful, good-looking), but his early death made him iconic. [*Listener*, 31/5/1993, p. 30]

But you do not have to be dead. The Arts Foundation is to honour 20 of New Zealand's greatest living artists with a new awards system. The announcement in the *Dominion Post* [22/3/2003, p. A2] carried this heading

New artist awards to go to living 'icons'

The fact is that *icon* is now used for almost anything. Here are some recent examples, ranging from brand names to Buzzy Bee and including bits of wire, No. 8, of course.

That would mean after 40 years, New Zealand would no longer be producing that icon of national identity, the No 8 wire. [*Sunday Star-Times*, 30/3/2003, p. D3]

The Kiwi icon – among the best known brand names in the retail sector... [*Sunday Star-Times*, 11/5/2003, p. D1]

Throaties is a New Zealand icon. [*Family Health Diary*, May/June 2003, p. 14]

The Buzzy Bee is our greatest national icon. It is in the great book of icons. It cannot now be un-iconised. [*Dominion*, 10/7/1999, p. 16]

The recipe change to the legendary pavlova icon is usually reputed in NZ to be the addition of vinegar to give the soft centre, and in Australia, the trademark of passionfruit in the topping [*Dominion*, 10/2/1999, p. 8]

from gates to boatsheds:

Professor Fraser tackled head-on Kiwi icons such as the "Taranaki Gate" and the notion of "blokes in sheds" solving problems by improvising with whatever is at hand. [*VicNews*, 1/8/2002, p. 1]

The public dressing sheds were renovated in 1950 and many boatsheds were rebuilt between 1950-1953. Since then the boatsheds at both ends of the beach have become more than background buildings; they are now icons of Titahi Bay beach [*The Bay* Fordyce & Maclehn, 2000, p. 99]

jandals and machines:

They've been an icon of Kiwi slobery since the '50s but in the summer of 2001, the jandal has become a hot fashion item, far removed from the grubby rubber models sported by beer-gutted blokes at barbies.... [*Sunday Star-Times*, 7/1/2001, p. A3]

... the kerosine can, says Somerville, is practically an icon for the show, so prevalent was its re-use... [*Listener*, 8/1/1994, p. 45]

The lawnmower is a great Kiwi icon. It's the ideal Kiwi zombie killing machine. [*Salient* 7/9/1992, p. 16]

It has the dynamic attributes of a sportscar, yet is still capable of workhorse duty, creating an Australasian genre of sports-ute in concert with the Holden Commodore ASS ute that is destined for icon status. [*Evening Post*, 6/10/1999, p.2]

plants and animals

Rover, with the expertise of a truffle hound, dived for the iconic huhu in a native log and came up triumphantly with the goods. [*Evening Post*, 5/12/2000, p. 12]

It might be good news for people who sunbathe in the sandhills but scientists say the drop-off in katipo spiders could spell disaster for one of New Zealand's native icons... "The katipo is endemic to New Zealand. It is only found here. It is an icon like the kiwi and the tuatara." [*Sunday Star-Times*, 6/8/2000, p. A7]

The wind rattles noisily in the towering Norfolk pines, icons of Napier. [*North & South*, 0/6/1999, p. 8]

from mythical characters and stereotypes to features of the landscape and even television programmes

Denis Glover's Harry is a virtual icon of kiwi folklore. He once followed his "wild thoughts / Away over the hill, Where there is only the world / and the world's ill". [*Listener*, 27/11/1992, p. 55].

...for this reporter the sorry affair of Sergeant Dan sums it up. The merry Dan, in his lemon-squeezer hat and his chipper uniform, stood to attention over Flemings mill in Gore for almost a century. Dan was a national icon, every bit as much Kiwiana as Buzzy Bee and the *Edmond's Cookbook*. [*Listener* (NZ), 20/4/2002, p.22]

Bogans as fashion icons? It sounds unlikely, but Massey University design student Genevieve Packer's bogan-inspired fashion collection is ultra-cool... [*Dominion*, 11/11/2000, p. 29]

Coastal sand dunes are becoming increasingly rare... Coastal sand dunes create iconic New Zealand landscapes but they are becoming increasingly rare. Sand dunes are home to more of New Zealand's endangered plant species than most other habitats. [*Forest & Bird*, 0/11/2002, p. 18]

Country Calendar.. is an icon. It's the new *Teletubbies*. [*Sunday Star-Times*, 16/6/2002, p. A4]

Even buildings are now iconic.

[Hdg] Sales of iconic buildings on Auckland's K'Rd inject life into former red light district [*Sunday Star-Times*, 9/3/2003, p. D16]

The Wellington Waterfront Technical Advisory Group recently referred to part of Queen's Wharf as 'iconic' and said of a proposed building on the site that it 'may be categorised at the level of "good quality commercial"

rather than iconic'. The Group gave elaborate consideration to exactly what was meant by iconic, ultimately concluding that the proposal [had] potential for assisting in enhancing the iconic nature of this part of the waterfront. [*Capital Times*, 7/5/2003, p. 3]

Dictionaries, as the late Harry Orsman would say, *record* usage. They neither prescribe nor proscribe, whatever the lexicographer's personal preferences. That does not prevent this author expressing his regret that a valuable word should be thrown about with such little regard for its original meaning.

We are not alone in this watering down of the meaning of icon. A recently sighted book on Australian icons lists various items as undistinguished as some of those New Zealand ones above, as well as such dual-nationality items as *Anzac*, *pavlova* and *Phar Lap* while an Australian website on Aussie icons lists both *beer* and *sausages*.

Meanwhile, *The Oxford English Dictionary* has added to its definition of *icon* a further 'draft' usage:

A person or thing regarded as a representative symbol, esp. of a culture or movement; a person, institution, etc., considered worthy of admiration or respect. Freq. with modifying word.

The supporting citations range from 1952 to 2000. All, be it noted, are from American sources.

2. The hoi polloi, the plebs and the common man – not to mention the ordinary joker

Hoi polloi is a frequently misused term. Some take it to mean *the ordinary man, the mob, the common people, the crowd*. Others take it to mean *the elite*. Both meanings are now common in New Zealand.

Recently I heard a friend who had attended a royal garden party remark on what a thrill it had been to mix with all the hoi polloi ... She was astonished when I told her that that was the last group of people likely to be there, as it meant not the best people, but those at the bottom of the heap. [*Listener (NZ)*, 6/10/2001, p. 48]

Hasn't it ever seemed, you know, undignified to take [the empties] down to the recycling centre where they might mingle with the Lion Brown bottles of the hoi polloi? [*Listener (NZ)*, 7/5/2003, p. 136]

Some time ago, I asked a meeting of about 50 ordinary Hutt Valleyans which meaning they accepted. The meeting was almost divided down the middle with a slight majority in favour of 'the common people'.

This confusion is not confined to New Zealand. The same point is made in an internet discussion by David Meadows (amongst others)

For my father's generation (or at least some of them), hoi polloi seems to have acquired a sort of opposite meaning, i.e. 'The rich'.

The Oxford English Dictionary gives only the one significant meaning – 'the majority, the masses' – although it was also used by Oxbridge students to mean candidates for a pass degree. Its first English record (in its Greek orthography) is attributed to Dryden in 1668:

If by the people you understand the multitude, the of πολλοί, 'tis no matter what they think; they are sometimes in the right, sometimes in the wrong: their judgement is a mere lottery. [Dryden *Essay of Dramatic Poesy* 65]

Burchfield, in his *New Fowler*, makes two points about this expression. The first is that the expression *hoi polloi* means 'the many; hence ordinary people, the man in the street'. *Hoi*, however, is the definite article in Greek and Greek scholars (or the pedantic) avoid saying 'the *hoi polloi*'. Burchfield illustrates this by a citation from Bernard Levin (1992) who wrote that *Alcibiades might have thought himself above hoi polloi* and he says that forbidding the use of the *hoi polloi* 'is a standard example of an attempt to force Greek grammar on to the receiving language'. Fowler himself, in 1926, recommended avoiding the use of the phrase altogether.

Dryden and Byron wrote 'the οἱ πολλοί, and who is to quarrel with them? And who is prepared to 'correct' W.S. Gilbert's lines from *Iolanthe*: 'Twould fill with joy, And madness stark, the οἱ πολλοί ...?' [Burchfield *The New Fowler's Modern English Usage* 3rd ed. 1996]

(Later commentators have pointed out a similarity here with what has happened to some Arabic terms. The Arabic element *al-* means 'the,' and appears in English nouns such as *alcohol* and *alchemy*. Since no one would consider a phrase such as 'the alcohol' to be redundant, criticising 'the *hoi polloi*' on similar grounds seems pedantic. This is not a unique case: words like *algebra*, *alligator*, and *lacrosse* incorporate articles from other languages, but are still prefixed in English with *the*.)

Burchfield's second point is the overturning of the true sense of the word which has, 'since the 1950s, come to be used in parts of America to mean "high society, the upper crust"'. He gives this 1988 example from the *New Yorker*: *How can a night-club comedian go on Broadway? ... I'm a street-corner character, and Broadway audiences have a hoi-polloi attitude* and this from an English source: *I know our Terry's much too grand for the likes of us nowadays – too busy consorting with the hoi polloi at all those literary soirées* (S. Mackay, 1992).

In this sense, *hoi polloi* has found its way into Webster's *Third New International Dictionary* with a secondary 'slang' meaning – 'people of distinction, or wealth, or elevated social status'.

How did it come to acquire this meaning? One plausible explanation is that in this sense *hoi polloi* came to be 'associated with snobs because of its resemblance to, or a mental association with *hoity-toity* meaning 'haughty or snobbish,' another English term that dates back more than three centuries.' Of this theory, the *QPB Encyclopedia* says:

A pretentious upper-class Frenchman a few centuries ago often took the opportunity to literally look down from his *haut toit* or 'high roof' on the lower classes, his *haut toit* becoming through mispronunciation, 'haughty, pretentious'. Or so goes one theory on *hoity-toity's* origins. The O.E.D. claims the word is a rhyming compound based on *hoit*, 'to romp' now obsolete. By this theory *hoity-toity*, first recorded as meaning giddy behaviour (1668), came to mean haughty by 1830 – possibly because the same socialites who were *hoity-toity*, 'silly,' were haughty as well. [Hendrickson, *QPB Encyclopedia of Word and Phrase Origins*, 1997, New York.]

The original meaning, *the common man*, was picked up by the Romans in their use of the *plebs*, 'the commonalty, originally comprising all citizens that did not belong to one of the patrician gentes, to which privileged order were afterwards added the equites or knights.'

All the insolent and unruly turbulence which characterised the Plebs of the Ancient Forum. [Lytton *Rienzi* l. ii, 1835]

There were several co-operating causes which..rendered the plebs anxious to obtain a body of revised and written laws. [Graves *Rom. Law in Encycl. Metrop.* II. 756/1, 1845]

This is less 'the mob', more a social class, and leads into the idea of the *hoi polloi* as the exemplar of common sense.

The masters have been done away with; the morality of the common man has triumphed. [Nietzsche *Genealogy of Morals*, 1887]

In other words, the common man has become someone from whom advice could be sought and he could be found everywhere, including the New Zealand backblocks:

That advice, which delivered by a common man, is good cheape, yet coming from a counsellor, serjeant, judge, are of great value. [Jeanes *Fulm. Christ* 315, 1656]

The wedding [of Abner] is to be at the survyiers hut in the bush ... [We] went to the bush together and saw Abner hung. I do not think a common man has had such a swell breakfast or, in this case, dinner. [Chudleigh *Diary*, 20/9/1863, p. 103]

This concept subsequently mutated into a variety of forms. One of the earliest is *the man on the Clapham omnibus* which is attributed to a 19th Century English judge. Summing up in a case of negligence reported in the *Law Reports* (1903), Lord Bowen said: 'We must ask ourselves what the man on the Clapham omnibus would think'.

Recently, in an interview with John Stotesbury, popular author Wilbur Smith [www.geocities.com] refined Bowen's definition:

...yes, what is the Average Reader! The man on the Clapham bus, forty years of age, one-and-a-half children, two dogs – or two-and-a-quarter dogs!

Chesterton championed the views of *the common man*:

You have weighed the starts in the balance, and grasped the skies in a span: / Take, if you must have the answer, the word of a common man. [Chesterton *The Pessimist*]

During his Jubilee, George V is said to have associated himself with *the ordinary sort of chap*.

I can't understand it. I'm really quite an ordinary sort of chap.

No wonder that, in 1942 in his address, *The Price of Free World Victory*, Henry Wallace proclaimed the century of the common man.

In New Zealand, in my youth, the ordinary man had become the *ordinary joker*.

...the present-day New Zealanders, the ordinary joker in [a] tartan shirt with his do-it-yourself concrete mixer... The practical, unimaginative, adaptable, prejudiced, smug, kindly, resilient, casual, slangy, independent, open-hearted she'll be right New Zealander. [Review, Nov. 1959, p. 16]

and a man celebrated in Peter Cape's song, 'Taumarunui'.

I'm an ordinary joker getting old before my time / For my heart's in Taumarunui on the Main Trunk Line.

The New Zealand poet, Allen Curnow, thought the relatively new WWII term, *kiwi*, meant much the same thing.

In every New Zealand poet, almost, there is a streak of the 'Kiwi' – our word for patriotic common man – who disapproves, distrusts, or despises the personal voice. [*Penguin Book of NZ Verse*, 1960, p. 64]

Later, Rob Muldoon was to claim support from the *ordinary bloke* which has become, in these politically conscious days, *the ordinary bloke and blokeess in the street*.

And then there's the part where the average bloke, or blokeess, in the street gets the chance to be in his band. [*Evening Post*, 1/2/2001, p. 22]

The term *blokeess*, surprisingly, goes back to at least 1909:

The bloke is afraid to climb into the blokeess's trap, on account of his horse. [*NZ Truth*, 23/1/1909, p. 1]

A recent, unexpected addition to the roster of ordinary blokes is British ex-Premier, John Major, in an equally surprising description of the species:

It is Mr Major who seems to sense the fears and hopes of middle Britain. He is an ordinary bloke, everybody's idea of a bank manager. [*Economist* 24/3/1990 p. 12/1]

But yet another view is that of novelist Angus Wilson, who saw the common man as, well, common.

I have no concern for the common man except that he should not be so common. [Wilson, *No Laughing Matter*, 1967]

Punch also had its doubts about the common man:

We live in an age in which the Common Man is apt also to be a crazy, mixed-up personality. [*Punch* 28/11/1956 p. 653]

Perhaps it is not surprising that Sir Edmond Hillary manages to be both an icon and, at the same time, the epitome of the common man, the *hoi polloi*.

But even ignoring the dark side's excesses, the use of cultural icons like Sir Edmund Hillary in advertisements designed to ignite national pride couldn't help but raise the emotional stakes well beyond those of an ordinary sporting encounter. [*Dominion Post*, 7/3/2003, p. B4]

Hillary.. has continued to be the type of New Zealander we'd like to see in the mirror each morning: practical, hard-working, self-effacing, determined, modest ... an ordinary bloke... who performed an extraordinary deed... [*Dominion Post*, 31/5/2003, p. C23]

3. The legacy of Greg McGee

TUPPER: *Whaddarya?*

FORESKIN: *Now that's an interesting philosophical question.*

Few of us have not been challenged at some time with the query 'What are you? A little baby? A big sook? A girl's blouse?' – you can supply your own put-downs. And yet it was not until 1981 that Greg McGee challenged us all with his landmark play, *Foreskin's Lament*, a play which Michael Neill wrote in his foreword was an act of mourning. It mourned the end of heroes, the passing of an age, the passing of a generation for whom 'the lore was Law, the Rugby Code a Covenant, and football grounds the shrines of tribal custom'. But, as Mervyn Thompson said, it was not just a play about rugby, it was a play about 'the state of the nation.' And it is also a play of challenges.

... "whaddarya?" still packs a whacking great theatrical punch. [*Listener* (NZ) 21/8/1999 p. 42]

The challenge is there from the beginning act

No shirking, let's finish with a bit of guts – whaddarya anyway?

So it is that Tupper, the coach, challenges – or is it taunts – his players with his frequent Whaddaryas?, a challenge reiterated in the powerful final monologue

I'm hanging up my boots – whaddarya?

Kicking for tough – whaddarya?

Chucking it in – whaddarya?... Can't play the game

or anymore wear the one-dimensional mask

for the morons' Mardi Gras

where they ask you whaddarya

but really, really don't want to know

[*Foreskin's Lament*: Price Milburn / VUP, 1981]

Somehow, that passage, followed by a six times 'Whaddarya?' has caught the public imagination and is now frequently used, with varying overtones of emotion, (and a variety of spellings *Whadarya*, *Whaddaya*, *WoddAREyer*, *What are ya?*, *Wodd are yer?* *Woddare yer?*) to challenge us to an examination of conscience.

[Hdg] Whaddarya?... I've gone cold turkey twice. It's bloody hard. But don't expect any sympathy from me. If I can do it, so can you. Whaddarya?

[*Listener* (NZ) 2/6/2001 p. 38]

Or, as McGill defines it in his *Dictionary of Kiwi Slang* (p. 22) to express 'rhetorically questioned contempt.'

Colin Meads didn't need any blindfolds or fancy 'man management'; he made do with a sheep under each arm and a decent-sized King Country hill. Fun? 'Whaddarya?', as they said in *Foreskin's Lament*. [*Listener* (NZ) 20/2/1999 p. 5]

'Garn, woddare yer? Can't yer take a joke, mate?' is the least you can expect when you stand exposed, cringing in the spotlight of supposed affability disguising unspoken contempt for a loser. [*Sunday Star-Times* 12/5/2002 p. C9]

Not surprisingly, 'Whaddarya?' is mentioned frequently in discussions of the play:

Whaddarya? – a question that has entered our cultural lexicon. A signifier of an unsavoury side of New Zealand male behaviour on and off the footy field. It was the catchcry of a young man called Foreskin in Greg McGee's play *Foreskin's lament*.. [*Listener* (NZ) 31/7/1999 p. 37]

'Each individual comes under group pressure to assert their acceptance of the group values by joining in anti-women behaviour,' Phillips says. To abstain from such behaviour invites endless ribbing, accusations that you're a poofer or effeminate. 'It's the "whaddarya?" mentality,' he says, citing the famous line from Greg McGee's play *Foreskin's Lament*. [*Sunday Star-Times* 22/2/2004 p. A8]

The show.. searches for some kind of explanation as to why the game [sc. rugby] has meant so much to us, a response to the question barked across a frosty training field in *Foreskin's Lament*: 'Whaddarya?' [*Listener* (NZ) 15/6/1996 p. 24]

It enters into the problem of identity of the individual

If anyone accuses you of being a computer nerd smile sweetly and holler 'Whaddaya!'. [*North & South* Oct. 1999 p. 29]

or of the nation:

[Hdg] WoddAREyer, a big girl's blouse?... It wasn't the trendy dance drug Fantasy that caused last weekend's death of yet another young male chance-taker. It was the dread cry WoddAREyer.. The authorities should instead think about the central role played by WoddAREyer, the chorus of ridicule so feared by young males... Under the threat of WoddAREyer, young men won't back off from taking an unnecessary risk. [*Sunday Star-Times* 6/5/2001 p. C6]

Although 'Whaddarya?' has replaced the old expressions, 'are you a sooky, a sissy, a girl's blouse, a less-than-man?', it still has much the same meaning, the same 'rhetorically questioned contempt.'

I dread the next time I have to pretend polite tolerance when some witless parent shouts 'Wodd are yer?' at a son or daughter who shows signs of turning the other cheek. [Frank Haden: *Sunday Star-Times* 10/2/2002 p. C8]

At 80mg, you've reached the giggling, who-gives-a-stuff level, the 'I've always noticed I drive better when I'm drunk' stage, the point at which you ask yourself 'Wodareyer? A big girl's blouse?' when you have twinges of befuddled conscience as you start fumbling the key into the lock. [*Sunday Star-Times* 14/12/2003 p. C2]

Groups of leering young men would saunter up to us and yell, 'Whaddaya, a pack of poofters?', or 'You're just a pack of girls', or even 'You're not real Kiwis, are you?' [*Listener* (NZ) 19/9/1987 p. 29]

We don't need to buy those women's mags anymore to keep up with the latest Hollywood gossip. Whadarya? [*Dominion Post* 27/11/2002 p. B6]

One night my cousin came up dishing out the beer and he said, 'Want one?' and I said no and he said, 'What are ya?' [*Listener* (NZ) 19/10/2002 p. 33]

It has also become a matter for levity:

'Q. What's the difference between a man and a condom? A. Condoms have changed; they're no longer thick and insensitive.' Not laughing? Whaddarya? [*Dominion* (Wellington) 18/12/1999 p. 22]

Even my carefully thought-out argument of 'What are ya?' failed to have any effect. [*Listener* (NZ) 21/7/ 2001 46]

or a matter of definition:

Whaddarya? A Te Papa-ite or a traditional museum buff? [*North & South* Apr. 2000 p. 48]

Revived and updated as a television production and re-titled *Skin and Bone* twenty years later, McGee's play did not seem to have same impact or the same resonance but the insight and power of the play remain.

The play was a lament for the innocence of a lost small-town rugby culture, nowhere more powerful than in the concluding (and very theatrical) 'lament' – a long monologue wherein Foreskin poured out his misery, his inability to cope with his lost sense of self. The final words were the cry 'Whaddarya? Whaddarya? Whaddarya?', as eloquent an interrogation of our notions of masculinity as New Zealand literature has produced.... Maybe the original play (and especially its conclusion) was just too theatrical to be filmed. Or maybe somebody should ask Greg McGee if he's an insightful commentator on New Zealand mores, or a purveyor of bland entertainments of 'international' (that is, nowhere) appeal. Whaddarya? [Graeme Evans: *NZ Catholic* 30/11/2003 p. 17]