Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.
THE CONSTRUCTION OF MASCULINITY IN GREG Mcgee’s FORESKIN’S LAMENT

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in English at Massey University

J S Rothwell

1995
ABSTRACT

McGee’s play interrogates contemporary constructions of masculinity centred around the national game of rugby. With the play being set in the late 1970’s, rugby was still central to the national ethos in a way that would no longer be thought universally valid in the 1980s.

The play presents an exploration of male Pakeha New Zealanders at a time when the ethos was steadily being corrupted. Elements of the comradeship that the game could promote are noted together with its more negative effects - the attitude of the team to women being one of the foremost and including the derogatory attitudes to homosexuals and people of other ethnicities. The eponymous Foreskin is seen as someone who tries to unite in himself the rugby ethos and intellectual life. In the Lament he addresses his failure at this endeavour.
CONTENTS

Introduction ........................................................................................................................................ 1

Chapter 1: Masculinity in The Ethos of Rugby .............................................................................. 8

Chapter 2: The Players’ Attitude to Women .................................................................................. 11

Chapter 3: The Team’s Attitude to “The Other” (Continued) ..................................................... 17

Chapter 4: Foreskin’s Attempt to Synthesize The Athlete and The Aesthete ............................ 20

Chapter 5: The Corruption of Team Standards .......................................................................... 30

Chapter 6: The Lament ................................................................................................................ 33

Chapter 7: Conclusion ................................................................................................................ 40

Bibliography ................................................................................................................................... 44
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To my supervisor John Ross of the English Department of Massey University whose enthusiasm for my subject and whose flexibility of approach were very welcome and whose suggestions were gratefully incorporated.

To David Carnegie of the Theatre and Film Department of Victoria University for his helpful advice and for giving me the opportunity of examining McGee's original script complete with Carnegie's own notes pencilled in the margin.

To Doreen de Cruz of the English Department of Massey University for kindly providing a thoughtful and helpful feminine view of the text.