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TITLE OF THESIS : FORESKIN'S LEGACY : GENDER, SEX AND VIOLENCE IN CONTEMPORARY NEW ZEALAND THEATRE

DEGREE : M. A.

SUBJECT OR DEPARTMENT : ENGLISH

YEAR : 1993

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FORESKIN’S LEGACY

Gender, Sex and Violence in Contemporary New Zealand Theatre
FORESKIN'S LEGACY
Gender, Sex and Violence in Contemporary New Zealand Theatre

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in English in the University of Canterbury 1993.
By Christina Stachurski.
Whatever it costs, New Zealand producers, actors and dramatists must confront each other and find ways of giving expression to the New Zealand voice, the New Zealand heart and contentment, if contented you really are, as well as the anxieties of your legendary country.

John Allen, judge of the 1958 British Drama League Finals.
# Foreskin's Legacy.

*Gender, Sex and Violence in Contemporary New Zealand Theatre.*

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Abstract.

In the early 1980s Foreskin's Lament swept the country as a major artistic and commercial success. In this play dramatist Greg McGee challenges the traditional New Zealand male role and associated behaviour. Foreskin ends the play searching for a new male identity: "[c]an't play the game or any more wear the one-dimensional mask . . . . Whaddarya?"\(^1\) Has the massive economic and social change occurring in New Zealand since the early 1980s been responsible for answering Foreskin's question and redefining the male role? Similarly, has feminism resulted in women achieving real freedom from the constraints of traditional expectations? Or, rather, has the uncertainty caused by the constant change and financial insecurity influenced New Zealanders to reactivate or reinforce gender roles from earlier times? It is possible to answer the above questions through a close study of contemporary New Zealand theatre: theatre is influenced and produced by the social and cultural context in which it exists. Within the social context, gender is inextricably linked with sex and violence. As the meeting between society and theatre occurs during the performance of play texts, the performance situation is the dominant concern of this thesis.

Acknowledgements.

Thanks are principally due to my supervisor, Dr Mark Williams, especially for acknowledging and accepting my point of view.

I am also grateful to: Campbell Thomas, Colin McColl, David Geary, Elric Hooper, Judith Dale, Jim Moriarty, Lisa Warrington, Michelman Forster, Richard Finn and Ross Gumbley for making themselves available for interviews (and John Broughton and Stephen Sinclair who would have if we could have co-ordinated cities and times); Andrew Scott, David Birrell, David Lovegrove, Doug Clarke, Howard Keene, Hugh Campbell, Jo Smith, Liz Weir, Lynn Campbell, Margaret Dawson and Sandra Thomson for each proof-reading part of the final draft, and for being variously involved in conversations, discussions or arguments about gender, sex and violence over the past year; Rebecca Hayward, fellow traveller on the thesis writing road, for her friendship and support, and for the use of her office; Associate Professor Howard McNaughton for the theory and references from his Honours and Stage Three classes; Phil Foster (Court Theatre), Stephanie Creed (Playmarket) and Caroline Armstrong (Downstage Theatre) for information and access to archives; Doug Clarke of the New Zealand Theatre Federation May Ives Library for supplying the texts absolutely free; Bernadette Hall, Ian Harding and Rob Staples for pivotal conversations; Matthew McGurk for final formatting, and Jill Tetley, the U.C.S.A.’s wonderful Education Co-ordinator, and John Sullivan and Jolisa Gracewood of the E-Team, without whom this thesis never would have been written.
In fact, I think I'd like it
To see my sex as women see us
What a thing to feel and to experience . . .

- Maybe I would find
It's not just a state of mind
But womankind in fact is held inferior.
Chris Knox, Seizure.

It is by taking up the challenge of speech
which has been governed by the phallus,
that women will confirm women in a place
other than that which is reserved in and by
the symbolic, that is in a place other than silence.
Hélène Cixous. The Laugh of the Medusa.
Introduction.

i) Theoretical Framework.

*It is not a question of gender, but of power.* Fay Weldon.

*All drama is . . . a political event.* Martin Esslin.

This thesis begins from the position that society, gender and theatre are interconnected: the dominant social ideology defines 'masculinity' and 'femininity' and overtly and covertly decides what is seen in mainstream theatres. Central to this argument is the concept of gender as socially constructed, rather than existing as a biological imperative. Ann Oakley points out that gender "roles, expectations, traits, and qualities vary from society to society and over time, indicat[ing] the real but often hidden disjunction between sex and gender (Oakley, cited in James and Saville-Smith 10-11). Social constructions of gender play a pivotal part in New Zealand's masculinist society (James and Saville-Smith 11). Arthur Brittan defines "masculinism" as the

ideology that justifies and naturalises male domination. . .
Masculinism takes it for granted that there is a fundamental difference between men and women, it assumes that heterosexuality is normal, it accepts without question the sexual division of labour, and it sanctions the political and dominant role of men in the public and private spheres. (Brittan 3)

This ideology has been alternately defined as the "White Male System" by Anne Wilson Schaef: her analysis presents the existence of "women's reality" and an emerging "Female System", showing
that the White Male System is a social construction, rather than an unquestionable given (Schaef 2).\footnote{This is a very simplistic summation of Schaef’s analysis, and is not meant to imply biological determinism as the basis of her theory. Dale Spender concurs with Schaef: “it is my belief that if women were to gain a public voice, they would in many instances supply very different meanings from those which have been provided, and legitimated, by men” (Spender 78). Marilyn French presents considerable evidence of patriarchal societies in Beyond Power: On Women, Men & Morals (1-44).}

This prevailing masculinism “entails a continuous negotiation and management of discourse and practice by dominant heterosexual men” which insists on the importance of behavioural differences between the sexes (Brittan 125, 140). Gender differences are presented as natural and “rarely portrayed as unequal. Instead women and men are seen as interdependent and complimentary. The gendered culture conceals the degree to which material inequality [exists] between men and women” (James and Saville-Smith 85). But, it is important to note that while the patriarchal system allows men to dominate women in every social class, such a system is supported by the majority of women, and also involves inequalities amongst men, and amongst women (Brittan 139). The notion that masculinism allows all men to have power over all women is decidedly simplistic: the reality is that a powerful group of men dominate almost all women and the large proportion of less influential males.\footnote{We recognize that female and male are imbricated in maintaining the dominant class ideology, one powerfully dependent upon gender stereotypes for its sustenance. This is not to deny the obvious inequities between the positions women and men have occupied. But it is to insist that the question be nuanced far beyond defining men as the villain and women as the victim. . . . There are men more innocent of the power politics of ‘patriarchy’ than some women; there are men as resistant to it, as confined by its assumptions, as women” (Claridge and Langland 8).} Although a Marxist analysis of inequalities between the sexes ignores “the benefits that working-class men gain from their control over and exploitation of women as unpaid workers in the home and
community”, it is useful to look at the organisation of production and reproduction in Marxist terms (James and Saville-Smith 3). Marriage and the nuclear family are, or perhaps have been, cornerstones of patriarchal capitalist society, and constitute “a kind of collective bargain among men that legitimates their control over a specific woman’s sexuality and children” (Brittan 120). In exchange, women receive economic security and social status from their husbands. Until relatively recently marriage largely confined women’s power and influence to the domestic realm, while working class men’s adherence to the behaviour and values of socially defined masculinity negated their ability or desire to challenge the existing social order and ethos (James and Saville-Smith 35-38).¹ Brittan argues that over the past twenty-five years the rise of feminism, the collapse of the nuclear family and the increase in gay rights have resulted in a “crisis of masculinity” (Brittan 180).

He states that “the viciousness of the counter-attack against feminism and the gay movement by the New Right is indicative of some kind of strain in masculinism. Male authority can no longer be presented as taken for granted - it has to be defended and rationalised” (Brittan 184). This retaliation against feminism involves large numbers of women as well as men: “possibilities for women have become so open-ended that they threaten to destabilize the institutions on which a male-dominated culture has depended,

¹ James and Saville-Smith argue convincingly that the hierarchic heterosexuality of marriage has been used as a means of social control in New Zealand. The social disorder of the 1880s and 1890s was rectified by the instigation of the “Cult of Domesticity” for women and the “Family Man” for men. The Cult of Domesticity was used to disarm the challenge of the “Man Alone” in two ways. Firstly, it provided a basis from which unpropertied men’s political power could be countered. Secondly, the Cult of Domesticity was instrumental in defining a less disruptive role for men. . . . Masculinity became increasingly defined in terms of men’s responsibilities to their families. . . . [T]he Family Man had no associations with resistance against men in authority” (James and Saville-Smith 35-38).
and a collective panic reaction on the part of both sexes has forced a
demand for counter-images" (Wolf 17). Patriarchy's "defences are
being strengthened and reinforced by more sophisticated discourses
and practice" (Brittan 170). For example, in The Beauty Myth Wolf
argues that the fixation on 'beauty' in the 1980s was a direct
consequence of the entry of women into powerful positions in the
public sphere (Wolf 28). This fixation on 'beauty' can be defined
using Stephen Heath's term, the "novelistic": he theorises that
society produces "fictions", which are "the constant narration of the
social relations of individuals, the ordering of meanings for the
individual in society" (Heath 85). Heath's notion is similar to
Barthes' definition of "myth" as "a form of communication, a
'language', a system of second order meaning" attached by social
convention (Culler 35). Both Barthes' and Heath's theories indicate
that meaning and relationships, which are inextricably connected
with gender, are socially constructed and can therefore be examined
and exposed.

Feminist theorists have examined and exposed the
objectification of women by men, and consequently by women
themselves, as a means of subordinating the female sex.
Objectification is a belief that only some people deserve the status of
persons or subjects: "[o]bjectification implies a denial of
intersubjectivity. There can be no real communication between the
subject and the object because, by definition, the object is not a person,
is devoid of status-worthiness" (Brittan 170). Susan G. Cole theorises
that one way of instilling social values is to eroticize them:

[i]mages that flatten sex into 'beauty', and flatten that
beauty into something inhuman, or subject her to eroticized
torment, are politically and socioeconomically welcome,
subverting female sexual pride and ensuring that men and
women are unlikely to form common cause against the social order that feeds on their mutual antagonism. (Wolf 142-3)

In these terms, the prevalent forms of sexuality are ‘fictions’, a means of narrating the social relations between individuals (Hite xxxv, Brittan 67, Heath 2).

Sexuality, then, is a form of power. Gender as socially constructed, embodies it, not the reverse. Women and men are divided by gender, made into sexes as we know them, by the social requirements of heterosexuality, which institutionalizes male sexual dominance and female sexual submission. (Mackinnon 111)

This is not to say that sexuality does not exist, but, rather, to “displace the particular and limiting representations of it that we know as ‘sexuality’” (Heath 3). The overt manifestation of such limited and limiting sexuality is pornography: “pornography always presumes a view of women as an object of male transcendence, ie pornography is an articulation of privileged male discourse” (Brittan 67). But, paradoxically, the effect of pornography is to keep men “from finding peace in sexual love. The fleeting chimera of the air brushed centroid, always receding before him, keeps the man destabilized in pursuit, unable to focus on the beauty of the woman-known” (Wolf 69). This lack of representation of the ‘woman-known’ extends into the theatre. Sue Ellen Case’s analysis of Classical Greek society and theatre is relevant to contemporary New Zealand society and mainstream theatre:

[as a result of the suppression of real women, the culture invented its own representation of the gender, and it was this fictional ‘Woman’ who appeared on stage, in the myths and in the plastic arts, representing the patriarchal values attached to the gender while suppressing the experiences, stories, feelings and fantasies of actual women. (Case 6-7)
Correspondingly, Rosemary K. Curb points out that "[i]nsofar as patriarchal theatre represents women's self-consciousness, it reflects Simone de Beauvoir's concept of woman as [O]ther" to men (Curb 303).¹

The resurgence of emphasis in social discourse on women's Otherness to men includes a parallel suppression of the validity of homosexuality, as homosexuality "calls into question the primacy of heterosexual marriage and confuses notions of gender appropriate behaviour" (Clum 93). "The suppression of the homosexual component of sexuality, and by corollary, the oppression of homosexuals, is therefore part of the same system whose rules and relations oppress women" (Rubin 180, cited Clum 93). Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has studied what she calls 'male homosocial desire', that is, male friendship which is considered more important and noble than relationships between the sexes ('mateship' in New Zealand). She points out that "much of the most useful recent writing about patriarchal structures suggests that 'obligatory heterosexuality' is built into male-dominated kinship systems, or that homophobia is a necessary consequence of such patriarchal institutions as heterosexual marriage" (Sedgwick 6, cited Clum 97). While the masculinist discourse is concerned with labelling and abjecting male homosexuality, this discourse tends to ignore female homosexuality, despite the fact that the "ultimate threat to men generated by any act of female intimacy is the threat of lesbianism" (Raymond 15). Adrienne Rich explains:

[w]hen we look hard and clearly at the extent and elaboration of measures designed to keep women within a male sexual purview, it becomes an inescapable question whether the issue we have to address as feminists is not

simple ‘gender inequality’, nor the domination of culture by males, nor mere ‘taboos against homosexuality’, but the enforcement of heterosexuality for women as a means of assuring the right of physical, economical, and emotional access. One of the many means of enforcement is, of course the rendering invisible of the lesbian possibility. (Rich 191, cited Clum 99)

Alternately, lesbians can be misrepresented as imitating men; a supposition which Radclyffe Hall exposes when she states that women’s affection can go to other women, “not because they are men trapped in women’s bodies but because they reject prescribed roles” (Faderman 319). Thus, the categorisation of women and homosexuals of both sexes, as objects and/or Other or invisible, in social discourse promotes a biologically determined dichotomy of gender and heterosexism as means to uphold heterosexual men’s positions of power and consequent benefits within the masculinist system.

Masculinism also overtly and covertly decides which plays are produced in mainstream theatres. “[T]he survival of theatre is economically tied to a willing audience - not only those people paying to sit and watch a performance but increasingly those who approve a government, corporate, or other subsidy (Bennett 4). Thosby’s and Withers’ research shows that theatre audiences are substantially made up of middle-aged, high income, high education, professional, managerial and white collar groups; the predominant determining factor is level of education (Thosby and Withers 96, cited Bennett 94).” People with similar horizons of expectation usually make up the government, corporate or arts council bodies that make financial grants to theatres. Theatre is socially mediated: “before they reach the

1Thosby’s and Withers’ The Economics of the Performing Arts is based on data gathered primarily in Australia and the United States, but also includes data from Canada, New Zealand and Britain (Bennett 94).
reader, the works produced always have forms of social appropriation already behind them; they have been selected for reception through social institutions, made available by the latter, and in most cases also have already been evaluated thereby” (Naumann 119, cited Bennett 56).¹ The six plays under discussion have been produced in mainstream theatres, which are dependent on middle-class audiences for economic support and which therefore usually cannot afford to produce plays which do not cater for the tastes and social/gender values of their predominantly privileged patrons.² These social influences on selection and production of particular texts and the social influences on members of the audience make up what Susan Bennett defines as the “outer frame” of a performance: the “inner frame” contains the dramatic production in a particular playing space (Bennett 149).

Within the inner frame of the performance it is necessary to make a distinction between text, script, drama and performance. A text is defined as the dramatist’s written words, while the script is the meaning attributed to the text by those involved in the production of the text. Drama is the action that occurs on stage, the world that is created by theatre practitioners (director, actors, designers and crew): performance includes the relationship between the audience and the drama. For the purposes of this thesis a text cannot be separated from the performance of that text, as it is within

¹In 1992 the Court Theatre’s income was made up from grants from the QEII Arts Council (27.56%), box office (61.21%), cash sponsorship (1.73%) and ‘other’ (income generated by Court Supporters etc 9.5%). This theatre also receives considerable non-financial sponsorship from businesses (conversation with Stuart Alderton, General Manager of the Court Theatre, 22 February 1993).

²Michael James Manala, which does not confirm masculinist values, has not attracted a similar level of audience attendance as the other plays discussed: “[t]he sad part about this production was the small houses - perhaps the high prices kept people away” (Kaa 3).
the performance situation that messages about gender roles and
behaviour are communicated from the playwright and practitioners
and are received and/or interpreted by the audience. Thus, the
relationship of the text to the performance must be defined. While I
agree with Richard Hornby that the text has to be the generating idea
of the performance (Hornby 62), David Birch's statement that
performance "is not a realisation/instantiation of a literary work, but
is an entirely new discursive formation" also has validity. It is
perhaps best to concur with Roger Gross, who believes that
performance is based on a text, but that the text has what he calls
"parameters and tolerances, i.e. what must occur in performance, and
what must not - but there is a great deal of choice possible within
these margins" (Hornby 95). Therefore, the text does have a
dominant influence on the performance, but practitioners also
choose how to interpret and present a text.

The script of the performance is made up of the numerous
conscious or unconscious choices made by practitioners during the
rehearsal and production process. Anne Ubersfeld theorises that the
written play text is incomplete as it does not establish the context of
the drama. But she is adamant that the answers making up that
context should derive from close textual work by practitioners. She
makes a distinction between T (the written text), P the performance
text) and T₁, which is text interposed between T and P, and is a
necessary component of performance. Her T₁ is what I have defined
as the script; T + T₁ = P, where T₁ is the script that provides the
answers to the questions posed by the gaps left in T (Ubersfeld 24,
cited Bassnett-McGuire 52). Although many people contribute to the
script and the drama, the director is responsible for establishing a
coherent and cohesive system of signification. De Marinus sees the
director as a model spectator, who "watches the development of [the
drama] from the seat of a presumed spectator and orchestrates the
effects as such a spectator is expected to receive them" (Carlson 12).
Thus, the director has a controlling influence over the drama, and so
is in the best position to articulate the interpretation of the text and
intentions of her or his production.

It is, then, obvious that a critical analysis of performance needs
to involve a different strategy to that of a discussion of the written
text. It seems most appropriate to use a structuralist approach to
analyse performance, as "[s]tructuralism finds the essence of a work
in the relation between parts rather than in the parts themselves;
these relations form patterns or 'structures' that define what the
work truly is" (Hornby 10). As performance has a direct relationship
to text, a structuralist approach can analyse the text, and go on to
discover how the script and drama have built upon the text to
produce meaning in the performance situation. The text itself is a
unified system which produces limited meaning: in the drama this
text becomes part of another larger unified system of signification,
which comprises text, actors, set, lighting, sound, costumes, kinesics
(gesture) and proximics (the spatial relationship of actors on stage).
But the drama is not the only influence on an audience's reading of a
performance: Marvin Carlson argues that the theatre's location,
auditorium, foyer, programme, publicity and reviews are also part of
the theatre semiotic (Carlson xiv).

Patrice Pavis defines theatre seminology as a

method of analysing text and/or performance that focuses on
the formal organisation of the text or the show as a whole, on
the internal organisation of those signifying systems that
make up both text and performance, on the dynamics of the
processes of meaning and establishment of sense through the
participation of theatre practitioners and audience. (Pavis
74)
He is most interested in the signifying function of an object or gesture on the stage, which presupposes that there is a correlation "between the level of expression (the Sausurian signifier) and the level of content (the Sausurian signified). . . . The correlation is not a given fact from the start, but emerges from the 'readerly' production of the director and the 'productive' reading of the spectator" (Pavis 75). Accordingly, Carlson argues that the contribution of the audience must be considered in a discussion of the production of meaning in a performance (Carlson xiii).

The audience member approaches a performance from within a particular "apparatus of reading" (Harvey, cited Bennett 35). This apparatus of reading, or subject position, is to some extent governed by a person's social status and corresponding values, gender, personal history and education.¹ Within the performance situation, "communication between spectators usually determines a 'homogeneity of response' (Elam 1980 96) despite variations in horizons of expectations and/or cultural values brought to the theatre by the individual spectator" (Bennett 163). So, although audiences may apparently be random selections of people, it is likely that an audience attending a particular production will share a similar subject position within society, and that the performance situation will generally engender a common response to the drama. Stanley Fish believes that an audience can be defined as a "community of readers. . . . which shares common values and determines collectively the norms and conventions according to

¹The subject is a linguistic or philosophical function that can be represented by the pronoun 'I'. The subject represents a point of view. . . . What had earlier been considered a 'self', a biological or natural entity, imbued with the sense of the 'personal', is now perceived as a cultural construction and a semiotic function. The subject is an intersection of cultural codes and practices" (Case 121).
which individual readings will take place” (Carlson 13). The pressure of audience response can coerce individual patrons to structure and interpret their experience in a way which might well not have occurred to them as individuals (Carlson 13).

It is useful then to apply Wolfgang Iser’s theory of the reading of a printed text to audiences’ reception of drama:

"The reader measures what he or she reads against events of the past and expectations for the future, and Iser suggests that this leads to syntheses which are ‘neither manifested in the printed text [or drama], nor produced solely by the reader’s imagination, and the project of which they consist are themselves of a dual nature: they emerge from the reader [or audience] but they are also guided by signals which ‘project’ themselves into him [or her].’ (Iser 135, cited Bennett 46)

However, these signals are culturally encoded:

"By describing the cultural encoding in a sign, semiotics reveals the covert cultural beliefs, embedded in communication. Thus, the elements of theatrical communication such as language or set pieces no longer appear to be objective, utilitarian or in any sense value free. The author’s or director’s or actor’s intent ceases to be perceived as a singular enterprise: in so far as it communicates, it works in alliance with the ideology or beliefs of the culture at large.” (Case 117)

With Iser’s and Case’s theory in mind, it is also important to take Pavis’ theory one stage further and realise that this correlation between the signifier and the signified is not necessarily the same for everyone: “the identification of the signified depends on human judgements, which can notoriously and justifiably, differ. The Saussurian security is here removed: a hidden gap opens up between signifier and signified” (Wright 109). As Umberto Eco states, the ideological bias of a reader can act as a code-switcher, ‘leading one to read a given text in the light of ‘aberrant’ codes (where ‘aberrant’
means only different from the ones envisaged by the sender)” (Eco 22, cited Bennett 68). Case presents the possibility of deconstructing dominant cultural codes of representation to expose the “alliance between sign systems and the patriarchal order” (Case 114).

This alliance can be exposed by utilizing Judith Fetterley’s notion of the “resisting reader”; a resisting reader refuses simply to assent to the assumptions of a text or performance:

[...] to expose and question that complex of ideas and mythologies about women and men which exist in our society and are confirmed in our literature is to make the system of power embodied in the literature open not only to discussion but even to change. (Fetterley xx)

A resistant reading of performances in mainstream theatres must define which feminist position the reading is made from as “there is no single feminist subjectivity” but, rather, a multiplicity of feminist positions (Young 182). This thesis takes a post structuralist feminist approach; that is to say, it undertakes “the analysis of underlying philosophical constructions in the discourse. . . . [which] involves examining the social constructions of gender and identity usually posited as fixed, seeing them rather as cultural products able to be changed” (Dale WTW 160).

Of course, a text or drama can consciously challenge society’s “codes of conduct, its rules of social co-existence. All drama is . . . a political event: it either reasserts or undermines the code of conduct of a given society” (Esslin 29). However, texts and drama which consciously challenge social assumptions may still unconsciously reflect the predominant social ethos. Barthes states that,

a writer is not speaking from the position of a spontaneous bourgeois subject . . . but is rather subject to the system that places him [or her], inseparable from his [or her] act, defined
by the system. . . . [C]ulture produces an illusory 'passive' I, the source of action appearing to be a pure ego without origin. The truth is half-way - a 'middle voice.' (Wright 124)

Therefore, it can also be useful to employ Fetterley’s notion of the resisting reader with regard to texts or drama which consciously challenge social assumptions, as the subject positions of the writer and director may still influence their representation of gender and sexuality, particularly of women. Alternatively, “woman-conscious drama” is characterized by

multiple interior reflections of women’s lives and perceptions . . . reflect[ing] the asymmetries of power, opportunity, and situation in women’s experience . . . [and] draw[ing] attention to the pervasive patterns of [women’s] subordination, imitation, and confinement . . . [I]t also envisions alternative, non-pressive ways of living. (Curb 302)

Not surprisingly, woman-conscious drama seldom, if ever, appears in New Zealand’s mainstream theatres.¹

Mainstream theatres’ productions of Foreskin’s Lament, Daughters Of Heaven, Ladies’ Night, Pack Of Girls, The Sex Fiend and Michael James Manaia have been chosen to present an analysis of the theatre most New Zealanders have recently experienced. These are plays in which gender is a predominant issue and which, significantly, have also been particularly commercially and/or artistically successful. Thus, while these plays may not be ready to be treated purely as aesthetic objects, the interest in them lies in the relationship between theatre and society. For this purpose it is inevitable that five of the six texts considered are written by men and that productions of these texts have been predominantly directed by men. “[P]ost-feminist critics”, to use Wright’s perhaps misleading

¹Daughters Of Heaven can not be defined purely as woman-conscious drama, although aspects of this drama come close to it: see Chapter One.
term, "are rethinking the struggle for power and recognition because [they] see the futility of perpetuating fixed binary oppositions. . . . [and] read texts for their hypothetical and marginal meanings" as a means of drawing attention to the inextricable relationship between society and gender, and theatre's reflection of this (Wright 200).
ii) Sleeping With the Enemy?: The Cultural Context.

It is not necessary to deny another’s reality in order to affirm my own.
Anne Wilson Schaef.

If love is the answer like the songs on the radio promise, where is it?

Some of the cover stories of 1992’s Listener & TV Times proclaim
New Zealanders’ present preoccupation with gender issues. Pamela
Stirling’s “Women: Yeah! Getting There” went some way to
compensate for the shocking statistics revealed a month earlier in her
two-part feature on male violence against women, but the nation’s
women had a bare week to congratulate themselves before Noel
O’Hare branded all women as power hungry and insensitive. In “Be
A Man!” New Zealand men are presented as victims of feminism,
urged to search for their “inner warrior” and reclaim their
masculinity (O’Hare 16).\(^1\) Such diversity of stance and opinion in the
magazine which probably most reliably reflects the nation’s
predominant concerns illustrates the impossibility of simply
summarising the situation within and between the sexes in New
Zealand in the early 1990s. Gender issues are entwined with national
and sexual politics, and individuals’ and different social groups’
agendas and beliefs depend upon their often discrete subject
positions. It is possible, however, to observe trends and make
tentative generalizations based upon statistics and media discourse.

The past twenty-five years have been a time of unprecedented change in and debate about gender roles in New Zealand; a pattern of cause and effect can be traced. In the 1950s and for most of the 1960s women generally unquestioningly accepted their roles as mothers and wives: in those times of full employment husbands went out to work and provided financially for their spouses and families. "In terms of sexual relations, there was an overwhelming acceptance of only one form of sexuality - that of monogamous heterosexuality within marriage" (Jesson 27). Traditional marriage and the nuclear family effectively split the public and private spheres. Then feminist groups began to appear in 1970: the Society for the Promotion of Community Standards and the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child were established in reaction in the same year (Jesson 28 & 57). In 1984 the nationwide series of women's forums, designed to establish priorities for the then forthcoming Ministry of Women's Affairs, met with organised opposition from anti-feminist women and from many conservative churches (Jesson 66). This Ministry was established in 1985: that year also saw the Homosexual Law Reform Bill, which precipitated an opposing petition of some 800,000 purported signatures (Ansley 17). The formation of the Coalition of Concerned Citizens in the same year "represent[ed] a political response to specific social and historical changes to New Zealand society" (Jesson 56).¹ The activism which culminated the decriminalization of male homosexuality in 1986 forced legal and social acknowledgement of a masculinity other than the traditional

¹The Coalition of Concerned Citizens included: the Concerned Parents Association, petitioners against the Homosexual Law Reform Bill, the Society for the Promotion of Community Standards, the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child, Credo (a group concerned with the credibility of the media), the Committee on Moral Education, the Educational Standards Association and Women for Life (Ansley 18).
male gender role, of which heterosexuality was a determinant. Similarly, feminism has meant that women have increasingly realised that they have options other than the traditional role of wife and mother.

Since the 1960s there has been both a significant decrease in the rate of marriage and an marked increase in the rate of separation and divorce (McLeod 52, Department of Statistics/Ministry of Women's Affairs 39). The introduction of the Domestic Purposes Benefit in the mid 1970s and the 1980 Family Proceedings Act's "no-fault split-down-the-middle divorce system" have given financially dependent wives the economic means to leave unsatisfactory marriages (du Chateau 101, McLoughlin 51). The past three decades have also seen women increasingly involved in earning their own incomes. While about 40 per cent of women aged 15 to 64 were in paid employment in 1966, this figure increased to 65 per cent in 1987: there has also been a shift from part-time to full time female employment over the corresponding period (Statistics/Women's Affairs 52). The traditional division between the public and private spheres has become blurred by social change since 1970.

The rejection by many women of a totally domestic life has involved an increasing participation and achievement in education. In 1966, women made up only 28 per cent of total university enrolments compared to 51 per cent in 1987 (Statistics/Women's Affairs 52). In 1992, Pamela Stirling reported that "more girls than boys now leave school with formal qualifications. . . . and a report from Victoria University indicates that women on average achieve appreciably better results than men across all faculties. The numbers of women going into law, medicine and, just in the last intake, the police force, are equal with men" (Stirling WY 15). Women's Studies
or Feminist Studies have been offered in New Zealand universities since the mid 1980s; although these departments "still hold a marginal status among the university hierarchy, the courses are in high demand" (Loates 32). The possibility of returning to university and secondary school as adult students has given many women the opportunity for education. Women's increasing educational qualifications have meant that they are now employed in areas and levels that were previously predominantly male preserves, which has caused a shift in traditional dynamics between the sexes. Most if not all men have been socialized into believing that females are inferior to males. Bill Rout recently made a study of secondary school male culture:

[being 'staunch' is the dominant masculine ideal at both the all-male and co-ed colleges studied and to be staunch boys must display 'sexual and social domination of women.' . . . Most women . . . are 'shocked' at the young-male attitudes revealed in his research. But men? Many react by 'shrugging their shoulders and saying they already knew.' This stuff . . . is 'taken for granted by men - unquestioned and socially and personally accepted as 'normal.'" (Stirling 88 17)

Women's move from the private to the public sphere has challenged men's assumption of their dominance and created an ongoing conflict, often perceived in two different realities, between women seeking equality and men seeking dominance.

Women's increased education and employment has also often upset the traditional power relationship between male and female partners. Many women no longer find fulfilment through servicing their husband's and family's needs and demands, nor do they simply accept that their male partner has a privileged position in their family.

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1The University of Canterbury had 337 students enrolled in Feminist Studies in 1992.
and/or relationship: "women should have more control over their lives, more outlets for self-fulfilment and equal access with men to the resources of society" (Park 77).\textsuperscript{1} The depressed economy has also forced many women, who would not necessarily define themselves as feminist, to undertake paid work to balance their male partner's wage with the family's or couple's outgoings. This social phenomenon has been perceived, consciously or unconsciously, as an affront to many men's masculinity by challenging the role of 'provider' and 'ruler of the home', and varying compensatory behaviour and media messages have appeared or intensified.

When female partners have changed and male partners have not, there is often violent or abusive behaviour designed to induce women to revert back to the previously compliant and complicit 'feminine' role. Such behaviour can involve emotional, physical and sexual abuse and assault: the motivation for which is the assertion of control.

It is estimated that the police are called to more than two incidents of family violence for every hour of the day and night in New Zealand. Even then, Men for Non-Violence estimate that only two per cent of assaults in the home are reported to the police. The Roper Report concludes that 80 per cent of the violence in New Zealand is in the home - most of it by males and most of it undetected (Stirling SB 16).

Male violence against women is not confined to the home (this does not imply that rape does not occur in the home). Criminologist Greg Newbold reports that "proven rapes are up 95 per cent on 1981 and 430 per cent on 1973" (Newbold 80): Rape Crisis estimate that there

\textsuperscript{1}Julie Park and her team of researchers interviewed two thousand women for Ladies A Plate: Change and Continuity in Lives of New Zealand Women. Auckland: Auckland University Press.
are 10 unreported rapes for every one reported.1 As daily newspapers carry considerable advertising for brothels, thinly disguised as massage parlours, the argument that New Zealand men rape for sexual gratification has no basis. Rather, there is overwhelming evidence that rape is about the assertion of male power over women:

rape is a means by which he [the rapist] can defile, degrade, and humiliate his victim. . . . Satisfaction and relief result from the discharge of anger rather than from sexual gratification (Groth 15). Sexuality becomes a means of compensating for underlying feelings of inadequacy and serves to express issues of mastery, strength, control, authority, identity, and capability. . . . Such offenders feel insecure about their masculinity or confused about their identity. (Groth 25-28)

As will become evident in discussion of the plays, gender is inextricably linked with sex and violence. It is also important to realise that an increase in reported rapes and male violent and sexual assaults on women not only represents an actual increase in these crimes; it also reflects a shift in individual and public attitudes towards women's expectations and men's behaviour. Many female victims of violence or abuse are breaking the silence which previously surrounded such crimes, and are supported in doing so by shifting social attitudes about the culpability of the victim.

Changes in women's attitudes have also precipitated many men into challenging predominant definitions of gender,2 especially

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1Rape Crisis, conversation 12 August 1992.

2Since 1984, men's anger management groups have proliferated in New Zealand: "[t]hey have as their basis social learning theory which states that violence is a learned behaviour" (McMaster and Swain 124). There are 27 groups across the country in the Men for Non-Violence network at present (Stirling SB 22). In the first three months of 1992, 709 clients were serviced by these groups (conversation with Ken McMaster, 12 August 1992). Convicted violent offenders are often ordered to attend 'stopping violence programmes' and such retraining has proved effective (Stirling SB 22). Telephone counselling especially for men began in Wellington and Christchurch in the mid 1980s; men's support and discussion groups also exist
after realising that the conventional male gender role has negative consequences for men as well as for women. "The male ideology is about competition, power and control. These produce winners and losers. . . . Competition, superiority, and indifference to feelings and intimacy rob men of close friendship and meaningful relationships with other men" and their partners, children and other women (McMaster and Swain 73, Smith 10). McMaster and Swain report that there are two distinct traditions in the men's movement in New Zealand - male liberation groups and anti-sexist groups (McMaster and Swain 118). The male liberation groups are concerned with their own personal growth as men and individuals. Anti-sexism groups have their basis in analysing and changing men's relationships with women, both at a personal and wider social level (Smith 80). Men who question their own masculinity and/or the structural relationships between men and women are in a definite minority (Smith 80-81). As Michael Haigh observes, "[t]he ideas and values expressed [in Foreskin's Lament] are just as common today as fifteen years ago. There might be a bit more tokenism now, but when you get into the hinterland, it's much the same."¹

A similar multiplicity of viewpoints is evident among the women of New Zealand. Lyn Loates concludes her article, "Excuse Me, Are You a Feminist?" (More 1992), with the observation that the strong women's movement evident in New Zealand in the 1970s and early 1980s has dispersed: "[s]ome feminists from the 1970s and 1980s battle-weary from the frays of previous decades, have abandoned the

cause, but many have slotted into the system, or are beavering away, quietly and independently, in ways that address their own needs, rather than the needs of a movement" (Loates 33). Pat Rosier specifically disagrees with Loates in a Broadsheet editorial: she states that there is a "misconception . . . that to be a feminist you have to be something called an 'activist' . . . we live our lives and act our feminism in diverse ways that we can sustain for a lifetime. There may not be an obvious 'women's movement' for women to join . . . but feminism is alive and kicking" (Rosier 2). However, within feminism there is often a political division between heterosexual and lesbian women as many lesbians believe that heterosexism is as much an oppressive force as masculinism. Additionally, Susan Faludi argues that since the gains in women's rights in the early 1970s,

we are now in the midst of a 'backlash' which is trying to stop or even erode those gains. Fewer women are identifying as feminists, and the backlash is supposedly telling women that their freedom is causing all manner of ills . . . [and that they should] have children and stay home. (Keremelidis 16)

This new 'moral front' comprises both men and women. Although Faludi is largely writing about American society, the commercial success of Backlash in New Zealand indicates that many New Zealanders are aware of and concerned about the issues she discusses. However, while the debate about feminism continues, "many women don't have the time, or the money to loll about talking women's issues. They've got their hands full just surviving" (Howells 18).
Clearly the days of the "half-gallon, quarter-acre pavlova paradise" are over.¹ The impact of feminism, increased gay and lesbian visibility and economic forces have resulted in a clash of traditional and liberal expectations of gender roles in the home, the work place and all forms of social discourse. As the theatre is a political arena, "either reassert[ing] or undermin[ing] the code of conduct of a given society" (Esslin 29), the following examination of six recently produced and particularly commercially and/or artistically successful New Zealand plays reflects the multiplicity, the tension and the uncertainty evident in gender and sexual politics in contemporary New Zealand society. The anachronistic Tupper says to Foreskin, "[w]hat your generation needs is a fucken good war to straighten you out" and, significantly, Foreskin replies, "[w]e got Choice instead. That's as much of a trial for most of us" (McGee 90).

1. The Past Re Present(ed).
   i) Foreskin's Lament.

   Rugby football was the best of all our pleasures: it was religion, and desire and fulfilment all in one. John Mulgan.

   I had no idea what a woman was, if the truth be known. Larry, Foreskin's Lament.

   A preoccupation with gender, sex and violence is not the only legacy Foreskin's Lament left to more recent New Zealand theatre; rugby gets at least a mention in all five of the other plays to be discussed here, even if Ladies' Night's only reference to the game is Craig divesting himself of an All Black uniform to the accompaniment of "You're Simply the Best."¹ Michael James Manaia partially contextualizes Mick's and Mattie's initiation into 'manhood' with a rugby party, at which they listen to or watch the all Blacks play:

   HELLO NEW ZEALAND!

   He places the ball.
   steps back.
   And wait,
   WAIT FOR IT.

   HE'S KICKED.

   AND LISTEN . . .

   IT'S A GOAL!

   It's a goal to New Zealand! (Broughton 33)

¹Court Theatre production, April/May/June 1992.
Apparently the euphoria precipitated by the All Blacks' success is the reason why so many New Zealand men are addicted to watching sport either live or on television. They vicariously identify with the team, and the team's prowess on the field is a kind of surrogate masculinity test; the result of the game actively affects how the viewers feel about themselves. Brent, arguably the most masculinist character in the plays under discussion, is feeling good about himself on his first entrance in *The Sex Fiend* as the All Blacks are winning a test match: "[c]ome on New Zealand. . . . Been watching the rugger? We've been giving those Welsh bastards a thrashing haven't we!" (Mulheron and Sinclair 7). "Perhaps because rugby so neatly integrates the disparate elements of male culture (the group dependency, the violence, and the virility), the game has been the means by which the images embedded in male culture have become synonymous with the national character" (James and Saville-Smith 51). It is significant, then, that two plays which consciously challenge the prevailing masculinity begin with rugby teams not playing well. At the beginning of *Pack Of Girls* "the All Blacks are down 15 to ten to the Barbarians" (Geary 7), and Tom's team "always lose" (Geary 4). Tupper is haranguing the team as *Foreskin's Lament* opens: "[g]et excited about it! Go over the top of him, don't hang off! Use your bloody feet, you pack of poofers. Ruck! Ruck!"¹ Later in the play, the Kaitaki team lose the game, despite Clean's opinion that they "should have been good for 20 points in against those Ngapuk

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bumpkins” (72). The rugby teams’ lack of success symbolises what Brittan terms a “crisis of masculinity” (Brittan 180).1

This crisis of masculinity is manifest in Foreskin’s Lament as very often it is revealed that someone is not as they seem; the uncertainty generated by this inconsistency expresses a confusion of gender and identity. However, despite inconsistent characters and difference between characters it is evident that the prevailing social ethos relies upon dichotomies of gender and sexual orientation, and upon the reaffirmation of these strict divisions and power relationships. The inclusion in the play of characters with feminist and homosexual agendas serves to further destabilize the dominant social perception of masculinity. Thus, even if such agendas are surrounded by ambivalence, social constructions of gender are challenged by Foreskin’s Lament. The play presents New Zealand masculinity in a state of flux; within individuals, in the world of the play, and by implication in New Zealand society. Foreskin’s final line questions more than the validity of the rugby ethos: it also expresses a search for new male identity. “Whaddarya?” is directed at himself, at other characters and at the audience (96).2 His lack of self knowledge and definition as a person and as a New Zealander is summarised in his reply to Ken:

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1Alan Brunton supports this view in his review of Pack Of Girls: “I白银any dyspeptic response to Pack came from attending a performance two days after the out-of-sorts All Blacks had ground themselves and the national psyche, into the turf at Lansdowne Road . . . . A psychologist claimed that every male in New Zealand would have to endure a period of depression.” Stage & Radio Record 6 (Summer ’91/’92): 6-7.

2"FORESKIN initially addresses CLEAN and TUPPER and those who were supposedly watching the television, but as he progresses, he moves downstage so that he is addressing himself to the theatre audience " (92).
KEN: You're a weird bastard sometimes Seymour. A good bastard but weird, you know.

FORESKIN mimics Irish.

FORESKIN: How could I know, being only meself (35-36).

Foreskin's question, overlaid with an assumed Irish accent and the mythologically associated lack of logic, emphasises both the confusion and colonisation of his identity. Apart from gender, New Zealand men have the additional terrain of past and present colonisation to negotiate in a search for a new self image. By the end of the play Foreskin and the audience have had the negative aspects of Tupper's rugby ethos, intellectualism, American imperialism and European sensibility thrust into their consciousness. Foreskin has no doubt that he is a "DBed and chocolate wheaten beaten" New Zealander, but his rejection of rugby, academia and imported philosophies leaves him confused about his identity (96).

Foreskin's Lament appeared during a watershed in New Zealand history. By 1980, traditional perceptions of New Zealanders were threatened by a variety of forces which implicitly or explicitly questioned the place of rugby and the closely associated male gender role in New Zealand's cultural life. In the past, the All Blacks' success and New Zealand military battalions' involvement in the Boer and World Wars had cemented into the national psyche a stereotype of the New Zealand male as physically tough, aggressive, unemotional and intensely loyal to his 'mates' (Phillips 258). Tupper adulates and transposes rugby and war:

1For most of Pakeha history the rugby milieu has provided sport, identity and social life for the vast majority of New Zealand men (Phillips 105-107). The initial motivation behind the birth and adoption of rugby in public schools in Britain was as a means of social control. Rugby allowed expression of aggression and close male
TUPPER: ... the finest thing I've ever experienced -- is that sense of comradeship, striving for the common goal, all together, one! ... And that standard has got to be one of guts, of character, of desire, of the spirit to go through the fire, the war, the dangers with your mates, and come out stronger for it at the other end. (51-52)

In her novel, Love and War, Elspeth Sandys' New Zealand male characters have spent the afternoon fighting Nazis: "[t]o listen to them, they might have been talking about a fiercely fought game of rugby. The language, in almost all respects, was the same" (Sandys 220). This association of rugby and war is supported by the words of the song they all, except Foreskin, sing at the party:

It's the way it was in the army
The way it was in the navy
Way it is on the football field
And so say all of us. (57)

Victory over the opposition is a matter of life and death for the army and the navy; in Tupper's view victory in rugby is almost as important: "[t]his is a team game, son, and the town is the team. It's the town's honour at stake when the team plays" (48). He believes that rugby is "hard, serious, important. A battle worth winning" (52). For Tupper, as Michael Neill observes, "'[t]he point of the bloody game . . . is to win' . . . what is to be won doesn't matter, the goal is simply to have a goal" (Neill 10). A male concern with winning on personal, team and national levels is clear when Larry organises the

physical contact within prescribed boundaries, which kept violence and sexuality/sensuality within 'safe' limits (Phillips 101-102). The subsumption of the individual to the team was also considered to be admirable training for military activities (Phillips 102-103). In New Zealand's colonial period men greatly outnumbered women; the adoption of rugby fulfilled the same functions as it had in the similarly male dominated environment of British public schools (Phillips 94).
party and sweepstake: "we could celebrate victory over Ngapuk with a party at my place, and we could all stay and watch the All Blacks and the Springboks on the colour TV after, and dish out the winnings from the sweepstake" (40). Earlier, "IRISH turns up the transistor and the sound of a trotting commentary is heard. IRISH and MEAN appear to have money on the race and react accordingly " (39). At the after-match party the Ngapuk and Kaitaki teams pit themselves against each other again: "what about a boat-race? Give us a chance for revenge, you're Ngapuk bastards. General noise resumes, punctuated by frequent calls of 'Blow your froth', 'Drink', and 'Redrink'" (58). Thus the desire to win, individually or collectively, forms an inherent basis of the prevailing masculinity. Significantly, none of the women in the play are concerned with winning: Moira states, "[i]n rugby there are no winners, only survivors" (78), Pat thinks that rugby is "a stupid game" (79) and Catherine "hates the game" (35).

In contrast to the other men, Foreskin does not take a ticket in the sweepstake, plan to watch the international test match or take part in the drinking games.¹ In regard to rugby, Foreskin is concerned with technique rather than with winning:

TUPPER: You didn't pass. You lost us the fucken game. . . . You dodge through half their team. Only one man to beat, three men in support outside you. Why did you try to beat that man? Why didn't you pass? What the hell were you trying for?


¹Irish's outsider status is confirmed by his lack of concern with winning rugby games: "[w]in? Who's going to give a tinker's whether we win or lose on Saturday, eh? The only one here with the right attitude is Foreskin, he doesn't give a thruppenny stuff" (23).
TUPPER: Perfection be damned! We could have won the fucken game!

FORESKIN: There's another one next week. Imagine if it had come off. (89)

Foreskin's desire for individual excellence, "poetry through motion" (35), runs contrary to Tupper's notion of the team as an entity: "[y]ou're an individual with a lot of skill. But that's not it, that's not the truth about rugby" (51). Tupper believes in a "sense of comradeship, striving for the common goal, all together, one!" and the associated easy assumption of mateship (51). Foreskin, however, defines mateship differently from Tupper and asks him, "[h]ow can we be mates? . . . We don't agree on anything important" (53). He also questions Tupper's belief that the team is an entity which subsumes its members: "[w]ho is the team Tupper? What is the team? There's just a collection of human beings. The team has no magical properties of its own" (51). These differences in outlook and opinion between the two men indicate that the traditional rugby ethos and associated male gender role, both represented by Tupper, are mutable.

In a play where the game of rugby parallels the 'game' of life, Tupper is obsolete compared to the younger, fitter men of his team; he no longer plays rugby himself but, rather, coaches others. When the players throw their "discarded gear at Tupper" in the dressing shed, this business anticipates and/or illustrates the players' rejection of the traditional rugby mythology that he represents (34).¹ Clean's ability to physically dominate Tupper in their fight also signifies this:

¹Similarly, the fact that Mean is reduced to his last pair of rugby shorts anticipates his planned retirement from rugby at the end of the play: "I used to have four pairs, but that Irish bastard keeps ripping them" (32).
"CLEAN turns his attention back to TUPPER, catches him, pins him back against the wall" (92). Described in the cast list as "[m]iddle-aged, [w]ith a paunch of impressive dimensions" (18), Tupper also wears "old-style high ankle rugby boots" (27, my underlining). It is not only Tupper's appearance that defines him as an anachronism, but also his attitudes. He seems to be living in a different reality from the other characters; this is suggested by his inability to recognise the truth about situations and events. He obviously wants the world to be as he wants it, or as it was, rather than as it actually is:

TUPPER: That wasn't the answer I wanted to hear Ken.
KEN: I'm sorry Tee, it's the truth.
TUPPER: Gorn it's all in the mind. (29)

Tupper's obliviousness to others' reality is also evident when he considers Moira, who is actually a feminist lawyer, to be a "nice homely sort of type" (73). These discrepancies between Tupper and other characters make clear that the traditional rugby ethos and closely associated male gender role is passé in the society represented in Foreskin's Lament.

In contrast to Tupper, the younger men present a variety of male attitudes. Like Tupper, Clean is concerned with winning, but on an individual rather than a collective basis; although he has also been shaped by his war experience, his philosophy is instead selfish and exploitative. Clean is a victim of American imperialism: his life and attitudes have been affected by his involvement in the Vietnam war, by his failed venture in "[p]yramid selling" (65) and

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1Clean has been emotionally brutalized. Jim Moriarty, who has played Clean twice, observes that "kicking Ken is nothing compared to gunning down Viet Cong in cold blood" (interview with Jim Moriarty, 18 February 1993).
apparently from "reading too many Time magazines" (30). He himself attributes his attitude to the Americans: "I did learn a bit from Nam. . . . Y'know, those yanks are the boys. . . . You stick it to them, that's their philosophy. . . . Everything's there for the taking, not the asking" (66). Clean is consciously immoral in his exploitation of others. Like Judas Iscariot, he betrays a fellow human being for expected financial gain, but Foreskin's Lament shows that, like Judas' action, Clean's betrayal of Ken is part of a larger scheme.

Ken's first entrance indicates his later role as a sacrificial victim; the image projected by him appearing through a door in "the backstage wall" (21) while directly facing the audience with his "arms draped over the other two players' shoulders" is reminiscent of the crucifixion (22). Characters' use of "Jesus", and "Christ" as expletives throughout the play draws attention to Jesus Christ: the parallel between Christ and Ken is particularly clear when Foreskin says, "Jesus Kenny, you're not thinking of playing" (34), and "Jesus, you've got the whole world to think of" (35). In an analogy to the Christian myth, Ken is an obedient "son" (29) with an unquestioning faith in the rugby "god almighty" (93) which causes his death: "[a]s Tupper says, maybe it's time I earned my stripes as skipper and set an example. . . . ask Tupper. He guarantees I'll be okay" (35-36). In the context of Foreskin's Lament, Tupper initially appears to be the personification of God on stage; he believes that he has omnipotent power: "you won't hurt him, I guarantee it" (21, my underlining). In the Downstage production, this initial speech was given "amplified reverberation"1 reinforcing Tupper's association with the common perception of the Christian God. According to the Bible, God's

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sacrifice of his only son leads to the redemption of his fellow men with Christianity superseding Judaism. The 'sacrifice' of Ken is also symbolically instrumental in the 'redemption' of his fellow men; Ken's death precipitates Foreskin's call for an examination and redefinition of New Zealand masculinity.

However, the prevailing masculinity in Foreskin's Lament and the crucifixion/redemption myth can both be analysed to reveal inherent male oppression of women. "Christ's ascension signifies a new era in father-son relations, a widespread triumph of patriarchal will and exclusive male responsibility for spiritual and public matters" (Chesler AB 10). But "[t]he reality that supposedly lies behind the orthodox concept of God is neither more nor less 'fictional' than the idea that innate sexual characteristics are the immutable determinants of gender" (Williams PW 148). A biological determinism is evident in Foreskin's Lament as the male characters in varying degrees view women as Other and as secondary to themselves.

Instances of affirmation of male subject status by the objectification of women occur in everyday interaction: Clean describes women as "fluff" (50,62,63,64,67) and Tupper and Larry refer to women as "floozies" (37,73). Clean's response to Foreskin's statement, that he does take Tupper seriously, implies that Foreskin is stupid by associating him with female genitalia:

**CLEAN:** There wouldn't be one cunt in this team who takes him seriously.

**FORESKIN:** I do

**CLEAN:** Well, one cunt (85).
"The way meaning is created in our society depends upon dividing the world into positive-masculine and negative-feminine" and language is a major means of doing this (Spender 12). What "studies of sexism in language reveal is the past and present social-power [im]balance between the sexes" (Moi 158). Although Foreskin's use of "women" (49), compared to Tupper's choice of "girls" (49), denotes a positive shift in Foreskin's attitude, he still speaks of the sexual act in terms of male possession of the objectified female: "all the beautiful blondes I'll never have ... I'm going to have one last lovely lady" (49 my underlining). Other male characters are more overt in their objectification of women. When Irish says, "I haven't seen the sheila since Monday, I'll be getting wet dreams soon" (22), he defines his girlfriend or lover only as a means of relieving his sexual needs. Similarly, Clean identifies women through their relationship with a man; he says to Moira, "[w]hose fluff are you?" (62); Larry is "hesitant" about dancing with Moira, as he knows she is Foreskin's girlfriend: "[w]hat about Fore - Seymour? I really don't want to step on anyone's toes" (61). The notion of male ownership of women and corresponding denial of women's own sexuality is also evident when Tupper tells the team, "[y]ou bastards are so slow you couldn't pull a sailor off your sister!" (27). The figurative sister, it seems, has no choice about her sexual partners, nor is she given credit for an ability to defend herself against sailors that she chooses not to sleep with. Although there is not much choice implied in the metaphor, this lack only illustrates the containment of women in masculinist society.

Clean's joke both objectifies women and reinforces the traditional female gender role:
Jock Phillips states that in "laughing at women, men give themselves a sense of superiority, reassur[ing] themselves that as males they [are] different" (Phillips 246). When Clean sings a ditty called "[t]he gash that never heals" (38), he reveals an "ethos which imagines women's sex as an alarming 'gash that never heals' (an image combining fear and disgust with the threat of sadistic violence)" (Neill 12). This violence is also inherent in the content and language of the song the men sing in the shower:

IRISH: Here's to the girl that I love best!
CLEAN: I love her best when she's undressed!
IRISH: I'd fuck her sitting standing lying.
CLEAN: Why, I'd even fuck her as she lay dying.
IRISH: And when she's dead and long forgotten...
CLEAN: I'll dig her up and fuck her rotten. (36)

"[T]he violence of the language [in Foreskin's Lament] is also another way of expressing the violence, brutal and desensitising, of our relations with others."¹ The male characters' choice of language and 'humour' illustrates that masculinism is a construction which relies upon constant reaffirmation of men's supposedly superior status to objectified women.

It is also significant that the men collectively sing about women as sexual objects while naked together in the shower: the abjection of homosexuality is an imperative part of the prevailing masculinity. Any behaviour which does not fit into the prevailing masculinity is labelled homosexual, asserting heterosexuality as an determinant of

masculinity, and 'punishing' transgressions from the socially defined male role. In Richard Finn's production of The Sex Fiend, Constable Chestnut's homosexuality was deliberately hinted at by the bright pink socks he wore with his policeman's uniform: pink is traditionally used to denote femininity. In the first line of Foreskin's Lament, Tupper reproaches the team for not playing rugby well by calling them a "pack of poofers" (21), and later labels Foreskin a "free spirit poofter" (48) when he questions Tupper's beliefs about rugby. Larry asks to have a "man to man" chat and Clean replies "[m]an to what", implying that Larry is homosexual and therefore not masculine (38). As manager/masseur Larry plays what is socially defined as a feminine role in being supportive and caring. When "Clean approaches Ken and begins to rub his hands up Ken's leg as Larry pulls away" he is redefining the sympathetic, therapeutic nature of Larry's massage into a homosexual act, and thus attempts to define both femininity and homosexuality as Other than masculine (30). The same dynamic is present in The Sex Fiend when Brent comments to Mathew, "I always thought there was something funny about you, ever since you took Home Economics instead of Metal Work" (Mulheron and Sinclair 50). Clean also makes jokes about Larry's homosexuality: "[y]ou may be a bit of a poof, but you're okay - at a distance of more than six inches" (58); "[l]isten, how do you blow out a candle Larry? . . . [p]oof!" (62); and, "[l]adies, gentlemen, Larry" (56). ¹ The fervour with which Clean harasses Larry suggests that he has doubts about his own sexual orientation, and is consciously or subconsciously attempting to abject his own homosexual tendencies

¹Phillips points out that "humour is a way of expressing superiority over other groups. The objectionable features of these groups define the characteristics of the dominant group" (Phillips 246).
by transferring these to Larry. This doubt about sexual orientation is exacerbated by Clean’s and Irish’s behaviour when

IRISH comes up behind CLEAN and begins caressing CLEAN’s chest, seductively rolling up CLEAN’s jersey. CLEAN faces LARRY across the massage table, moaning and writhing in ecstasy. IRISH gradually begins to slip CLEAN’s shorts down. . . . CLEAN is nude except for dirty jockstrap, boots and socks. CLEAN bends forward over the massage table and IRISH pretends to enter him from behind. They writhe to orgasm, then leap back from the table together, joining arms at the shoulder. . . . Both dip their shorts/jock-strap to expose their penises to Larry (31).

Presumably Clean and Irish expose their penises to prove that they are not sexually aroused, and are thus heterosexual: Clean states that their behaviour is "just kidding" (32) and McGee terms it a "performance" twice in the stage directions (31-32). However, in a play in which realistically presented behaviour is often revealed to be an act, the 'pretence' of an homosexual act and the sexuality of the character are also called into question. Therefore, in Act One the question 'is Larry homosexual?' operates with an inseparable inversion, that is, 'is Clean really heterosexual?'

This confusion about sexual orientation is exacerbated by McGee's lack of specificity about Larry's sexual preference in the Act One text. Although Clean and Irish harass him with behaviour and comments which imply that he is gay, Larry does not acknowledge his sexual orientation. Larry has been played without any overt indication of his homosexuality.¹ When Foreskin defends Larry against Clean he says, "it's no skin off your nose what he is or isn't" (32), without specifying which is the case. Larry's comment, that he knows "someone [meaning himself] who'd give anything for his very

¹Interview with Colin McColl, 30 November 1992 (McColl had also directed a production in which Larry's homosexuality was apparent).
own prison” when Foreskin has just described “marriage, home [and] family” as “prisons” (37), certainly does not overtly identify Larry as homosexual; and Larry’s discussion with Ken about his ex-wife presents inexperience rather than homosexuality as the reason for his divorce:

just the usual, everyone’s so blasé about it these days. We weren’t . . . compatible, as they say. Seemed like the thing to do at the time, marriage, you know. I had no idea what a woman was, if the truth be known, how . . . demanding. Sounds silly in this day and age, doesn’t it? You lads wouldn’t be making that sort of mistake. (27)

In a production, the director and the actor playing Larry would need to decide on the implication of “how . . . demanding”. While this could imply Larry’s sexual reluctance towards women, it is more in keeping with McGee’s construction of this character in Act One to imply that Larry found his wife’s emotional and domestic demands onerous. His remark, "[y]ou lads wouldn't be making that sort of mistake", does not support an interpretation of his previous comment as an avowal of homosexuality as Ken is portrayed as heterosexual. So, in Act One Clean’s constant torment of Larry shows more about Clean, and about his definition of masculinity, than it does about his victim.

In fact, Foreskin’s Lament also subverts the predominant male gender role by presenting a very sympathetic homosexual character. Larry is the moral touchstone in the play: he reports to Foreskin about Clean kicking Ken, and has the concern and courage to challenge Clean about this. Larry also generously organises the sweepstake and party for the others, his apparent motive being a desire to be liked and included, which no doubt strikes a note of empathy with audiences. This sympathetic portrayal of a character,
who is only later revealed to be homosexual, means that Larry is presented as a male individual who also happens to have a sexual preference for men: his homosexuality does not define his identity, showing that sexuality and gender are not the same.¹

McGee's inclusion of a feminist character also destabilizes masculinism; Moira has subject rather than object status. She is a success in masculine terms; her status as a lawyer and her verbal ability to dominate Clean confirm this (64-65). Her lack of understanding of Tupper's words makes clear both her liberation from and his belief in traditional gender expectations:

TUPPER: ... You'd get your cake, too.
MOIRA: My cake?
TUPPER: Yeah, once he's settled down, getting his oats regular like, well, chucking a rock's the next thing he'll think of.
MOIRA: Chucking a block?
MOIRA: You think that's what I want from him?
TUPPER: What else would you want from him? Stands to reason.
MOIRA: I've never heard so many anachronistic pigs in all my life. (75)

While Moira and Tupper are simply at ideological odds, the relationships and interaction between this 'liberated' woman and the younger male characters are less simple. Despite himself, Clean is

¹Larry does not acknowledge his homosexuality until page 62 of the text, when he seems to be inspired by Moira's liberation from traditional gender roles. While he initially states to her that he does not "feel liberated" (60), the close contact they have while "dancing slowly around the verandah" (61) signifies a communion from which Larry gains the strength to be honest: "[w]hy don't we have the courage of our convictions? Or even convictions, that'd be a start. My deep dark secret seems to be common knowledge anyway. Even closets have ears" (62).
attracted to Moira, but the increasing sexual tension between them is broken when "CLEAN sees Foreskin" (67). Clean's comment that "[b]its of fluff are a lot easier to handle" is: (a) a means of retreat from what he perceives to be Foreskin's territory; (b) an honest acknowledgement that Moira is beyond him; and (c) an insult to Moira in an attempt to deny the threat he feels from her (67). His next line, "[w]ell, better get back to the boys" signifies his return to the predominant masculinity after a brief moment of honest communication with a woman. Clean's very sense of self relies upon his inability to allow women subject status; therefore the intersubjectivity necessary for mutual communication and an equal relationship is impossible.

In contrast to Clean, Foreskin is not threatened by Moira's success and ability; she says, "I frighten a lot of men, I can tell you. Except Seymour" (62). But Foreskin's immediate work of redefining himself has to take precedence over relating to Moira:

MOIRA: Can we go? – they're getting out.

FORESKIN: We can't go home yet.

MOIRA: Why not?

FORESKIN: I've got to ... sort it out ... You're not enough. They're not enough ... FORESKIN turns away [from MOIRA] to look out from the verandah. After a little while, MOIRA sees that FORESKIN is not looking or responding.

[MOIRA:] Fuck you!

MOIRA exits, leaving FORESKIN alone. (80)

Moira's liberation from traditional gender roles is not yet equalled by a parallel development in Foreskin. Her departure signifies the impossibility of their relationship being on equal terms because of
this. It is significant that Moira has rejected Foreskin and Larry has declared his sexual orientation before Foreskin's lament. The presence of feminist and homosexual agendas in the play implicitly demands a redefinition of masculinity as much as Foreskin's explicit knowledge of Clean's brutality does.

As the construction of gender has played such a definitive part in the construction of identity throughout most of New Zealand's Pakeha history, this disruption of the traditional national male stereotype and modern masculinism creates confusion and absence of identity in the play. Confusion of identity is manifest in multiple interwoven ways. No character is a simple, single self presented unequivocally as such to others: the result is a shifting scheme of deception and misunderstanding. Characters have difficulty defining each other: Moira says to Foreskin, "[s]ometimes I have this feeling that I don't know you at all" (69), and Foreskin observes that Clean is "a riddle" (69). The result is rather like Sam Shepard's concept of character in a play, though not so radical.

The term 'character' [can] . . . be thought of in a different way when working on this play. Instead of the idea of a 'whole character' with logical motives behind his behaviour which the actor submerges himself into, he should consider instead a fractured whole with bits and pieces of characters flying off the central theme."\(^{1}\)

This fracturing of character is evident in the assigning of nicknames, Foreskin, Clean and Mean and the subsequent addressing of the same characters as Seymour, Lindsay and Fred, which indicates the assumption of different personae for different social situations.

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Usually nickname are synedoches, signifying the whole from a part, but in Foreskin's Lament the incongruity of the nicknames emphasises the central theme of confusion of identity: the villain is called Clean, and Foreskin comments that "Mean . . . is actually clean" (77). Tupper's name translates into 'copulator', but this nickname is opposite to his attitude to sex. When Foreskin says that he likes sleeping with women, Tupper replies, "[w]ell, you're young son, you'll get over it. In a couple of years' time you'll rather have a glass of beer any day" (49). Moira's act of translating "Seymour" into "Foreskin" for Clean's elucidation (63), and Larry's correction, "Fore-Seymour" (61), for Moira also emphasise McGee's concern with shifting personae. Foreskin's attempt to define Clean involves sliding signification:

Clean? As in squeaky clean, or Mr Clean the soap-suds man. Or P.C. Clean, keeping the dirt off our streets. Or Clean 'n Jerk, take your pick, Clean or the jerk, get it? . . . Or clean, as in wound or kill - clean kill. (69).

McGee's definition of his characters recalls Katherine Mansfield's "understanding of the self as 'multiple, shifting, non consecutive, without essence, and perhaps unknowable'" (Fullbrook 16-17, cited Williams LTH 76). Moira's and Larry's discussion about her name shows how names can be unstable signifiers of identity, and also shows the possibility of deliberately subverting social expectations:

LARRY: You can be a rather shocking young lady.

MOIRA: Particularly for a Moira. You know, I never did like that name. It always conjured up visions of acne, glasses, and virginity in perpetuity. . . . I

1In Shakespeare's Othello, Iago tells Brabantio that Othello and Desdemona are sexually intimate by saying, "an old black ram / Is tumping your white ewe" (Othello, 1.1.85-86).
thought of changing it, then I thought 'Why?
Am I not strong enough to create my own image.'
(61-62)

It is unclear from the text whether Clean deliberately misleads Tupper about Moira's name or is genuinely mistaken, but Tupper's use of "Myrtle" also shows how perception influences the reading of reality (73). Moira's deliberate subversion of Tupper to "Tipper" ironically emphasises his inability to allow her her own identity and values: instead he imposes his expectations of female behaviour and desire onto her (76). At the end of their conversation, Tupper's continued insistence on calling Moira "Myrtle" indicates that he has not listened to anything she has said (76).

The interchange between Clean and Moira reveals a considerable multi-layering and confusion of perception and appearance. Clean initially considers Moira to be "a lovely piece of fluff" (64), then realises she is a lawyer and states, "well, I wasn't to know. . . . That you're . . . who you are " (64-65). Moira's next line neatly encapsulates McGee's concern with the sliding signification of perceived identity: "[t]hat I'm a person, rather than a bit of fluff? Or a lawyer, rather than a mere person?" (65).1 Clean recognises that the perception of personality is socially manufactured and wants to create a new lucrative persona for himself through success in rugby: "[j]ust think how many name players are flogging the roads between here and Kaitaia for everything from shit paper to ladies' underwear" (66). He also reveals that he consciously puts on an act at times when he tells Moira, "I'm no fool, despite appearances, and how I carry on for the benefit of those idiots in there" (66). Towards the end of the play

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1Clean's misperception reveals the higher status of the traditionally male occupation of lawyer compared to the customary female role of sexual object.
Foreskin verbalises his realisation that the whole rugby milieu is an act:

[t]he masks have been on long enough. . . . [S]top this masquerade in the name of team spirit. . . . [L]ook at us all . . . Playing along, humouring each other, bullshit in one sustaining bullshit in the other. Tupper play-acting for the team's benefit, all you guys playing along for his benefit. I was the only one who believed the whole charade was serious. When does the charade stop?" (85-86)

For a play which dwells on the traditional national stereotype, and apparently focuses on typical characters, Foreskin's Lament reveals a significant concern with multiplicity of personas and the instability of identity.

In the concluding lament McGee makes clear that a redefined male identity must be an authentic New Zealand one, and "blessed with the absence of [someone else's] resonance" (95). Rugby was originally imported from Britain, and shaped past and present immigrants' and New Zealand born men's view of the male gender role. This is evident in the beginning of the 'Brucie scene':

FORESKIN: ... Now Irish, pretend you're a good keen kiwi lad instead of a wasted Irish git . . . .
Now Brucie, what do you want to be more than anything in the world . . . .

IRISH gets into the act . . . puts on the newzealandese . . . .

IRISH: Well, ah, I wanna be, ah, one of the boys.

FORESKIN: Right Brucie. And what do the boys do, Brucie?

IRISH: Play footie. (82)

1These typical characters are the father figure, the young rebel, the war veteran, the feminist, the homosexual, the family man, the wife/mother and the decent bloke.
European influence is also evident when Moira ascribes her sensibility to her experience while travelling; she tells Larry that "overseas people are more ... mature. They'd thought about things, they'd made a few decisions, they'd asked 'why'" (59, Neill 14). Both Clean's and Moira's philosophies are imported and shown as lacking in humanist values. Clean deliberately injures Ken in order to advance his own position, while Moira dismisses the rugby players as disgusting and inconsequential: "I've seen pigs at a trough with more style than that" (68). In turn, Foreskin exposes Moira and her kind as "trendy lefties or trendy fascists [who] ... have nothing to do with reality" (68). Foreskin says of his rugby team, "[o]ur reality is here... This is the heart and the bowels of this country, too strong and foul and vital for reduction to bouquets, or oils or words" (68). Thus McGee, through Foreskin, makes a strong statement against intellectual and academic snobbery and firmly presents a variety of men of all classes and backgrounds as valid and important New Zealanders. As Michael Neill points out, the "heroes of Foreskin's [past] alternative mythology (Perelman, Bowie, Kubrick, Burroughs, Kerourac, Cleaver)" are foreigners (Neill 16). His experience at university is disconnected from that of the majority of New Zealanders: it is no authorial accident that Foreskin has spent "hours being lectured on the inauthentic voice in modern literature by academics who live life vicariously, through books and abstraction" (87, my underlining). He rejects "eternal variations of god-boy-as-simple-kiwi" as he knows that life in New Zealand is no longer simple (68). To escape into abstractions is the privilege of a minority which ignores the reality of the majority of New Zealanders "who decide for us which road, what speed, how far, and who drives - they decide how and why we live" (68).
As he is a product of his time, Foreskin is referring here to male New Zealanders. During the 1970s, the advent of feminism, gay rights and concern over the political situation in South Africa began to erode the myth of the traditional New Zealand male stereotype, and to challenge modern masculinism. The introduction of television in the 1960s meant an influx of American influence into New Zealand and, significantly, graphically presented the true horror of war for the first time with coverage of the Vietnam war. By 1980, the sanitised mythologies of rugby and war and the dominant perception of masculinity were exposed as questionable in both senses of the word. The commercial success of Foreskin’s Lament in the early 1980s emphasises the public’s concern with these issues at that time.

Ten years later this play has been accorded a pivotal place in the New Zealand theatre canon similar to that of John Osborne’s Look Back in Anger in post World War Two Britain. In these two plays, young men survey the past with nostalgia and have difficulty coming to terms with the present: "[i]f you've no world of your own, it's rather pleasant to regret the passing of someone else's" (Osborne 17), and, "now the dance is done. I'm hanging up my boots - whaddarya?" (96). Both Jimmy and Foreskin are compared with an older anachronistic male figure: Tupper, like Colonel Redfern is "one of those sturdy old plants left over . . . that can't understand why the sun isn't shining any more" (Osborne 66 ).¹ These four male characters all suffer confusion of identity. At the beginning of Foreskin’s Lament Foreskin is a man uneasily astride two worlds:

¹Significantly, John Osborne dedicated Look Back in Anger to his father.
I like coming back here a couple of times a week, keeping some involvement. Oh, I know I couldn't live here again, but Jesus Larry, You've no idea what it's like up there in the ivory tower. (36)

His abnegation of both milieus in the final moments of the play creates a void in himself and presents the possibility of the creation of an "I" which was previously "[a]lways the other" (95). His action of smashing the television set with a bottle, while it is broadcasting a rugby test, efficiently explodes both prescribed and received images of New Zealand men (92). In the last section of the lament Foreskin shifts his focus from 'I' to 'you'. "What are you?" is asked directly of the audience (96, my underlining). The "[q]uick blackout" on Foreskin and auditorium lights up on the audience underlines that his question is not to be answered within the play, but rather by the men of New Zealand (96).

A similar demand for a re-definition of femininity is not evident in Foreskin's Lament, although the play radically departs from Look Back in Anger in relation to the female gender role. While Alison acquiesces to Jimmy's treatment of her, Moira is quite clear of her boundaries in her relationship with Foreskin. Compare "I'm in the mud at last! I'm grovelling! I'm crawling! Oh, God --- She collapses at his feet" (Osborne 95) to "[c]an't you compromise just once? [t]hink of me? . . . [f]uck you! MOIRA exits" (80). With the inclusion of Moira, Foreskin's Lament acknowledges feminism, but Moira is an example of liberal feminism, in which "women demand equality with men in existing social, political and cultural terms" (Dale WTW 160, my underlining). Moira is a lawyer, owns her own car and swears, just like a man. However, "if a woman is represented as being 'more like a man' . . . this positive representation is one that holds up conventionally defined masculinity as a model of the
human" (Marshment 28). It is evident, from Moira’s use of the word "cuntstable" to insult Clean, that she inhabits and perpetuates the masculinist ethos which negates the validity of women’s bodies, sexuality and alternative reality(ies) (64). Moira’s position in relation to the play also reflects her complicit relationship to masculinism: she appears in Act Two to more or less conduct a series of interviews with male characters designed to reveal much about various masculinities, but actually very little about her experience as a woman.¹ Her departure from the stage well before the end of the play, once her dramatic function is fulfilled, conveniently leaves the action open to Foreskin’s Lament’s overriding concern with masculinity. In Ancient Greece, ‘moira’ referred to the inescapable fate of an individual’s share or portion in life; McGee’s choice of Moira’s name is an ironic and probably unconscious reflection of the limitation of his depiction of a feminist woman. Fortunately, as the following discussion of Pack Of Girls and Daughters Of Heaven will show, some contemporary feminist characters have escaped the fate of being defined solely through masculinist terms.

¹However, to be fair to McGee, it must be pointed out that his original script included Moira’s discussion, with a character called Prick, about her feelings about a past pregnancy and illegal abortion. This scene was cut during the workshopping process. (Carnegie 208-209).
ii) Daughters Of Heaven.

I never knew a tolerable woman to be fond of her own sex. Jonathan Swift.

In order to change the face of the world, it is first necessary to be firmly anchored in it, but the women who are firmly rooted in society are those who are in subjection to it; unless designated for action by divine authority. . . the ambitious woman and the heroine are strange monsters. Simone de Beauvoir.

My mother was holding me back. Pauline, Daughters of Heaven.

Michelanne Forster is distanced from Greg McGee by gender and by her upbringing in the United States. Ten years separate the writing of Foreskin’s Lament and Daughters Of Heaven and the two plays also examine discrete periods of New Zealand’s social history. The focus of Daughters Of Heaven is on women, however Forster states that she writes as an individual, rather than from a conscious position as a woman or as a feminist.1 Caryl Churchill takes the same position regarding her politics and her writing. The absence of an explicit political agenda only strengthens the exploration and expression of femininities in readings of Daughters Of Heaven and Top Girls. In both plays the presentation of a situation from multiple viewpoints urges the reader or audience member to make their own assessment of the drama, and reinforces the complexity of gender issues in

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1 Interview with Michelanne Forster, 29 October 1992.
society: Forster states, "[i]t's not my job as a playwright to tell people what to think".1

Interestingly, both Daughters Of Heaven and Top Girls present historical figures on the stage. Churchill's inclusion of Isabella Bird, Pope Joan and Lady Nijo at the fictional Marlene's dinner party lends historical authenticity to their expression of their experiences. Both Court's and Downstage's Daughters Of Heaven programmes include photographs and notes about the actual Parker Hulme murder and trial; posters for the Globe's and Downstage's productions feature photographs of the historical Pauline and Juliet, thus framing the performance with historical authenticity. Churchill chooses only to include female characters in Top Girls to enable an examination of women's relationships with each other and with the social system. Similarly, Daughters Of Heaven focuses on the female characters' experiences, stories and feelings in relation to each other, rather than these characters being adjuncts to male characters or concerns. Both plays are concerned with the subversion of the customary female gender role, and with the implications of the terms of such subversion.

Violence is significant in the questioning of gender roles explicit in Foreskin's Lament and implicit in Daughters Of Heaven. Ken and Honora are both representative examples of their respective customary gender roles. Their deaths at the hands of those who transgress such roles call into question the validity of the subject positions of both the victims and perpetrators of the violence. In Daughters Of Heaven violence adds further complexity to an

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1 Interview with Michelanne Forster, 29 October 1992.
examination of gender, for, as Glamuzina and Laurie point out, "the violent female offender offends not only against particular laws but against her 'proper' place in society, and against the perceived 'true nature of womanhood'" (Glamuzina and Laurie 135). Thus, Pauline's and Juliet's transgression against 1950s Christchurch's definition of femininity involves three aspects: their violence, their relationship and their rejection of social expectations for their future. Inextricably entwined with gender in relation to Pauline and Juliet are family dynamics, class and colonialism. The play makes clear that Juliet's need for Pauline stems from her particular family's dynamics. Pauline's need for Juliet is bound up with the Hulmes' social position and connections with England, culture and liberalism. Clearly, the Parker Hulme case is exceedingly complex.

Pauline's and Juliet's murder of Honora can be partially interpreted as an act of resistance against the customary female gender role, and so must be viewed within the social context of New Zealand in the 1950s. The overwhelmingly predominant role for women in 1950s New Zealand was that of an actual or aspiring wife and mother. The nuclear family, comprising a heterosexual couple and their children, was the accepted way to live (Glamuzina and Laurie 5). Pauline rejects her mother's intention that she fulfil social expectations: "I don't want to be a secretary... I don't want a bloody family". Rather, she wants to go away with the Hulmes so that she can be with Juliet. From Honora's point of view, Pauline's expectations are unrealisable, "[f]alse expectations is what hurts people", (25) and she actively works to prevent Pauline from

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achieving her ambition: "Mrs Hulme told me they couldn't keep you . . . I talked to her. On the phone. Last week. And I saw Dr Hulme before that" (39). Pauline's and Juliet's murder of Honora with a brick is intended to remove "the main obstacle in . . . [Pauline's] path" of a self defined rather than a socially defined future (22).

Angie's unrealized plan "to kill [her] mother . . . with a brick" in Top Girls is a parallel situation to that of Daughters Of Heaven (Churchill 98-9).¹ Both Angie and Pauline prefer to think of women other than Joyce and Honora as mother figures and mentors: "I think I'm my aunt's child. I think my mother's really my aunt" (Churchill 95), and, "I'm one of the family. She [Hilda] said so" (24). Marlene and Hilda have power and status in the public sphere, and, from the young women's point of view, appear to encourage the girls' attempts to write their own destiny; Hilda says, "[u]sing one's imagination is so important at this age" (17) and Marlene looks at Angie's secret "exercise book" (Churchill 131). In comparison to Hilda and Marlene, Honora thinks that Pauline's writing is "far-fetched" (38) and Joyce considers Angie's writing to be "childish" (Churchill 131). Both Joyce and Honora are lower class, unimaginative and bound to domesticity: "I don't take in boarders because I want to " (11) and, "I've got four different cleaning jobs" (Churchill 136). Angie and Pauline admire Marlene and Hilda, who deviate from the customary female gender role, rather than their mothers who fulfil this role²: "[s]he's special" (Churchill 94), and,

¹A comparison of Daughters Of Heaven with Top Girls is appropriate. It seems very likely that Churchill drew upon the Parker Hulme case, which was reported worldwide. The parallels between characters and situations in the two plays are too similar to be accidental. These parallels, combined with Churchill's concern with exploring gender, reinforce a feminist reading of Daughters Of Heaven.

²For the purposes of this comparison Joyce is perceived to be Angie's mother, although Marlene is Angie's biological mother.
PAULINE    Your mother is so beautiful.
JULIET     She dyes her hair.
PAULINE    I think you look like her.
JULIET     (SHE TOUCHES PAULINE'S FACE) You don't
           look all that much like your mother. Truly.
PAULINE    I think I might be adopted.
JULIET     You're very different people inside.
PAULINE    Yes. We are. (18)

Pauline's concern with repudiating any external or internal similarity between herself and her mother recalls Forster's epigraph: "I murder her. . . . I am she" (4). Pauline's desire to be different from Honora means that on one level the murder can be viewed as a symbolic act in which Pauline irrevocably repudiates what she considers to be the undesirable aspects of herself, which are embodied in her conventional, lower class mother.¹ This interpretation possibly explains why the girls focus upon and kill Honora, while seemingly disregarding Herbert.

Pauline considers Honora a "[p]hilistine" (23), "loathsome" (36), and hates her mother's lower class ethos: "[s]ometimes she makes me want to scream. (IMITATING HER MOTHER) 'I need to spend a penny'" (56). The class difference between the Riepers and the Hulmes is clearly established in Scenes Two and Three in regard to housework and food. In the Rieper household “PAULINE . . . [IS] SCRUBBING THE FLOOR” and Honora takes in “boarders” (11). In comparison, the Hulmes employ a housekeeper: “BRIDGET STARTS

¹In the Downstage production, Pauline dominated the actual murder, maniacally striking the first six or so blows.
TO TIDY UP. . . . I don’t get paid to hoover weeds” (14-15). While the Riepers will be having “[s]avalloys” for dinner, Bridget is preparing “nice roast chicken” for the Hulmes (18). When Honora states, “Pauline’s not looking herself lately. She’s off her food”, Bridget’s reply, “[s]he eats like a horse at Ilam. Everything on her plate”, indicates Pauline’s rejection of the Riepers’ lower class household and ethos for that of the Hulmes (25). Her rebellion against her mother and associated social expectations is reflected in the Court’s poster and programme cover. The art work presents Pauline stretching out to the light, nature and the future, having rejected and removed the threat of the customary female gender role, represented by the almost obscured dead body of Honora Rieper below her. The representation of Pauline alone, rather than with Juliet, reinforces this view of her overcoming her mother’s expectations and lower class ethos with the murder. Correspondingly, in both the Court and Downstage productions Pauline’s accent was a replica of the Hulmes’ upper class English accents; the Court’s Honora, Sandra Rasmussen, had a pronounced lower-class New Zealand accent and Downstage’s Jennifer Ludlam played Honora with a North of England accent, signifying in both cases Pauline’s attempt to identify with the Hulmes and overcome her lower class upbringing. Differences between Juliet’s and Pauline’s families are not limited to class. Hilda and Honora parent differently, while the fathers do not take an active parenting role. Hilda has a liberal approach: “[u]sing one’s imagination is so important at this age. (KISSING JULIET) Now be good darling and don’t stay up too late” (17). In comparison, Honora is practical and ungracious: “[s]ounds a bit far-fetched to me” (38), “SHE PATS PAULINE AWKWARDLY” (57), and, “[i]f you ask me Lady Muck should worry herself a little bit more. Don’t slouch.
You’ll compress your innards” (23). Thus, the appeal of Juliet for Pauline includes the Hulmes’ social position, association with England and culture, and Hilda’s liberal approach to parenting, which allows the young women freedom to create their own special world and express themselves.

Despite the attractions the Hulme household has for Pauline, Juliet’s family’s dynamics affect her negatively. Henry is distant from his family; Hilda comments to the Detective, “[y]ou don’t have to worry about my husband communicating with Juliet. He never has communicated with anyone and he’s not about to start now” (60). Juliet acknowledges that Henry “doesn’t care” what she does (15), and also “never tells [her] the truth anyway” (43). Juliet’s insecurity is exacerbated by her knowledge of Hilda’s affair with Walter Perry:

\begin{verbatim}
JULIET    Are you going to get a divorce?
HILDA    I don't know.
JULIET    Are we going back to England?
HILDA    I don't know.
JULIET    You don't know much, do you. (47)
\end{verbatim}

At the time leading up to the murder, there is nothing constant or secure in Juliet’s family situation. Hilda, unlike Honora, does not fulfil the customary female gender role in being a ‘good’ and devoted mother. Juliet’s desire for secure parenting is apparent after the murder: “[w]here’s Daddy? I want Daddy” (64). Similarly, she attempts to connect her parents as she is led away by the Detective:

\begin{verbatim}
JULIET    Cheer up Mummy. I [w]on't be long.
HILDA    EXITS WITH DR HULME.
JULIET    Look after her Daddy. (68)
\end{verbatim}
Significantly, this is the only scene in which Juliet and her parents are together, emphasising her usual isolation from her parents. For someone so young and apparently extremely privileged Juliet is startlingly cynical: “[t]his world is cruel place Gina. Don’t you ever forget that” (44). Pauline is the one constant Juliet can rely upon, and her need for this security is evident:

JULIET    Don’t ever leave me.
PAULINE   Never.
JULIET    Promise?
PAULINE   Promise.
JULIET    Cross your heart?
PAULINE   And hope to die. (21)

Juliet’s insecurity manifests itself in her desire for control over herself and others. While in prison she “refus[es] to cry” (88), despite distressing circumstances, but plans to allow herself to cry upon her release saying, “I’m certain I will cry at long, long last” (9), indicating that control over herself substitutes for a lack of control in other aspects of her life. In her relationship with Pauline she usually takes the dominant and instigative role over a subservient and compliant Pauline. During their coronation act “JULIET IS THE YOUNG EMPEROR DIELLO” while Pauline is “A SOLDIER” (13). Juliet’s speech while playing the emperor reveals her desire for control over others:

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1The play makes only passing reference to the historical Juliet’s illness which resulted in her spending long periods in sanatoriums.
[there will be no mercy to those who disobey me. Neither to
the snotty nosed orphan or the simpering sibling; nor to the
fish fingered housewife or the hunch-backed academic. All
must cower before me and obey the wisdom of the Royal Law.
The lively oracles of God are mine alone. (13)

Correspondingly, often Pauline addresses Juliet as "my lord"
(19,36,45) while Juliet describes her as a "servant" (19). Juliet also
commands Pauline when they are not role-playing: "But you must
try it again. I want you to" (20), and, "Prepare yourself for my
commandments" (36). It seems that the murder of Honora is
partially a kind of test of Pauline's love and devotion to Juliet; it is
Juliet who is dominant in planning the murder:

PAULINE  Mother will never agree to it.
JULIET     She can't stop you.
PAULINE  She has my life planned. Death by degree at
           Digby's. She's determined.
JULIET     I thought we had an understanding. If things
           come to that.
PAULINE  Do we? ... 
JULIET     Swear you will follow me to Hell and back if I
           command it. (44)

And:

JULIET     ... We've got to do it. You haven't changed your
           mind have you?
PAULINE  I'd die without you." (53)

This latter exchange implies either that they see the murder as the
only means of continuing their relationship, or that Juliet is
deliberately manipulating Pauline into killing Honora by threatening
the loss of their relationship if Pauline does not comply with the
plan. Either interpretation emphasizes Juliet's insecurity. Aligned to
Juliet's insecurity and need for control is her sense of self importance: "I see my own star brighter than ever" (8) and, "Pauline matters. I matter. That's all. We have the right to do what we needed to do in the interests of our own happiness" (70).

While Juliet's and Pauline's need for each other is thus apparent their relationship transgresses the gender role assigned to women in Christchurch during the 1950s. As Janice Raymond observes, in masculinist societies men exist in relation to each other, women exist in relation to men, and women are divided from each other: "hetero relations are the only bonds that receive social, political, and economic sanction for women" (Raymond 11). 1 Accordingly, Honora says to Pauline, "[t]he Hulmes don't like you and Juliet spending so much time together and neither [do we]" (40).

The play shows the basis for masculinist fear of women's connection: in their private world Pauline and Juliet resist, subvert and expose as social constructions the precepts of the masculinist society in which they live.

Bridget's Catholicism presents a socially accepted religious norm from which the girls deviate while together. This difference is strikingly pointed out:

BRIDGET Some people had better say why they were thrashing about in the ferns shouting mumbo jumbo or I'll be forced to tell their Mam.

JULIET We were burying religion.

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1 As previously discussed in relation to Foreskin's Lament, masculinism relies upon the objectification of women: men have subject status and women have object status. Within such a system heterosexuality involves a hierarchical subject/object relationship, and male dominance is assured. If women have any kind of relationship with each other, this connection subverts and threatens masculinism; such women refuse the definition of object and declare themselves to have subject status, as objects cannot relate to each other. Such female connection effectively displaces male domination, as domination requires the dominated.
BRIDGET  Holy Mother of God.

JULIET  First we sent Mario Lanza up to the gods and then we sacrificed a mouse at the temple of Minerva. We baptised him 'Randolf.'

BRIDGET  You're making yourself an easy target for the Devil. Mark my words. (16)

Bridget's religion idolises/idealises the Virgin Mary and the many female saints and martyrs who died protecting their chastity. A consequence of the Catholic Church's teaching is that women's bodies, which tempt men to sin, are denied validity and kept concealed by decorous clothing. Thus, established religion acts as a means of social control, in disallowing female sexuality, sensuality and physicality. However, Pauline and Juliet claim their female bodies as important and enjoyable, although Bridget may "narrow minded[ly]" interpret their expression of their physicality as "running around the garden in ... knickers" (16). Juliet's and Pauline's worship of nature is an extension of the acceptance and celebration of their physical selves:

JULIET  Do you know the first thing I'm going to do when I get out? I'm going to climb to the top of a hill and embrace the sky. Not just a mingy strip of sky, but all of it, unfettered and stretching to eternity. Then I'll roll in the grass - the grass that is just beginning to smell of summer and sun - and I'll press myself flat against the earth and pay homage. (9)

The connection between the young women, and their connection with nature, involves a spiritual sense which enables them to "perceive beyond this world into Paradise" (69). They have a spiritual experience of what they call "the Fourth World" at Port Levy (69-70), and believe that they have an "extra part to ... [their] brains" which makes this experience possible (69). Thus, Juliet and Pauline not only
reject established patriarchal religion and its associated repressive female gender role, they also declare their female selves as founders and ministers of an alternative exclusive religion which validates and elevates young women: "[w]e have our own religion. We're writing our own Bible" (69). As Juliet says to Medlicott, she and Pauline "worship god within . . . [them]selves" (69). They choose to construct religion rather than be constructed by it; their substitution of Mario Lanza and James Mason for the Christian God1 and their concern with breaking the commandments2 reveal that established religion can be resisted, subverted and exposed as a social construction.

It may be argued that Juliet's and Pauline's notion of the god within is hardly original and that, in substituting film stars for God and the saints and substituting their own writings for the Bible, they are still contained within the framework of masculinist religion. In Top Girls, Churchill makes clear that the Act One characters' 'success' is achieved only within the framework of masculinist society. Marlene is a liberal feminist; she has been appointed Managing Director "[o]ver all the women [she] work[s] with. And the men" (Churchill 67). Similarly, Patient Griselda has achieved fame and fortune by obeying her husband: "[i]t was always easy because I always knew I would do what he said" (Churchill 79). Pope Joan has

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1 "Do you think Mario would be terribly jealous if we elevated James to the gods right now? . . . PAULINE CEREMONIOUSLY GIVES A FRAMED PHOTO OF JAMES MASON TO JULIET. . . . Fair goddess, I bring 'HIM' before you that he may ascend from the ranks of the giants to dwell in the temple of the gods and live forevermore in our hearts" (31).

2 "How many commandments have we broken now? . . . We're making good progress. Lying, stealing, false gods. . . . coveting your neighbour's wife - we'll have to let Mr Perry be our stand-in for that one" (35).
achieved the highest office in the Church by pretending to be a man, but is stoned to death when she gives birth during a papal procession. Thus, the Catholic Church is shown to be a political rather than a spiritual arena: "I shouldn't have been a woman. Women, children and lunatics can't be Pope" (Churchill 69). In contrast, gender is not an issue in Juliet's and Pauline's own religion.

It is useful to utilize the ancient Greeks' concept of Dionysus, Julia Kristeva's theory of the Semiotic\(^1\) and a Maori view of the life force to understand Juliet's and Pauline's spiritual connection with each other, with nature and with the universe. To the ancient Greeks, Dionysus represents all the fluid forces of life, which are connected and which pulse through human, animal and vegetable organisms. During Dionysiac or Bacchic revels the Greek person is "not only united, reconciled, and fused with [their] neighbour, but as one with him [or her]" (Kaufman 37). Interestingly, the historical Dr Medlicott writes of "the destructiveness of the 'Dionysiac experience' which he claims 'partake[s] of the same primitive regression' as was apparent in 'the two girl murderers, Parker and Hulme.'"\(^2\) Kristeva's theory of the Semiotic also involves regression\(^3\):

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\(^1\)In this discussion Kristeva's term has been given a capital S to distinguish it from earlier use of "semiotic" to refer to the signifying system in the theatre.

\(^2\)Dr Reginald Medlicott. "Concepts of Normality and Moral Values." New Zealand Sexologist (March 1986): 6 (cited Glamuzina and Laurie 132). Euripides' The Bacchae serves to illustrate that "those who repress the demand in themselves [for the Dionysiac experience] or refuse its satisfaction to others transform it by their act into a power of disintegration and destruction" (Dodds xlii). Within these terms, both Pentheus' and Honora's deaths can be attributed, in part at least, to their refusal to allow the Thebans or Pauline and Juliet satisfaction from the Dionysiac experience.

\(^3\)Kristeva "displaces Lacan's distinction between the Imaginary and Symbolic Order into a distinction between the semiotic and the symbolic... The semiotic is linked to the pre-Oedipal primary processes... The semiotic continuum must be split if signification is to be produced (Moi 161).
the splitting (coupure) of the semiotic chora ... enables the subject to attribute differences and thus signification to what was the ceaseless heterogeneity of the chora ... Once the subject has entered into the Symbolic Order, the chora will be more or less successfully repressed. (Moi 162)

However, the Semiotic, unlike Lacan's Imaginary phase, is not a stage that the subject leaves behind as impossible to achieve again. Just as the ancient Greeks deliberately went to the mountains to engage in Dionysiac experience, the Semiotic is an available state of being to more modern people. Kristeva sees the Semiotic as an endless flow of pulsions ... gathered up in the chora ... the chora only admits analogy with vocal or kinetic rhythm'. From the similarities between Kristeva's Semiotic and the Dionysiac experience it is probably safe to conclude that both involve an acknowledgement of and involvement in non-political physical and psychic connection with others, nature and spiritual forces. This connection is particularly well illustrated by Juliet's and Pauline's experience at Port Levy of what they call the Fourth World:

THE SOUND OF THE SEA. JULIET STANDS, CONCENTRATING. PAULINE APPEARS OUT OF THE MIST. THE GIRLS STAND TOGETHER, TRANSFIXED, ON THE EDGE OF THE CLIFF, LOOKING OUT OVER PORT LEVY. MUSIC AND LIGHT SURROUND THEM. (69)


2In contrast, "[t]he Freudian unconscious is a capitalist construction, an internalized set of power relations, the result of repression produced for capitalism by the family" (Deleuze and Guattari, cited Wright 146).
The Semiotic is manifest in "THE SOUND OF THE SEA": the pulsing of the waves parallels the pulsing rhythm of their earlier chanting in unison:

(CHANTING) There are living among two dutiful daughters of a man who possesses two beautiful daughters
The most glorious beings in creation.
they'd be the pride and joy of any nation.

You cannot know or try to guess
the sweet soothingness of their caress
The outstanding genius of this pair
is understood by few, they are so rare.
Compared with these two every man is a fool
The world is most honoured that they should rule. (43)\(^1\)

It seems likely that the rhythms or Semiotic pulsing of Juliet's and Pauline's chanting may have precipitated their experience of what they call the Fourth World. Their experience at Port Levy has been interpreted by a Tohunga from that area. He speaks of Mauri,

the physical life force or life principle which is fed from the solar system . . . [and of] Ihi which is the inner force in a person . . . The way of perpetuating the life force, or Mauri, is by re-energising. Once a person knows where Mauri is, then Karakia [or prayer/chanting] can get them through to another dimension . . . Just before and just after certain planets come into alignment twice a year, it is possible to enter this dimension. (Glamuzina and Laurie 147)\(^2\)

Hence, Juliet's and Pauline's spiritual experience goes beyond mere substitution within the masculinist religious framework and is in fact subversive of the masculinist symbolic order. "Symbolic dominance is never secure but is continually challenged by the forces of the [S]emiotic" (Buxton 74). The Semiotic chora is pre-Oedipal and non-

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\(^1\)Judith Dale suggested the application of Kristeva's theory of the Semiotic to Juliet's and Pauline's verse (interview 9 February 1993).

\(^2\)For a full account of the Maori interpretation of the Parker Hulme case, see Glamuzina and Laurie 147-148.
gendered; "[a]ny strengthening of the [S]emiotic, which knows no sexual difference, must therefore lead to a weakening of traditional gender divisions" (Moi 164-65).1

Similarly, the girls' physical intimacy challenges masculinist restriction and definition of women's behaviour. In Surpassing the Love of Men, Lillian Faderman speaks of passionate friendships among women in the nineteenth century, and how the twentieth century's theories about sex have precluded women's friendships: "[t]hroughout most of the twentieth century . . . the enriching romantic friendship [between women] that was common in earlier eras is thought to be impossible, since love necessarily means sex and sex between women means lesbian and lesbian means sick" (Faderman 311). The historical girls may or may not have been sexually intimate2, but Forster states, "[t]he question of the girls' lesbianism which seems to preoccupy the media never directly concerned me. It was the passionate delivery of their souls to one another that I was interested in."3 Correspondingly, a sexual relationship between Juliet and Pauline is not explicit in the text. Their kissing is framed by role playing:

JULIET BECOMES MARIO LANZA

JULIET Yes, of course.

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1Kristeva "sees the pre-Oedipal mother as a figure that encompasses both masculinity and femininity . . . for the simple reason that the opposition between feminine and masculine does not exist in pre-Oedipality."

2Glamuzina and Laurie, who have a lesbian agenda, are aware that there is no irrefutable proof that the historical girls had a sexual relationship (Glamuzina and Laurie 65).

PAULINE  Mario.

JULIET  Gina.

THEY KISS. (20).

And:

JULIET  What will James say? You're putting him in a very foul temper.

PAULINE  Oh James darling, Don't be cruel.

JULIET  There is only one way to silence such foolishness.

PAULINE  (COYLY) Yes?

JULIET KISSES PAULINE PASSIONATELY A LA JAMES MASON. (32)

The video of Lisa Warrington's production at the Globe Theatre in Dunedin shows the emphasis Warrington placed on Pauline's and Juliet's imitation of film stars. The girls kissed with closed mouths and a lack of passion, obviously role playing rather than actually kissing each other; by law 1950s film stars were not allowed to kiss with open mouths.¹ Later, Pauline's description of her and Juliet "making love" while pretending to be the saints is embedded in a scene where she is pretending to Medlicott that she is insane: "(MAKING IT UP AS SHE GOES ALONG) They're visions of . . . hellish flames and blinding light. Sometimes [I] feel this terrible impulse to thrust my hand into the fire and watch it burn. . . . Sick in my mind, not my body, you idiot" (70-71). This framing of Pauline's and Juliet's physical intimacy with role playing and dishonesty casts doubts about their actual lesbianism: the text's ambivalence about their sexuality was reflected in Elric Hooper's production at the Court

¹Interview with Lisa Warrington, 3 February 1993.
Theatre. He personally does not believe that the historical girls were lesbian and wanted audiences to make up their own minds about this. Hence Forster’s text and Hooper’s and Warrington’s productions subvert the masculinist social construction of women’s intimacy as lesbian sexuality.

The Downstage director, Colin McColl, chose to interpret the text differently; in his production Pauline and Juliet were overtly lesbian and expressed this on stage. Correspondingly, the Downstage flyer used a black and white image of the historical Pauline and Juliet with a bright pink heart superimposed between them and the pre-show music was Doris Day’s “My Secret Love.” The impetus of this production was the young women’s lesbian love story and tragedy. “[O]nly the girls occupy full stage in bright light, the others are isolated into small oases, for the story is told from their point of view: they are the centre.” Jan Jordan comments in her review of this production, “I thought it was positive that the play did not deny the physical and sexual pleasure which the girls enjoyed with each other” (Jordan 56), and Judith Dale agrees with Jordan, “[i]t was Downstage’s decision to have certain sequences played with a degree of nudity. . . . How else can the audience be made to realise that this relationship is exactly that, a ‘relationship’ in every sense - emotional, intellectual, sensuous and, yes, sexual” (Dale DW 23). The interpretation of the girls’ relationship as lesbian exposes

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2 Interview with Elric Hooper, 28 November 1992.

3 See Jan Jordan’s review of this production in Broadsheet. Koanga/Spring 1992. 56.

heterosexuality as an option, rather than as the only possible sexual relationship, and hence also challenges masculinist precepts, particularly in the context of 1950s Christchurch.

While *Daughters Of Heaven* presents Juliet's and Pauline's socially subversive relationship, it also presents 1950s Christchurch's view of their relationship and behaviour. Bridget O'Malley is included in the play to embody and articulate social values; unlike the other characters she is not based on a historical figure involved in the case, but "is not so much a fictional creation as a being in whom is gathered together opinions, attitudes and facts manifested in the city at the time" (Court *DOH* 4). She simply accepts the 1950s social and sexual mores; for her 'good' and 'bad' are clearly and immutably defined. Bridget considers Pauline and Juliet to be "[t]wo precocious dirty minded girls" (81) and "queer" (72). Similarly, the conventional Honora defines their relationship as unacceptable: "Mrs Parker became perturbed over their unhealthy relationship and tried to break it up" (22). Like Bridget, Matron labels Juliet and Pauline "lesbians", even though Juliet protests that "[w]e're not lesbians. We're a special case" (75). In both the Court's and Downstage's productions one actor played both Matron and Honora. This double casting signifies the connected power of all social institutions, including the family and 'justice', to control what is socially considered to be deviant behaviour: the same actor works in different roles to achieve Pauline's and Juliet's separation.\(^1\) Once inside the

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\(^1\)Obviously, this doubling also saves wages for another actor, but the audience reads what is on the stage without the theatre's financial considerations in mind. Churchill also uses doubling to signify parallels in women's relationships to society. In the Christchurch Arts Network's 1992 production of *Top Girls* the same actor played both Patient Griselda and Mrs Kidd to emphasize that both of these characters are subject to their husbands, and another actor played both Dull Gret and Joyce to underline these two characters' parallel socialist feminist stance.
social institution of the prison Matron has complete power over 
Pauline and Juliet: she is responsible for separating them once they 
have been sentenced: "MATRON ATTEMPTS TO STEER JULIET 
OUT OF THE ROOM. JULIET CONTINUES TO KICK AND 
STRUGGLE. . . . MATRON EXITS WITH JULIET" (86). Then when 
they are due to leave their prisons Bridget acts as the agent and 
instrument of society: it is due to her actions that "THE GIRLS ARE 
FINALLY [PHYSICALLY] SEPARATED" at the conclusion of the play, 
even after they have served their sentence for murder (93).1 Clearly, 
Juliet and Pauline transgress more than the law against murder; they 
are also tried, found guilty and punished by society for transgressing 
the customary female gender role (Glamuzina and Laurie 135).2

While Daughters Of Heaven presents Juliet's and Pauline's 
own private world and their society's view of their relationship and 
behaviour, leaving the audience to judge the situation for 
themselves, the play also presents one fact that is not open to 
interpretation: on 22 June 1954 Juliet Hulme and Pauline Parker 
murdered Honora Rieper. In Daughters of Heaven they commit the 
murder together as an attempt to prevent their separation and to 
allow the fulfilment of Pauline's potential: "we were desperate. Mrs 
Rieper was impossible. She didn't want to [l]et go of Gina. But Gina 
has so much talent. She would be famous if -" (66). Pauline's and 
Juliet's motivation and violence compound their transgression of the 
customary female gender role.

1Forster confirms this interpretation. Interview, 29 November 1992.

2The fact that women, Honora/Matron and Bridget, achieve the separation of Pauline 
and Juliet only emphasises how women collude, knowingly or unknowingly, in the 
division of women in masculinist societies.
The re-enactment of the murder on stage inescapably presents this violence to the audience. Both Hooper and McColl chose to stage the murder, which is not in Forster’s text. Hooper felt that he “couldn’t not stage the murder” and presented it in a highly stylized manner upstage behind a gauze. Movement was carefully timed to coincide with a strobe light, and the light turned redder and redder with each strobe until Honora was dead and the light was completely red. Handel’s "Zadok the Priest and Nathan the Prophet" increased in volume as the murder progressed, so although the action was stylized the sound and light frayed the audience’s nerve endings. The murder occurred just before interval: one patron comments, “Daughters Of Heaven is the only play I’ve been to at Court where the audience was silent moving out to the foyer for interval.” McColl decided to present the murder realistically as “the audience needed to experience the reality that somebody died - awfully.” Accordingly, the murder occurred downstage; the actor playing Honora had blood bags concealed around her head and burst these with her hands while apparently protecting herself from blows from an imitation brick in a stocking. The blood stayed on the stage throughout Act Two, and was highlighted by light from underneath the perspex floor, signifying that Juliet’s and Pauline’s relationship is forever coloured by their violence and Honora’s death. The same message is evident in the colour photo, of the actors playing Juliet and Pauline clasping hands while covered in blood, which accompanied Brett Riley’s review of the Court production in the Listener & TV Times. 3 Inevitably, given

1Interview with Elric Hooper, 28 October 1992.

2Interview with Colin McColl, 30 November 1992.

3Listener & TV Times (9 December 1991): 44.
its historical basis, *Daughters Of Heaven* associates transgression of the customary female gender role with violence, and exposes the myth of women as essentially nurturing and unaggressive.

*Daughters Of Heaven’s* inherent challenge to masculinist precepts was reinforced at the end of all three productions. At the end of the Court production, Pauline broke down after Bridget told her that Juliet had stated that “[e]verything is finished. Do not try to find me” (93). After Bridget left the stage, leaving the two girls separately lit on either side of the stage, Pauline heard Juliet’s voice, “[w]e worship the power of these lovely two / with an adoring love known to so few” and responded, “[…]is indeed a miracle one must feel / that two such heavenly creatures are real” (93). After Bridget finally left the stage in the Downstage production the girls paced their cells and threw their chairs off the stage. They then moved down to what was defined as ‘their’ area of the stage; the last image of the drama was one reaching out to touch the other as the lights went out.¹ In Warrington’s production, the girls’ psychic connection was signified aurally as, although physically separated and highlighted by two spotlights, they spoke their four line poem in unison. Despite the efforts and effects of society, personified by Bridget, Pauline and Juliet remain psychically connected, as signified by their telepathic communication or connection on stage.

Juliet’s and Pauline’s story is unique, but *Daughters Of Heaven*’s exposure of the role social institutions play in attempting to separate them, both before and after the murder and after their prison

¹Tony Rabbit’s set was raked and covered with an oversized woman’s coat (the coat Honora was wearing when she was murdered). The fur around the collar defined an area downstage that was used for all of Juliet’s and Pauline’s interaction (interview with Colin McColl, 30 November 1992).
terms, shows the power society has to define what is acceptable behaviour for females. However, although Daughters Of Heaven represents the 1950s the play is of the 1990s. Unlike Downstage's 1991 production of Foreskin's Lament, Daughters Of Heaven is not a representation of a historical past, written at the time it examines. Colin McColl believes that Foreskin's Lament should be produced every five years to keep New Zealanders reminded of the past and to consider the present and future in the light of the past.¹ Michel de Certeau believes that the writing of history possesses a symbolizing function; it allows a society to situate itself by giving itself a past through language, and thus opens to the present a space of its own. 'To mark' a past is to make a place for the dead, but also to redistribute the space of possibility, to determine negatively what must be done, and consequently to use the narrativity that buries the dead as a way of establishing a place for the living. (De Certeau 99)

Although it is unlikely that Pauline and Juliet are dead, their story is firmly situated in the past. The present resurgence of interest in their story is not confined to the stage: Julie Glamuzina's and Alison Laurie's Parker & Hulme: A Lesbian View was published in 1991 and New Zealand film maker Peter Jackson will shoot Heavenly Creatures in Christchurch in 1993. Both Daughters Of Heaven and Heavenly Creatures are or will be fictionalized accounts of the 1950s relationships and events, but both are re-presenting history; neither Forster nor Jackson change the characters' names to indicate that theirs is a fictional rather than a historical account.² Clearly, the social conditions of the early 1990s allow a wider examination of the

¹Interview with Colin McColl, 30 November 1992.

²The casting of Pauline and Juliet in the Court's and Downstage's productions, and of Pauline in Warrington's production, meant that the actors playing those roles bore a marked physical resemblance to the historical Pauline and Juliet.
Parker Hulme case than the lurid sensationalism and the rigid categorization of the past, an examination which is relevant to women living in the early 1990s.

As discussed in the earlier part of this chapter, Moira is a very limited representation of a woman: she meets the only other woman in Foreskin's Lament only briefly and within their male partners' purview and social milieu. Although Juliet's and Pauline's joyful, reciprocal and enriching connection with each other, nature and spirituality is overshadowed by the tragedy of the murder of Honora, there is also tragedy inherent in their physical separation by 1950s social institutions. The historical contextualizing of these institutions forty years later has the implication that, should these two young women have lived in the early 1990s, then the outcome of their relationship could or would have been different, and would not be forever coloured by their violence and the death of Honora. Forster, like Churchill, "creates a space for dialogue and change outside the theater [sic] as well as in it" (Merrill 89). Daughters Of Heaven allows the historical Pauline and Juliet to speak to contemporary society for connection between women, particularly as each production finally emphasised that, once Juliet and Pauline had forged a connection, it could not be ultimately broken by society:

[Writing [or performance] is a tomb in the double sense of the word in that, in the very same text, it both honours and eliminates... taking the dead or the past back to a symbolic place connected to the labour aimed at creating in the present a place (past or future) to be filled, a 'something that must be done.'... Historiography uses death in order to articulate a law (of the present). (De Certeau 99)
The 'law of the present' that Daughters Of Heaven clearly articulates is the validity of women's connection and reality(ies), a law which is evident in present day performances of Ladies' Night.
2. Regenerating Gender.
   i) Ladies' Night.

Silence gives the proper grace to women. Sophocles, Ajax.

[All together, they have become the heart and muscles and mind of something perilous and new, something strange and growing and great. Together, all together, they are the instruments of change. Keri Hulme, the bone people.


Wesley’s Methodist mother believes her son is "doing Christian work, giving happiness to lonely ladies" (50) in his job as a male stripper; his intention is to make "[s]even hundred bucks a week, in the hand" (58). In other words, different perceptions of the same event are reliant upon the subject position of the perceiver. In a society in which gender is in a state of flux, a play which regenerates gender is particularly open to a variety of interpretation and response. On a surface level Ladies' Night appears to be a glorified strip show which New Zealand men, who usually do not attend performances, apparently have no objection to their wives, partners and girlfriends attending. But a close analysis of the performance situation reveals that the play can transcend strip show dynamics and is in fact subversive of the prevailing social ethos in gathering women together, affirming women's reality and temporarily liberating
women from the constraints of the masculinist world in which they live. The play also operates as a socially sanctioned display of male bodies, which appeals to both women and homosexual men. It is unlikely that homosexual or heterosexual men would be aware of the validation of women's reality offered by Ladies' Night, and women themselves seem split into those who enjoyed the whole performance and those who went only for the strip finale and thought that the rest of the play was "boring." Thus, Ladies' Night offers a variety of readings, the selection from which is dependent upon the subject position of the perceiver.

Mark Amery wonders "whether [Ladies' Night is] really theatre or a legitimised strip show" (Amery 16). Strip shows are often perceived as sleazy and unrespectable: many women who would not go to a strip club will attend the theatre. As the semiotician Marvin Carlson makes clear, "the theatre, beyond its basic function of providing a space for a public to watch a performance, will provide many additional connotative meanings to the culture of which it is a part" (Carlson 43). Carlson considers both architectural and urban semiotics, citing "the city as a 'text' created by human beings in space, spoken by and speaking to those who inhabit it, move through it, and observe it"; he speaks of the roles of individual units, such as theatres, within such a text (Carlson 47). Mainstream theatres in New Zealand signify respectability, legitimacy and culture. The Court Theatre, for example, is situated in the Arts Centre which is in close proximity to the Canterbury Museum, Robert McDougall Art Gallery, botanic gardens and the centre of the city. The Arts Centre's Victorian neo-Gothic architecture and historical association with the University of Canterbury lend respectability and validity to Court's
productions. Thus, even if *Ladies' Night* is considered in the minds of its patrons to be a strip revue, its presentation in mainstream theatres overcomes social inhibitions about attending such an event.

The objectification of men inherent in male strip revues is addressed in the text: Norman says, "those women out there should be thinking of us as mindless objects" (34). Craig's description of Wesley as a "brown bombshell" overtly reverses the usual male gaze at objectified women (32). The characters themselves are concerned about being objectified: Wesley states, "it's fucking degrading... we're no better than prostitutes" (71-73), and Norman says, "[w]e all feel exploited" (72). The men's unease is negated within the play when Glenda points out that they are stripping by their own choice: "[n]o one forced you to come along tonight and take your clothes off" (73). The evident alternative option of "the dole", which would provide for the men's needs, illustrates that they are not forced to strip by financial circumstances (7). On another level, neither the actors nor the theatre audience have been coerced into being at the performance; the "entertainment" takes place by mutual consent (74). In the context of the theatrical performance, the actors are playing male strippers and the audience assumes the role of a strip show audience: this theatrical reflexivity further distances the action from the usual strip show dynamics. Thus, *Ladies' Night* goes beyond a reversal which simply reinforces the dominant system of aligning sexual difference with a subject/object dichotomy and reverses the unequal power relationships between men and women. The play's strip finale is subversive on two counts. Firstly, the gender reversal of male stripping for a female gaze reveals that the usual male subject/female object dichotomy is socially constructed and mutable, and secondly, *Ladies' Night*'s subject/subject dynamic liberates
sexuality into an erotic rather than a political arena. Accordingly, co-writer Stephen Sinclair reports that "[w]omen who have seen the show have told us they find it more enjoyable than an actual 'straight strip' because they actually get to know the people inside."¹

Many, many New Zealand women have found Ladies' Night enjoyable; ticket sales have broken the box office record previously set in the theatre by the phenomenally successful Foreskin's Lament.² Just as Foreskin's Lament's success relied upon its expression of the social and cultural situation peculiar to New Zealand in the early 1980s, Ladies' Night's success also seems to rely upon a particular social climate. It is impossible to generalise about the subject position of the huge cross section of women comprising the audiences; however, while discussing Ladies' Night it is necessary to consider that most if not all women are limited and devalued by masculinism, that gender roles and the relationship between the sexes are in a state of flux in New Zealand, and that many women have different perceptions and assumptions than those of the prevailing ethos in which they live. This alternative reality is almost always denied and/or negated by the prevailing social ethos and organisation. In Ladies A Plate: Change and Continuity in the Lives of New Zealand Women, Julie Park reports that "[t]he experiences and feelings related to the researchers by many women would support Anne Wilson Schael's thesis, expressed in Women's Reality (1981), that women


²By the end of 1992, 136,462 tickets had been sold for Ladies' Night, compared to 93,393 tickets for Foreskin's Lament (Playmarket). One woman attended the Fortune Theatre's production of Ladies' Night eight times and was given a discounted ticket price towards the end of the season (interview with Campbell Thomas, 1 February 1993).
know, but are not always aware that they experience living in a culture but are not of it" (Park 77). Usually women do not share private experience which does not coincide with the dominant social perception of how they or their lives should be. Such communication is precluded by the myth of femininity and by the organisation of New Zealand society which generally divides women. Attending Ladies' Night offers women a unique socially sanctioned opportunity to gather together in large numbers.

Once women are together in a predominantly female group they are liberated from the usual male domination of discourse. Dale Spender explains that women's relative 'silence' plays a large part in enabling male domination of society:

[m]ales, in the patriarchal order, are accorded 'superiority' by virtue of their sex; they have this 'superiority' consistently confirmed in interaction with females who abdicate in favour of males by restricting their own opportunities for expression, by deferring to male interests and definitions, and by concentrating on supporting male efforts. (Spender 101)

New Zealand women (and men) may or may not be consciously aware of this male domination of discourse, however the absence of men does have an effect on women's vocal expression: Stephen Sinclair reports that "[t]he veto on males in the audience [of 'ladies only' nights in strip clubs] makes women customers less inhibited" and is strictly enforced. Audiences for Ladies' Night usually comprise at least 80% women. Women know that they are

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1 Park's Ladies A Plate: Change & Continuity in the Lives of New Zealand Women is based on detailed research conducted with 2000 women between 1985 and 1988.

2 McCarten and Sinclair had to get special permission to attend such a night during their research (Goodman 35).
surrounded by women; most attend with groups of female friends or colleagues; for example, the Court Theatre’s production of Ladies’ Night attracted large parties of women from offices and factories, plus many groups of young women aged between about fourteen and twenty who often attended more than one performance.¹ In the Court’s production bright lights flashed at the audience pre-show and during scene changes. While this obviously diverted attention from the scene changes, it also highlighted the predominantly female audience to individual audience members. Kathy Hansen reports that these predominantly female audiences were significantly more vocally expressive than Saturday night audiences which mostly comprised heterosexual couples. Stan Wolfmann’s statement agrees with Hansen’s observation; "[w]eek-night audiences . . . tend[ed] to be the most volatile, with large groups of women attending together - the girls’ night out. On Saturday night, with an audience of mostly couples, it [was] more subdued".² Some women report enjoying intimidating the infrequent men in the audience through vociferous reaction to the male strippers, not necessarily through an implied comparison of the male patron’s bodies to those on stage, but by taking up aural space, usually reserved for male vocal expression. Such vocal expression is a political action: Hélène Cixous believes that "[i]t is by taking up the challenge of speech which has been governed by the phallus, that women will confirm women in a place other than that which is reserved in and by the symbolic, that is in a

¹Interview with Elric Hooper, 28 October 1992, and conversation with Grant Robertson, who was the lighting operator for that production.

place other than silence. Women should break out of the snare of silence" (Cixous 251). They do; during performances of Ladies' Night, which for many New Zealand women allows a unique opportunity to experience and express collective female power in vocal expression: "the exuberance of a typical Ladies' Night audience (foot stomping, ya-hooing, whistling and cries of 'Get ya gears off' were trademarks) helped get it switched to the main [Mercury] theatre."¹ Hence, while it may appear that women's strong vocal reaction to the stripping finale is in appreciation of male bodies, it is also an expression of female power found in unity and the removal of male domination of discourse.²

The transgression of customary gender roles extends from the audience to the stage. David Bishop states in his review, "[f]ive good keen blokes fulfil the Cinderella role, changing from stumbling unemployable individuals to a polished male strip tease troupe."³ Bishop's point can be developed further into reading Ladies' Night as a kind of modern feminist reversal of Cinderella, offering a similar fairy tale wish fulfilment for women in its subversion of customary gender roles and relationship between the sexes. As the play states, women have a desire for more than "flabby husbands and boyfriends parked in front of the telly" (81), and "something in a man other than


²Of course, this experience of female vocal expression is available in 'ladies only' nights at strip clubs, for those women who do feel comfortable attending strip clubs. Erin Kennedy observes that these women's vocal expression breaks the expectations of the customary female gender role: "[s]urely the raucous laughter which greets the warning can't be coming from these nice young ladies... no wonder the doormen look edgy" (Erin Kennedy, It's a Ladies' Night Out. Dominion Sunday Times, November 8 1992 21.).

old socks and a bald head rising above a newspaper" (74). The first scene of Ladies’ Night presents similarly limited males with Grahame, Norman, Wesley and Craig: when the men decide to become male strippers they also begin their journey to becoming men from whom Moira could get "[n]ormality, warmth, empathy, [and] a little communication of interests, ideas" (McGee 68), and who "recognize that [women] exist" (Geary 36). It is a long journey; initially the men are totally ignorant of women's point of view. After they pool their 'knowledge' of women's sexual fantasies Gavin concludes that "the ideal turn-on for a woman, then, is a bass guitar playing monk with a degree in medicine and a Diner's Club card" (18). The next line, a stage direction, states "THEY ALL NOD IN AGREEMENT" (18). The general lack of New Zealand men’s understanding of women’s sexuality is also emphasised when Gavin, in his feminine persona, is having a "heart to heart" with the audience, "just us girls":


[But it does amaze me how many men today still don't know what, you know, works for us. They think erotica is doing it with their boots off! I think it's terrible: you've got to account for slow learners, but two million years! (79)]

But the men do learn about and acknowledge women's point of view for, as Glenda later points out to them, "we're here to fulfil women's fantasies, not yours" (42); Gavin later comments, "I must say, it's been a revelation to find out what things women get excited about" (51). Wesley's research into women's reality goes further; he is familiar with pivotal feminist texts: "Marilyn French wrote The Woman's [sic] Room. De Beauvoir [sic] wrote The Second Sex" (53). Ladies' Night acknowledges and expresses that women can feel, think and believe in ways other than the prevailing masculinist social ethos.
The men develop themselves as well as their understanding of women. Act Two opens in a lounge bar with the men "DRINKING TOP SHELF DRINKS" (49), in contrast to the "beer" from the opening of the first act (1). They are now concerned about their appearance; Wesley has bought himself a $500 suit, BARRY IS WEARING "SHARP DESIGNER CLOTHES. CRAIG IS DRESSED IN A WELL CUT THREE PIECE PIN STRIPE SUIT" and Norman has had a perm (49). As Norman points out, the men have changed in more than just their appearance:

I was thinking the other night, back stage, just how much we've all got out of this. Me especially. Thinking back to how, y'know, I was a couple of months ago, how much we've all improved ourselves. I mean, Craig, you used to be thrown out of bars and always having money troubles. Now you're a successful businessman. And Barry, you used to be this real bloke with this big thing about bass guitars, and now you're an open flexible guy. And you Wes, you've been doing really well with your studies. You've developed yourself, you really have. That goes for you too Gavin. All of us. Look at me, I don't hardly stutter any more. I've grown more confident. (57)

Later Norman shows emotion, "NORMAN BREAKS INTO SOBS, HUGS GAVIN" (68), and Barry is upset by Denise leaving him, showing implicitly that he does genuinely care for her: "[s]he's really got you strung out, hasn't she" (69). This acknowledgement or evidence of feelings transcends the denial of emotion evident in the great majority of New Zealand men (Marriot 14, McMaster & Swain 73, Smith 10); as Foreskin points out, New Zealand men "were taught not to cry a vale of tears ago" (McGee 93). Women's desire for emotionally and psychologically mature men is reflected in Barry's description of his estranged wife's new lover: "[s]he's moved in with this guy. She's not sure yet that she loves him, but he's open, intelligent . . . and wonderful. He talks to her about things I never
did, and lets her be herself" (76). Denise does not mind that her lover is twenty years older than her and nearly bald; it is how he treats her that is important. Once Barry realises this, from apparently actually listening to Denise's point of view, there seems to be a possibility of reconciliation between him and Denise: "[j]ust talking to her, I couldn't feel angry any more. . . . We're gunna see each other again" (76). The other men also realise and acknowledge than women need to be treated decently. Wesley takes Craig to task for treating women badly: "[y]ou've got a problem, and you should think about looking at it, but I don't suppose you ever will. You treat women like shit, like you've got to prove something" (66). But Craig does reform his attitude and says to Norman, "[l]ook I'm awfully sorry man. I feel very bad about what happened, y'know with Zowie" (77). Thus, by the end of the dramatic action the male characters have variously developed into faithful, groomed, educated, considerate and compassionate men, who are consciously aware of and trying to fulfil women's desires and expectations.\footnote{After conversing with many women who have attended Ladies' Night, it is apparent that individual members of the audience identify more with one character, and that this is probably due to each woman's particular frame of reference. Richard Finn, director of the Fortune Theatre production, confirms that "towards the end of the season there seemed to be different fan clubs for different characters" (interview with Richard Finn, 1 February 1993).}

As if to remind the audience of the reality of the average New Zealand male, Grahame acts as a reference point to highlight the other characters' development. When the men gather at Craig's house for their first practice session Grahame jeers at what he considers to be their effeminate behaviour and leaves, explicitly refusing to be part of the revue and implicitly denying the need to accommodate women's reality into the male viewpoint: "[t]his is real sicko territory boys. Real fucken weird" (21). Neither we, nor the
other men see him again until he meets them by accident in the lounge bar in Act Two; he is drunk, vulgar and still in the limited 'real bloke' mould. From Graham's point of view the others have changed for the worse: "[y]ou used to be a good bloke. Not now. The hell with you ponsy bastards" (58). However, Graham's unattractive appearance and behaviour only emphasise the other men's positive development: "I gotta go and squeeze a Maltese. . . . GRAHAME BELCHES. . . . Whaddaya call a constipated Samoan? (PAUSE) Fella fulla faeces! Ha ha ha! . . . GRAHAME (LEERING AT NORMAN) PIG'S ARSE!! . . . GRAHAME FLAKES OUT " (52-61). Graham's attitude is reflected in his language. Although the other men do swear occasionally, Graham swears consistently: “[t]he bastards” (1,2), “Fuck off Gavin! . . . Fark orff! Fark orff!” (4), “Oh Christ” (8), “bullshit” (9), “Fuck off. . . . real fucken weird” (21), “Well fuck me! . . . Well fuck me” (52), “Touchy bastard. . . . Jesus” (55), “F-f-f-fuck off? I'll f-f-f-fuck off, in my own fucking time! . . . The hell with you ponsy bastards. . . . You’ve fucked it for yourselves!” (58). His choice of expression further illustrates Don MacKenzie's point in relation to Foreskin's Lament: violent language is "another way of expressing the violence, brutal and desensitising, of our relations with others."1 In the text Graham makes his final exit well before the end of the play, further signifying the undesirability of his behaviour and attitudes by his absence.

While the other men develop beyond the customary gender role that Graham represents, Gavin’s assumption of a feminine persona further destabilizes predominant social perceptions about gender.

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On a cultural level, cross dressing may be understood as a mode of performance in which - through play on a disjunction between clothes and body - the socially constructed nature of sexual difference is foregrounded and even subjected to comment: what appears natural, then, reveals itself as artifice. (Kuhn 49)

The association of femininity with a man, inherent in male cross dressed comedians, can serve to reduce the threat of male homosexuality to masculinism; however, Ladies' Night audiences are predominantly female and this allows a different dynamic. The complicity between Gavin and the female audience is established at the beginning of the play when he points out the limitations of the men's lifestyle and attitudes: ”[v]iolence is so primitive” (1), ”[c]an’t say as there’s been a lot of development in our social habits” (3), and ”[h]ere we are, twenty five, twenty six, and we’re still scrapping with other dorks in public bars” (4). His observations align him with many women's point of view, as does his later feminine persona: ”it’s actually quite interesting doing this routine, playing the part of being one of the girls. I get the feeling they actually start believing, as the night goes on, that I’m one of them” (68). Indeed Gavin's (apparent) choice to dress as a woman for the Raging Rhinos strip revue indicates his acceptance of femininity as positive: Craig does not dress as a woman when he compères the show. While dressed as a woman Gavin incites, supports and channels the female unity and subversive complicity of the audience.

Gavin does not parody women for laughs from the others while backstage with the other men but, rather, uses his female appearance to intimidate Barry: ”[k]eep those cheeks clenched sweety ... Felt a teeny bit of stubble there. Gotta watch that Barry” (62). It is likely that on one level female audiences' enjoyment of Ladies' Night
is due to a kind of revenge from gender role reversal, where women, forever objectified, judged and constantly grooming their bodies to fit masculinist precepts of ‘femininity’, have the situation reversed in the drama. Gavin, as a 'woman' judges Barry's body and finds it lacking. Stubble is one example of the tyranny of the social definition of femininity: men (except apparently male strippers) are allowed to be hairy, while women are not.\textsuperscript{1} Gavin's warning about Barry's need to remove his "stubble" (62), and his comment to a "MAN IN AUDIENCE:) Having a bit of trouble with facial hair darling? I can recommend a hormone treatment that does wonders" (79), allows individual women publicly to acknowledge and share their private experience of removing 'unfeminine' hair. A similar dynamic occurs during performances of Pack Of Girls when Hazel describes the reality of childbirth to DPB saying, "[p]ut your fingers in your mouth . . . . Pull til it hurts. . . . Now pull your lips over your head" (Geary 21), and when Trish acknowledges her incontinence as a result of childbirth: "[i]t's just that since I had Ben when I jump sometimes I . . . ." (Geary 27). This public expression of women’s usually very private experience destabilizes the social myths of childbirth and femininity.

While assuming his feminine persona Gavin himself also experiences and expresses on stage what it is like to be a woman in a masculinist society. When Barry says to Gavin, "[l]isten tits, when I come to you asking if I can wear one of your dresses, then you'll

\textsuperscript{1}The now disbanded Christchurch feminist comedy revue company Four Frock Off featured a skit which had female audience members hysterical during the satirical depiction of the removal of body hair, culminating in the use of various power tools. Some of the reaction was simply due to the public display of what is an intensely private affair: hardly anyone ever talks about it.
know I’m in trouble” (69), he is attempting to objectify and thus reduce Gavin and his female persona:

BARRY ... Feel nice does it? (HE BATS GAVIN'S RUBBER TITS WITH HIS HAND) To have a pair of your own? (HE BATS THEM AGAIN) Eh? (BATS THEM HARDER) Eh?

GAVIN SUDDENLY GRABS [BARRY]’S WRIST
GAVIN Hey mister! Keep your hands to yourself!

BARRY BACKS OFF. GAVIN ADJUSTS HIS CHEST.
GAVIN Treat her like that did you?
BARRY Eh?
GAVIN Smack her round a little bit? (69)¹

Many, many New Zealand women are subject to male violence.² But Gavin refuses to be a victim; he also refuses to be silenced by Bernie when trying to get some justice for Barry’s violence towards his ‘female’ self:

GAVIN (TO CRAIG, POINTING TO BARRY) Craig, what are you going to do about this guy?

BERNIE I’m talking. Siddown.

GAVIN (IGNORING BERNIE) I’ve had nil support . . .

BERNIE Hey - Rita Hayworth, do you wanna shut it! . . .

¹Later, Gavin further validates women and their bodies: “[w]hat a puzzling organ the mammary gland is. I’m not certain whether we men are better off without them, or whether we’re missing out on something tremendous” (77).

²“It is estimated that the police are called to more than two incidents of family violence for every hour of the day and night in New Zealand. Even then, Men For Non-Violence estimate that only two per cent of assaults in the home are reported to the police. The Roper Report concluded that 80 per cent of the violence in New Zealand is in the home - most of it by males and most of it undetected” (Stirling SB 16). In 1987, more than 3000 women and 5000 children left their homes to seek shelter in women’s refuges” (Newbold 80); this increased to 19,056 in 1991 (Stirling SB 16). It is estimated that one out of seven women who is living with a man has been assaulted by him (Nimmo 39).
While the action of a ‘woman’ punching Bernie was greeted with screams of laughter from the Court audience, supposedly due to cross-gender behaviour, the fact remains that Gavin, as a ‘woman’ fights back. Significantly, Gavin immediately draws attention to his female appearance: "GAVIN STRAIGHTENS THE CREASES IN HIS DRESS, CHECKS THE ZIPPER AT THE BACK AND PULLS HIS LONG EVENING GLOVES UP THE FULL LENGTH OF HIS ARMS" (70). While the immediately apparent motivation for Gavin’s attack on Bernie is the jibe about Gavin being “queer”, the dynamics go beyond this (70). Bernie labels Gavin “queer” because of his feminine appearance: Bernie’s supposition is that anything in men which is other than ‘masculine’ is homosexual. In this way femininity and homosexuality are associated, despised and decried. Therefore Gavin’s retaliation towards Bernie can be interpreted as an act of female resistance against masculinism: for the right of women to speak, the right not to have femininity despised, and the right to live without male violence. Gavin’s feminine persona and dress allow the audience a vicarious identification with and satisfaction from Gavin’s actions.

Dress, or rather undress, is a site of further subversion of masculinist precepts in Ladies’ Night. From one point of view the covering of the men’s penises by G strings during the strip sequence only inscribes their bodies with phallic power, by both drawing attention to the penis and concealing it from the female gaze, thus underlining male possession of the penis/phallus and women’s lack
of it. Initially the men believe that "it's the mystique of the penis which is all important" and that, "[w]hen you get down to it, the old poti is what it's all about" (42). However, once again Ladies' Night presents women's reality as alternative to masculinist assumptions, confirming de Beauvoir's view that Freud "understood nothing of what women want." Glenda is engaged by the men to instruct them in stripping for women. She states quite plainly that women "don't want to see any dick. Despite all the literature on the subject women are far more stimulated visually by other areas. . . . [W]e're here to fulfil women's fantasies not your's. . . . Leave your adolescent penis envy . . . ideas under your bed" (42, my underlining). Glenda's statement depoliticizes male possession of the penis and emphasises women's erotic enjoyment of men's physicality. Richard Finn chose to include 'phallic' symbols in the stripping finale of the Fortune Theatre's production to increase the "fun" of the performance: one of the characters adopted a fireman persona for his strip and utilised a large hose to pump dry ice around the stage; another character pulled a gun out of his G string and pretended to fire it at the audience after divesting himself of his James Bond outfit. These 'phallic' symbols emphasized the men's sexuality, rather than reinforcing male power, as for example the phallic nature of the Robert Jones Building on the corner of Armagh and Colombo Streets in Christchurch is no doubt intended to do.3

1[T]he phallus is a set of meanings conferred upon the penis. . . . Castration is not having the (symbolic) phallus. Castration is not a real 'lack', but a meaning conferred upon the genitals of a woman. . . . The presence or absence of the phallus comes from the differences between the two sexual statuses, 'man' and 'woman' (Rubin 189-91).

"Ladies' Night"s subversion of phallocentrism is also well illustrated in the rejection of Gavin's Roman emperor act. The society of Rome was strictly phallocentric, and Gavin's portrayal of "Nero himself" embodies this ethos (34). The female audience's rejection of Gavin's Roman Emperor act symbolises women's rejection of associated male attitudes: "[h]e's trying to coax some of them into taking his toga off, but they aren't going for it. They're backing away, they're helping each other. They're well and truly turned off" (34). Later, Glenda, as the representative of women's point of view, decides that Gavin should "hang up [his] toga for good" (45). Foregrounding this decision is the connection of female strip club audiences to Cleopatra: "[a]ll male strip. Ladies only, tonight at Cleopatra's" (7). As Michael Scott points out with regard to Shakespeare's _Antony & Cleopatra_, "Rome is Cleopatra's enemy... Rome is the cold world where there are tangible boundaries and regulations ready to encroach on the paradise of love" (Scott 13). In New Zealand in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the tangible boundaries and regulations ready to encroach on the paradise of love between men and women are the social injunctions of the customary male gender role. These social injunctions result in most men seeing relationships with women as a site for the quest for domination, power and status as proof of their masculinity (McMaster & Swain 73), and thus being unable or unwilling to recognise, acknowledge and accept women's reality within their relationships. The success of "Ladies' Night" to a great extent is due to both the acknowledgment and expression of women's reality and the presentation of men who reject masculinism in their quest to appeal to women's real desires. This gender role transgression liberates the stripping finale into an

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3Interview with Richard Finn, 1 February 1993.
erotic rather than a political arena, reinforcing Wolf's view that the prevalent subject/object dichotomy can be transcended: "there is no 'rock called gender'... It can change so that real mutuality - an equal gaze, equal vulnerability, equal desire - brings heterosexual men and women together" (Wolf 152).

At the opening of Foreskin's Lament the "[c]lothes... hanging along the walls" and "shoes [and] socks stowed under" forms indicate that the men will take on a new social role before they leave the dressing shed (21). The Kaitaki rugby team's stripping and dressing in front of the audience and the (very near) nakedness of the men in Ladies' Night and their changes in clothing signify the possibility of the assumption of different male identities and attendant attitudes, expectations and behaviour.\(^1\) Suzanne Moore observes that "[e]xplicitly sexual representations of men have always troubled dominant ideas of masculinity, because male power is so tied to looking rather than to being looked at" (Moore 53). Ladies' Night ends with male characters stripped; their active acknowledgement of and engagement with the women in the audience while in this state indicates a progression from Foreskin's Lament's almost exclusive preoccupation by men with masculinity. In response to the success of Ladies' Night, 1993 will see Raging On, the sequel which looks at Norman, Wesley, Barry, Craig and Gavin four years later and focuses on their relationships with wives, partners and lovers. Significantly, the boorish Grahame will not appear in Raging On. In the strength of their patronage of Ladies' Night, New Zealand women have created a market for theatre which allows an opportunity both for the

\(^1\)In his review of Downstage's 1991 production of Foreskin's Lament, Denis Welch observes that, "the two most popular plays of the eighties - Foreskin and Ladies' Night - both feature lashings of male nudity. Someone, surely, will write a thesis on this one day." Listener & TV Times (24 June 1991): 55.
realisation of their desire for emotionally, socially, psychologically and sexually desirable men, and for the sharing and support of an expression of women's reality with other women.

Alternately, as Moore discusses in 'Here's Looking At You Kid!', the male body "coded, in Mulvey's apt but awkward phrase, for its 'to-be-looked-at-ness'" is available to both women and men (Moore 46). She discusses the 1986 Levis 501s advertising campaign in which Nick Kamen stripped to his underwear in a laundrette, and which was overtly erotic to heterosexual women (Moore 46). But "United States market research show[s that] three out of four gay men prefer Levis jeans," and that in 1992 the average gay household income was "a staggering US$23 000 more than the national average." It seems very likely that the Levis advertisement featuring Kamen was deliberately tailored to appeal to both heterosexual women and homosexual men, revealing the possibility of a multiplicity of gazes. The similar possibility of a variety of interpretations of exposed bodies on stage is evident in Downstage's production of Daughters Of Heaven. In some scenes Juliet and Pauline were stripped to the waist which means that their physical and sexual pleasure in each others' bodies was manifest on stage rather than glossed over or ignored. But, this display of women's breasts also allowed a male gaze at objectified female bodies: "is it simply not possible to create eroticism differently from the implications of that constructed under 'the male gaze'. Perhaps not" (Dale DW 23)


The undefended nature of exposed bodies on stage extends to performances of Ladies' Night: the social validation of male stripping by the production of this play in theatres applies to men as well as women. Early in Ladies' Night homosexual men are acknowledged and affirmed by Gavin's condemnation of Barry's anti-gay joke:

BARRY Hey, I've got another one. Did you hear about the homo who got his vaseline confused with a jar of putty?

GAVIN For heaven's sake Barry, lay off it.

BARRY His windowpanes fell out! Ha ha ha!

GAVIN Jesus.

BARRY Just because you're totally humourless.

GAVIN Humour doesn't come into it. (5)

A similar validation of homosexual men can be interpreted when Gavin punches Bernie after Bernie attempts to dismiss him by calling him "queer" (70). Of course, it is impossible to know how many of the men attending Ladies' Night are sexually attracted to other men, but it is apparent from conversation with friends that homosexual men did go to the Court's production.

This production was subtitled "The Ultimate Version" and heavily emphasised the spectacle of attractive male bodies\(^1\); publicity photographs in the newspapers show the actors body-building at a gym. The poster and flyer feature a fetishized male torso, as did displays in the foyer; the pre-show and bridging music was Drop Dead Fred's 'I'm Too Sexy For My Shirt.'\(^2\) The programme features large

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\(^1\)Court Theatre's poster, programme and flyer, 1991 production.

\(^2\)"Fetishism treats a part as if it were the whole ... sexual self" (Wolf 175).
colour photographs of the actors from the waist up and naked except for cuffs, collars and bow ties. In the early scenes, where the text determines that the men are ill-groomed and unconcerned with their appearance, Barry and Craig (Erik Thomson and Patrick Griffith) wore tightly fitting and flattering jeans and often stood with their backs to the audience in a poses which emphasised their posteriors. Other actors, without such attractive physical attributes, were not positioned on the stage in the same manner. The director, Elric Hooper, cut some of the text to allow more time for an extended strip finale; Brian McMillin’s set unfolded to allow the characters to use the whole auditorium during the strip finale, fulfilling the advertising promise that audiences “will never get closer.” Once stripped to their G strings, the men spent time posturing and moving on the stage, allowing, and perhaps inviting, a gay gaze as well as a female gaze.

In contrast, in Finn’s production at the Fortune Theatre the men left the stage very quickly after having stripped to their G-strings: Finn states, “I didn’t want any ‘groin shoving’ and concentrated on ‘teasing’ during the strip rather than flaunting bodies”. Difference in directors’ emphasis and interpretation is also evident in productions of Daughters Of Heaven. Lisa Warrington makes clear that her own female experience allows her insights into Juliet’s and Pauline’s relationship and world view that McColl and Hooper apparently are not aware of. She agrees that, because of socialisation, a female director can understand and interpret a text from a different perspective to that of male directors. For instance, the dominant concern of Warrington’s production was the passionate

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1Interview with Richard Finn, 1 February 1993.

2Interview with Lisa Warrington, 3 February 1993.
intensity that is typical of a certain stage of female adolescence and which is not sexual. Accordingly, Warrington cast much younger actors in the roles of Pauline and Juliet than Hooper and McColl did, which allowed a sincere representation of this passionate intensity and which corresponded more closely with the actual ages of the historical Pauline and Juliet. This does not mean to imply that there is any ‘right’ interpretation of a text, but rather that the gender and/or subject position of the director can largely influence the representation of gender and sexuality on the stage, just as the audience member’s subject position influences their reading of a performance.

The gap between the subject position of masculinist men and many women means that performances of Ladies’ Night, which are actually socially subversive, are not perceived as threatening to the dominant social ethos, due to the female audiences’ apparent focus on male bodies. But, as the endings of the three productions of Daughters Of Heaven show, once women have become connected and their reality(ies) validated by other women, this subversive female unity will not disappear. The performance dynamics of Ladies’ Night present at least as strong a challenge to the masculinist ethos as the women’s physical foray onto the rugby field in Pack Of Girls.
ii) Pack Of Girls.

Anatomy, like the bubonic plague, is history, not destiny. Phyllis Chesler.

In Foreskin’s Lament Moira asks Foreskin, “[c]an’t you compromise just once? Think of me?” before exiting from their relationship and from a play which is almost exclusively concerned with masculinity and rugby (McGee 80). Eleven years after Foreskin’s Lament was first staged, David Geary’s Pack Of Girls introduced Pam Hooper to New Zealand theatre audiences as a woman at the centre of a play concerned with rugby and its place in New Zealand culture. Like Moira, Pam has difficulties in her relationship with a rugby player, but rather than reject the rugby milieu, as Moira does, Pam tenaciously demands that her husband compromise and think of her, and she uses rugby as a means of forcing him to do so. As a result, Pack Of Girls becomes a sex war play before ending as a feminist love story which celebrates the possibility of a harmonious relationship between women, men and rugby. The play’s rugby framework includes a concern with camaraderie and egalitarianism, which validates women’s relationships with other women. Pack Of Girls also presents complex, autonomous female characters, who develop during the action, facing and resolving the kind of personal issues that face New Zealand women in the early 1990s. Thus, Pack Of Girls is not only concerned with the relationship between women, men and rugby, but is also a complex expression and exploration of New Zealand femininity.
The rugby milieu envelops Pam's and Tom's lives: at the opening of *Pack Of Girls* their bedroom is set within a "STYLIZED RUGBY FIELD". They are in bed and covered by a "GREEN AND WHITE" bedspread, the colours of which match those of Tom's "MANAWATU REP RUGBY JERSEY" in his photo on their wall, identifying both rugby and status with Tom, rather than with Pam, and signifying that Tom's involvement with rugby affects Pam and their marriage (1). Rugby has effectively divided the couple: as Foreskin points out in the earlier play "[b]ly the time [rugby players] get into the pit they're too shikkered and tired and knocked up to even think about giving someone else a bit of pleasure" (McGee 49). Accordingly, Tom's rugby injuries prevent him from being sexually intimate with his wife: "[n]ot the knee. . . . Not the lips . . . and look, sorry, the ears are cauliflowered" (1); on the previous evening Tom had "to save [his] energy for the big game tomorrow" (2). Geary immediately establishes that Tom's involvement with rugby precludes emotional as well as sexual intimacy between the Hoopers: Pam feels that she is "lucky to get a look in" with Tom (2). Her desire for more from their marriage is signified by her Mills and Boon romance: "THE COVER OF THE BOOK HAS A WINDSWEPT COLONIAL WOMAN LOOKING LONGINGLY FROM HER HOMESTEAD VERANDAH OUT TO AN EXOTIC JUNGLE" (3). The hero in Pam's book is out in the jungle and has "eyes [which] burn . . . with a dark mysterious passion" (34). In contrast, Tom closes his eyes, goes to sleep and "STARTS SNORING" when Pam is talking to him (5). While Tom wants to sleep, rather than listen to Pam, he will wake up in the early hours of the morning to watch the satellite

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game, thus establishing that he considers rugby to be far more important than his wife.

Pam is a "rugby widow" (36). The major tension in Pack Of Girls is created by her attempt to gain recognition and affirmation from Tom, and his resistance to what he perceives to be her encroachment on his rugby milieu and masculinity: Tom believes that rugby has "got nothing to do with sheilas" (44), echoing Tupper's declaration that, "[i]t's a man's game" (McGee 89). Tom is not deliberately obtuse in his inability to listen to and consider Pam, rather, he is a product of a social ethos which defines a man's identity, masculinity and status through involvement and ability with rugby, rather than through his relationship with his wife: "I've got to keep my place in the rep team Pam... You like having a husband in the reps, don't ya... if I can talk rugby with the cockies it gives me an edge over the other stock agents" (4). But while Tom's world of rugby and his associated beliefs and behaviour validate him, they also prevent him from desiring or participating in a reciprocal and mutually satisfying relationship with Pam:

TOM : (PAUSE) I don't understand you lately.
PAM : ... Tom, I want you to recognize that I exist.
TOM : It's pretty hard to ignore ya.
PAM : Hasn't stopped you so far. (36)

Pam's love for Tom and her perception of his lack of recognition and respect for her is manifest in her dream about playing in a test match between the All Blacks and the Welsh Barbarians. Both the Barbarians and the All Blacks wear masks which are a "GROTESQUE STYLIZATION OF TOM'S FACE" (8), signifying that Pam sees Tom as
both her opponent and as a potentially supportive partner. In the dream Pam manages to overcome the Barbarian Tom Hoopers to be congratulated by "[t]he All Blacks, Tom Hooper and Tom Hooper" (10); her subconscious tells her that there are barbaric aspects of the real Tom Hooper which must be overcome before she can feel "really strong and . . . loved . . . and sexy" within her marriage (32). The rest of the play follows the same format as the symbolic dream. Pam challenges Tom's unsympathetic beliefs and behaviour to finally achieve (grudging) affirmation and affection from him: "[y]ou had some skills and spirit, I guess. . . . PAM AND TOM EMBRACE AND KISS" (107-8).

Significantly, Pam's challenges to Tom take place in relation to rugby, the arena which defines his identity and masculinity, and in which, therefore, he is most vulnerable and defensive. Initially Pam retaliates against Tom's attitude and behaviour towards her by adjusting the alarm clock so that he misses most of the satellite game. Subsequently she places herself in Tom's rugby arena to claim his attention: she says to him, "I thought if I played rugby it might be something you did understand" (36). Pam's original motivation for starting the women's rugby team is "to get close to [Tom] again" (106); after talking to Suzie about women's rugby she says to Tom, "[i]f we can't beat you lot, we might as well join ya" (5). Originally she has no intention of playing rugby against her husband. Tom, however, has a different approach to Pam; he seems to see situations and relationships in terms of winning or losing rather than in terms of sharing or co-existing. Consequently, Tom feels threatened by the

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1 Interview with David Geary, 30 July 1992.

2 Anne Wilson Schaef theorises that in the White Male System, "relationships are conceived of as being either one-up or one-down. In other words, when two people
women playing rugby; this is indicated by his patronising manner towards the women at the training session: he “CRACKS UP AT THE SIGHT” of the women in their practice gear, and comments that the half size ball they are using is “suitable for halfwits” (38-9). His trick passes are designed to make them drop the ball so that he can jeer at their ability: “TOM DUMMIES TO LUCY AND TRICK PASSES TO PAM. PAM DROPS THE BALL. Butterfingers. . . . Think of it as a big egg. . . . Make that scrambled” (39-40). When Pam goes to tackle the tyre, Tom moves it so that she looks “pathetic” (42). Obviously he is not at the practice to coach and support the women, but rather to try and prove to them that they should not be playing rugby. When Tom is unable to dissuade the women from playing rugby, he decides to “coach . . . the oldtimers to make sure they cream” the women (45). Thus, by the end of Act One the oppositional stance between Tom and the women is firmly established.1

Tom’s combatant mentality is reflected in his speech, which often contains reference to war; he also habitually defines women as the enemy, both as the opposing team and as the opposite sex: “Alexander, the Great Conqueror” (38); “this is the enemy. Me, if you like” (42); “They are the enemy. . . . Here’s your chance for revenge. Get out there and kill them” (58-9); “No prisoners Evergreens” (67), and “They’re not women. They’re the enemy” (85). His motivation

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1The other men take the rugby game much less seriously than Tom does: “TOM: . . . They are the enemy. What are they? DOUG AND THE OFFSTAGE OLDTIMERS: (AMUSED BY THE ABSURDITY OF TOM’S ANALYSIS) The enemy” (58).
speech to the men’s team reveals his feeling that men and masculinity are generally threatened by women; sandwiched between his remarks showing apparent concern is a misogynist diatribe:

[th]ink hurt. Think damage. Think of every woman who’s ever done the dirty on ya. Your mothers, cutting your hair with some clapped clippers from the Rawleighs man rather than take you to the barber in town. Your sisters, teasing you about your pimply, pusy [sic], pox-ridden faces. Your wives, serving up cold meals; or worse, screwing around behind your back. That’s women for ya. Here’s your chance for revenge. Get out there and kill them... Breathe in... womenhate. (59)

From Tom’s point of view, the general threat women pose to male identity and masculinity is intensified by their encroachment on the previously male dominated domain of rugby:

I don’t know what the hell you lot think you’re up to... Rugby is tradition. It’s men giving it all. Like Carol’s grandfather. A floor cloth. What are ya? It’s got nothing to do with sheilas. When you pull on that jersey, lace up those boots, you follow in the footsteps of men like Hoppy Hopkinson... It’s discipline and spirit and winning and shit. It’s men like Whineray and Meads. (44)

Like Whineray and Meads, Tom is defined as successful by his ability to play rugby well. This success has previously given him status over other men and over all women: as Pam points out, netball “doesn’t rate” compared to rugby (36). Thus, the rugby game between the women and the men is both a physical and a symbolic event; the two teams are playing to win the game, but both Pam’s team and Tom also have other agendas.

The women decide to play against the Oldtimers to support Pam in her desire to “show... the men around here that we’re sick of standing on the sideline. That we [can] get out there and play the game better than them” (46). Thus, Pam’s motivation for playing
rugby has gone beyond wanting “to get close to [Tom] again” and developed into a confrontational stance (106). For Tom the game is a test of masculinity; a masculinity which defines itself by men being better than women: “TOM: (MUSTERING THE OLD TIMERS) If we lose no one in the clubrooms will want to know us. We’ll be drinking alone for the rest of our lives. Not only that, we’ll be drinking alone somewhere else. I want to see commitment, pride, winners. I want to see men” (89, my underlining). Tom’s and Pam’s personal agendas are thus expanded into a larger scenario.

Significantly, the couple captain their respective teams and their personal issues become public on the field. Like Moira in Foreskin’s Lament, Pam argues that the role of husband/lover is just as important as that of rugby player: “[y]ou might be a man on the field but you’re certainly not much chop around the house . . . or in bed, for that matter” (77). Pam’s public exposure of her feelings about her marriage may seem extreme but, like the dream, the rugby game is a condensed and symbolic event, a dramatic device which allows efficient expression of the play’s concerns. Like the ‘green world’ of the forest in many of Shakespeare’s plays, the rugby game and field function as a space and time outside of everyday life, in which issues are condensed and heightened and change is precipitated.

The overt spectacle of a rugby game on stage also draws the audience’s attention to theatre’s reflection and/or examination of society: on one level Pam and Tom are probably representative of thousands of rugby couples, in which the women feel undervalued and neglected in relation to their male partners’ commitment to

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1In Foreskin’s Lament Moira says to Foreskin, “[l]et’s just run - get away from this whole thing. . . . Can’t you compromise, just once? Think of me? . . . Me. As opposed to the imbecile Tupper, or the moronic Clean. Is that asking too much? (McGee 80).
rugby. In performance, Pack Of Girls invokes and capitalises on audiences’ own experience, especially when DPB and Tom incite the audience to divide into separate genders in their vocal support for the teams: “DPB ENCOURAGES THE SPECTATING WOMEN TO JOIN IN IN ENCOURAGING THE [WOMEN’S] TEAM . . . TOM CAN SIMILARLY FIRE UP THE MALE FRATERNITY” (69). However, despite this sex war framework, the game ends in a draw. Geary decided on this result to signify that neither team or gender is victorious over the other, but are equally important and valid. The drawn score also indicates that neither Pam nor Tom have lost anything from Pam’s involvement with rugby (89). Similarly, the battle imagery in the dialogue ceases once the game is over; the women’s relative success indicates that they have equal status to men and should be accommodated and affirmed, rather than ignored or fought against.

Tom finds this female success threatening, but Harry approves of the women’s achievement. In his role as referee Harry has literally to ensure that the rugby game is played fairly; on a more symbolic level he considers both women and men to be worthwhile, and does his best to facilitate equality and communication between the sexes. Harry acknowledges that the women play rugby well: “[g]reat game

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1Pack Of Girls was better received by audiences who were familiar with the rugby milieu expressed in the play (interview with David Geary, 30 July 1992).


3Battle imagery, other than that in Tom’s speech, occurs in the text, but finishes by page 87: the rugby game finishes at page 95. Pam has “COMBATANTS” in her dream (11); DPB says, “Pretty soon you’re going to be in the middle of . . . a war” (57-8) and “Carol you’re going great guns” (84); Pam says, “You and who’s army?” (78) and “stop fraternising with the enemy” (87), and “PAM AND TOM HAVE BEEN HAVING THEIR PRIVATE BATTLE ON ANOTHER PART OF THE ONSTAGE FIELD” (76).
I meant your wife. As for that bloody Carol, what a dark horse. Dress her up right and we’ll smuggle her into the seniors” (99). He also realises that it is to men’s advantage to involve women in rugby: “[t]hey’re the future. Put women off the game and they’ll put the kids off. Have your boy turning to league . . . basket bloody ball. We’ve got to include them to keep the game alive, and for the good of Kurinui” (100). The kindly Harry has another reason for his advice to Tom; his own divorce seems to have made him realise that wives need attention and love from their husbands and he says, “[s]he’s a strange beast marriage Tom. I wouldn’t want to see what happened to me and Noeline happen to you and Pam” (100). Harry leads Tom by example; he has his own relationship difficulty which he actively tries to resolve. He is attracted to Hazel and his attempts to court her illustrate his belief that men need women as well as rugby.

HARRY : . . . Come for a beer in the clubrooms later Hazel?

HAZEL : Quit sniffing around me you old dog. (16)

join HARRY APPROACHES HAZEL . . . Mind if I ya? Ta. (HARRY PULLS UP A CHAIR) Haze?

(HAZEL NODS AND HARRY POURS HER A DRINK) . . . (HARRY AND HAZEL HAVE ANOTHER DRINK). (105)

Thus, Pack Of Girls makes clear that it is not rugby per se which prevents mutually satisfying relationships between players and their partners, rather, the play demonstrates that the masculinist rugby ethos, adopted by men like Tom, has negative effects on their partners and relationships and that this can be changed.

Harry, the ‘referee’ on two levels, is pivotal in melding Tom’s masculinism and Pam’s aggressive feminism into a synthesis which
celebrates the possibility of a mutually rewarding relationship between men, women and rugby. This relationship is communicated through the curtain call: "THE CAST ASSEMBLE, IN CHARACTER, FOR A RUGBY PHOTO. . . . HARRY AND TOM ARE ASSISTANT COACHES" (109). Tom’s role as assistant coach shows his new support for Pam's move out of the domestic realm, and into a world she can share with him and where she can meet him as an equal, as the women’s success indicates.¹

Pack Of Girls also implies that a harmonious and positive relationship between men, women and rugby involves a redefinition of a rugby ethos which activates brutality and belligerent aggression: DPB illustrates the underside of the customary rugby ethos when she interrupts “TOM’S IMPASSIONED OUTBURST” about the great tradition of rugby to remind him of “Keith Murdoch [who was k]icked off the ’72 Welsh tour for punching a security guard in a hotel” (44). The incident when DPB incites the women to pretend to kill a chicken and drink its blood presents a satirical account of the brutal and barbaric mentality of some rugby players. When Pam questions DPB about the extremity of this incident, DPB comments, “[y]eah. That’s what’s wrong with men’s rugby. It’s all fire and death and shit. Women’s rugby will be different. We can use our running and passing skills in the true spirit of the game” (61). DPB’s comment is in striking contrast to Tupper’s team talk in Foreskin’s Lament:

if, on occasion the ball has got the odd bit of hair on it, or an ear or such-like, then we’ll give it the benefit of the doubt and kick shit out of it first and let the ref ask questions after . . . We’ve got to be absolutely uncompromising, sicken them

¹In an earlier draft, the Steinlager song, “Stand By Me”, plays while the curtain call ‘photo’ is being taken, signifying both the team’s new found female camaraderie, and Pam’s and Tom’s new commitment to each other.
in the first twenty minutes so that they don't want to play. Kick and rake anything within yards of the ball. (McGee 43)

Thus, Pack Of Girls not only dismisses traditional or customary gender roles which limit men, women and their relationships, but also argues for a return to the original concept of rugby as a physically satisfying sport which engenders real unity and mutual affirmation among players.

In the past, the true spirit of rugby involved egalitarianism and camaraderie among team members, but in Foreskin’s Lament Clean’s violent actions and jealous attitude emphasise the demise of the original rugby ideals. Clean is jealous of other team members and draws attention to their social and financial positions:

If easy palm. That's the way it goes in the high finance business, isn't it? All rake-offs, kick backs, under the table deals, a little more sand in the concrete, eh? . . . [G]o easy on poor old Mean. He might have to sell half his farm, then he'd only own a quarter of the bloody province. . . . [and s]ome of us never got the benefit of a university education. (McGee 30-32)

Foreskin’s Lament embodied and articulated many New Zealanders' deep unease with the rugby milieu in the early 1980s. In a way, Pack Of Girls redresses the negative perception of the rugby milieu generated by Foreskin’s Lament, with the later play’s emphasis on the development of camaraderie, egalitarianism and love for the game among the women replacing the dissension among team members and lack of commitment to the actual sport evident in Foreskin’s Lament.

Initially the women in Pack Of Girls are disparate and unconnected as a group. The differences between them are accentuated by their costumes at the first training session. Hazel
demonstrates her practical approach to life by wearing a “SWANDRI AND GUMBOOTS” (29). In contrast to Hazel, Lucy is very concerned about her appearance; she believes that “[f]ashion is a state of mind” (24). Her “HIGH-TECH JAZZERCIZE OUTFIT” emphasises that Trish’s track suit is old and too small, signifying that, unlike Lucy, Trish has not played sport for some years. Pam is dressed in “SOME OF TOM’S DISCARDED GEAR” illustrating her predominant concern with her husband (24), while Carol’s outfit indicates both her inherited aptitude for rugby and her initial status as the social misfit of the group: she is “DRESSED IN OLD STYLE RUGBY GEAR, COMPLETE WITH LACE UP COLLAR JERSEY AND VERY LONG SHORTS. EVERY TIME SOMEONE TOUCHES HER DUST FLIES OFF” (25).¹ Lucy’s and Trish’s mocking of the overweight Carol indicates that the differences in the women extend to personality conflicts:

LUCY: You’ll look great running around the field Carol.

TRISH: Men love chunky, spunky girls.

LUCY: With love handles (26).

Similarly, Hazel is dismissive of Lucy, calling her, “Mrs Done-Up-Like-A-Sore-Thumb” (50) and initially thinks that Pam is a “stuck up slag” (21). The women are also in different financial circumstances: Lucy and Des are exceedingly wealthy, owning “Willow Meadow Brook Estate” (29) and an “Alfa Romeo” (31). In comparison, Pam and Tom “own a few acres and the odd cow” (4) and DPB is

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¹Her rugby gear belonged to her grandfather, ‘Shrapnel’ Hoppy Hopkinson who played for Manawatu in 1927 (38).
apparently a Social Welfare beneficiary.¹ Their relationships with men also differ: DPB’s very name signifies her lack of a male partner, Hazel is a grieving widow, Lucy and Des have “tiff[s]” (104), Pam and Tom have serious marital problems, and Trish and Neville have a mutually supportive relationship: “[s]ome of our husbands aren’t as liberated as your Neville” (25). As the play proceeds these differences between the women cease to be important. Their new connection is first emphasised by the women’s putting on their new team jersey and visually signifying a cohesive unity: “THE JERSEYS ARE NEW, BLACK AND HAVE ‘BUSHWHACKERS’ EMBLAZONED ACROSS THEM” (53). In Michael James Manaia, the soldiers’ unity is aurally reinforced by a “(Song : Voice Over) ‘United we stand, divided we fall’” (Broughton 2:13), illustrating Julia Kristeva’s concept of “intertextuality”, which is “when one or more systems of signs are transposed into others” (Moi 156). Geary utilizes the same efficient device when at the end of the game the women sing “UNITED WE STAND” (96). Hence, the Bushwackers fulfill the original rugby ideal of egalitarianism in pursuit of the common goal of beating the opposing team.

The women’s acceptance of each other and their new easy camaraderie is also reflected in their shortening of each other’s names. Before the women’s rugby team is started, Hazel is suspicious of Pam and will not allow Pam to call her “Haze” as Hazel’s friend DPB does: Pam says, “[n]o rush to know Haze . . . I” (20). After the game Hazel has no objection to Pam calling her “Haze”, and signifies her new approval of Lucy by addressing her as “Luce” (105). By presenting this female acceptance and connection within a rugby

¹There is nothing in the text to identify Trish’s and Hazel’s financial and social positions.
framework Pack Of Girls both effectively valorizes women's relationships with each other, and attempts to redefine rugby as a site for real connection and empathy.

Of course, Pack Of Girls radically departs from the original ideals and customary expectations of rugby by presenting a women's team. This juxtaposition of women and rugby on the stage has implications beyond the rugby game. The women are not only united as a team, they are united against men as the emblem on their jerseys indicates: "THE EMBLEM IS A WOMAN IN A BUSH SINGLET STANDING ON A MAN" (53). After the game the women sing songs which aurally and linguistically identify them as a unified group against men:

LUCY : ... "I wish that all the men"
WOMEN : I wish that all the men.
LUCY : Were trees in the forest.
WOMEN : Were trees in the forest.
LUCY : And I was an axewoman.
WOMEN : And I was an axewoman.
LUCY : I'd chop off their bollocks.
WOMEN : Chop off their bollocks...
LUCY (OFF) : I wish that all the men.
WOMEN (OFF) : I wish that all the men.
LUCY (OFF) : Were waves in the ocean.
WOMEN (OFF) : Were waves in the ocean.
LUCY (OFF) : And I was a surfie.
WOMEN (OFF) : And I was a surfie.
LUCY (OFF) : I'd cream them with my motion.
WOMEN (OFF) : I'd cream them with my motion. (97-98)

This new connection between the women, and the potential power of their unity, is acknowledged by Hazel:

Georgina's got seven Godmothers to look out for her... Hey I like that Godmothers name. Perhaps we could change to that. Then we could go on a Mafia trip to Taupo Lucy. If we find that Des of yours with someone else we could take them out to the middle of the lake and dump them overboard. (105)

While the play ends with the women separating to return to their male partners and/or homes, their continuing female unity is presented in their arrangements for future meetings:

CAROL : See you at practice on Tuesday.
HAZEL : What about the hangi and visiting Trish and DPB...
PAM : Sure Haze. We'll organize a car load to go down tomorrow. Come back for the hangi later on. (105)

Thus, while Pack Of Girls valorizes women's ongoing relationships with each other, and as a united force to overcome male oppression, it does so within the context of their relationships with men. Unlike The Sex Fiend, Pack Of Girls does not associate women's relationships with each other and the female transgression of gender boundaries with lesbianism. For example, while Hazel assumes customary masculine appearance and behaviour, "HAZEL ENTERS, IN SWANDRI AND GUMBOOTS AND A BEER BOTTLE IN HAND... [AND LATER] EXITS BEHIND THE SCOREBOARD FOR A PISS" (12),

1Interestingly, these songs, like the rugby game, present women successfully overcoming men in traditionally male dominated arenas.
she is presented in relationship to two men, Harry and the deceased George.

The play's concern with the women's relationships with each other, and with men, is entwined with an exploration of the women's own personal development. By the beginning of the game it has been established that the women each have something personal to resolve: as discussed above, the rugby field and game act as a symbolic space in which issues are intensified and change occurs. When Trish jokingly pretends to be a man making a sexual advance towards Carol in the changing shed, Carol's reaction suggests that she may have been raped or sexually assaulted in the past:

TRISH : What about it Carol, eh? A legover in the back of the ute, eh. Eh?

(TRISH MOCKINGLY SIDLES UP TO CAROL. CAROL PUSHES TRISH AND FLATTENS HER. THE OTHERS, WHO HAVE ENJOYED THE PARODY, GO QUIET).

Sorry. I didn't realize. (57)

Carol's lack of connection with men may be the result of unresolved issues relating to past sexual assault.¹ Later, during the game, Basil Smiley "keeps touching [Carol] where he shouldn't" (91). However, Carol refuses to be a complicit victim of Basil's sexual assault and tells the other women what is happening. While it is Hazel who actually punches Basil to punish him, Carol says later that she "was going to" (94). During the game Carol learns to "stick up for [her]self" (94) against the "old creep" (30,35). Carol also overcomes her awkwardness and social unease. Her status as a social misfit is

¹The text strongly implies that Carol lives with her mother, rather than with a husband or partner: "[i]t's all Mum and I could find" (25); "[w]e were using it as a floorcloth actually" (39).
implied by her being left out when the others pair off to piggyback (48) and by Pam's suggestion that Carol can play "left-right-out if [she] likes" (31). But, during the game Carol's ability and skill earn her both confidence, as illustrated when she stands up to Tom, "[s]cared you might lose?" (85), and affirmation and acceptance by the other women: "HAZEL LIFTS CAROL UP AND WITH PAM[S] AND LUCY'S HELP THEY CARRY CAROL OFF AT SHOULDER HEIGHT" (96). Pam also affirms Carol in her after match speech, calling her "[w]oman of the [m]atch" (103).

Carol and the well groomed Lucy may initially appear to be opposites, but both overcome personal insecurity through their involvement with rugby. Early in the play, Lucy is set apart from the other women by her superficiality: her obsession with her appearance and compulsion to watch "'Dallas' re-runs" indicate the shallowness and loneliness of her life (31). Trish has spoken to her husband about the women's rugby team, but Lucy has not discussed it with Des as she knows that he would not approve (25). Des is a "snob" (52), but Lucy's involvement with rugby facilitates her rejection of limiting upper class social mores and associated superficiality: during the game Lucy stops being "ULTRACONSCIOUS OF GETTING DIRTY" (41) and "DIVES TO SCORE" (91). As the play progresses, Lucy begins to be aware of her own needs and desires and tells her husband that she is "playing rugby, or it's divorce" (52). Her struggle with the repression of her own self to her husband's and social class' expectations is indicated by her inability to talk through her mouthguard: "Maaaannnawaat uuoo ss wwwweeniiiiiiieeeeee" (71). Her increasing recognition of, and opposition to, exploitative male attitudes is also signified vocally. Originally Lucy does not swear, in marked contrast to Pam, DPB and Hazel, who are assertive
towards men. For example, Pam swears at Tom while challenging his attitude towards her: “I’m going to sleep with the fucking kids and I won’t be getting up at some goddawful hour to get your fucking breakfast you fucking fuckwit” (37). Later, Lucy’s new assertive ability is indicated when she does swear at men, referring to her husband as “[t]he bastard, I’m sorry, I don’t use language like that. The wanker” (52); and she comfortably says, “[p]iss off” to Doug when he lewdly invites her to exchange jerseys with him at the end of the game (96).1

Like Lucy and Carol, Hazel also deals with a personal issue during the rugby match.2 Before the women’s rugby team is started she has difficulty coming to terms with George’s death: she “get[s] pissed every Saturday and cheer[s] for her dead husband” (13). When the women are getting ready for the actual game Hazel acknowledges and admits that “[h]e’s dead” (55). Accordingly, at the beginning of the game “HAZEL GOES TO THE SIDELINE TO THROW UP”, symbolically ridding herself of the past and her associated distress (67). By the time the game is over she is ready to welcome Harry’s advances: she accepts his company and beer and then follows him out “to give [him] a hand”, ostensibly with the cleaning up of the clubrooms, but with the implication that she and Harry will further their connection (105-6).3

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1Thus, the swearing in Pack Of Girls serves a different purpose and occurs in a different context to the swearing in Foreskin’s Lament.

2Denis Welch also observes this: “Hazel certainly exorcises some demon on the rugby field” (Welch RPOG 49).

3This interpretation of Hazel’s move to follow Harry is reinforced by Pam’s subsequent reference to the first time she and Tom made love: “Tom, remember when we... for the first time, when you asked me to stay behind to help clear up the clubrooms... right about here” (107, my underlining).
However, the play ends with only the implication that Harry and Hazel will establish a relationship. Similarly, the Hoopers' happy future is unassured: Pam's and Tom's final embrace is interrupted when "A LOUD GUNSHOT GOES OFF NEARBY" (108). The Toheroa Twins' shooting of one of the Hoopers' steers seems very likely to cause further friction between Pam and Tom: "TOM IS ABOUT TO EXPLODE. [BUT] BEFORE HE CAN THERE IS A BLACKOUT" (108). Pack Of Girls' lack of a conventional closed ending, where couples are finally united and set up to live happily ever after, reflects the reality of relationships in New Zealand in the 1990s. Although the curtain call signifies that Pam and Tom do have a new supportive relationship, the play does not give a false impression that there will be no difficulty for Pam and Tom in sustaining this. Tom may be convinced that women can play rugby, but his ability to acknowledge and express his emotions is still underdeveloped:

PAM : ...I love you Tom.
TOM : (PAUSE) Yeah, I love me too.
PAM : You're impossible. (107)

Thus, Pack Of Girls exposes the myth that marriage is magically fulfilling for women: marriage is only one available destiny for the female characters in the play. There is no suggestion at the play's close that DPB will marry Nugget, even after she is sure he is the father of her baby: earlier she states, "I don't love him and I don't need him" (14); nor is there any implication that Carol will or should change her unattached state.
Even less likely to marry are the Toheroa Twins. The Twins transgress customary gender boundaries in breaking the law, in adopting what is culturally defined as masculine appearance and behaviour, and in having an intensely close relationship with each other. The Twins are physically huge: XXOS rugby jerseys only fit them "[a]t a pinch" and they wear "HUGE BOOTS" (54). The Twins are also tremendously physically powerful; they "smash [the Old Cop’s] head into the goalpost" (67). They have attempted to rob the Turangi TAB by driving a "bulldozer through the wall" (20); they grow marijuana and smoke it before the game (50), at half time they drink beer and smash a bottle (85), do "wheelie[s]" in their "POWERFUL V-8 car (28) and shoot the steer (108). With the Toheroa Twins, Geary seems to be drawing upon and combining two aspects of New Zealand’s particular social history and culture. The social or folk hero of New Zealand’s literature and cultural mythology is traditionally a ‘hard man’; a subversive whose exploits can variously involve the bush, powerful vehicles, alcohol and physical violence and endurance, and who may be on the wrong side of the law. Such figures include, for example, Barry Crump, Johnson in John Mulgan’s Man Alone and Stanley Graham. New Zealand’s rugby mythology contains similar heroes, whose reported physical abilities and endurance seem actually impossible: Pack Of Girls makes reference to “‘Shrapnel’ Hoppy Hopkinson . . . [who] used to play with . . . big wads of cotton wool bunged in the holes in his legs” (38). In Foreskin’s Lament, Tupper says to Ken, “KOed out of your scone last week, hero this week. This is the stuff of rugby, this is how legends are made!” (McGee 29). With the inclusion of the Toheroa Twins, Pack Of Girls places women in this social folk hero tradition: the fact that the Toheroas are twins possibly makes reference to the nationally
renowned and popular Topp Twins, whose appearance, music and politics also subvert customary gender expectations. Obviously, the fact that the Twins never appear on stage overcomes staging difficulties, but their absence from the action is an effective dramatic device to increase the stature of the Twin's appearance and exploits. As in Greek tragedy, the reporting on stage of events occurring off stage uses the audience's imagination to magnify the Twins' behaviour in a way that would be impossible to realise on stage. But this onstage reportage of the Twins' offstage exploits also mocks the 'hard man' and rugby hero tradition by pointing out the physical impossibility of this mythology, effectively subverting the customary male stereotype.

On a first impression Geary's use of the frameworks of rugby and the 'hard man' social folk hero, which are culturally defined as masculine, leaves Pack Of Girls open to definition as a liberal feminist text, but Geary's treatment of his female characters goes far beyond that of McGee's definition of Moira in Foreskin's Lament. A close analysis of Pack Of Girls reveals that the play is closer to a feminist post-structuralist text in its examination of "the social constructions of gender and identity usually posited as fixed, seeing them rather as cultural products able to be changed" (Dale WTW 160), although Geary was probably not consciously writing such a text.\(^1\) Initially, Geary presents his female and male characters variously: as conditioned by society, for example Tom; as in the process of transcending such conditioning, for example Pam, and as already subversive of customary gender roles, in Hazel, DPB and the Toheroa Twins. Characters further subvert customary gender roles as the play

\(^1\)David Geary considers himself a 'humanist', rather than a feminist (interview with David Geary, 30 July 1992).
progresses. The different attitudes and behaviour within each of the two genders also reinforces that gender roles are socially constructed and able to be transgressed to suit a particular individual's aptitude and inclination. Thus, Pack Of Girls is a site of cultural subversion which celebrates the possibility of a harmonious relationship between women, men and rugby, and explores and expresses a range of New Zealand femininities.
3. Dispelling "Edjimicated Fluff."

The Sex Fiend.

*Men can’t write about women . . .
The itch knows nothing of the sore . . .
The Wife of Bath is a botch-up
Blanche Dubois a macho wank
Moll Flanders pure male fantasy
Cleopatra a boyish prank.*  Mervyn Thompson, *Singing The Blues.*

*The idea of woman as object had become so ingrained that no matter how much I liked someone ‘as a person’ I had no chance of sustaining a real relationship with her. Women were disposable, I knew that. Pornography had educated me.* Chris Knox, *New Zealand Listener* column.

*The Sex Fiend* illustrates, above all, that theatre is a political site: "behind the Performer loom the politics of theatre; behind them, the larger politics of New Zealand itself" (Thompson PT 47). Gender politics are at the centre of *The Sex Fiend.* The circumstances leading to the writing of this play date back to 1 February 1984, when Mervyn Thompson, prominent playwright, director and lecturer in drama, was "overpowered by six women who struck him with their fists, burned him with their cigarettes, and threatened him with a knife. Then they tied him to a tree and left, after spraypainting the word ‘rapist’ on his car" (Lamb 32). Subsequently, the *New Zealand Listener* published Thompson’s account of the incident and the circumstances surrounding it, and then an article by Women Against
Sexual Harassment which gave their view and explanation of the situation.¹ W.A.S.H. argued that “the women who attacked Thompson did so because the legal system fails to provide justice for women” (W.A.S.H. 22), while Thompson protested that he had “never raped anyone in [his] life either in the legal or the feminist sense” (Thompson VV 21). His acknowledgement of these two different definitions of rape pinpoints the issue at the centre of the attack, of the subsequent cancelling or picketing of Thompson’s productions and of The Sex Fiend itself. It is simply this; feminist women generally understand and interpret events and situations differently than men or women whose world view is that of the prevailing masculinist social ethos.

This difference in interpretation meant Thompson could believe that he had been “a strong supporter of the women’s movement for more than a decade” (Thompson 22), while concurrently admitting that he did have a "habit of touching women in the course of his work", that on occasion he had been sexually intimate with his students, and had ‘been through a period . . . in which [he] used women as sexual objects’” (W.A.S.H. 23).² His apparent ignorance of the dynamics of power involved in physical touching of any sort between non-peers indicates an inability sincerely to consider his physical or sexual contact with women from


²Here W.A.S.H. quote Thompson from a TVNZ Eye Witness news interview.
the women's point[s] of view, or that alternative perceptions of the same situation are possible and valid.¹

As Mary Field Belenky et al make clear in Women's Ways Of Knowing, "[a]ll knowledge is constructed, and the knower is an intimate part of the known. . . . Ultimately constructivists understand that answers to all questions vary depending on the context in which they are asked and on the frame of reference of the person doing the asking" (Belenky 137-138). Thus, while Thompson believed that he was "gang-bashed by a group of extremists who [had] not even taken the trouble to get their facts straight", the question must be asked as to how "facts" are defined (Thompson VV 23). In fact, W.A.S.H. believed that his six assailants' action occurred to prevent further sexual harassment or violation: "the women refused to be passively afraid" (W.A.S.H. 22).

Inevitably the incident sparked debate and discussion in New Zealand society, one result of which was that in March 1984 the co-operative rehearsing Thompson’s Songs To Uncle Scrim at Wellington’s New Depot Theatre became aware that there was considerable opposition to the production. The co-operative then met with the “Women’s Subcommittee of the Trades Council, the Wellington Unemployed Workers Union, Women Against Pornography, Women Against Sexual Abuse Of Children, Women Against Rape, Feminist Librarians, Victoria University’s Women’s Action Group and Porirua Women’s Refuge” (Simpson 54). These women saw the theatre as a site where they could exert pressure for justice for women: a member of Women Against Pornography stated,

¹Peter Rutter makes a full analysis of the dynamics of power and effects on women of sexual relationships between non-peers in Sex In the Forbidden Zone. Los Angeles: Jeremy P Tarcher Inc, 1989.
"[w]ith the way things are organised, this is one of the few ways we can show women's disapproval. . . . Most of the women involved in the meeting opposed the production as a form of support for the six women in Auckland" (Simpson 54). After meeting with the women's groups the Scrim Co-operative decided to cancel the production.

Later, one member of the co-operative, Danny Mulheron, disassociated himself from the decision (Simpson 54). Three years later, he co-wrote The Sex Fiend partly as a protest about the censorship inherent in the cancellation of Songs To Uncle Scrim in 1984\(^1\), fulfilling Jenny Rankine's 1984 prediction that "[p]ersecution of Mervyn's plays won't help. Men will turn the focus of the argument onto censorship instead of rape" (Rankine 12). In an interview published in the programme of the first Court production of The Sex Fiend, Mulheron states that he and co-writer Stephen Sinclair

were sick of the politically liberal prudery surrounding theatre and we decided we would 'kick-butt' by writing something to expose the awful queasy underbelly of liberal sensibilities in New Zealand theatre, universities and in people who are offended by what other people don't give a shit about (Court TSP1).\(^2\)

A similar categorisation of activists is evident in Thompson's Singing the Blues (1991), in which he writes his account of the

\(^{1}\) Interview with Ross Gumbley, 10 January 1993.

\(^{2}\) In Passing Through (1991), Thompson himself uses the theatre to address the picketing of his productions: "here he stands, in front of a small, brave audience, while outside the theatre a chorus (of persons unknown) is battering at the doors so hard they are threatening to split, and screaming with raw hatred: 'Rapist! Rapist! Rapist!' . . . [b]y virtue of some strange virus that has entered the bloodstream of the nation, he is being spat at in the street (by person's unknown) and lied about in the media. . . . 'I'm not a rapist! See?' " (Thompson PT 50-52).
feminists' attack and subsequent cancelling or picketing of his productions:

there are new activists afoot, powerful in educational circles and in the media. . . . According to these manipulators of young minds, all men are rapists and child molesters, [and] lesbianism is so desirable a state that it requires active promotion. (Thompson SB 71)

He concludes:

[i]f one quotation could sum up what I feel, it's this one from Eugene O'Neill. In The Iceman Cometh he has one of his characters say: I was born condemned to see all sides of a question. When you're damned like that, the questions multiply for you until in the end it's all question and no answer. As history proves, to be a worldly success at anything . . . you have to wear blinkers like a horse and see only straight in front of you. You have to see, too, that this is all black, and this is all white. (Thompson SB 70)

Thompson's association of himself with Larry from The Iceman Cometh is both ironic and revealing in the context of Gayle Austin's analysis of this play. In Feminist Theories for Dramatic Criticism, Austin uses Judith Fetterley's notion of the resisting reader to argue that both The Iceman Cometh and its male characters represent women falsely:

[t]he women characters shown on stage are three stereotypical whores, while the three wives and one mother who are constructed offstage through the men's dialogue are scapegoats, blamed for most of the men's problems. Women have no lives of their own in this play. (Austin 32)

O'Neill's, Thompson's and Mulheron & Sinclair's writing can be read while employing Fetterley's approach to expose the falsity of their representation of women and/or feminism in the texts quoted or mentioned above.
An apparent difficulty with a resisting reading of *The Sex Fiend* is its genre which implies that the play is intended to amuse the audience and is not to be taken seriously. A definition of characters as falsely representative of real women is fraught with difficulty as farce necessarily involves stereotypes: “the farce writer’s focus is on a situation, an accelerating action, rather than on the individuals within it” (Smith 151). However, a “stereotype is no more than a definition of one group of persons by an other who wishes to control it” (Schaefer 10), and there is a difference in the presentation of male and female stereotypes in *The Sex Fiend*. Brent and Phil are both gross, but Brent is described as “a friendly bigot [who] . . . is obnoxious, crass, opinionated, and has many other endearing traits” (7, my underlining). Phil is “constipated” (18), but Brent is able to “have a quick dump” (20) and “feel five pounds lighter” (23), as if, within the terms of the play, Brent’s and Phil’s politics have a parallel with their excretory systems. Brent is also ‘rewarded’ at the end of the play with a partner, while Phil is not, although she expresses desire for a relationship: “[c]ome back! I love you! Brent!” (55). The play is constructed so that the audience identifies with and sympathises with Matthew: he is the fulcrum of the action, the only character to know who all the other characters really are, and also the one who has the most to lose by disclosure of identity. Somehow, despite his silliness, Matthew is just plain likeable.

The third male character, Constable Chestnut, embodies social authority in his professional capacity; correspondingly Phil defines him as an “instrument of male oppression” (58). He has power over his parallel female character and arrests her at the end of the play: “this way please Miss O’Hara” (68). As well as this various privileging of male characters, *The Sex Fiend* also sets up its own
defense against feminist objections to the play’s content and basis. The beginning of the play asserts that feminists have no sense of humour; after attending the Lesbian Comedy Jam at the Fun House Theatre, Matthew says that he “never knew that comedy could be so much more effective when you take out the punch lines” (5). However, despite this assertion, feminists can laugh at the characters and situations in The Sex Fiend and also consider the play’s basis and assumptions as Patricia Cooke makes clear in her review:

remembering that the people women and children are to be kept safe from are mostly men; and not at all wishing to detract from the efforts of those who try and change society by moderating between men and women; with these reservations I can still heartily recommend this healthy farce.1

The Sex Fiend’s genre does not preclude it from an analysis of the gender politics inherent in the text or in the drama. Actually, the stereotypes and extremity of the genre only emphasise the play’s reliance on generating humour through the conflation of gender transgression with homosexuality and the assumption of a biologically determined dichotomy of gender.

This biological determinism is apparent in The Sex Fiend’s clash between stereotypical versions of masculinism and radical feminism. The play presents Brent as the embodiment of masculinism: he is the literal sex fiend of the play’s title. Brent does not appear to have a relationship, sexual or otherwise, with a woman: he is “divorce[d]”2 and has “come down to the big smoke for

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a bit of the ol' noogienoogie" (7). He is constantly in pursuit of orgasm and his male gaze at pornographic magazines and videos apparently has allowed him to achieve this: "(Pulls out Playboys:) Bought [sic] some stick mags down for ya. They're pretty well thumbed you might say, but only a few of the pages are stuck together" (9). His use of pornography indicates that sex is often a solitary rather than a shared activity for him: "[s]orry old son, looks like it's gunna be Lily Palmer and her five daughters . . . won't be the first time and probably not the last" (34). His intended sexual stimulus, the 'women' in the magazines and video, are constructions of femininity rather than real women, and "represent . . . the patriarchal values attached to the gender while suppressing the experiences, stories, feelings and fantasies of actual women" (Case 6-7). Pornography "sells a view of women that is harmful to gender relations. (The term 'gender relations' is used because pornography can be seen not only to victimise women, but also to alienate men from women and women from men socially)" (Crow 24). The Sex Fiend expresses the feminist abhorrence of pornography when Matthew "sticks [the pornographic] video and magazines under his jersey" so that Phil and Anna can not see it (14). Matthew also states that pornography is "[f]ilth, smut . . . [and] despicable" as he "tries to rip up all the magazines at once" (15).

In Gus van Sant's film, My Own Private Idaho, models from the front covers of pornographic magazines come to life and speak: in The Sex Fiend Desiree is the embodiment and articulation of the one dimensional women in Brent's pornography. But, although she is present and speaks, she is defined only by her function of supplying gratification to men: "Miss Desiree O'Hara, otherwise known as Blowjob Belinda the Bike of Buckle Street" (56). Desiree's own
sexuality is not expressed in the play. Her planned chamber maid persona is an unreal servile sexual role; similarly, the women represented in the pornography are "[s]laves to the [d]ildo" (35). Brent’s apparent reliance on servile, objectified women for sexual satisfaction indicates that such activity makes him feel masterful over women. In The Sexual Fix, Heath theorises that both pornography and the valorization of orgasm are political means to indemnify male domination of women:

Pornography is based on the premise that women’s bodies define them both as objects and as essentially different from men.

However, the same biological determinism is evident in radical feminism, which “[s]tresses [the] superiority of female attributes and difference between male and female modes, [and] “favours separate female systems” (Austin 6). Phil, Eileen and, to a lesser extent, Anna are radical feminists and believe that all men oppress all women: “[s]ure he’s a man, and therefore he’s sexist” (21). Accordingly, the women declare Matthew’s flat a “wimminspace” to exclude men (24): Matthew accepts the women’s classification of all men as the enemy; he says to Anna, “[i]f I was her [Phil] I’d be suspicious of me too!” (5). From a radical feminist viewpoint, the male body determines male

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1Anna is shown to be heavily influenced by Phil, to the extent that Phil literally puts words into her mouth: “ANNA You think he might be . . . PHIL -Fucking your brain” (21); and “ANNA To think that all this time I’ve been close to a . . . a . . . PHIL Raping molester!” (39). In this way Anna is characterised as a nice girl who has been led astray, rather than as a committed radical feminist. Also, Anna is connected with Matthew, even though they are not defined as a couple: “we’re just good friends. . . . We’re in more of a ‘relationship’, not a ‘relationship’!” (13).
attitudes and behaviour; for example, Phil desires Brent when she thinks he is a woman, but abruptly changes her mind when he proves that he is a man: “Brent, back to audience, holds open his trousers... Phil reacts in total disbelief. She then decks Brent with a powerful upper cut!” (67). Thus, *The Sex Fiend* makes clear that both masculinist and radical feminist agendas define the opposite sex as Other, as a means of controlling the perceived threatening aspects of the other gender. But the play does not present equal contention between the two agendas; *The Sex Fiend* is set within a masculinist framework which focuses on and valorizes the phallus, and ignores or negates a valid alternative reality or realities for women.

Accordingly, the play associates feminism with the adoption by women of appearance and attributes socially defined as masculine. This association of subversive women with masculinity is not peculiar to *The Sex Fiend*. The beginning of the women’s chant in *The Sex Fiend* associates the witches from *Macbeth* with Phil, Anna and Eileen: they say, “[u]s are we /Witches three” (17), while *Macbeth* opens with three witches entering and one saying, “[w]hen shall we three meet again?” (*Macbeth* 1.1.1.). The witches’ appearance casts doubts on their femininity: Macbeth states, “[y]ou should be women; / and yet your beards forbid me to interpret / that you are so” (*Macbeth* 1.3.44-6). Similarly, Eilish Moran used makeup to create an obvious moustache when playing Eileen in the first Court production. Both Shakespeare and Moran associate facial hair with a lack of culturally defined femininity and with subversion against the dominant social order; Eileen wishes to gain revenge against men, “[b]rother, father, husband I... -pooe out your eyes” (42), while Shakespeare’s witches instigate Macbeth’s action against the existing
social order with their pronouncement, “[a]ll hail, Macbeth, that shalt be king hereafter” (Macbeth 1.3.49). In both Macbeth and The Sex Fiend female characters also deliberately adopt masculine attributes in an attempt to appropriate personal power. Phil seeks revenge for “the oppression of wimmin for over two million years” (65), and overtly adopts masculine appearance and behaviour; she smokes “roll-your-owns” (12), “hoicks and spits” (55) and drives a very powerful vehicle: “[t]here is a tremendous roar onstage as the ute roars off” (19). Janice Gray, a jazz and blues singer as well as an actor, played Phil in both Court productions; her particular voice allowed to her to speak very deeply and gruffly: her costume included a swandri, jeans and boots. Phil’s appearance and behaviour and her statement, “I am strong” (19) recalls Lady Macbeth’s desire to suppress her femininity to enable her to achieve the power of the throne: “[m]ake thick my blood; / Stop up the access and passage to remorse, / that no compunctious visitings of nature / Shake my fell purpose. . . . come to my woman’s breasts / And take my milk for gall” (Macbeth 1.5.39-46).¹ Shakespeare’s and Mulheron & Sinclair’s characterisation of socially subversive women as overtly masculine, effectively reinforces the notion that power is a masculine attribute and thus reaffirms the dichotomy of gender.

In The Sex Fiend, male concern with feminists taking power previously exclusively reserved for men translates into fear of physical castration. Originally Freud believed that women suffered

¹Jenijoj Labelle points out that in Elizabethan times psychology was closely aligned with physiology; by asking the spirits to free her of the basic psychological characteristics of femininity she is also asking the spirits to eliminate the basic biological characteristics of her woman’s body. Labelle also states that for the Elizabethans “visitings of nature” referred to menstruation and “passage” referred to the vagina. Labelle, Jenijoj. “A Strange Infirmity” : Lady Macbeth’s Amenorrhea.” Shakespeare Quarterly 31 (1980): 381-6.
from penis envy because of their biological sex. Later, Lacan reinterpreted Freud's castration theory and explained that what women actually lack is the power men have in a masculinist society. He defines having this power as having possession of the phallus, rather than possession of the physical penis. In The Sex Fiend, Phil has assumed the power usually reserved for men in a masculinist system: “ANNA enters with PHIL, who is carrying a guitar” (11); “the guitar is a [phallic] symbol” as Barry states in Ladies' Night (McCarten and Sinclair 42). Having gained the phallus, Phil is determined to keep the power for women that the guitar symbolises; she only allows Matthew to touch the guitar/phallus when he is dressed as Mandy: “PHIL hands MATTHEW [MANDY] her guitar” (44). Earlier, when Matthew was dressed as a man, Phil stops him from possessing the guitar/phallus: “MATTHEW picks up guitar to sit down in chair, but sees PHIL glaring at him and replaces guitar” (13). Correspondingly, she is obsessed with symbolically or literally castrating men as a means of reducing male oppression: her band plays “Death to the Phallus” (11); she suggests “[r]ipping [their] . . . balls off” as a means of overthrowing patriarchy (42), plans to “grab [Matthew’s] testicles and rip them off and jam them down his throat” (40), and is ready with a “pair of garden shears” in anticipation of castrating Matthew (65). Through Phil, The Sex Fiend makes reference to the feminists' attack on Mervyn Thompson in 1984: “PHIL takes [a] hatchet from [the] hearth . . . [and states] I've dealt with pricks like this before. I was there when we strung up Mervyn” (61). By citing this real incident The Sex Fiend provokes or re-invokes a substantiated male fear of literal or symbolic castration by feminist women: “[s]uddenly a fist smashes through a panel of the door, between his legs, and grabs him by the crotch. Matthew shrieks . . . PHIL is revealed holding
MATTHEW through door” (65). Having invoked this male fear of castration in the audience, The Sex Fiend works to allay the fear of emasculation by invalidating feminism.

Significantly, the audience never sees Phil play the guitar and thus signify women’s comfortable possession of the phallus. Phil’s and Anna’s judgement of Matthew/Mandy’s guitar playing and song as “[b]loody marvellous” and “fantastic” implies that feminists believe that any creative work which expresses women’s reality or solidarity is of high artistic merit, while the audience is aware that Matthew/Mandy’s song is actually atrocious.

MATTHEW [AS MANDY] starts to strum, slow, then fast; soft, then loud, to try to conceal the fact he hasn’t the faintest idea how to play the guitar. He begins to sing:

MATTHEW Ooooh! Women! I’m a woman, you’re a woman! She’s a woman too! We’re.....
(tries to think of new line and fails)
Women! (He strums madly) and...and...we, ah, no, no, um.....(44)

Similarly, Anna’s comment that Eileen’s poem is “easily good enough” to send to Broadsheet, New Zealand’s feminist magazine, implies that Broadsheet has very dubious literary standards (41). Phil’s masculine appearance and her desire to “go down to the West Coast for a couple of months...[for] a spot of whitebaiting...get[ting] back in touch with the whenua...[and] bonecarving” associate her closely with Keri Hulme. In the Court’s first production,

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1Matthew has given up possession of the phallus with his conversion to feminism.

2Eileen’s poem: “You deny my reality / Why why why? / Clad in armour of scars / The warrior -yet / With O so soft vulnerable centre / I bleed still, my mind a womb / Slashed / By screams / I reach out to touch / Your soft place / Warm and undulating / Tidal....O daughter of swords / Warrior, Amazon, victim / Gathering your embryos of hope / Weave your wild wimmin spell / Incredibly” (40-41).
Janice Gray’s Phil smoked a pipe, which also immediately aligned her with Hulme; this association was deliberately invoked by the director, Elizabeth Moody.¹ Hulme’s novel, the bone people won the Booker prize in 1985, earning her international and national renown. Her widely reported appearance, behaviour, novel and success all transgress gender boundaries and indicate that Hulme has an alternative reality to masculinism:

the radical and utopian nature of Hulme’s text closely parallels the image the French feminists give of the écriture féminine of the future, when they describe the metaphysical feminism which moves past and negates all concepts of gender difference as being part of the phallocentric symbolic system. (McLeod 67)

As if in reprisal, The Sex Fiend implies, through Phil’s and the other women’s obvious lack of literary standards, that the expression of such an alternative reality in literature results in substandard work. With its reference to actual literature and writers in contemporary New Zealand society, The Sex Fiend efficiently invalidates women’s reality and achievements.

This misrepresentation of women’s reality extends to a misrepresentation of lesbianism. Phil’s desire for Brent, whom she believes is a lesbian, reinforces the notion that many lesbians adopt an extreme version of conventionally masculine appearance and behaviour: Brent “wears a black nylon windbreaker, under which . . . he has a gross t-shirt. Also jeans” (7), and Phil says “She’s [Brent’s] so assertive. Confident, within herself” (27). Brent’s belief that Phil is a “decent sort of bloke” again associates lesbianism with masculinity

¹Interview with Ross Gumley, 10 January 1993.
The play also conflates feminism with lesbianism; all three feminist women in *The Sex Fiend* are sexually attracted to other women, in contrast to the non-feminist Desiree's sexual association with men. Eileen wrote her poem, "The Torn Tutu," for Phil; the poem implies that Eileen and Phil are or have been sexually intimate: "I reach out to touch / Your soft place / Warm and undulating / Tidal" (41). Anna believes herself to be a lesbian when she is attracted to Mandy: "I've never been a lesbian before. Kiss me Mandy" (48). In *The Sex Fiend* the actual scenes of 'lesbian intimacy' between Anna and Mandy, and between Phil and Bren, are made unthreatening to the audience by their knowledge that one of the partners is in fact a man; there are no scenes of real lesbian intimacy in the play. Of course, in these situations humour is generated by mistaken identity, but overall the play acts to invalidate lesbianism, as do many mainstream plays, which portray the lesbian as the "outsider, the stereotype and the social menace" (Case 78).

Phil is written out before the end: there is no place for a feminist lesbian in a closed ending which reaffirms masculinism: "Oh yuck! Goddam heteroes! (She opens front door). I hope you all live happily ever after! Exit PHIL." alone (68). In contrast to Phil,

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1Similarly, Constable Chestnut's familiarity with the brand of Mandy's' hairspray also uses the transgression of gender boundaries to signify homosexuality: "[w]ellaflax basalm. COP pats his hair into place" (57) Later, Constable Chestnut openly reveals his homosexuality through citing his preference for socially defined feminine behaviour. He says to Matthew, "[c]an you imagine how difficult it is, day after day, putting on a strong face to society. Drinking DB with the blokes after the game, when really you'd rather be sipping pink gins and listening to Mozart. (Pause). Young man, look at me. I'm... gay" (64).

2Joe Orton comments, "I think that the portrait of the queer in Peter Shaffers's *Black Comedy* is very funny, but it's an awfully conventional portrait. It's compartmentalization again. Audiences love it, of course, because they're safe. But one shouldn't pander to audiences* (Transatlantic Review (Spring 1967): 95 (cited Smith 150).
Eileen and Anna are, in the terms of the play, rewarded by their pairing with Brent and Matthew:

BRENT   Come back to me Eileen. . . .
EILEEN  Oh Brent!
ANNA    Oh Matthew!
MATTHEW Oh Anna!

Both couples go into a clinch. (68)

Although there is an element of deliberate parody of traditional masculinist resolutions, where a woman and a man are united after overcoming obstacles to their love with the implication that they will “live happily ever after” (68), the closed ending celebrates Anna’s and Eileen’s conversion from feminism and lesbianism to femininity and heterosexuality:¹

They sit on the sofa. They go to kiss, but then MATTHEW pulls away.

MATTHEW   I’m sorry, I hope you didn’t think I was . . .
ANNA      Matthew?
MATTHEW   Yes Anna?
ANNA      (Pulling him down on to her lap) Shut up!
MATTHEW   Yes Anna

They kiss.
Lights down. (69)²

¹Elody Rathgen also notes this in her review of the first Court production: “[h]eterosexuality is safe and most can go away happy.” The Press, 14 May 1990.

²At this point in Richard Finn’s production at Fortune, the lights went down to one well defined round spot on Matthew’s and Anna’s heads as they were kissing, and then the circle of light went out, in a parody of a clichéd film ending.
Eileen leaves her feminist poems behind with her feminist politics as she leaves with Brent; now that she has a man she “won’t be needing that any more” (69). However Brent does not give up his pornography, despite having been “slam[med] over the head with it” earlier (37). His line, “[s]end the vids to Palmy”, reaffirms male control of women’s sexuality, as does the arrest of Desiree (69). This final line of Brent’s was added to the text during rehearsals for the second Court production, as the cast felt that otherwise the ending was “too saccharine. We thought that Brent wouldn’t have changed and wanted to show this somehow.” At the end of the play the women are divided from each other, not just by their new allegiance to male partners, but also as Eileen and Brent have left to return to Palmerston North and Phil has left the action. There is no suggestion that the women will remain connected as there is in Daughters of Heaven and Pack of Girls.

The negation of feminism at the end of the play extends to Matthew, whose determination to be a ‘good feminist’ is established at the very beginning of the play by his new appointment as campus “Sexual Harrassment [sic] Officer” (2), and by the difficulty Anna has in leaving his house:

MATTHEW opens the door for ANNA.

MATTHEW Oh sorry - huh! Opening doors for ladies! How antediluvian!

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1It seems that Constable Chestnut’s intention to arrest Desiree is more related to the fact that he has “a list of twenty respectable businessmen [to whom she has] given the clap” (57), than to her actual soliciting. She is an experienced prostitute, and initially tells Matthew that “they won’t bust us or anything. They’re after me for some unpaid fines.” (29).

2Interview with Ross Gumbley, 10 January 1993.
MATTHEW closes door before ANNA can get through it.

MATTHEW     Sorry Anna, I didn’t mean to shut it in your face.

ANNA         Honestly Matthew, it’s alright.

MATTHEW     OK then. I’ll open it. Sorry -OK. (Opens door.) But if I’ll tell you what, I’ll go through the door first, and then it won’t seem like I’m opening the door for you. (5-6)

Just as The Sex Fiend defines feminism for women as adopting ‘masculine’ appearance and/or behaviour, so too does the play define Matthew’s feminism by his taking on a role socially defined as feminine. When the play opens Matthew is “baking some herbal scones” (4); Brent’s arrival with the empty cake tin, previously containing the “beautiful big cake” that Matthew’s mother “baked” for him emphasises the traditional connection between baking and women (7). Later, he offers the scones to the women three times, in an inversion of the traditional New Zealand gender relationship: “[s]cones anybody?” (17), “[s]cone Anna” (18) and “[s]cone anyone?” (22). Matthew’s later assumption of a feminine persona serves to negate the basis of radical feminism. While dressed as Mandy, Matthew becomes what Robert Stoller terms “the phallic woman” (Gilbert 397). “Stoller argues that the male transvestite uses the degrading apparatus of female costume to convert ‘humiliation’ to ‘mastery’ by showing himself (and the world) that he is not ‘just’ like a woman, he is better than a woman because he is a woman with a penis” (Gilbert 397). Obviously, this is the implication of the play

1 Matthew’s identification with the scones and associated femininity highlights the contrast between his and Brent’s politics. Brent is immediately identified with the traditional New Zealand male gender role in his concern with rugby with his first line: “Come on New Zealand... Been watching the rugger? We’ve been giving those Welsh bastards a thrashing haven’t we!” (7).
rather than Matthew's specific motivation for assuming the feminine disguise. Just prior to his assumption of the disguise, the women plan to attack Matthew: "[l]et's get the sex fiend!" (37), but Phil and Anna then approve of Matthew when he is pretending to be Mandy:

... PHIL embraces him in a violent hug.

PHIL Bloody marvel[l]ous!

MATTHEW Oh...

ANNA (Hugging him) Oh Mandy that was fantastic! (44, my underlining)

Matthew's feminine disguise converts 'humiliation' to 'mastery' ironically 'proving' that men can do anything. Therefore, although The Sex Fiend reinforces biological determinism of gender, this basis serves to privilege men and negate women.

Matthew's cross dressing, like that of Imogen in Cymbeline, also allows him to escape physical danger. He "sees the chambermaid's costume, [and] grabs it" (37) in a similar life threatening situation to when Pisanio produces male clothing for Imogen: "disguise / That which, t'appear itself, must not yet be / But by self-danger... /... You must forget to be a woman... /... Fore-thinking this, I have already fit / ('Tis in my cloak-bag) doublet, hat, hose" (Cymbeline 3.4.146-171). While Imogen is disguised as a man, Shakespeare draws attention to the fact that she is a woman; for example she says,

[ b]est draw my sword; and if mine enemy
But fear the sword like me, he'll scarcely look on't.
Such a foe, good heavens! (Cymbeline, 3.6.25-27)
The comedy inherent in the incongruity between her real self and her appearance is also evident when Matthew’s male body is pointed out to the audience while he is disguised as Mandy, for example,

MATTHEW and ANNA go into another grope, feeling MATTHEW’s ‘breasts.’ MATTHEW jumps up looking very dishevelled and staggers away. . . . MATTHEW refolds padding and sticks it back in corset. He looks up and sees EILEEN watching him.

MATTHEW (In male voice) Shit! (48-9)

His several changes from male to female dress also emphasise that his feminine appearance is only a temporary disguise for his male body. Much of the humour in The Sex Fiend results from mistaken identity generated by characters wearing, or disguising themselves in, clothing associated with the opposite gender. Phil’s attraction to Bren’ is a kind of inverse parallel to the dramatic irony present in Olivia’s attraction to the cross-dressed Viola in Shakespeare’s Twelfth Night. Viola says to Olivia:

[b]ly innocence I swear, and by my youth,
I have one heart, one bosom, and one truth,
And that no woman has; nor never none
Shall mistress be of it, save I alone. (Twelfth Night 3.1.159-162)

Similarly, Brent says, “[I]look, Phil, mate. There’s something I gotta tell ya. I’m just not interested in men” (55). The audience knows that Phil’s, Olivia’s and Anna’s attraction is unrealistic and unrealisable and this dramatic irony increases the humour of the situation, especially when Matthew/Mandy says, “[I]listen, Anna, it hurts me to say this, but it would never work” (48). The emphasis on the incongruity between bodies and clothing in The Sex Fiend works to reinforce a biologically determined dichotomy of gender, rather than
emphasise the possibility of the transgression of gender roles as cross dressing does in Pack Of Girls and in Ladies’ Night.

Those to whom the social order has traditionally given power, however, will inevitably use ceremonies of transvestite misrule to recapture rule; they seek not a third sex but a way of subordinating the second sex, and in their anxiety they play with costumes to show that costumes are merely plays, seeking reassurance in what they hope is the reality behind appearances. (Gilbert 416)

This notion of 'reality behind appearance' is reinforced when Anna is attracted to Matthew, despite his feminine disguise. Almost paradoxically, Matthew's feminine disguise allows him to bypass his political taboo about inter-gender sexual contact:

ANNA has backed MATTHEW [MANDY] on to the sofa. They kiss.

ANNA
That was beautiful. I shall always remember this moment.

MATTHEW (As if in a dream) Me too.

They kiss again. (48)

This response to Anna’s advances negates his earlier refusal to be sexually intimate because of his feminist politics:

ANNA
Would you like to sleep with me?

MATTHEW
No-no-no! well yes, but I don’t want to pressure you, unless you want me to. -But let’s just forget it. I don’t want to rush you into anything. I think it’s more important to build up respect in a relationship. (Leaps up) That’s the water boiling. (2)

The play implies that Matthew was really masculinist all along. Brent arrives with pornography expecting Matthew to enjoy it, supposedly Brent’s expectation is based on past experience: "[g]ot an
item or three in the pack that'll put a smile on your face. We're gonna have a ripper of a time, no wucking furries! (Pulls out Playboys) (9). The stories Brent tells about Matthew and the Davidson women and his observation of Matthew's duplicity supports this observation, despite Matthew's denial of their truth: "that's your story and you're sticking to it. You always were a crafty buggar. . . . [H]ow do you think Old Man Davidson felt when he caught you smuggling the meat up his wife?!") (8). The probability that Brent and Matthew have been involved in sexual exploits while together is also hinted at when Brent says, "she was a friend of yours! No wonder she let out such a scream when I lifted her skirt. (LAUGHS). Christ, this is like old times!" (36, my underlining). These implications about Matthew's sexual history, combined with the constant reminders of his male identity under his feminine disguise, imply that his assumption of feminist politics is like his assumption of a feminine disguise; something that is temporary and inappropriate, and correspondingly he divests himself of both his feminine disguise and his feminist politics by the end of the play: "[w]hen I go to university tomorrow, I'm going to resign from every campus group I'm a member of " (69).

While The Sex Fiend purports to be an attack on "the awful queasy underbelly of liberal sensibilities" (Court TSFI 2), there is no doubt that feminism is the major target: vegetarianism and biculturalism are dwelt with only briefly.¹ In "The Uncanny in Auckland" Jonathan Lamb comments upon how the attack on Mervyn Thompson repeated a scene from Renée's Setting the Table, a play Thompson was involved with workshopping and producing

¹See pages 1,9,13 and 68 of the text.
(Lamb 41). The situation of feminist women attacking a man whom they consider to be a ‘sex fiend’ returns to the theatre in The Sex Fiend, and serves to invalidate such women’s claims. When Phil, Anna and Eileen have caught Matthew, tied him up and are ready to castrate him the audience knows that actually Matthew is not guilty of “[p]ossessing material degrading to women. . . . Assault on a female’s buttocks. . . . Violating his own sister. . . . Attempted murder. . . . And the oppression of wimmin for over two million years!” (65), rather, as Matthew attempts to explain, “[i]t’s all a ghastly series of coincidences” (65).¹ On another level, the character of Matthew also parallels Danny Mulheron in the situation surrounding the cancellation of Songs to Uncle Scrim in 1984. At first Matthew and Mulheron support feminist politics and later change their minds; interestingly Mulheron played Matthew in the original BATS production and in the first Court production. Thus, while The Sex Fiend generally serves to invalidate feminism, it is also contextualized by, echoes and attempts to redefine two specific instances where men felt threatened by feminists. This unreal representation of women on stage is at the modern end of a dramatic continuum stretching back through the Renaissance to Classical times, when “the notion of the female derived from the male point of view, which remained alien to female experience and reflected the perspective of the gendered opposite” (Case 11).

Not surprisingly then, The Sex Fiend’s representation of radical feminism in particular, and of feminism generally, is very limited and distorted. David Cauto’s hilarious satirical novel, The Women’s

¹A similar invalidation of feminist definition of male oppression occurs at the beginning of the play: “MATTHEW I mean, what bastards! That’s typical isn’t it: a white male drinking club forcing out a women’s group. . . . ANNA They actually booked it two months age. Eileen forgot to check” (4)
Hour, also involves a situation where feminist women are pitted against a 'sex fiend': Sidney Pyke ironically defines himself as an "authoritarian male chauvinist rapist pig" (Caute 151). But Caute's novel, unlike The Sex Fiend, destabilizes masculinism by presenting two characters, Bess and Melanie, in an actual lesbian relationship, and by descriptions of these two radical lesbians as conventionally feminine and attractive to men. Bess is "beautiful" and Melanie is, or rather was, a "heart-fluttering creature of heterosexism" (Caute 28), compared to Phil's grossness and Eileen's frumpy appearance: "[s]he wears thick black horn rimmed glasses, a long dress, and her hair up in a bun" (16). The Women's Hour also has an open rather than a closed ending which further destabilizes masculinism. Depending on their politics or sympathies, readers can chose between Sydney being dead or alive at the end of the novel: "[y]ou all thought I was savaged to death by two rottweilers, eh? Bad luck - alternative ending. May as well post-modern the post-moderns" (Caute 269).

More significantly though, both The Women's Hour and The Sex Fiend satirise academic women, or "edjimicated fluff" as Clean would call them (McGee 63). Academic women often have what Belenky et al term 'constructural knowledge', which enables them to "experience themselves as creators of knowledge, to evaluate their experiences, to understand that all knowledge [morality and social expectations] are constructed, contextual and mutable" (Park 76). So academic women are doubly threatening to masculinism, firstly because they have more education than most men and are therefore 'one up' in Schaeff's terminology, and secondly because this education often precipitates women into feminism.1 For example, the educated

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1"In the White Male System, relationships are conceived of as being either one-up or one-down. There are no other possibilities for interaction" (Schaeff 104).
Moira demands to be called a "[w]oman" rather than a "lady", illustrating her understanding of the political power of language; a university education affords women the theory and articulacy to analyse and reject the masculinism evident in both discourse and society (McGee 67). Clare, a 'mature student' in Roger Hall's By Degrees says,

I really wanted to have a talk to Duncan. Were we as we were because of my university work, or had it been like this for a while and my studies had brought it out into the open? Were my expectations different? Did he feel threatened? And would he admit it? I was certainly much more dissatisfied with my life at home. (Hall 44-45)

As Clean remarks, "[b]its of fluff are a lot easier to handle" (McGee 67). The Sex Fiend works to dispell "edjimicated fluff" through falsely representing feminism, invalidating the version that it does represent, undermining women's literary achievement and dividing academic women; its genre is particularly suited to its purpose.

Eric Bently theorises that in the past farce served to allow the audience vicariously to enjoy the adventure of adultery "without incurring the responsibilities or suffering the guilt, without even the hint of an affront to the wife at our side" (Smith 14). In the social context of contemporary New Zealand, feminism has replaced adultery as the predominant threat to masculinist social organisation. The Sex Fiend allows audience members vicariously to enjoy categorizing and dispelling feminism without even the hint of being 'politically incorrect' as the play is a hilarious farce. However, within this farce framework the play's reliance on the conflation of gender transgression with homosexuality and on an ultimately biologically determined dichotomy of gender implicitly reinforces predominant
definitions of gender, showing that "[t]heatre isn't [only] meant to be entertaining, it's [also] to tell you how to think (5)."
4. The Personal Is Political.
Michael James Manaia.

What we are seeing in our time is the death throes of the masculine principle. Shona Laing.

Foreskin's question, "Whaddarya?", is partly prompted by the inhuman brutality of Clean's violence, a result of his involvement in the Vietnam war: "I did learn a bit from Nam... You stick it to them" (McGee 66). Michael James Manaia's presentation of another Vietnam veteran goes some way towards answering Foreskin's question, at least in relation to one man: the audience not only sees what Mick is, but also why he has become what he is.1 Michael James Manaia, "[o]therwise known as Mick" is strongly affected and influenced by history, society, culture and family.2 Through the persona of Mick, playwright John Broughton reveals the devastating effect of war and of the predominant New Zealand masculinity on individuals and their relationships with others and shows how these have shaped New Zealanders' sense of values and self. Concurrently, Broughton presents resistance to the social construction of the self, creating tension between social authority and myth on one hand, and an individual's power to resist these and claim their right to a life of human fulfilment and peace on the other:

1Interestingly, Wellington audiences would have appreciated a closer connection between the two Vietnam veterans, as Jim Moriarty played both Clean and Mick in Downstage's 1991 productions of Foreskin's Lament and Michael James Manaia.

2John Broughton. Michael James Manaia. Unpublished 1990. 3. All further citations occur in the text.
Downstage subtitled the play as "[o]ne man’s fight for peace within himself".¹

The particular format Broughton has chosen allows this tension between the individual and social authority and myth.² **Michael James Manaia** is a monologue, but Mick is no simple raconteur nor a character in the traditional sense of the word. Rather, he is an instrument, an accommodating medium through whom Broughton can subvert linear time and present Mick’s cultural heritages, socialization, family history, childhood, adolescence, war experience, post-war experience and present devastation. These memories and events do not follow in chronological order. In performance, **Michael James Manaia** is a pastiche, a carefully organised collection of events, memories, images, music and songs; the connections, patterns and parallels between components of the text and of the drama form the meaning. Mick’s story may initially seem a jumble in his confusion and desperation as he searches for justification and absolution, but the process of searching among his memories and knowledge reveals the connections in his personal and cultural history which explain his violence towards his deformed baby.

To emphasise the connections in Mick’s narration, director Colin McColl chose to frame the performance of **Michael James Manaia** as if Mick is speaking in group therapy. Within this framework the monologue works as a pattern of avoidance leading towards disclosure, giving the performance a strong structure, focus

¹The Evening Post (13 February 1991): 41.

²Barthes defines myth as “a form of communication, a ‘language’, a system of second order meaning”; the mythologist is concerned with the image of war, not the “properties and effects but the second order meanings attached to it by social convention” (Culler 35).
and coherence without detracting from the issue.\textsuperscript{1} Thus, Mick's disclosure of his killing of his deformed son is the culmination of the performance. All that he says and does on stage contextualizes his violent act towards the baby and works towards enabling him to speak of the killing. His speaking out about his experiences presents the possibility of him being healed from the brutalising effects of war, and from a masculinity which accommodates and valorizes war.\textsuperscript{2}

Mick reveals that from an early age he encountered various social validations of war and imperialism. As a child he knew that his father "was overseas during the war, Maori Battalion an' all that" (5). He later whistles the tune of the Maori Battalion's song, the words of which glorify war as an honourable and patriotic activity:

\begin{verbatim}
Maori Battalion march to victory
Maori Battalion staunch and true.
Maori Battalion march to glory.
Take the honour of your people with you.
And we'll march, march, march to the enemy,
And we'll fight right to the end,
For God, for king and for Country, . . .
Aue!
AKE AKE KIA KAHA E! (2:27)
\end{verbatim}

Soldiers' loyalty to king and country also featured in Mick's English grandmother's "huge black an' white etching of The Charge of The Light Brigade. . . [which showed] the whole Imperial bit"(9). Mick "really liked" this etching and imagined the soldiers in the picture saying, "[t]ake that, you swine! You dirty foreign pig! That's not cricket! Take that, an' that! For the Regiment! For England!" (9).

\textsuperscript{1}Interview with Colin McColl, 30 November 1992.

\textsuperscript{2}Very often the breakthrough in the healing process of therapy occurs when a person begins to speak of, and thus acknowledge, the action or problem that has resulted in their distress (interview with Colin McColl, 30 November 1992).
This youthful patriotism was encouraged by being given "a bright shiny medal with a blue ribbon" (8) to commemorate the Queen's visit. His interest in war was fostered at high school with "a regular diet of Queen and Country . . . [and] a whole week in the Cadet Corps at the beginning of each school year" (27). This week involved "film after film from World [W]ar II. . . . And [Mick and Mattie] thought it was fucking great" (29).

The boys' acceptance of the social glorification of war is evident in Mattie's "mesmeris[m]" (31) by the angel Buster brought back from the battle for the monastery at Cassino. To Mattie, the angel seems to represent victory and "glory" (30) as shown in the film of the event: "[t]he Monastery was no more. By Jeez, did we cheer. Great war-ry stuff" (29). This portrayal of war as continuous glamorous patriotic victory motivates Mick to join the army: "I was gonna get in there an' I was gonna kill, kill, kill. The yellow peril. Reds under the beds" (2:1). At this stage, and even later in Singapore, Mick has no real conception that he could be killed while fighting; his whole platoon volunteers when the Commanding Officer asks for volunteers for Vietnam: "[t]hat's what we was in it for, an' we couldn't wait" (2:10). It is not until Mick is faced with the horrific injury of a fellow soldier in Vietnam that he realises that he could actually die in the war: "[t]hat's when I felt scared. I mean real scared shitless. I thought, fuck, [t]hat could've been me. I ain't ready to die, [n]ot yet. An' especially not here. Not in this fucking war" (2:16). His sudden revelation that he could die in Vietnam emphasises his previous acceptance of the unreal myth of war perpetuated by art, ceremony, film, song and other representations.

Because Michael James Manaia relates Mick's story in retrospect, the playwright is able to show Mick's present opinion of
aspects of his past. His singing of a bawderized version of “Rule Britannia” early in the play establishes a framework for the subversion of imperialism:

Rule Britannia, marmalade and spongy pud.
Five Chinese crackers up her arsehole,
Bang, bang, bang, bang, bang. (5)

In retrospect, Mick comments that the imperialist etching of the “The Charge Of the Light Brigade” is “[f]ucking bullshit man!” (9). He also recounts the time, when he was six years old, that he saw the Queen and realised that, despite all the “Union bloody Jacks [and] fuss and huha”, she is “just a person. An ordinary looking person” (8). This exposure of the propaganda surrounding and supporting imperialism and war has a parallel later in the play. Mick whistles “Maori Battalion” just after his graphic description of the little Vietnamese girl being “Fucked Up Beyond All Recognition” by a grenade, and telling how after witnessing this he suddenly understood the reason for his father’s attitude and behaviour (2:26). This juxtaposition exposes the myth of war that the imperialist song projects: among “Maori Battalion”’s glorification of war and victory there is no mention of people being mutilated or killed, or of soldiers witnessing horrific injury and death and the effects of this on their post-war selves and relationships. Hence, alongside Michael James Manaia’s discussion of the real physical danger of war is an exposure of the social propaganda and authority which perpetuate the glorification and acceptance of war.

Social authority, in the form of army superiors, is resisted in a series of incidents in the play. During barracks week at school Mattie does not accept the Colonel’s absolute authority:
"And where's your name tag, boy, why aren't you wearing your name tag? Haven't you got a name?"

"Memorised it and destroyed it, Sir." . . .

So he pokes his cane into Mattie's stomach an' he says:

"There's an idiot on the end of this cane, boy"

"Not at this end, Sir", you said. (28)

Mick also subverts authority by telling Sergeant Harris that he is on "L.A.P. duties" without "let[ting] on that L.A.P. st[ands] for 'Little As Possible'" (2:3). Similarly, Private Jones impersonates a sergeant to steal from army stores; he "g[ets] away with that trick about five times" (2:4). Corporal Craddock is also a victim of the soldiers' challenge to authority. At Waiouru the army trainees decide to "move in the opposite direction to what he want[s]" (2:4): they later "fix" the Corporal:

[st]piked his drinks and he was history.
The Big C was last seen,
completely starkers,
covered in vomit,
lying on his bed
which somehow materialised in the middle of the parade ground. (2:7)

Mick comments that his army training "was all a big game" (2:2), but acknowledges that "the game didn't always go our way" (2:4), as is evident in his later revelation about the American army:

Jeez, we used to see these planes goin' overhead
spraying the stuff.
To kill the messies they said.
Fucking arse! . . .

Agent Orange is a mixture of 2,4-D and 2,4,5-T
and something else called TCDD,
otherwise known as dioxin.
And do you know what dioxin is?  
Well, it just happens to be the most powerful fucking cancer-causing agent known.  
It also causes birth defects, still births and miscarriages.  
(2:37, my underlining)

Obviously both the army and imperialism have little regard for individuals.¹

Michael James Manaia forces the audience to consider the effects of war on individuals and on their relationships with others; the play emphasises that war has an aftermath for those who survive to return to civilian life. Buster and Mick have legacies of emotional and/or physical disablement from their war experiences, both of which are continually signified on stage. Designer Tony Rabbit’s larger than life size angel suspended above the stage represents the wooden angel Buster brought home from the Battle for Cassino, which in turn represents Buster’s emotional disability as a result of his war experiences. The angel’s omnipresence makes clear that Buster and his sons are continually affected by his involvement in World War One. Significantly, Mattie claims the angel as his own once the boys realise where it has come from. He even takes the angel to hospital with him after Buster’s emotional violence results in Mattie’s catching double pneumonia: Mattie’s possession of the angel indicates his inheritance of the effects of Buster’s involvement in war. After Mattie dies, Buster gives Mick the angel to put in the casket with Mattie’s body; Buster’s emotional problems seem to be largely buried with the angel: “[a]fter that [h]e never gets in a shitty no

¹Mick comments that individuality and identity are lost when in the army: “[t]he thing that I really enjoyed about being Private Nobody was that you didn’t have to think” (2:2); and “I just lost myself in all that bullshit” (2:5). Clean makes a similar point in Foreskin’s Lament: “[i]t’s got its good points, that kind of life. You obey orders, get your dough at the end of the week. You’re looked after, no worries” (McGee 66).
more. Hardly drinks much. Just an occasional beer, [at] home, with Mum" (38). The aftermath from Mick’s own war experience is indicated by his “peculiar habit of continually scratching himself” (i), which suggests that something is wrong with his body. His legacy from the war is the toxic effect of Agent Orange; the itchiness on “his forearms and the back of his neck” occurs where the defoliant landed on parts of his body not covered by his shirt (i). Thus, the scratching figure of Mick on stage under the angel is subject to the compounded effects of two wars.

Michael James Manaia and Foreskin’s Lament both reinforce their expression of the brutalisation of men in war by including returned servicemen from two wars, but there are many more deliberate parallels between Buster and Mick than between Tupper and Clean. Buster, a World War One veteran, is excessively physically and emotionally violent, apparently as a means of asserting dominance over his sons. It seems to Mick that Buster finds this control to be necessary to his self esteem: “[y]ou couldn’t stand the thought that either me or Mattie could beat you at anything” (14). Mick also states that “[w]henever [Buster] got pissed he had to go an’ get fucking aggro. Always wantin’ to pick some bloody row with us” (23). However, Buster’s drinking to excess and violence are symptoms of his emotional distress rather than deliberately malevolent actions. This is evident when Buster seems unable to express concern over Mick’s and Mattie’s safety when the boys endanger themselves. Mick reports that “the Ol’ Man . . . gave us one hell of a hiding” after the boys return after being swept down the river and staying out overnight (19), and, after they have endangered themselves driving Hank the Tank “at night, [with] no lights, [and] no warrant” (26), they have to stay home for six months and are
“belted with the horsewhip” (25). Similarly, Buster makes the boys mow the lawns after they have been away from home until it is late and dark without an explanation of their whereabouts: “trouble was our good day turned into a good night as well” (2:36). All the reported incidences of Buster’s physical violence towards his sons involve Mick and Mattie actually or apparently endangering their lives. Perhaps his fear of them dying, as his war experience has taught him can easily happen, can only be expressed by beating them when they safely return to try and prevent a recurrence of danger. Interestingly, Buster is able to express emotion when he is concerned about Marcia: “I can still see the Ol’ Man’s face that night Mum suddenly had to go into hospital. . . . It was the only time I ever saw the Ol’ Man cry” (12). Thus, while Buster is not an unfeeling man, he has difficulty articulating his emotions, especially about other males, and his war experience has exacerbated this. The effects of socialisation by the prevailing male ethos and war on the ability to express emotion about other men is also evident in Mick. He says that when he was a boy he “really loved” Mattie (15), but when he is grown up and in Vietnam his feelings for Jonesy are suppressed:

he never said nothin’, ya know, . . .
But his eyes said it all.
His.
An’ mine
For just a second.
A single split second of time. (2:21)

The most significant parallel between Mick and Buster is the death of their sons as the direct or implied result of their fathers’ physical and/or emotional violence. Initially Mick blames Buster for Mattie’s death, but then understands and forgives him once his own
experience allows him to realise that his father's attitude and behaviour are the result of his war experience:

Now I understand
Your war

Now I understand
Your fight.
Now I understand.
Your feelings.

Now,
   I think,
       I understand
           you.

Oh, fucking hell.

Dad,
I'm sorry.
I know what it must have been like for you. (2:27)

This explanation of Buster's attitudes and behaviour is an implied explanation of Mick's violence. Mick's new understanding of his father implies the possibility of a parallel understanding of Mick from Lizzie and from his own dead son. He addresses the dead child early in the play, "ya see boy" (5), as he similarly repeatedly addresses the live child as "boy" (2:40-41). Mick's belief in the presence of the spirit of his dead son is alluded to when he discusses abortion: "the wairua, the spirit of the foetus could come back and haunt us.... Wreak vengeance 'cos it never had the chance to be loved by anyone" (17). He then acknowledges to himself the presence of the spirit of his own dead child: "[t]he wairua, it's there, but it's not there. I can't see it. But I can feel it" (18). The narrative force of the play involves Mick's explanation to the wairua and to Lizzie of the events and beliefs precipitating the murder, interspersed with pleas for them to realise that the violence was not his fault.
Broughton cleverly uses the association of the word “fault” to connect Buster and Mick in relation to the emotional and/or physical violence they inflict upon their sons. Initially Mick accuses his father of causing Mattie’s death, using the phrase, “it was all your (fucking) fault” (14,31). The play then negates much of both their culpability by Mick negating this phrase when referring to his killing of his son: “[i]t ain’t my fault. . . . It’s not my fucking fault. . . . It’s not my fucking fault . . . It just wasn’t my fault. It was never my fucking fault” (2:22,26,32). In this way, Michael James Manaia establishes quite clearly that Mick’s and Buster’s attitudes, behaviour and violence reflect their socialisation and experience.

The play also shows how Mick’s socialisation and experience emphasise patrilineal relationships. Early in the play he identifies himself with his “Ngati Kahungunu ancestor” (3), and recounts how Kahungunu got married and procreated: “they begat so-and-so who begat so-and-so who begat . . . .”(4). This lineage is extremely important as part of the identity of Mick and of his tribe: “Ngati Kahungunu. . . . Ngati means the same as the ‘Mac’ in Macdonald, the ‘O’ in O'Reilly and the ‘Fitz’ in Fitzpatrick . . . They all mean ‘son of’” (4). Broughton consciously chooses to emphasise Mick’s identity as the son of his father, who is also identified with the male ancestor: “Petiti Hauruku Manaia was my Dad, Kahungunu through and through” (5). Mick’s very name, Michael James Manaia, signifies his identification from parents and forefathers: “[m]e Mum’s family were the James ya see, an Michael was her father” (5). Michael himself is thus defined and identified by his forefathers ability to procreate.1

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1Paternity is also valorized by the traffic officer “pull[ing] a cigar out of his shirt pocket” and wanting to light it up for Mick (2).
It is not surprising then that Mick’s sense of his own masculinity is closely associated with virility and active sexuality. He introduces himself as “Mick the Stick . . . Mick the Dick, or Mick the Prick” (3). He then identifies himself as (previously) virile and sexually active: “[t]o the wifey, though, I was always Mick. Mick the Stick. Boy, she loved it” (3). Mick’s virility is emphasised by his association of himself with Kahungunu: “Mick the Stick. . . For obvious reasons. It’s my Ngati Kahungunu ancestor. . . . A great lover, they say. The ladies loved him, or wanted to. Rather well endowed with the necessaries he was” (3). Similarly, Mick’s and Mattie’s sexual encounter with Doreen Hodges at Bible Camp makes clear that Mick considers sexual intercourse as a determinant of masculinity: “[w]e went as boys and came back men” (16). When a soldier is injured by a mine, he is immediately concerned as to whether his genitals have been damaged: “[w]hat’s that, matey? You’d rather be dead than have ya balls shot off. Fuck. So would I, I think” (2:16). For this soldier and for Mick, “a man’s genitals are integral to his self-esteem”.¹ Immediately after this episode the retelling of the story of Maui and Hine Nui Te Po reinforces the male fear of castration. The story centres on Maui’s attempt to “kill death itself” by entering the “body of Hine Nui Te Po through the doorway of Te Whare Tapu O Tangata, the Sacred House of Mankind”; when the fantail laughs at Maui Hine Nui Te Po wakes, moves and “CLOSES HER THIGHS”, crushing him (2:17-18). While this story is apparently about “fighting death,” the subtext involves a fear of castration during intercourse:

[w]hat is experienced by the male as authentic (heterosexual) pleasure is the affirmation of his own identity as a male. Each time he survives the peril of entering the female void, his masculinity is reified. He has proven that he is not her and that he is like other him. (Dworkin cited Chesler 218)

This fear of emasculation during sexual intercourse with a woman is also evident in Foreskin's Lament when Tupper rebukes Foreskin for being "seen getting back with some floozy at all hours" the previous Friday night (McGee 48). Tupper is apparently concerned about Foreskin "tiring [him]self out" before the Saturday rugby game, but it is evident from his language that he actually considers sex as a political arena for proof of masculinity: "[y]ou can do all the fucking you like on Saturday night after the game is over" (McGee 49). In Tupper's view Foreskin risks being 'emasculated' at a time when he needs to consolidate his 'masculinity' for Saturday's rugby.1 Foreskin denies that sexual activity tires him, but Tupper refuses to listen to him:

FORESKIN: I sleep like a baby, honest. I like ladies.
TUPPER: Can't you see you're letting the team down tiring yourself out like that. (49)

Thus, paradoxically, the valorization of the phallus and active sexuality as determinants of masculinity co-exist with a fear of literal or symbolic castration.2

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1In Pack Of Girls, Tom is not sexually intimate with Pam on a Friday night as he has "to save [his] energy for the big game tomorrow" (Geary 2). But Pam's later appropriation of this phrase when she is angry with Tom shows that the taboo on Friday night sex for rugby players is a 'fiction' which fosters division between the sexes. TOM: Look, I'm sorry about the other night. (PAUSE). Snookems . . . PAM: I'm saving my energy for the big game. (SILENCE). Tom, why do we have to be so aggro towards each other?

Through its expression of castration anxiety and the valorization of patrilineality and the phallus, Michael James Manaia contextualizes the importance to Mick of identity as a father, and more importantly as the father of a son: "[i]t was gonna be a boy. I just knew it" (2:35); "Yes, yes. It's a boy . . . A BOY, YAHOOOO!" (2:39); and "It's all right, isn't it? You said it was a boy" (2:39)! Unlike Kahungunu, Buster, Michael James and "hundreds of fucking expectant fathers" Mick is unable to father a healthy child (2:39). From a Maori perspective it is important to have children to ensure ongoing care for the land. Boys are taught whakapapa or oral history by the elders of the tribe or iwi, as Mick has been by his Maori grandparents. Therefore, children play an imperative role in receiving, implementing and passing on Maori spiritual value systems. The death of Mattie, Lizzie's miscarriages and the birth of the severely deformed baby mean that Mick's family, the Manaia have no means to continue history and value systems into the future. Given his social conditioning, the miscarriages and the severely deformed male baby, challenge Mick's identity and masculinity.

His killing of the deformed baby defends both Mick's identity and masculinity: his violent action is foregrounded by his treatment of gingerbread men, the teddy bear and the Viet Cong. Mick tells how his grandmother made gingerbread men and how he "used to bite

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1Before Marcia's hysterectomy, Buster wanted to have many sons: "[a]lmost half a football team, Dad used to say" (12).

2Interview with Jim Moriarty, 18 February 1993.

3Mick also wants the baby as a replacement for Mattie: "[i]t was gonna be a boy . . . An' he was goin' to be just like Mattie" (2:35).
their fucking little heads off first” (9). Later, Mick is very upset and disappointed after Lizzie’s first miscarriage: “I mean fuck, I was out of my tree” (2:35). He destroys all the baby paraphernalia including ripping the teddy bear’s head off: “[y]a look fucking better that way, with no fucking head on ya” (2:36). Of course, these actions do not hurt the gingerbread men or the teddy bear, who are literally ‘other than human’. As discussed above, war propaganda and the mentality fostered in active soldiers defines the enemy as ‘other than human’; for example, the enemy is variously described as “the yellow peril. Reds under the beds” (2:11), “dinks, chinks, coons, [t]he little slit-eyed bastards” (2:11, 21) and “a pair of the little black pyjamas” (2:20). When Mick finds “two of the . . . little slit-eyed bastards” he has no compunction about “[s]lit[i]ng] their bloody throats” (2:21).\footnote{The definition of the enemy as a dehumanised Other is emphasised by his extreme concern for Jonesy, immediately after unconcernedly killing the Viet Cong: “I think we got a pair of the little black pyjamas. Fucking Charlie. I can still see Jonesy lying there, Half his fucking guts hanging out. . . . JONESY!” (2:20).} The Viet Cong and the deformed baby are threats to Mick; one to his life and the other to his identity and masculinity. He slits the baby’s throat in a parallel action to slitting the Viet Cong’s throats; at that moment his immediate reaction is defensive. The baby seems ‘other than human’ to him; he says, “[y]ou’re not a boy. Boys don’t look like that . . . You’re a gingerbread man. That’s what you are” (2:40). It is only afterwards that he realises what he has done: “I DIDN’T WANNA DO IT AT ALL!” (2:32). Mick’s recounting of this moment and the past contextualizes and explains the combination of social, historical and cultural factors that precipitate his violent act towards his baby.

While the play recounts the past, it also presents Mick’s present situation. His killing of the baby has separated him from his son and
from his wife: "[t]o the wifey, though, I was always Mick" (3, my underlining). This separation between partners and upheaval in the family is reinforced in *Michael James Manaia.* The earth on the floor of the set is "symbolic of the red earth found at Kurawaka, a place of origin in the Maori story of creation. When Tane Mahuta forced his parents Rangi (the Sky Father) and Papatuanuku (the Earth Mother) apart, where the sinews snapped the blood dripped forth and the earth turned red." Both Tane Mahuta and the severely deformed baby instigate the separation of their parents, which opens up a new illuminated space. For Tane Mahuta the new literal light in the world allows him to live in a new, healthier environment and abjects the limitations of his past circumstances. Judith Dale sees the deformed baby on one level as representing an impasse in relation to gender in contemporary New Zealand: "no healthy clear way forward is possible at the moment and we need to address this and give birth to a new consciousness." Most New Zealand men are emotionally 'deformed' by their socialization. Mick's killing of the baby symbolically liberates New Zealand men from their emotional 'deformity' into a new healthier environment, while the play, literally set in an illuminated space between earth and sky and symbolically set between Mick's Maori and Pakeha heritages, illustrates the problems Mick has with relationships.

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1Upheaval in the family is also signified by the three chairs, an armchair, a chair and a stool, that are the main props on stage, through their association with the Mother Bear, Father Bear and Baby Bear of *Goldilocks*. Like Goldilocks' intrusion on the Three Bears, the effects of involvement in war invade and upset the Manaia family.


Mick may imperviously imagine that he and Lizzie “had a really good relationship” (2:31), but Lizzie has a different view. She says,

Lie number one:

But I’ll still respect you in the morning.

Yeah?
Well, all you did was come,
roll over an’ then go to sleep.
Snored your bloody head off.
Then first thing in the morning you take off
bloody pig shooting without saying a word.
Nothing.
You call that respect?
Jeez, Mick,
How did you think I felt?

Fuck, Lizzie, that’s getting a bit heavy. (2:33, my underlining)

Although Mick has difficulty accepting or discussing Lizzie’s and his own emotions, she provides emotional nurturing for him, particularly in relation to his nightmares about Vietnam: “[s]he’d take me, hold me. Sometimes I’d cry like a fucking baby. She wouldn’t say anything. She’d be there. She’d just be there. For me” (2:32). Lizzie is presented as having a mothering function for Mick; she supplies the money for fixing his car and realises that he has no sense of responsibility of paying it back: “[y]eah, well, pigs might fly” (2:34). Mick also only proposes to her once he knows that she is pregnant:

I’M PREGNANT.

Well, fuck me.

So what are you going to do about it?

What are we waiting for?
Let’s get married. (2:34)
This suggests that Mick sees Lizzie as the mother of his potential sons, rather than as a life partner that he wants to make a commitment to. To Lizzie, no doubt, Mick's killing of the baby not only destroys their child but ignores her rights and feelings, as his response indicates: "I have to keep tellin' ya, Lizzie. It just wasn't my fault . . . So's don't look at me like that" (2:32). Mick never mentions how he feels emotionally about her, and even when he acknowledges Lizzie's importance to him, this is done without expressing his feelings about her: "I dunno what I'd done without her. Ya hear that, Lizzie. I dunno what I'd a done without ya" (32). Jim Moriarty states that "the peculiar attitude [Mick] has formed towards women [is] because of war."\(^1\) It can be argued, however, that Mick's attitude to women is only exacerbated by his war experience, and basically is the result of his socialization into the predominant New Zealand male ethos.

In Foreskin's Lament Irish unconsciously points out that "your average rooster", the average New Zealand male, defines sex as having a "naughty" (McGee 42). In keeping with his socialization, Mick defines his first sexual experience with a girl as a "naughty" (15) and, on another level, sees this sexual act as a subversion of authority, rather than a positive and reciprocal experience with Doreen:

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[s]in and fornication right under the nose,
well almost,
under the nose of the minister, the Reverend Chalmers.
That was what we enjoyed about it most of all, I think.
The fact that we actually did it right then and there,
at St John's Bible Class Camp. (16)
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His objectification of women is also evident as he ‘reads’ “Playboy Magazine” (2:37), and in his comment to Mattie about a nurse, “[j]eez, I like that little red head piece. Fuck, she’s got a nice pair, that one” (37). Mick’s attitude to women is paralleled in the Maori creation story:

Look now at Tane! …
He gathers the earth together.
He makes something.
He moulds something.
Carefully.
Carefully now, out of the earth.

He aha? What is it? …
Ae! A woman! (20-21, my underlining)

After Tane has created a woman, he “takes Hine Ahu One for his wife” (21) and they produce a daughter. He then “takes Hine Titama for his wife” as well (21), emphasising, both in language and action, male control of women and female sexuality: later, Hine Titama is “shame[d]” when she discovers that her husband is her father; Tane, who instigated their sexual union has no shame (22). Both Mick’s Maori and Pakeha milieus define women as Other, but the play also makes clear that Mick’s relationships with other men are problematic.

With its subversion of linear time, Michael James Manaia presents Mick’s socialization into the predominant male ethos. His familiarity with “[d]rag racing” is introduced at the beginning of the play; this activity involves a competition from which a winner and a loser emerge. Later in the play, references to organised sport illustrate the effect victory or defeat can have on men. Mick and Mattie have a sense of exhilaration from winning: “we’d come back from playing footie one Saturday. We’d played Central Hawkes Bay College and
had thrashed them. So we was fizzing” (26). In contrast, Buster is shown as negatively affected by losing: “[t]he Ol’ Man must’ve lost his bowls tournament ‘cos he was in a shitty” (36). Of course no play concerned with New Zealand masculinity would be complete without reference to rugby; the All Blacks’ success, “[i]t’s a goal to New Zealand” (33), contextualizes part of Mick’s and Mattie’s initiation into ‘manhood’. For Mick and Mattie this rugby party is their first experience of alcohol: “we ended up getting absolutely paralytic. Both of us. For the very first time in our lives” (32). James and Saville-Smith state that for young male New Zealanders “[a]lcohol consumption is part of the rites of passage into manhood,” and Michael James Manaia emphasises that alcohol is a means of determining masculinity in New Zealand. Corporal Craddock is humiliated by becoming ill after consuming alcohol: “[t]he RSM was not impressed the next morning. If you can’t hold your liquor boy, you’re not a man (2:17). Clean makes the same taunt to Foreskin: “can’t hold your piss, eh?” (McGee 81). Alcohol also plays a large part in the mateship among soldiers; they “hit the piss” in Taupo and in Vung Tau: “[w]e’d all get a few dozen ales in” (2:24, my underlining). The excessive consumption of alcohol covers a male inability to communicate, feel and express emotion; as Gordon McLauchlan points out, “[a]lcohol has created a kind of emotional nihilism among so many of my male acquaintances”.

situation they are in after drinking considerable amounts of alcohol and collectively:

[]he whole platoon,
The whole fucking lot of us would descend onto one bar,
ten guitars an' all . . .

(Sings) The old home town looks the same,
As I step down from the train.
An' there to meet me was my momma
an' poppa.

Fuck, would we give that one heaps.
I mean, fucking heaps with a capital Haitch!
Trouble was we'd all burst into fucking tears. (23)

Just as Michael James Manaia exposes the social authorities, propaganda and the myth of war, so too does the play expose a masculinity which valorizes winning at the expense of someone else, prevents real communication and generally anaesthetizes the emotions.

The act of exposing war and masculinity as social constructs is a means of presenting the possible liberation from the social construction of the self. Although the play expresses Mick's present distress, it also suggests the possibility of his healing. As discussed above, Mattie's death causes Buster to stop his emotional and physical violence and excessive drinking. The close connections made in the play between Buster and Mick implies that Mick can also overcome his grief and modify his behaviour and attitudes. In Act One, Mattie's death and Buster's healing are reported at the very end of the act; similarly Mick's acknowledgement of the killing and his distress occurs at the end of Act Two. Buster realises that he can change; similarly Mick's final confession of the killing also indicates an acceptance of some personal responsibility for his actions and attitude, despite the social determination of his behaviour.
The drama ends with Mick wailing after disclosing that he has killed his and Lizzie's deformed baby. His wail was taken up and intensified by singer Cherie O'Shea, giving strong vocal and public expression to Mick's acknowledgement of the intense pain and suffering from his life experience. His expression of his pain and suffering is a liberation from the customary silence about the reality and effects of war, and from New Zealand's predominant masculinity which prohibits the expression of feelings. Buster says nothing about his emotions or about the reality of war when Mick is going to Singapore with the army:

[and the Ol' Man.
Well, he wasn't saying too much. . . .

I thought you'd be pleased.
Me going.

Fuck what do I have to do to please you?
Can't you say anything? (2:9)

Later, unlike Buster, Mick does recount the reality of war:

[ah' I seen it all.
I mean fuck,
did I ever.

But I ain't talkin' about that.
No one talks about that.
Not ever.

Until now. (2:10-11, my underlining)

Mick's vocalization of his experience of war and the accompanying exposure of the predominant New Zealand masculinity parallels John Broughton's and Downstage Theatre's actions in writing and producing Michael James Manaia. Jim Moriarty, who plays Mick, believes that Michael James Manaia "is a cleansing process. By
reliving his experience Mick is able to let it go, to expunge it. Maybe killing the baby is breaking the cycle of generations of violent men and the cycle of emotional trauma." This play is the story of one man, but it’s public performance challenges the associated social definitions of masculinity and war and complicit silence about these myths: the personal is political.

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Jim Moriarty also reports that one Vietnam veteran stayed sitting in the auditorium for about twenty minutes after a performance. Jim went out to talk to the man, but he left. Later, the man wrote to say that seeing Michael James Manaia had precipitated him into being able to go and visit the grave of his own dead deformed child and weep, and also to be able to be reconciled with his estranged wife (interview with Jim Moriarty, 18 February 1993).
Conclusion: ‘Whaddarwe?’

We were all mixed up with games and images. . . We play our games everyday. We never say what we mean. MAN, *The Mating Dance*.

What about the breaking down of stereotypes, so that people can really be themselves. Moira, *Foreskin’s Lament*.

Clare Corridan’s *The Mating Dance* was first produced in 1981, one year after *Foreskin’s Lament* was first seen in New Zealand theatres. *The Mating Dance’s* two characters, WOMAN and MAN, are both individuals and representative of New Zealand men and women. Their brief encounter and private thoughts give a perceptive and revealing insight into the anguish and confusion generally involved in relationships with the opposite sex. *The Mating Dance’s* focus on these effects of gender role socialization addresses an arena neglected in *Foreskin’s Lament*. The MAN says, “[s]he was the bloody same. Female. The weaker sex. Until they want they own way. A bloodsucker. A potential parasite who can’t see past my flat, my car and my wage packet” (Corridan 21). The WOMAN observes that, “[m]en are different, of course. They breeze through the whole thing. They are the hunters. We wait for them” (Corridan 14). But, the WOMAN and the MAN also express desire for real communication with the opposite sex: MAN, “I want your friendship and approval” (Corridan 19), and WOMAN, “I want someone who I can tell that I drink raindrops and catch thistle down to make a wish. Someone who won’t laugh” (Corridan 18). Both *The Mating Dance* and *Foreskin’s Lament* end with questions. The WOMAN says, “[a]nd
here we stand. Both together on the edge of something. Men and women. Will it change? Will we go in circles forever? Changing partners but never changing the dance?" (Corridan 24). The resonance of the WOMAN’s questions and Foreskin’s “Whaddarya?” echo throughout much of New Zealand’s theatre in the subsequent ten or so years, finding some answers, provoking defense or precipitating new questions.

The period in which these two plays were written, the early 1980s, was a time of crisis in New Zealand’s social history. The tensions, contradictions and lack of cohesive identity in Foreskin’s Lament reflect society at that time. The phenomenal patronage of this play indicated New Zealanders’ concern with questioning the traditional and monolithic rugby mythology, and illustrates the possibility of focusing on theatre to observe and examine social trends and issues. In 1981, Mike Nicolaidi commented that “Foreskin’s Lament can . . . be seen as foreshadowing a sterner reality -- for the individual and for the nation -- urging us to take only the best from our past, our mythologies, and not allowing ourselves to become hamstrung by them.”¹ Downstage’s production of the original script of Foreskin’s Lament in 1991 allows reconsideration not only of New Zealand’s past in relation to the present, but also a retrospective consideration of the effect of this play on our present society and theatre.

Foreskin’s Lament’s predominant concerns, gender, sexuality and violence, continue to feature in New Zealand theatre, but within much wider and more diverse contexts. Contemporary plays are not only examining contemporary society, as Foreskin’s Lament

originally did, but also examine our past and our past mythologies. Daughters Of Heaven, Michael James Manaia and The Sex Fiend, which only premiered in the early 1990s, all involve a representation, re-examination and/or reinterpretation of the past, as an attempt to come to terms with, understand or reinterpret actual historical violence.\(^1\) Edward Bond theorises that "the cause and solution of the problem of human violence lie not in our instincts but in our social relationships" (Bond 12). Correspondingly, Bond's Saved is not so much concerned with the actual violence involved in stoning a baby to death, but more with exploring and expressing the social order that precipitates such violence.

Daughters Of Heaven's return to the 1950s involves a re-examination of that period's homogeneous, monolithic social order with its rigid definition of gender roles. Peter Harcourt comments that, during the 1950s, playwright Bruce Mason attacked the repression, 'keeping up appearances' and the "grey blanket of sameness which he considers to be the New Zealander's idea of equality" (Harcourt 99). Although she is writing thirty or so years later than Mason, Forster's representation of the circumstances and relationships surrounding the 1954 Parker Hulme murder also exposes the social repression of the individual in the 1950s.\(^2\) Michael James Manaia explores the 1950s through to the 1980s to reveal the social circumstances precipitating physical and emotional violence in

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\(^1\)Michael James Manaia is partly based on a Vietnam veteran killing his baby, whose severe deformity was caused by the effects of Agent Orange. Broughton's father was a medical witness in the court case which ensued (interview with Jim Moriarty, 18 February 1993).

\(^2\)Part of the fascination the Parker Hulme case had for the 1950s may have been a vicarious, momentary liberation in reading about both young and older women who did not follow society's dictates.
two men, who are also representative of their generations. Although 
The Sex Fiend could be set at any time between 1984 and 1993, it is contextualized by, refers to, and illustrates female violence which disrupts the social order: "[o]ne of the reasons men are so outraged after the attack on Mervyn [Thompson] is that the privileges they have taken for granted - making the rules, taking sexual initiatives, not being afraid of women - have been violated" (Rankine 12). The Sex Fiend’s preoccupation with male fear of physical castration can ironically be seen as a reversal of the threat of sexual violence that governs and contains women’s behaviour in New Zealand society, and which has intensified since 1984.¹ On another level, The Sex Fiend illustrates that texts, scripts and dramas do not only represent and/or examine society, but are also influenced by the fact that playwrights, practitioners and audiences are subject to society. However, resisting readings of the The Sex Fiend, Foreskin’s Lament, Daughters Of Heaven, Pack Of Girls and Michael James Manaia reveal the emotional and/or sexual violence inherent in masculinist society.

If the masculinist marginalization and misrepresentation of women as objects, Other or invisible is apparent, in varying degrees, in every play considered here except Ladies’ Night, what does it say about the marginalization of actual women in New Zealand theatres when the Listener & TV Times’ double page feature, which is apparently a review of theatre in New Zealand in 1991, is by two male critics, features men in four out of four photographs and mentions only one female actor and one female writer/director/actor out of a total of seventeen mentions of playwright or practitioners.² The

¹See Introduction ii) “Sleeping With The Enemy: The Cultural Context.”
absence and invalidation of women in this review only reinforces the earlier argument about the masculinist invalidation of women's achievements evident in The Sex Fiend, and emphasizes the social mediation of theatre and discourse.\textsuperscript{1}

However, on a much more positive note, Ladies' Night and Pack Of Girls, consciously reinterpret social contexts, regenerate gender and offer positive solutions to gender inequality or issues. The appearance and success of Pack Of Girls in the early 1990s redresses the marginalization of women inherent in Foreskin's Lament and presents the possibility of a harmonious relationship between women, men and rugby, fulfilling Don MacKenzie's 1980 prediction that rugby is "an identity to be refined, not rejected."\textsuperscript{2}

However, what New Zealand theatre has developed to show since the first productions of Foreskin's Lament is that rugby is now only one social arena. Correspondingly, Pack Of Girls was much better received in more rural dominated areas like Palmerston North and Dunedin, than it was in more urbane urban centres like Wellington and Auckland.\textsuperscript{3}

In the programme of Downstage's 1991 production of Foreskin's Lament, David Carnegie writes, "[i]t is true that times have

\textsuperscript{2}Bill Lennox and Denis Welch. "Ups and Downs." Listener & TV Times (6 January 1992): 44-45. The South Island suffers the same fate as female playwrights and practitioners.

\textsuperscript{1}In Wellington and Auckland in 1991, there were 'professional' productions of plays by Anne Jones, Anna Marbrook, Rena Owen, and René, and Tina Retigen, Cathy Denford, Mari Adams, Riwia Brown, Robyn Grace, Anna Marbrook and Anne Jones directed productions. Doubtless, there were also more than two female actors employed in those cities in 1991.

\textsuperscript{3}Don MacKenzie. Auckland Star (6 October 1980).

\textsuperscript{3}So far no one has produced Pack Of Girls in conservative Christchurch. However, 1993 will see this play produced by amateur societies in Balclutha, Taupo and Nelson, where the play "will probably be more close to the bone . . . with a greater connection to rural concerns" (letter from David Geary, 25 January 1993).
changed; but this play, set in 1976 shows us where we have come from. 'Whaddarya?' (or, 'What are we?') still has no clear answer. The questions still apply, perhaps now more than ever.”¹ What Carnegie seems to overlook is that there will never be a clear answer to Foreskin’s question to New Zealand men and by implication, to New Zealand society. 'Whaddarya?' no longer exists in the same context and with the same double implication as it did in the early 1980s. Even 'what are we?' implies that 'we' as New Zealanders can be defined. The question itself is different, depending on who asks it and who answers. The male, Pakeha, heterosexual Foreskin, is no longer a representative New Zealander, or “the voice of the country’s conscience” (Black 183), if indeed there can be such a concept in the early 1990s. In Ladies Night, Barry’s and Wes’ exchange certainly challenges historical assumptions of national identity:

BARRY ...I don't need no diploma to tell me what I am. I'm a Kiwi.

WES (INDIGNANTLY) I'm a Kiwi.

BARRY Yeah, well, you're Samoan ... but I'm a native.

WES You mean indigenous person.

BARRY Don't you insult me mate. My family's been in Bunnythorpe for 150 years! (40)

Barry, Wes, Craig and Norman are arguably many New Zealand women's new ideal men, replacing the traditional stereotype and showing that women now have the power to define their own ideal men, rather than simply accepting men's definition of men. Although Barry, Wes, Craig and Norman were invented by men,

their existence on the stage and their popularity only occurs through
the patronage of predominantly female audiences. None of the
Ladies' Night men play rugby: Ladies Night's reconstruction of
masculinity and the women playing rugby in Pack Of Girls negates
the traditional concept of male rugby players as representative New
Zealanders. It is no longer possible for one play to represent "the state
of the nation" as Foreskin's Lament did in the early 1980s.¹

In 1992, Lawrence McDonald asks, "[h]ow could any single,
necessarily limited, mythical construction speak to the unstable,
divided and multifarious 'New Zealand' which confronts any
potential film maker or dramatist"? (McDonald 2). The present
multifarious and more relaxed social climate allows an examination
of gender and sexuality to take place with less angst than was evident
in the early 1980s. McGee's uncompromisingly blunt approach has
given way to genres or frameworks which allow enjoyment,
exhilaration and erotica alongside, or perhaps sometimes even
instead of, the examination of social and personal relationships and
roles. Ladies' Night's strip finale, Pack of Girls' onstage rugby game
and The Sex Fiend's farce genre are all innovations in New Zealand
theatre.

Campbell Thomas suggests that it is likely that many of the
references in The Sex Fiend are simply outside many audience
members' frame of reference: "many [of those attending Fortune's
production] wouldn't know what a Sexual Harassment Officer is. It
was rather that they laughed at the farce formula."² Regardless of its

¹"When Foreskin's Lament was first rapturously received by New Zealand audiences
in 1980, no one doubted what genre of play they had seen. Meryvn Thompson
summed up the consensus. It was a play about 'the state of the nation'" (Sebastian
Black. "Playboys Of The South Pacific": The Plays Of Greg McGee." Australasian
dubious political agenda, *The Sex Fiend* is an extremely well crafted farce. Thomas also observes that *The Sex Fiend*, until the end of 1992, was apparently the only farce with New Zealand characters available for production. The appeal of New Zealand farce for audiences is clear from the commercial success of the premiere production of *Flatmates Wanted* at the Court Theatre at the end of 1992. Stuart Alderton, General Manager of the Court Theatre, is sure that many patrons who attended the theatre, probably for the first time, to see *The Sex Fiend* or *Ladies' Night* are coming back to see productions of other New Zealand plays, like, for example, *Daughters of Heaven* and *Flatmates Wanted*, and that it is the New Zealand content which is important to such audiences.

Correspondingly, the Court Theatre has programmed four new New Zealand plays in its 1993 season, and Centrepoint Theatre’s entire 1993 programme is made up of New Zealand plays. It seems likely then, that part of *Foreskin’s Lament*’s legacy, in addition to a preoccupation with gender, sex and violence, is the precipitation of audiences into theatres in times of social uncertainty to witness, recognise and enjoy watching New Zealand characters. It also seems likely that the appeal for audiences in watching New Zealand characters is due to the present uncertainty of what exactly constitutes a ’New Zealander.’ The theatre in New Zealand is certainly a significant social arena, in which this country’s tensions, uncertainties, and gender and sexual politics are manifest.

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2Interview with Campbell Thomas, 1 February 1993.

1*Flatmates Wanted* is written by Colin McCulloch, and will be produced at least by the Fortune Theatre in 1993.


3These plays are McCartney & Sinclair’s *Raging On*, Robert Lord’s *Joyful and Triumphant*, Michelanne Forster’s *Larnach* and Matthew Brown’s and Darien Tackle’s *Bag Ladies*. 
The multiplicity of agendas, audiences and New Zealand characters in this country's theatre reflects the multiplicity evident in our society. James Beaumont, a playwright/actor/designer/director, states "[t]here is so much diversity in New Zealand to enrich the work we do. I really feel that if we could transport the shows we do to Europe, to London, they would be in awe of the kind of work we're producing."\(^1\)

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