

Chapter Six

Sandra Lee (later Lee-Vercoe), who was first elected to the New Zealand House of Representatives in 1993 as the member for Auckland Central, was once quoted stating that ‘when you’re a woman and you’re a Maori and you’re a conservationist you can sort of get the feeling that you’re a three-time loser’. She sometimes felt, she said, as though she ‘belong[ed] to every minority group which was ever invented’.¹ This chapter explores the experiences and print media representations of Māori and Aboriginal women who have entered the political system as Members of Parliament (MPs). The history of the participation of Māori and Aboriginal people in the parliamentary system in New Zealand and Australia highlights divergences between experiences of colonisation across the Tasman. Although colonisation differed only in degree, the legislative provision of separate representation for Māori within the parliamentary system was a substantial point of difference. Far fewer Aboriginal people have become MPs than have Māori people, and only much more recently, and hence this chapter is largely focused upon New Zealand. I focus particularly on Iriaka Rātana and Whetū Tirikātene-Sullivan, the first Māori women to occupy parliamentary seats in New Zealand, while also discussing the experiences and representations of the Māori women who followed them into the House. I explore both the ways in which these women were represented in the print media, and the ways in which they articulated their own roles within the Parliamentary system. Within parliamentary systems historically dominated by white men, Māori and Aboriginal women are only now beginning to become prominent figures in the decision-making bodies of the New Zealand and Australian nations.

Race, Gender and Parliamentary Representation

Indigenous engagements with the parliamentary system of government were in many ways vastly different across the Tasman during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Perhaps the most critical structural factor shaping these different histories was the creation and retention of separate Māori representation in the New Zealand House of Representatives. Although originally intended as a temporary measure, dedicated seats for Māori have existed within the New Zealand Parliament since 1867. A separate Māori electoral roll was established in 1949, and from 1975 Māori were able to choose to enrol on either the general or the Māori roll. When dedicated Māori seats were introduced, however, the

1 S. Nealon, ‘Sandra Lee Under Scrutiny’, *New Zealand Woman’s Weekly*, 23 July 2001, p. 22.

measure was not an unambiguously enlightened and liberal one. Catherine Iorns Magallanes has argued that ‘the system of separate Maori seats ... effectively began as a means to disenfranchise Maori’.² Ranginui Walker similarly contended that the measure ‘was only a token gesture with deceptively manipulative purposes underlying it’, pointing out that had the number of Maori seats been calculated in relation to population figures, Māori would have received many more seats than were established in 1867.³ Instead, the *Māori Representation Act 1867* restricted the number of Māori seats to four, and this number was not increased for over a century. Until 1967 Māori (excepting so-called ‘half-castes’) were only able to stand for election in Māori seats, not in general ones.⁴ Māori influence in Parliament was thus limited by the small number of Māori representatives. Further, since the number of general seats was revised upwards as the population grew while the number of Māori seats was not, and since the number of people opting for the Māori electoral roll had no impact on the number of Māori seats, this imbalance became greater over time.

During the twentieth century, the continued existence of the Māori seats was at times the subject of debate, and it remains so in the twenty-first century. Recently, the need for separate Māori seats was questioned because Māori were being elected to general seats in increasing numbers, particularly after New Zealand’s switch to a Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) electoral system in 1996. New Zealand professor of law Philip Joseph argued that having dedicated seats, the number of which itself increased, as well as having Māori people getting elected to general seats ‘amount[s] to reverse or indirect discrimination’, which was contrary to human rights legislation prescribing a ‘non-discrimination standard’.⁵ The Royal Commission on the Electoral System (RCES) which reported in 1986 had supported the abolition of the Māori seats and the creation of a common electoral roll if MMP were adopted, but such a step was opposed by many Māori and the seats were preserved when the change to MMP occurred.⁶ This shift in the electoral system nevertheless played an important part in increasing Māori representation in Parliament. The number of Māori seats was henceforth to be determined in relation to the number of voters on the Māori roll, which meant that the number of seats increased to five in 1996, six in 1999 and seven in 2002.

2 C. J. Iorns Magallanes, ‘Indigenous Political Representation: Identified Parliamentary Seats as a Form of Indigenous Self-Determination’, in *Unfinished Constitutional Business? Rethinking Indigenous Self-Determination*, ed. B. A. Hocking (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2005), p. 110.

3 R. Walker, ‘The Maori People: Their Political Development’, in *New Zealand Politics in Perspective*, ed. H. Gold (Auckland: Longman Paul, 1992), p. 382.

4 Electoral Commission, ‘Maori and the Vote’, *Elections New Zealand*, updated 9 April 2005, accessed 19 January 2009, available from <http://www.elections.org.nz/democracy/history/Maori-vote.html>.

5 P. A. Joseph, ‘The Maori Seats in Parliament’, in *Te Oranga o te Iwi Maori: A Study of Maori Economic and Social Progress*, Working Paper 2 (Wellington: New Zealand Business Roundtable, 2008), p. 15.

6 B. Easton, *The Whimpering of the State: Policy After MMP* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1999), p. 36; Royal Commission on the Electoral System, *Report of the Royal Commission on the Electoral System: Towards a Better Democracy* (Wellington: V. R. Ward, 1986), pp. 81-113.

The proportional voting system of MMP created a more favourable environment for smaller parties, thus making specifically Māori parties more viable, and the inclusion of list MPs in Parliament meant that parties felt it increasingly necessary to put forward a list of candidates which was inclusive of women, Māori and other groups.⁷ Moreover, since the MMP system gives each voter both a vote for a candidate in their electorate and a vote for the party that they wish to hold power, all parties have an increased need to attract Māori voters, who had been paid scant attention for much of the twentieth century, while the four Māori seats were safe Labour seats.⁸ Following the shift to MMP, the number of Māori in Parliament did show a substantial increase, from six percent prior to the 1996 election to thirteen percent afterwards.⁹

At the same time, Māori have frequently sought political autonomy outside Pākehā institutions such as the parliamentary system. After the introduction of the Māori seats, as Walker has observed, Māori ‘continued to pursue their own models of political development’, two of the most important institutions being the Kīngitanga and the Kotahitanga (see Chapter One).¹⁰ In 1886, King Tāwhiao sought government approval to institute a Māori council through which chiefs would ‘administer Maori rights under the Treaty of Waitangi’, and when denied this approval founded a council based in the Waikato, the Kauhanganui.¹¹ In the second half of the nineteenth century, Kotahitanga mo Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Unity under the Treaty of Waitangi), also referred to as the Māori Parliament (Pāremata Māori), was similarly an attempt to establish a chiefs’ council in parallel to the Pākehā parliament which would administer Māori affairs.¹² Although not including Waikato, where the Kauhanganui had been instituted, the Kotahitanga was pan-tribal and represented more iwi (tribes) than earlier organisations had done.¹³ Through this body, a Native Rights Bill was introduced into the House of Representatives in 1884. Rather than debating the bill, which would have given the Māori Parliament jurisdiction over Māori and the right to examine land issues, the Pākehā MPs ‘simply walked out’, meaning that there was no quorum.¹⁴

7 R. Mulgan, *Politics in New Zealand*, 2nd ed. (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1997), pp. 64-65, 133-134. Under MMP, MPs are elected both through an electorate vote, thus entering parliament representing an electorate, and through a party vote whereby the proportion of the vote received by a party determines the number of seats that party receives, with seats not filled by electorate MPs being filled by those on a pre-announced party list.

8 Ibid., p. 133.

9 J. Karp, ‘Members of Parliament and Representation’, in *Proportional Representation on Trial: The 1999 New Zealand General Election and the Fate of MMP*, eds. J. Vowles et al. (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2002), p. 131.

10 Walker, p. 383.

11 Ibid.; J. A. Williams, *Politics of the New Zealand Maori: Protest and Cooperation, 1891-1909* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1969), pp. 43-44.

12 Walker, p. 384.

13 M. H. Durie, ‘Mana Maori Motuhake: The State of the Maori Nation’, in *New Zealand Politics in Transition*, ed. R. Miller (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 373.

14 Ibid., pp. 373-374.

In the early twentieth century, the lead in Māori political activity shifted to a group of young, educated men, known as the Young Māori Party, who worked within the parliamentary system to achieve their goals.¹⁵ These men were followed by a group of MPs linked to the Rātana movement, aligned with the Labour Party.¹⁶ A national Māori Council was eventually established in 1962 under the National Government, but was simply to perform an advisory role in relation to Māori policy (see Chapter One).¹⁷ The Māori Women's Welfare League (MWWL), in which Whina Cooper played such a prominent part, was also a national forum for Māori. In the late twentieth century, a group of young, urban activists re-ignited the focus on Māori autonomy, calling for the recognition of tino rangatiratanga (self-determination or sovereignty), which according to the Māori text of the Treaty had never been ceded.

In Australia, in both federal and state governments, far fewer Aboriginal people have held parliamentary office than have Māori people in New Zealand. By the end of the twentieth century, a mere two Aboriginal men had been elected to parliament at the federal level, Neville Bonner and Aden Ridgeway. Both men were senators, Bonner representing Queensland between 1971 and 1983, and Ridgeway representing New South Wales between 1999 and 2005. No Aboriginal women had been elected to either house of the Federal Parliament. At the state level, only eight Aboriginal men, and no women, were elected before the end of the twentieth century. Of these eight men, six were elected to the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly (reflecting the larger proportion of the population who identified as Aboriginal in the Territory), one to the Queensland Legislative Assembly and one to the Western Australian Legislative Assembly.¹⁸

In many parts of Australia, Aboriginal people were also denied the vote for considerably longer than were Māori. At Federation, the *Commonwealth Franchise Act* of 1902 denied Aboriginal people the vote unless they had been on the electoral roll before 1901, meaning that even in states which had previously granted Aboriginal people the right to vote, that right would not apply to those from such states who reached voting age after 1901.¹⁹ Although such stark denial of the vote was later relaxed in some states, as well as for those who

15 Walker, pp. 385-386. Although it is widely used, however, such a description is erroneous, as these men did not form a political party. Walker, p. 386.

16 The prophet and leader Tahupōtiki Wiremu Rātana sought to control the four Māori seats in order to unify the Māori voice in Parliament, and after winning the first two seats in 1935 he allied the Rātana movement with the Labour Party, which had won that election. The other two Māori seats were won by Rātana candidates in 1938 and 1943, and the alliance between the movement and the Labour Party continued for several decades. Walker, p. 387.

17 *Ibid.*, p. 388.

18 A booklet produced by the Australian Electoral Commission lists these men: Eric Deeral in Queensland, Ernie Bridge in Western Australia and John Ah Kit, Wesley Lanhupuy, Neville Perkins, Maurice Rioli, Stanley Tipiloura and Hyacinth Tungutalum in the Northern Territory. Australian Electoral Commission, *History of the Indigenous Vote* (Kingston: Australian Electoral Commission, 2006), pp. iv-1.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 5.

had served in the military, it was not until the passage of amendments to the *Commonwealth Electoral Act* in 1962 that all Aboriginal people could vote in federal elections. Queensland was the last state to allow Aboriginal people to vote in state elections, in 1965.²⁰ In New Zealand, on the other hand, Māori men were never explicitly denied the franchise although many were in practice initially excluded from it as they did not meet individual property rights qualifications, and Māori women received the vote along with Pākehā women in 1893.²¹ In debates on the possibility of federating with the Australian colonies at the turn of the nineteenth century, some opponents cited concerns that Māori would suffer disenfranchisement or that New Zealand's 'enlightened record' of race relations would be harmed through federation.²² Regardless of the relative impact that such concerns had on the final decision over federation, the early inclusion of Māori into the political system appeared to play an important part in the widely held belief that New Zealand race relations were superior to those in other settler societies.

Given the small numbers of Aboriginal people elected to state and federal parliaments, the existence of dedicated Māori seats within the New Zealand Parliament was at times considered a model to follow in Australia. Doug Nicholls sent a request to the Prime Minister and other party leaders in Federal Parliament in 1949 that an Aboriginal person should be elected to the federal House of Representatives by an Aboriginal vote. In the federal Senate, Ridgeway was a supporter of the establishment of dedicated seats for Aboriginal people.²³ In the late twentieth century, several proposals were made for dedicated Aboriginal seats in the Commonwealth Parliament, and an inquiry was also held into the possibility of establishing dedicated seats for Aboriginal people in the Parliament of New South Wales (NSW).²⁴ Franca Arena gave a speech in the NSW Legislative Council in 1995 asking that the State Government 'consider legislation to ensure that a number of dedicated Aboriginal seats be set aside so that the voice of the first Australians can be heard in this Parliament'.²⁵ She commented upon the existence of dedicated seats for Māori in New Zealand, observing (wrongly) that Australia only gave Aboriginal people the vote in 1967 while Māori were able to

20 Ibid., pp. 5-8.

21 A. Sullivan, 'Maori Politics and Government Policies', in *New Zealand Politics in Transition*, ed. R. Miller (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 367.

22 J. Bennett, 'Redeeming the Imagination: A Trans-National History of Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand, 1890-1944' (PhD thesis, University of Melbourne, 1997), p. 313.

23 A. Reilly, 'Dedicated Seats in the Federal Parliament for Indigenous Australians: The Theoretical Case and its Practical Possibility', *Balayi* 2, no. 1 (2001), pp. 82-83.

24 Ibid., p. 83. A report in Queensland in 2003 also considered the possibility of establishing dedicated Aboriginal seats in that state. K. Struthers, 'Hands on Parliament: Indigenous Peoples' Participation in Queensland's Democratic Processes', *Indigenous Law Bulletin* 5, no. 27 (2003), p. 4.

25 'Aboriginal Representation in Parliament', *Hansard and Papers*, Legislative Council, Parliament of New South Wales, updated 5 December 2007, accessed 16 July 2008, available from <http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/parlament/hansart.nsf/V3Key/LC19950920009>, p. 1131 (20 September 1995).

vote much earlier, and stating that ‘the New Zealand example is in stark and vivid contrast to the way in which Australia has treated its Indigenous people’.²⁶ Such seats would, if tied to Aboriginal population figures, be fewer than is the case in New Zealand. As Alexander Reilly observed, for representation in Federal Parliament to ‘mirror the population of Aboriginal people’, the 148-member House of Representatives would include three Aboriginal members, given that Aboriginal people formed just over two percent of the Australian population in 1996. As there was one Aboriginal senator between 1971 and 1983 and one between 1999 and 2005 in a 76-member House, he noted that representation in the Senate was closer to proportional.²⁷ The issue of including dedicated seats in a parliamentary system is a complex one. While many Māori have argued strongly for the retention of the seats as providing guaranteed representation and as a symbolic recognition of the status of Māori as Treaty partners, others have supported their abolition as a flawed model that can sideline Māori concerns. Yet however the seats are viewed, their existence plays a large part in explaining the greater numerical representation of Māori in Parliament than of Aboriginal people in Australia.

Divergent histories are also evident across the Tasman in relation to women’s inclusion in the parliamentary system. As previously mentioned, women became eligible to vote in New Zealand in 1893, and in Australia (white) women received the Commonwealth franchise in 1902, having already become eligible to vote in South Australia and Western Australia. As Patricia Grimshaw has shown, ‘the politics of race’ were ever present in debates surrounding the passage of women’s suffrage in both Australia and New Zealand, as was also the case in Hawai’i.²⁸ Women were not eligible to stand for election to Parliament in New Zealand until 1919, following the passage of the *Women’s Parliamentary Rights Act*, while in Australia women were granted the right to stand for election in the Commonwealth Parliament at the same time as the vote was achieved, as was also the case in South Australia. It took considerably longer in both countries, however, for women to be elected to office. New Zealand’s first female MP was Elizabeth McCombs, elected for Lyttelton in 1933 through a by-election after the death of her husband James McCombs, who had held that seat until his death. At a federal level in Australia, the first women elected were (Dame) Enid Lyons in the House of Representatives and Dorothy Tangney in the Senate, both in 1943, although some few women had been elected to state parliaments before this. The numbers of women elected remained small in both Australia and New Zealand for much of the century, and were still well below what was proportionate to population figures at the turn of the twenty-first century.

26 Ibid., p. 1133.

27 Reilly, pp. 85-86.

28 P. Grimshaw, ‘Settler Anxieties, Indigenous Peoples, and Women’s Suffrage in the Colonies of Australia, New Zealand, and Hawai’i, 1888 to 1902’, *Pacific Historical Review* 69, no. 4 (2000), p. 572.

Prevailing ideological constructions of gender, the pressures of family responsibilities, the nature of particular electoral systems, the aggressive atmosphere inside the debating chamber and difficulties in gaining selection, particularly in safe seats, have been among the obstacles to women's parliamentary representation identified by scholars, although many of these factors have decreased in importance over the course of the twentieth century.²⁹ Christine Fletcher, who was first elected in New Zealand in 1990, recalled those voting on the selection of a candidate asking her who would take care of her family, while Sonja Davies, who was first elected in 1987, remembered being referred to in derogatory terms such as 'granny', 'Auntie' and 'girlie' when she spoke in the House.³⁰ As in the case of Māori representation, MMP has arguably increased the number of women in Parliament in New Zealand, although it has not removed the 'underlying conditions creating the lack of political power'.³¹ The Royal Commission on the Electoral System (RCES) considered that a shift to MMP would facilitate a rise in the number of women MPs, and indeed, in the first election held under MMP in 1996 the percentage of MPs who were women did rise, from twenty-one percent to twenty-nine percent.³² In 1992, Rae Julian noted that New Zealand was ranked eleventh worldwide in relation to the 'representation of women in national legislative bodies', while Australia was twentieth, both being well ahead of the United States and the United Kingdom.³³ Since then, New Zealand has had two female Prime Ministers, and Australia its first female Prime Minister.

As might be expected, Australia and New Zealand differed regarding the representation of Indigenous women in parliament. The first Māori woman to become an MP was Iriaka Rātana, who entered Parliament in 1949 and served until 1969 in the seat for Western Māori. The second was Whetū Tirikātene-Sullivan, elected in a by-election in 1967 for the seat of Southern Māori. No Aboriginal woman entered either state or federal parliaments in Australia until Carol Martin was elected to the Western Australian Legislative Assembly in 2001. At the time of writing, no Aboriginal women have been elected to Federal Parliament in either house.

29 See for instance: R. Julian, 'Women: How Significant a Force?', in *New Zealand Politics in Perspective*, ed. H. Gold (Auckland: Longman Paul, 1992), pp. 403-405; E. McLeay, 'Rules, Values and Women's Representation in the New Zealand Parliament', in *Representing Women in Parliament: A Comparative Study*, eds. M. Sawyer, M. Tremblay and L. Trimble (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), p. 71-76; M. Wilson, 'Women and Politics', in *New Zealand Politics in Transition*, ed. R. Miller (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 418-427.

30 A. Baysting, D. Campbell and M. Dagg, eds., *Making Policy Not Tea: Women in Parliament* (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 18, 137-138.

31 Wilson, p. 426.

32 Ibid., pp. 423-424.

33 Julian, p. 401.

Māori women, particularly those of high birth, have always been able to play a significant part in leadership, although in some iwi women are only rarely recognised as leaders in their own right. Several women are known to have signed the Treaty of Waitangi, including Rangi Topeora and Kahe Te Rau o Te Rangi. Nonetheless, Māori women faced greater difficulties in being elected than did either Māori men or Pākehā women, and a similar situation appears to have faced Aboriginal women in Australia. Sandra Wallace argued that although ‘most’ women standing for election in New Zealand prior to the 1990s ‘faced a certain degree of prejudice’ due to their being female, the position of Māori women was ‘very much worse’ for they also met with ‘a lot of traditional cultural opposition’, at least among some iwi. Both Rehutai Maihi, who in 1935 was the first Māori woman to seek election, and Katariana Nutana, who stood in 1949, confronted ‘the aversion of tribal elders who objected to women entering politics’, as did Rātana in her successful bid in 1949.³⁴ Māori and Aboriginal women were also less likely to stand for election. Between 1919 and 1969 six Māori women stood for election to Parliament in the four Māori seats. Wallace pointed out that, if Rātana were not included (since she stood many times), a count of the number of campaigns in which Māori women sought election showed that Māori women ‘were less likely than Pakeha women to seek election to Parliament, even in a Maori seat’.³⁵

A number of the women whose experiences and media representations have been discussed in this book ran unsuccessfully for election during their lives. Standing as an independent, Whina Cooper placed sixth in the race for the seat of Northern Māori in 1963. Oodgeroo stood for election in Queensland twice, in the Greenslopes electorate in 1969 and for the seat of Redlands in 1983. In 1977, the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that Shirley Smith (known as Mum Shirl) was ‘the No 1 candidate on the NSW ticket of the new Uniting Party, representing Aborigines and migrants’. She was quoted stating that ‘we ain’t got no money to fight an election campaign and I don’t stand a chance’, but that ‘someone has to show the young blacks and migrants how to do it, how to become leaders, because they haven’t got much confidence’. She expressed her hope that ‘if I show the way maybe a black will get into Parliament the next time’.³⁶

What, then, enabled Rātana and Tirikātene-Sullivan to be successful in their bids for election? Mira Szaszy pointed to several important factors in an interview in 1986 when she said that:

34 S. Wallace, ‘Powder-Power Politicians: New Zealand Women Parliamentary Candidates’ (PhD thesis, University of Otago, 1992), pp. 310-312.

35 Ibid., pp. 79-80.

36 G. Williams, ‘Redfern’s “Mum” Shirl Takes Her People’s Fight All the Way’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 December 1977, p. 7.

It was suggested I stand for Parliament, but it was difficult to get into the Maori seats which rarely changed hands. I also faced the problems of being a woman and having to oust a Ratana.³⁷

As well as her position as a woman, she observed the strength of the alliance between the Rātana movement and the Labour Party, which made the four Māori seats safe Labour seats for a considerable period of time. Both Rātana and Tirikātene-Sullivan entered Parliament through this alliance, and it was not until Sandra Lee was elected in 1993 that another Māori woman was elected. Tirikātene-Sullivan herself was quoted in a documentary about women in politics commenting that it was ‘interesting’ that she and Rātana, the only two Māori women to have been elected at the time, ‘came on the background of [the] Rātana movement, where women are accepted in every way’.³⁸ Unlike many women candidates, Māori or Pākehā, Rātana and Tirikātene-Sullivan thus gained selection in safe seats.

The Forerunners: Iriaka Rātana and Whetū Tirikātene-Sullivan

Born Iriaka Te Rio in 1905 at Hiruhārama, or Jerusalem, Iriaka Rātana moved to the Rātana pā (fortified village) in her teenage years and became part of the performing groups which travelled through New Zealand with the prophet and leader Tahupōtiki Wiremu Rātana. She was part of the concert party which travelled overseas with him in 1924. During this trip an attempt was made to place Māori grievances over breaches of the Treaty before King George V, who denied the group an audience. Becoming a second wife to Rātana, she was by 1939 ‘one of the most influential women leading the Ratana movement’.³⁹ After his death, she married again, to one of his younger sons, Matiu Rātana. He was elected as the MP for Western Māori in 1945, and became tumuaki (head or leader) of the Rātana church in 1946. Pregnant with her seventh child when her second husband died in 1949, she sought nomination as a candidate for his parliamentary seat. Although the Labour Party initially preferred a non-Rātana candidate rather than a woman with many children, she was endorsed as the Labour candidate after having already begun campaigning and having stated that she would otherwise stand as an independent, potentially taking with her the Rātana votes on which

37 V. Myers, *Head and Shoulders* (Auckland: Penguin, 1986), p. 248.

38 J. Rymer, dir., *Standing in the Sunshine: Power* (New Zealand: Isambard Productions, 1993).

39 A. Ballara, ‘Ratana, Iriaka Matiu 1905-1981’, *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, updated 7 April 2006, accessed 1 December 2006, available from http://www.dnz.govt.nz/dnzb/default.asp?Find_Quick.asp?PersonEssay=5R7.

the Labour Party relied.⁴⁰ On 29 November 1949, she was elected with 6,317 more votes than her closest opponent.⁴¹ In the 1957 election, she won her seat with the highest majority of any candidate, but did not seek a Cabinet position.⁴² A foundation member of the MWWL, she received the OBE (Officer of the Order of the British Empire) in 1971, following her retirement from Parliament in 1969. She died at the age of seventy-six in 1981.



Figure 11: 'Iriaka Matiu Rātana', c. 1949. Tesla Studios. Mitchell-Anyon.

Photograph. F-55126-1/2. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

40 T. MacDonal, 'Iriaka Ratana', in *The Book of New Zealand Women/Ko Kui Ma Te Kaupapa*, eds. C. Macdonald, M. Penfold and B. Williams (Wellington: Bridget Williams, 1991), p. 548; J. McCallum, *Women in the House: Members of Parliament in New Zealand* ([Picton]: Cape Catley, 1993), pp. 59-60.

41 Ballara, 'Ratana, Iriaka'.

42 McCallum, p. 63; K. Sinclair, *Walter Nash* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1976), p. 304.

Rātana was elected during an era in which assimilation was a central framework for approaching Māori affairs. During her time in the House, she argued that Māori must reach a position of socio-economic equality with Pākehā, often urging that the Government assist Māori in this process of advancement. She stated in 1961 that ‘no Maori would want to live in the old way we used to live when the Maori was uneducated’. Speaking about the migration of Māori to urban areas, she exhorted Māori to ‘show even greater willingness to face up to this great challenge of adjustment’, while also asking Pākehā for ‘tolerance and understanding’ and ‘a continuing and increased readiness to extend the helping hand of friendliness and brotherhood’.⁴³ Although she sometimes spoke of there being unity between Māori and Pākehā, she also argued that Māori should be able to retain their cultural identity. In 1962 she told the House that ‘as a Maori, I must preserve my identity’.⁴⁴ The Treaty of Waitangi remained a sacred document to Rātana. In addressing the Budget in 1956, she remarked briefly upon previous speakers’ thoughts, before turning to ‘a subject not mentioned in the Budget’. That subject, which she was ‘sure the whole House will agree is important’, was the Treaty of Waitangi. Rātana pointed out that ‘had that treaty not been signed by representatives of our two peoples it is probable that we would not be meeting here in Parliament today, and there would be no such thing as the presentation of Budgets’.⁴⁵ Nearing the end of her career in Parliament in the 1960s, she began to speak more strongly of her disapproval of Government actions.⁴⁶ In 1961, she remarked in the House that New Zealand ‘leads the world in telling other countries, and especially coloured peoples, how they should look after their people who need help and assistance within their own boundaries’, and asked if ‘our own house’ was ‘in order’. She answered that ‘it is not’, and stated that ‘we should spend more time actively helping to clean up the factors which keep the Maori race in the position it is in today’.⁴⁷

Whetū Tirikātene-Sullivan, as mentioned above, also had close ties to the Rātana movement. She was born at the Rātana pā in 1932, the daughter of (Sir) Eruera Tirikātene, who was elected as the MP for Southern Māori that same year. Narratives of her life sometimes tell that Tahupōtiki Wiremu Rātana prophesied before her birth that she would become a leader.⁴⁸ After finishing school, she worked in the public service in several secretarial posts before studying for a Bachelor of Arts at Victoria University of Wellington, which she finished in 1964. While at the Australian National University in Canberra writing a doctoral thesis on contemporary Māori politics, her father died and she was asked to stand

43 *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives, vol. 327, pp. 1701, 1703 (24 August 1961).

44 *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives, vol. 330, p. 274 (20 June 1962).

45 *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives, vol. 309, p. 1760 (12 September 1956).

46 Ballara, ‘Ratana, Iriaka’.

47 *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives vol. 327, p. 1700 (24 August 1961).

48 For instance: K. Boon, *Whetū Tirikātene-Sullivan* (Wellington: Kotuku, 2006), p. 5; McCallum, p. 93.

for election in his seat. She was elected in 1967, then the youngest woman ever elected as an MP.⁴⁹ When the Labour Party came to power in 1972 she became the first Māori woman to hold Cabinet rank, holding the portfolios of Tourism and the Environment, as well as being Associate Minister of Social Welfare. Tirikātene-Sullivan was appointed to New Zealand's highest honour, the Order of New Zealand, in 1993, shortly before losing her seat in the 1996 election.



Figure 12: 'Whetū Tirikātene-Sullivan, 1984'.

Photograph. EP-Portraits of New Zealanders-Tirikātene-Sullivan, Whetū-02. Dominion Post Collection. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.

49 McCallum, pp. 93, 95.

A Dubious Distinction? Being First

Like Rātana and Tirikātene-Sullivan, many of the famous Māori and Aboriginal women mentioned in this book were acclaimed as having achieved a ‘first’ at some point during their lives, or as being pathbreakers (see also Chapter Four). In some cases, the women were hailed as the first Indigenous woman, in others as the first Indigenous person and in still others as the first woman to reach a particular position or to achieve a particular success. As well as being the first Māori woman to hold a Cabinet post, Tirikātene-Sullivan was the first woman to give birth while a sitting MP when she had her first child in 1971, and her experiences in this ‘unique position’ were the main subject of a *New Zealand Woman’s Weekly* article that year.⁵⁰ When she won election in 1993, Sandra Lee became the ‘first woman Maori elected to a general seat’ rather than a Māori one, as well as having been earlier in her career the ‘first Maori woman to head a county council’ in New Zealand.⁵¹ National Party MP Georgina Te Heuheu was reportedly ‘the first Māori woman to gain a law degree and [to] achieve admission to the High Court’.⁵² In Australia, Linda Burney became the first Aboriginal person elected to the Parliament of New South Wales in 2003, and Marion Scrymgeour became the first Aboriginal person to lead a government in Australia when she was made Acting Chief Minister of the Northern Territory in January 2008, having earlier become the first Aboriginal woman to hold Cabinet office. Prominent Māori and Aboriginal men might likewise be acclaimed for having broken barriers in this way. When Bonner was selected for the Senate in Queensland, the *Australian Women’s Weekly* reported this under the headline ‘Warm-hearted Mr. Bonner makes history’, and the reporter observed that ‘as an Aboriginal, Mr. Bonner made a historic breakthrough in Australian politics when he was selected’ as he would be ‘the first Aboriginal Member of any Australian Parliament’.⁵³ Many press reports throughout his career repeated this refrain, describing him as the ‘first’ or the ‘only’ Aboriginal parliamentarian.⁵⁴ Being acclaimed as having achieved a first in this way appeared to make a person more newsworthy, and those writing about well-known Māori or Aboriginal women in

50 C. Mackenzie, ‘A Breath of Fresh Air in a World of Middle-Aged Men?’, *New Zealand Woman’s Weekly*, 8 February 1982, p. 4; C. Raymond, ‘Baby Daughter Gives MP Unique Position in House’, *New Zealand Woman’s Weekly*, 13 September 1971, pp. 24-26.

51 ‘Lee’s Magnetism Attracts a Fierce Loyalty’, *Sunday Star-Times*, 13 November 1994, p. A4; L. Patrick and D. Heka, ‘Post Parliament But Not Post Politics’, *Tū Mai*, no. 36 (2002), p. 16.

52 ‘Meet the Country’s 17 Māori MPs’, *Kōkiri Paetae*, no. 25 (1999), p. 3.

53 M. Millar, ‘Warm-Hearted Mr. Bonner Makes History’, *Australian Women’s Weekly*, 9 June 1971, p. 7.

54 See for example: ‘Bonner Upset by Uncle Tom Label’, *Australian*, 9 February 1972, p. 5; J. Cunningham, ‘For Neville Bonner Life Wasn’t Always Easy’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 July 1979, p. 10; T. Gilmour, ‘Historic Start to New Thrust For Aborigines’, *West Australian*, 10 December 1979, p. 7; ‘“Rebel” Bonner Back on a Familiar Trail’, *Australian*, 30 December 1977, p. 2.

the media often listed any such claim to fame that a woman might have. A number of newspaper articles about Rātana's death in 1981, for instance, observed in the headline or first paragraph that she was the first Māori woman elected as an MP.⁵⁵

For some women, achieving firsts was almost a way of life, with each new position breaking further barriers. A string of firsts was often attached to media narratives about Pat O'Shane. As Kate Legge wrote in the *Australian Magazine* in 1993, 'if she wasn't the first woman, she was the first Aborigine, and if she wasn't the first Aborigine, she was the first Aboriginal woman'.⁵⁶ Profiles of O'Shane frequently noted that she was the first Aboriginal woman to become a teacher in Queensland, the first Aboriginal person to gain a law degree and to gain a Master of Law degree, the first Aboriginal person to become a barrister, the first Aboriginal person and the first woman to head a government department at the state level, the first Aboriginal person or first Aboriginal woman to become a magistrate or the first Aboriginal person to be appointed the chancellor of a university.⁵⁷ Sometimes, fine-grained distinctions were required to make a claim that a woman had achieved a first. When Lorraine Liddle was admitted to the Bar, several newspapers considered her achievement newsworthy in large part because she was the 'Northern Territory's first Aboriginal barrister', the 'first Aboriginal barrister of the Northern Territory' or, as the *Sydney Morning Herald* carefully put it, 'understood to be the first Aborigine born in the Territory to practice law there'.⁵⁸ In the *New Zealand Woman's Weekly* in 1990, Sonya Haggie asserted that, unsurprisingly, Te Arikini Dame Te Ātairangikaahu was 'the first New Zealand woman to become a monarch'.⁵⁹

Continual repetition of the achievement of one or more firsts might have underlined the newsworthiness of the women being written about, but it was a distinction which could have potentially negative discursive effects (as demonstrated in the literary context in Chapter Four). A status as first made these women appear exceptional, and thus could also set them apart as difficult to emulate. Further, it could place them as having been successfully assimilated

55 For example: 'First Maori Woman MP Dies at 76', *Evening Post*, 22 December 1981, p. 30; 'Death of Mrs Ratana: Maoridom Loses One of its Greatest Figures', *Wanganui Chronicle*, 23 December 1981, p. 3.

56 K. Legge, 'In the Case of Pat O'Shane', *Australian Magazine*, 31 July 1993, p. 8.

57 See: S. Kirk, 'Women of the Eighties', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 December 1989, p. 16; B. Lagan, 'O'Shane Retires, Leaving Her Mark on Bench', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 April 1997, p. 3; 'Magistrate O'Shane "Couldn't Go On"', *Canberra Times*, 13 May 1997, p. 4; L. Nicholson, 'Pat Says Goodbye to "Bureaucracy of Suspicion"', *Daily Telegraph*, 23 July 1986, p. 3; M. Scott, 'O'Shane Savages "Elite Uni" Reforms', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 April 1995, p. 7; S. Williams, 'Pat Fights For Justice', *Daily Telegraph Mirror*, 17 February 1993, p. 11.

58 'Aboriginal Barrister For NT', *West Australian*, 15 February 1986, p. 25; P. Broekhuisje, 'Aboriginal Barrister Sets Out to Beat the Barriers of Prejudice', *Daily Telegraph*, 19 February 1986, p. 18; J. Friedlander, 'Taking the Rule of Law to Her People', *Australian*, 14 February 1986, p. 3; G. McManus, 'Lorraine – the Territory's First Black Barrister', *Australasian Post*, 14 August 1986, p. 14; 'NT Aboriginal First', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 April 1986, p. 6.

59 S. Haggie, 'Te Arikini: "If You Don't Agree – Stay Home!"', *New Zealand Woman's Weekly*, 5 February 1990, p. 23.

into non-Indigenous institutions and systems of power, potentially serving to confirm that such assimilation was possible. If these women, or men, were first, others could be expected to follow. These figures could thus be read as implying that assimilation was occurring inevitably and successfully. The celebration of such achievements could also potentially mask the difficulties faced in reaching the positions in question, and could obscure how far out of the reach of many Indigenous people such successes lay. Lee was quoted in *Tū Mai* in 2002 saying that ‘a lot of mainstream media thought that a Maori woman winning a general seat was just great’, but she told them that ‘far from being an achievement it was an indictment on the electoral system, that it kept Maori women out of parliament in that area of general seats for so long’.⁶⁰ Some months after being admitted to the Bar in 1986, Liddle was quoted in the *Age* observing that:

I do not want to become an Aboriginal success story. That simply shifts attention away from the majority of Aboriginal people who, in a place like Alice Springs, lead desperate lives ...

It would only be when there were ‘hundreds of Aboriginal lawyers and doctors and other professionals’ that ‘things [would] really be different’, she said.⁶¹ Echoing the narratives of Indigenous women’s success in sports and the performing arts discussed in Chapters Two and Three, media framings that represented a woman as a first could thus imply that barriers to success had been removed, and that similar achievement was open to all Indigenous people if they had the determination to succeed. Ironically, these narratives could place the women both as exceptional, and therefore newsworthy, and as representatives of their people’s successful assimilation.

At the same time, the achievements of some of the first women to enter Parliament were potentially diminished by the assertion that they followed their male relatives into the position. Academics and other commentators have observed in many countries that a number of women entering parliamentary office were related to former male MPs who had usually died, particularly among the first women elected. The phenomenon is sometimes referred to as ‘male equivalence’, ‘widow’s succession’ or ‘the substitution factor’. In this analysis, ‘the relationship between the woman and her husband or father is assumed to account for her entry into Parliament’, and she was often presumed to be less than efficacious as an MP.⁶² Both Rātana and Tirikātene-Sullivan succeeded male relatives in the

60 Patrick and Heka, p. 16.

61 M. Gawenda, ‘Back Home to do Her Bit For Her People at Last’, *Age*, 1 November 1986, Saturday Extra section, p. 4.

62 S. Wallace, “‘Like Father, Like Daughter’? A Reassessment of the Concept of Male Equivalence in New Zealand”, *Women’s Studies Journal* 7, no. 1 (1991), p. 17.

seats they held, Rātana following her husband and Tirikātene-Sullivan following her father. Tirikātene-Sullivan was at times described as having taken over the seat of Southern Māori from her father.⁶³

Wallace has challenged this understanding of the electoral success of women in Parliament in New Zealand. As she shows, while thirty-six women were elected in New Zealand prior to the 1993 election, only five were related to the person who had held the seat immediately prior to their election and two were ‘closely related to former MPs’. While the potential public perception of these women as simply dutiful wives and daughters who were continuing their male relative’s work might have assisted them in reaching the House, Wallace observed that they often had considerable political experience in their own right and were active and capable as MPs. As well, a number of male MPs in New Zealand had also been related to former MPs. Rātana’s husband, for example, had himself followed his brother into the Western Māori seat.⁶⁴ Reiteration of the relationship a woman had with a previous MP could thus unfairly imply that she was less capable than were other MPs.

Representing Gender and Race in the Print Media

Like many non-Indigenous women who were elected to parliament, Rātana and Tirikātene-Sullivan sometimes faced obstacles because they were female, both before and after their election. In Rātana’s case, the intense opposition to her decision to stand for election was reported in the press, and explicitly linked to her being Māori. When she began campaigning in 1949, several articles in Wellington’s *Evening Post* reported criticism of her decision by Māori leaders. One story reported that Māori leaders from Waikato and Maniapoto iwi had opposed the selection of women as parliamentary candidates at a recent hui (meeting). Among those reported to have expressed such opposition was Te Puea Hērangi, who with other leaders was reported to have stated that it was against tradition for a woman to ‘be at the prow of a canoe’ and that it was not ‘fitting for a woman to lead a war party’. Te Puea had reportedly been asked to stand herself for the Western Māori seat in 1946, and had ‘declined the invitation on principle’.⁶⁵ Speaking at a meeting held by Rātana, Tohuroa Parata, who was identified as ‘one of the leading chiefs’, reportedly said that ‘in standing [Rātana] had broken the custom of her ancestors, and that he would not vote for a woman’,

63 See for instance: S. Kilroy, ‘Political Dynasty Ends After 64 Years’, *Dominion*, 25 October 1996, p. 1; K. Scherer, ‘Leaving with “Grace, Serenity”’, *Evening Post*, 25 October 1996, p. 1.

64 Wallace, “‘Like Father, Like Daughter’?”, pp. 18-26.

65 ‘Maori Leaders ... Unwilling to Follow a Woman’, *Evening Post*, 26 November 1949, p. 8.

as well as that her ‘place was in the home’.⁶⁶ Another article observed that the National Party candidate for the seat, Hoeroa Marumaru, had been reminded by Māori leaders of a saying recommending that ‘if the hen crows, screw its neck!’⁶⁷

Rātana herself seems to have responded spiritedly to these criticisms. At the meeting at which Parata censured her, she reportedly noted that she had been criticised for seeking election when she had six children, and was quoted saying that she wished she had more. She was also quoted as having said that she had been asked whether she ‘would be able to stand up to all the clever, well-educated men’ in Parliament, to which she responded that ‘there is a saying that women have long and broad tongues’, and that ‘the Speaker will find it very difficult to keep me in order when my tongue gets under way!’⁶⁸ In focusing upon opposition to Rātana’s election that stemmed from Māori custom, press reports elided the difficulties Pākehā women also faced in being selected as candidates.

At the time of Rātana’s death in 1981, media coverage displayed a more explicit focus on Māori custom as backward in its approach to gender relations. Koro Wetere, then MP for Western Māori, was quoted in the *Evening Post* stating that Rātana had ‘effectively broke[n] down the barriers in Māori circles to having a woman in power’, which he described as having been ‘truly against the customs and traditions of the time’.⁶⁹ The path-breaking nature of her achievement was thus recognised by Māori leaders as well as by those writing of her in the press. However, some representations of her as a path-breaker presented her in ways which reflected the social and political context of the late 1970s and early 1980s. In a particularly striking example, an article in the *Wanganui Chronicle* observed that in following her husband into office and holding the seat for twenty years, Rātana ‘inadvertently became an early “women’s libber”’ because she ‘was forced to overcome cultural and traditional barriers against a woman holding a position of power and authority above men in Maori circles’.⁷⁰ This depiction re-imagined her as a feminist activist, transforming the epithet of ‘women’s libber’ into a positive description by emphasising that she was ‘forced’ to be so in order to surmount the obstacles posed by Māori custom. Rātana would almost certainly have never considered herself in this way, and nor would she have placed herself in opposition to Māori tikanga (custom). Indeed, the writer of the article noted that it was through ‘her thorough grounding in all aspects of Maoritanga [culture and beliefs]’, as well as her work habits and her ‘genuine concern for the welfare of all people’, that she eventually ‘won the respect of those who initially opposed her place in the House’.⁷¹ Such reference to her as having broken barriers relating

66 ‘Chief Says ... Maori Custom Broken’, *Evening Post*, 28 November 1949, p. 8.

67 “‘If the Hen Crows, Screw Its Neck!’”, *Evening Post*, 28 November 1949, p. 8.

68 ‘Chief Says’, p. 8.

69 ‘First Maori Woman MP Dies’, p. 30.

70 ‘Last Respects Paid to Mrs Iriaka Ratana’, *Wanganui Chronicle*, 29 December 1981, p. 2.

71 Ibid.

to Māori tradition failed to acknowledge the obstacles which also faced Pākehā women seeking to become MPs, or the small number who had achieved that goal. These representations could thus imply that Māori culture was the problem, obscuring Pākehā cultural opposition to women in power.

In common with Pākehā women who entered Parliament as MPs, Māori women MPs were often represented in gendered frames in the media. Many scholars have examined media depictions of women in politics or as world leaders, identifying gendered patterns of representation such as a greater emphasis upon their domestic lives than upon those of men in similar positions, a focus upon their physical appearance, or the use of 'common gendered frames' in stories about them.⁷² Māori women might be represented in these ways as well, particularly in women's magazines. Shortly after Tirikātene-Sullivan was elected to Parliament, the *New Zealand Woman's Weekly* profiled her in 1968 under the headline 'A "Shining Star" of Maori Womanhood'. She was described as appearing 'fragile', having 'a slight figure and finely-boned, aristocratic Maori features' and wearing her 'thick dark hair ... girlishly long'.⁷³ A 1973 article after she became the Minister of Tourism described her as 'this woman with the flowing black hair and colourful clothes, Polynesian-patterned', who might 'become a striking ambassador for New Zealand tourism'.⁷⁴ Reminiscent of the way in which Maureen Kingi was represented as an ambassador for New Zealand in her role as Miss New Zealand (see Chapter Three), this comment implied that Tirikātene-Sullivan would be a passive figure whose looks were at least as crucial to her job as her deeds. Some years later, Alliance MP Sandra Lee's physical appearance was mentioned a number of times in articles about her. In 1994, when she replaced Jim Anderton as leader of the Alliance party, Karyn Scherer described her in the *Evening Post* as 'a glamorous 42-year-old Maori grandmother with a trademark whisper and a lot of hair'.⁷⁵ Ruth Laugesen wrote in the *Sunday Star-Times* in 2000 that Lee was '48, a grandmother and one of parliament's most glamorous women'.⁷⁶ As was noted in *Mana* in 1996, Lee thus had 'a consistently high profile because of her glamorous grandma image' as well as because of 'her advocacy of issues ... and her prominent role in the Alliance'.⁷⁷

Profiles of Māori women MPs in newspapers and magazines were often clearly shaped by gendered frameworks, frequently placing a greater emphasis on

72 See for example: C. Jenkins, 'The More Things Change: Women, Politics and the Press in Australia', *Ejournalist* 2, no. 1 (2002), accessed 27 February 2009, available from <http://ejournalist.com.au/v2n1/cathy.pdf>; P. Norris, 'Women Leaders Worldwide: A Splash of Color in the Photo Op', in *Women, Media, and Politics*, ed. P. Norris (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 164.

73 L. Newick, 'A "Shining Star" of Maori Womanhood', *New Zealand Woman's Weekly*, 22 April 1968, p. 8. The article translated her name, Whetū Mārama, as 'Shining Star'. Newick, p. 8.

74 J. Leigh, 'Minister as Salesman of New Zealand', *Auckland Star*, 17 February 1973, p. 5.

75 K. Scherer, 'Party on a Platter: A Big Challenge for Sandra Lee', *Evening Post*, 12 November 1994, p. 13.

76 R. Laugesen, 'Alliance MP Gives Rivals No Lee-Way', *Sunday Star-Times*, 13 August 2000, p. A11.

77 P. Bensemann, W. Harawira and D. Fox, 'Rambo or Rangatira?', *Mana*, no. 13 (1996), p. 24.

domestic details and personality traits than might be expected in similar pieces about male MPs, whether Māori or Pākehā. This was particularly the case in profiles published in women's magazines, a genre of publication within which male MPs were in any case less likely to be profiled. In articles collected from women's magazines, most published during the 1960s and 1970s, nearly two-thirds of the accompanying images depicted Tirikātene-Sullivan with her husband or children, or in a domestic setting. One article which appeared in the *New Zealand Woman's Weekly* in 1972 described Tirikātene-Sullivan as a 'busy Maori MP and mother', and focused upon her efforts in fashion design rather than upon her work as an MP.⁷⁸ In such profiles, Tirikātene-Sullivan was sometimes asked about how she would or did combine motherhood with her parliamentary role. In the *New Zealand Woman's Weekly* in 1968, she was asked whether or not her work in Parliament might 'mean postponing parenthood', to which she was quoted responding practically that she and her husband would simply 'need a nanny to help with [the] care' of any children she had while an MP.⁷⁹ After her first child was born, an article in the *New Zealand Woman's Weekly* reported in detail on the organisation of her domestic routine. Tirikātene-Sullivan's new daughter had travelled with her mother and been taken along to Parliament, and was later 'cared for within the ages-old Polynesian concept of the extended family'.⁸⁰ It is difficult to imagine such emphasis being placed on a male MP's role as a father and domestic arrangements.

Māori women who became MPs were also sometimes described in terms of their supposedly feminine personality traits. Profiling Tirikātene-Sullivan in the *Auckland Star* in 1973, after she had become Minister of Tourism, Jack Leigh placed considerable emphasis on her femininity. Although she had 'not yet made her impact as Minister of Tourism', he wrote, her 'style' was becoming evident, and that style was 'something feminine and artistic – a feat of personality rather than performance, so far'. Her intention to 'redecorate' in the hotels owned by the Tourist Hotel Corporation was described as 'the woman's touch' on the portfolio. A visit she had made to Fiji was said to have 'revealed ... the main axis of her personality', and she was described as 'sensitive', 'soft-spoken' and 'carr[ying] her love for her family around as part of her whole aura, her personality'. Such traits were, Leigh wrote, 'splendid qualities in a woman, you may think, but hardly essential to one of Cabinet rank'.⁸¹

A profile of Lee by Laugesen over twenty years later, in 1995, also made reference to femininity in this way. Although Laugesen appeared supportive of Lee, and recognised that she would be 'battling to create a new female archetype

78 S. Cornwell, 'MP Finds Empathy With Fashion-Art', *New Zealand Woman's Weekly*, 11 December 1972, p. 8.

79 Newick, p. 10.

80 Raymond, p. 24.

81 Leigh, p. 5.

of leadership in the minds of the public', she argued that Lee might have more success because she was seen to be different from fellow MPs Helen Clark, Ruth Richardson and Jenny Shipley, all of whom were 'seen by many as cold, hard and without emotion'. Laugesen suggested that Lee's 'occasionally tremulous voice, waves of long black hair and classical features' made her 'a very feminine politician', and that she might therefore not provoke the 'hostility in male voters' that other political women had done.⁸² Despite the significant shifts in social and political context which had occurred between Tirikātene-Sullivan's appointment as a Minister and Lee's accession to the leadership of the Alliance, similar discourses about what constituted femininity continued to be echoed in representations of these women in the media.

Even in articles which supported the election of larger numbers of women to Parliament, such gendered frameworks of representation could reappear. In her profile of Tirikātene-Sullivan in the *New Zealand Woman's Weekly* in 1968, Leah Newick wrote that 'youthful Mrs Whetu Tirikatene-Sullivan' spoke 'sound sense in a soft voice' and was 'herself a refutation of the rather tedious notion that a pretty head shouldn't bother itself about politics'.⁸³ Most of the pictures accompanying the article showed Tirikātene-Sullivan in situations outside her parliamentary role, including one in which she appeared to be in her kitchen cooking while her husband sat at the table and one in which she was shown dressed in a glamorous dress and applying perfume before a mirror. One picture which showed her in her parliamentary role depicted her standing beside a desk with a basket of papers, appearing a secretary as much as an MP. On the cover of the magazine, she was pictured sitting in a subordinate position on the floor beside her husband, who sat above her in a chair. In another article in the *New Zealand Woman's Weekly* in 1982, Catharine Mackenzie profiled the eight women then in Parliament. A significant proportion of the piece focused on how the women managed their lives and parenthood without being supported by a wife at home. For Tirikātene-Sullivan and her husband, Mackenzie stated, 'family life is paramount', and she described how Tirikātene-Sullivan dealt with the challenge of trying to be both mother and MP.⁸⁴ Although the article appeared to consider the women MPs as able to be advocates on women's issues in Parliament, little attention was paid to their ideas on particular issues. In women's magazines in particular, Māori women MPs were thus portrayed in similarly domestic ways to those in which Pākehā women MPs were frequently depicted.

At other times, however, gender was largely irrelevant to representations of Māori women in Parliament, their position as women MPs giving way to their position as Māori MPs. One permutation of such representations was the depiction of the

82 R. Laugesen, 'On a Lee Shore', *Dominion*, 2 February 1995, p. 9.

83 Newick, p. 8.

84 Mackenzie, p. 4.

women as, like male Māori MPs, advocates for Māori people in Parliament (see below). Representations of Māori women MPs in the media, like those of men, could also fall into similar binaries as those of activist women (see Chapter Five), a distinction being drawn between those depicted as assimilated or moderate and those depicted as radical. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Tirikātene-Sullivan was occasionally represented as an exemplar of integration. A 1967 profile of her in *University Focus* magazine, the magazine of the New Zealand University Students' Association, took this approach. Titled 'the "new" Maori', it began by asserting that 'physically, culturally, and educationally, the 32 year old new member for Southern Maori represents this generation's most triumphant synthesis of Maori and European societies'. Describing Tirikātene-Sullivan as having been 'immersed in Maori culture from childhood' and as fluent in the Māori language, the author[s] claimed that her 'ascendancy in politics represents a unique blending of Maoridom, youth, femininity and intellectual attainment'. She was described as 'a vital, intelligent woman of stature' and as 'a repository of the highest attainment of two races'. Tirikātene-Sullivan was reported to believe that the integration of Māori and Pākehā was achieved through intermarriage, and the article was accompanied by small pictures of her and her Australian husband captioned 'Intermarriage ...' and '...brings integration'.⁸⁵ An article in 1974 in the *New Zealand Woman's Weekly* also represented Tirikātene-Sullivan as an exemplar of integration. Reminiscing about the Royal Tour of 1953-1954, Dorothy Moses wrote that when Tirikātene-Sullivan performed Māori song with a group at the end of the tour, 'it seemed ... a fitting climax to Her Majesty's visit that, in her last few moments in New Zealand, she should see combined in one slim girl capable, modern secretaryship and traditional Maori symbolism'.⁸⁶ Such a combination of beauty, exoticism and modernity had been similarly applauded in Maureen Kingi and Kiri Te Kanawa in the 1960s (see Chapter Three). It was a racialised and gendered depiction which emphasised that New Zealand was a place of harmony, where Māori and Pākehā were one people.

By the end of the twentieth century, following the upsurge in Māori activism of the 1970s and 1980s, such portrayals had been replaced by oppositional representations of Māori women MPs as conservatives or radicals. Occasionally, Tirikātene-Sullivan had been depicted as holding radical views in the 1970s. Leigh described her in the *Auckland Star* in 1973 as 'a woman with a social conscience who is outspoken on racial matters'. In the interview which followed, Leigh asked her about her 'standpoint on the subject of race – for which she has reserved some of her strongest public statements'. Tirikātene-Sullivan responded that she believed 'in the priority of the individual as an individual, irrespective of race, sex, creed and class' and had therefore 'expressed myself

85 'The "New" Maori', *University Focus*, June-July 1967, pp. 3-4.

86 D. Moses, 'Unique Meeting of Families in Government House', *New Zealand Woman's Weekly*, 21 January 1974, p. 4.

because of my strong convictions’ when someone was ‘discriminated against purely on the grounds of their ethnic origin’. The media had depicted her as ‘a bit of a radical’, she continued, but such a depiction did not ‘represent me as I believe I am’; she preferred to ‘hope’ that she could be an ‘interpreter between Maori and Pakeha’.⁸⁷ By the mid-1980s, Tirikātene-Sullivan was sometimes portrayed as holding moderate views in contrast to those of younger, urban activists. An article in the *New Zealand Herald* in 1986 about her efforts to gain greater official recognition for the Māori language stated that ‘hers has not been a high-profile campaign’, implicitly contrasting it with the campaigns of others. Instead, she was credited with ‘spirited behind-the-scenes lobbying’ which had ‘laid much of the groundwork for the introduction of legislation to make Maori an official language of New Zealand’. Tirikātene-Sullivan was quoted saying that she had not been ‘a high-profile person’ and that much of her work had been ‘behind the scenes’.⁸⁸ In another article, she was quoted explaining that this low profile was because she led a busy life and there was ‘simply no spare time to devote to public relations’.⁸⁹ Shortly before she lost her seat in 1996, an article in the *Christchurch Press* in 1994 referred to Tirikātene-Sullivan and the three other Māori MPs as ‘aging MPs who [had] increasingly lost touch with the emerging forces in Maoridom’. Tirikātene-Sullivan was described as one of the ‘older, conservative and tribally loyal’ Māori MPs, and as ‘a dignified elderly woman with longstanding and deep links among Maoridom’s traditional, tribal leaders’.⁹⁰

Following the 1996 election, a number of new Māori MPs entered the House, both in the Māori seats and in general electorate seats. The familiar binary opposition between moderate and radical continued to be played out in some representations of these new MPs in the media. To some degree, this binary was evident in the brief labels that were applied to the new MPs in articles surveying the election results in 1996. While the *Evening Post* described National Party MP Georgina Te Heuheu as a ‘Waitangi Tribunal member’ and Labour MP Nanaia Mahuta as a ‘Tainui Trust Board researcher’, Donna Awatere Huata was termed among other things ‘a former Maori radical’, and Tariana Turia, who had been part of the occupation of the Moutoa Gardens (Pākaitore) in 1995, was referred to as a ‘young radical’.⁹¹ Male Māori MPs were also subject to such labelling, with new Labour MP Joe Hawke, who had been a leader in the Bastion Point protest,

87 Leigh, p. 5.

88 D. Millar, ‘Long Crusade to Revive Maori Tongue’, *New Zealand Herald*, 4 June 1986, section 2, p. 1.

89 S. Scott, ‘A Challenge for Southern Maori’, *Evening Post*, 7 March 1990, p. 7.

90 O. Riddell, ‘Labour Row With Maori MP Looks Like a Sign of a Dying Relationship’, *Press*, 15 February 1994, p. 11.

91 The Moutoa Gardens in Wanganui were occupied by protesters for seventy-nine days in 1995. The land, which was the subject of a Treaty claim, was said to have been the site of a pā and place of trade which had been reserved for Māori from the purchase of Wanganui.

described as a ‘veteran activist’.⁹² The *Dominion* referred to these women in similar terms, although providing more detail. Te Heuheu was described as ‘the first Māori woman to get a law degree’, and also as a member of the Waitangi Tribunal and Waikato University Council, while Mahuta was labelled a ‘niece of Tainui negotiator Sir Robert Mahuta, and a Maori studies researcher’. Huata was termed a ‘former Maori radical’ who had begun a ‘consultancy business offering executives bicultural skills programmes’, and Turia was described as a ‘Maori radical’ who had been ‘one of the leaders of the Moutua Gardens occupation’.⁹³

Some press articles also displayed a significant level of discomfort with the presence of so-called radicals in Parliament. Press coverage about Turia, in particular, often appeared to consider her a dangerous radical, especially when she became involved in controversial incidents. One *New Zealand Herald* article in 1997 referred to her as ‘the controversial Labour Maori MP’, while another in 2000 termed her a ‘radical minister’ and stated that she was ‘now beating her anti-colonialist drum from the Beehive’.⁹⁴ Writing in the *Sunday Star-Times* in 2000, Anthony Hubbard described her as ‘a doting grandmother with a gift for causing offence’ and stated that since she was ‘a genuine radical in a mainstream party’ she was ‘doomed to dwell in hot water’.⁹⁵ Such a concern was also occasionally evident in relation to Lee, both in relation to her affiliation with a specifically Māori party and her environmentalist stance.⁹⁶ She was described in the *Evening Post* in 1994 as having a ‘fiesty and uncompromising stance on a wide range of issues’, and was herself said to be ‘wary of those who use her Mana Motuhake affiliations to label her as a Maori extremist’.⁹⁷

Representing Gender and Race in the House

As is implied in these media depictions, both male and female Māori MPs were often understood as being advocates for Māoridom as a whole in their parliamentary position. This point illustrates once again the multivalent nature of the concept of representation. The preceding section of the chapter emphasised the ways in which Māori women MPs were represented by others in the media; this section focuses upon the ways in which they acted as and understood themselves to be representatives of Māori within Parliament. Many Māori

92 K. Scherer, ‘MMP Delivers at Least 15 Maori MPs’, *Evening Post*, 14 October 1996, p. 12.

93 ‘45 First-Timers in Parliament’, *Dominion*, 14 October 1996, p. 2.

94 P. Herbert, ‘Turia Free to Speak Out: Labour’s Maori MPs to Ensure “Co-Ordination”’, *New Zealand Herald*, 11 June 1997, p. A5; A. Young, ‘Radical Minister Turia Has Space to Beat Her Drum’, *New Zealand Herald*, 26 August 2000, p. A5. The Beehive is a popular name for the executive wing of the New Zealand parliamentary buildings.

95 A. Hubbard, ‘Turia Never Far From Trouble’, *Sunday Star-Times*, 27 August 2000, p. C5.

96 Lee was a member of Mana Māori Motuhake, one of the small parties which formed the Alliance.

97 Scherer, ‘Party on a Platter’, p. 14.

women did articulate their own view of their parliamentary role in this way, frequently considering themselves to be advocates for Māori in the House, and sometimes focusing upon Māori issues in their work as MPs.

While MP for Western Māori, Rātana worked hard on issues of concern to Māori. A member of the Māori Affairs Committee, she also worked with others to achieve the *Māori Vested Lands Administration Act 1954*, to protect ancestral land, and to improve living conditions at the Rātana pa.⁹⁸ Rātana did not speak often in the House, and when she did, she often focused upon issues of Māori welfare. In her maiden speech, given in 1950, she concentrated upon matters such as housing, health and land.⁹⁹ In focusing on the needs of Māori throughout New Zealand rather than on the specificities of her electorate or the state of the entire country, hers was a somewhat unusual maiden speech.¹⁰⁰ For Rātana, giving this first speech was ‘an ordeal’. She told the House in 1961 that it was ‘not easy to come here with a Maori mind and a Maori understanding, and try to express one’s views, as a Maori, in your language’.¹⁰¹ Three years later, during the Budget debate, Rātana observed that she would ‘not make any attempt to go far afield in ... money matters and other subjects’, but would instead discuss ‘matters that are bound more closely to the well-being of the Maori people’.¹⁰²

Tirikātene-Sullivan, who also held a Māori seat, likewise often focused upon matters of concern to Māori. Like Rātana’s, her maiden speech in 1967 dealt with the situation of Māori throughout New Zealand. She expressed her intention to ‘address my first remarks in this House’ to ‘the disparity in the socio-economic levels ... between Maori and pakeha New Zealanders’. Nearing the end of the speech, she stated that there existed ‘a glaring disparity between the apparently harmonious situation in New Zealand’s race relations and the real socio-economic levels’, warning that if New Zealanders ‘continue to rest on the laurels of past achievements’ the country’s ‘hard-won reputation’ for racial harmony would be lost.¹⁰³ She was quoted in a 1993 publication saying that ‘I am here in Parliament as a Māori advocate’, and would act as such for ‘all the Māori people, irrespective of tribe’.¹⁰⁴

Many Māori MPs who did not hold specifically Māori seats, both men and women, nonetheless also considered themselves to have a role within Parliament as advocates for Māori. Te Heuheu was quoted in *Mana* in 2004 explaining that she had entered Parliament as a member of the conservative National

98 Ballara, ‘Rātana, Iriaka’; McCallum, pp. 62, 66.

99 *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives, vol. 289, pp. 335-337 (12 July 1950).

100 P. Horn, M. Leniston and P. Lewis, ‘The Maiden Speeches of New Zealand Women Members of Parliament’, *Political Science* 35, no. 2 (1983), p. 256.

101 *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives, vol. 326, p. 406 (11 July 1961).

102 *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives, vol. 300, p. 1386 (22 September 1953).

103 *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives, vol. 350, pp. 548, 551 (16 May 1967).

104 Baysting, Campbell and Dagg, eds., p. 9.

Party because she thought it ‘important that Maori perspectives are present in every party that aspires to wield power in Parliament’. It was, she said, ‘just not acceptable in Aotearoa New Zealand today that a main political party should not have immediate access to Maori perspectives’.¹⁰⁵ She thus placed herself as a mouthpiece for Māori concerns and viewpoints within the National Party.

However, Tirikātene-Sullivan voiced her doubts after her retirement about the possibility of Māori MPs being able to advocate for Māori concerns if elected to general electorates. Commenting on the formation of the Māori Party in 2004, she observed that the pressure on Georgina Beyer as an MP for a general electorate to support the Government over the foreshore and seabed issue rather than to ‘vote as she wanted to, as a Maori’ had ‘refuted my hopes ... that a Maori could speak for Maori as an MP for a general electorate’.¹⁰⁶ Perhaps because of the tendency for Māori MPs to place themselves as advocates for Māori interests, Lee told *Tū Mai* in 2002 that it was ‘very difficult being a Maori politician’ since ‘opposition politicians can accuse Maori politicians more easily of some kind of bias or advocacy’.¹⁰⁷ In Australia, after his parliamentary career was over, Bonner similarly spoke of being an advocate for Aboriginal concerns while in the Senate, though also hinting at the difficulties of doing so from within a conservative party. A Liberal Senator for Queensland, he detailed how he had sought to ‘consolidate’ his position and ‘present my bonafides as a senator representing all people’ before beginning to promote Aboriginal interests.¹⁰⁸

At the same time, Indigenous women MPs sometimes expressed a desire that they not be confined to working on specifically Indigenous matters, or representing Indigenous people. Just as Māori and Aboriginal writers and filmmakers did not always wish to be understood as ‘Indigenous writers’, but simply as ‘writers’, Indigenous women and men elected to Parliament did not want to be confined solely to a position in which they represented Indigenous concerns. Tirikātene-Sullivan was quoted in the *New Zealand Woman’s Weekly* in 1968 saying that she saw her parliamentary position as ‘a two-fold role’, in that she sought both to ‘interpret one culture ... to another’ and to ‘make the greatest possible contribution’ while in office. In relation to the latter aspect of her job, she remarked upon a ‘popular misconception that a Maori member deals only with Maori matters’.¹⁰⁹ For Lee too, Māori issues were only part of her political agenda. An ardent conservationist, she was quoted in the *Sunday Star-*

105 C. Archie, ‘Pushing the Boundaries – Providing the Voice’, *Mana*, no. 59 (2004), p. 40.

106 *Ibid.*, p. 42. The controversy related to ownership of the foreshore and seabed, a right which many Māori claimed through the Treaty.

107 Patrick and Heka, p. 16.

108 N. Bonner, interview with R. Hughes, conducted 13 January 1992, in *Australian Biography*, accessed 9 March 2009, transcript available from <http://www.australianbiography.gov.au/subjects/bonner/interview3.html>, tape 3; see also T. Rowse, “‘Out of Hand’ – The Battles of Neville Bonner”, *Journal of Australian Studies*, no. 54-55 (1997), p. 104.

109 Newick, p. 8.

Times in 2002 saying that she had ‘particularly enjoyed being the minister of conservation’ because she had ‘been an activist for a long time and getting to be the minister was like being let loose in the lolly shop’.¹¹⁰

Likewise in Australia, Linda Burney, who was elected to the Legislative Assembly in New South Wales in 2003, made it clear that she did not wish to be considered as a voice only on Aboriginal affairs. While she stated in one interview that her Aboriginality was ‘what guides and directs me’ and that she would therefore be involved in ‘Indigenous issues’, she also thought that it was ‘about time that people recognised that Indigenous people have views about our health, the roads we travel on, the environment we live in, infrastructure and development’.¹¹¹ Asked in another interview if she felt ‘a special responsibility to act as a bridge between the cultures’, she responded that while she did feel such a duty, she was also ‘well aware that there is a Minister for Aboriginal Affairs’ and therefore would ‘offer advice when I’m asked’.¹¹² Being restricted to Indigenous issues could potentially be as frustrating as being unable to address them.

Māori women MPs sometimes felt a common connection with each other, and with the Māori men who were in Parliament, in their desire to advance the interests of Māori. Te Heuheu was quoted in *Mana* in 1999 recollecting that when giving her maiden speech she was ‘truly mindful of all the other Maori MPs who had come through this place before me’. In the same article, Lee was quoted suggesting that there was a ‘basic grace’ in relationships between Māori MPs, since ‘they have a greater imperative because, no matter how much they argue ideologically about what they’re doing, they’re all tangata whenua [people of the land] and have a greater obligation to Maori first and foremost’.¹¹³ Turia, who was elected for Labour in 1996 and resigned the party to establish the Māori Party in 2004, similarly felt that there was a common bond among the Māori members of the House. She was quoted observing that it was ‘different being a Maori MP ... to being a mainstream MP’ because ‘we come here with a lot of common purpose ... and so we have points of commonality, points of agreement’, which might be articulated differently but which meant that ‘we know that it’s highly likely our Maori colleagues, no matter what party, will be supportive’. Labour MP Nanaia Mahuta also saw herself as ‘another voice around the table advocating on behalf of Maori in particular areas’. She pointed out that ‘Maori MPs have come together with a common purpose on a few issues’, as had women MPs.¹¹⁴ Such a connection was not shared by all Māori MPs, however. New Zealand First’s Rana

110 S. Catherall, ‘Sanctuary in the Lee of Politics’, *Sunday Star-Times*, 28 July 2002, p. A11.

111 ‘Representing Diversity: Linda Burney MP’, *ATSIC News*, Winter 2003, p. 19.

112 C. Boaden, ‘Interview with Linda Burney’, *Public Administration Today*, no. 6 (2006), p. 6.

113 W. Harawira, C. Archie and C. Robertson, ‘Our Women MPs ... United They Stand?’, *Mana*, no. 29 (1999), pp. 24, 27.

114 *Ibid.*, pp. 28, 32-33.

Waitai was quoted in the *Dominion* in 1996 emphasising the party divisions that existed between Māori MPs. There was, he thought, ‘no commonality between a Maori in ACT and a Maori in NZ First’.¹¹⁵

Among the women, some felt a particular connection through their position as Māori women. Asked about her relationship with other Māori women in Parliament, Te Heuheu observed that she had familial ties to some, meaning that ‘first and foremost there’s something far more important than what political party I belong to as a Maori’. Turia thought that the Māori women MPs had a bond as Māori women, commenting in *Mana* that they had ‘a mutual respect for one another’ and that ‘Maori women are a lot more focused on the issues, in that they are more collaborative in their approach and we do have a closer bond than with the men’.¹¹⁶ In a speech at the School of Māori Business Studies at Canterbury University in 2006, Turia suggested that ‘the connections we have transcend party boundaries’. At the same time, she thought that Māori women in parties other than the Māori Party faced ‘difficulty’ in that ‘the operating instructions come under the party banner ... more than the exceptional qualities and values we practice as tangata whenua’.¹¹⁷

Such connections between women were not always evident, however. A rift was clear between Lee and Alamein Kopu, an MP for the Alliance until she resigned to become an independent and formed the short-lived Mana Wāhine Te Ira Tangata Party. Kopu felt that there was ‘no collaboration among the Maori women MPs or a Maori caucus, because they all go back to their parties’, and she felt that she received ‘more support’ from the Māori men in Parliament. She stated that ‘Maori women’s issues’ did not ‘get a fair hearing or come to the fore’ because people were ‘too busy playing party politics’, and that while ‘we all talk about the Treaty and tino rangatiratanga’, it was ‘almost impossible to get a strong point across or accepted in Parliament because too many other Maori from the other parties are counteracting you’. Lee also criticised other Māori MPs, both men who ‘talk[ed] tough on the marae and then vote[d] soft with the National Party’, and women in the Government who failed to veto policies which would impact negatively upon Māori.¹¹⁸ While generally regarding themselves as being in Parliament to advance the interests of Māori, the women thus did not always agree on how that ought to be done, sometimes being divided across party lines.

115 A. Kominik, ‘MPs Claim Territorial Rights Over Homeless Newcomers’, *Dominion*, 19 October 1996, p. 1. The ACT Party is a right wing party which espouses free market principles and tax cuts, while New Zealand First is a populist and nationalist party.

116 Harawira, Archie and Robertson, pp. 25, 28.

117 T. Turia, ‘Being a Maori Woman in Politics’, updated 23 September 2006, accessed 22 July 2008, available from <http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/PA0609/S00509.htm>.

118 Harawira, Archie and Robertson, pp. 27, 35.

If Māori women MPs often considered themselves to be advocates for Māori, whether they held Māori or general seats or were list MPs, their position as women in Parliament was more complicated. Many of the first Pākehā women to stand for election sought to justify their campaigns through arguments which emphasised their difference as women, and therefore their special ability to represent the interests of women and children. Many women who stood for election in New Zealand between 1919 and 1969 were supportive of the goals of women's organisations, explained their views on particular issues of policy in terms of their being women and discussed women's issues in their campaign speeches far more frequently than did men who stood for election.¹¹⁹ In the House, Sandra Grey has demonstrated that women MPs in New Zealand were more likely to make explicit reference to their gender in speeches than were men, saying for instance that they spoke on an issue 'as a woman'.¹²⁰ Women in Parliament were sometimes also represented in the media as advocates for women's issues. Writing in the *New Zealand Woman's Weekly* in early 1982, Mackenzie considered that the eight women then in Parliament would seek to advance women's status and prevent women's issues from being ignored.¹²¹ Many Māori women MPs, however, seemed to consider their position as advocates for Māori to be more central than any role they might have had as advocates for women, as was evident from the emphasis placed on Māori issues in their speeches and in interviews which they gave. Speaking about being a Māori woman in Parliament, Turia observed that 'being a Maori woman in politics to me, is essentially about being Maori', thus emphasising her position as Māori rather than her position as a woman.¹²²

Yet Māori women MPs did promote issues affecting Pākehā women as well. Rātana commented in the House in 1961 that she was looking forward to hearing the maiden speeches of the new MPs, and in particular, to that of 'the lady member for Gisborne', Esme Tombleson. Rātana expressed her 'full confidence' that 'she as a woman and I as a woman, with others on this side, will fully understand the needs of all our womenfolk in this country'.¹²³ Rātana was once described by Tirikātene-Sullivan as 'the first Māori feminist'.¹²⁴ Tirikātene-Sullivan herself sometimes took a feminist approach to women's issues, at least in the early part of her parliamentary career. Debating the *Contraception, Sterilisation and Abortion Bill* in 1977, she asked if women should 'be compelled to accept that we are carriers of life, despite our private will and all our intellectual

119 Wallace, 'Powder-Power Politicians', pp. 180-182.

120 S. Grey, 'The New World? The Substantive Representation of Women in New Zealand', in *Representing Women in Parliament: A Comparative Study*, eds. M. Sawer, M. Tremblay and L. Trimble (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), pp. 140-141.

121 Mackenzie, p. 4.

122 Turia, 'Being a Maori Woman in Politics'.

123 *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives, vol. 326, p. 406 (11 July 1961).

124 Rymer, dir., *Standing in the Sunshine: Power*.

comprehension that we do not wish at a given time of our lives to accept this role?’ Abortion was ‘a fact of life practised in all cultures and civilisations from time immemorial’, she said, including in Māori society. Further, she stated that ‘freedom from unwanted reproduction is the very essence of women’s equality’, and that abortion was ‘fundamental to a woman’s ability to participate equally in society’. Women in New Zealand, she argued, ‘must have the right to choose’. In addressing the issue, she observed that ‘I speak as a woman, as a mother, and as one who subjectively experienced soul-searching anxiety about my third pregnancy’.¹²⁵ Twenty years later, while the National Party was in Government, Te Heuheu held the portfolio of Women’s Affairs as well as chairing the Māori Affairs Select Committee and being appointed Associate Minister for Treaty of Waitangi Negotiations. In an article in the Christchurch *Press* in 1998, she was quoted remarking that she felt ‘passionate’ about proportional representation ‘because it empowers more women to participate in the most powerful decision-making body we have – Parliament’. New Zealand, she said, must ‘live up to [its] reputation’ as being in the international vanguard in terms of gender equality ‘by delivering policies that improve the position of women’.¹²⁶

For many of the Māori women in Parliament, however, it was important to consider women’s issues within a Māori framework. Like many activist women, they were asked about or commented upon the issue of Māori women’s speaking rights on the marae. Rātana is said to have ‘pushed for the boundaries of what was customary for women’ by asking to speak, and an ‘exception was often made ... because of the esteem in which she was held’.¹²⁷ She was reportedly once told that local practice meant that she could not speak, and replied that she would ‘respect [that practice] right onto the floor of the House and if they need my vote I will remain silent’.¹²⁸ Tirikātene-Sullivan was quoted in the *New Zealand Woman’s Weekly* in 1983 making a similar point, stating that there were ‘some of my male Maori peers who do not accept that a Maori woman may speak on a marae ... yet who come to me as an advocate, sometimes even in their own case’.¹²⁹

Māori women MPs often distinguished their approach to women’s issues from that of Pākehā feminists, as did other Māori women. In a 1994 publication, Lee explained that ‘Maori women tend not to describe themselves as feminists’, preferring to speak about ‘mana wahine [the dignity of women] as a philosophy

125 *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives, vol. 412, pp. 2367-2369 (19 August 1977).

126 ‘Minister Extols MMP’, *Press*, 19 September 1998, p. 9.

127 S. Coney, *Standing in the Sunshine: A History of New Zealand Women Since They Won the Vote* (Auckland: Penguin, 1993), p. 44.

128 ‘Gagged on the Marae, Silent in the House?’, *Evening Post*, 26 March 1969, p. 16.

129 M. McNicholas, ‘Women on the Hill Carry Double Load’, *New Zealand Woman’s Weekly*, 14 November 1983, p. 6.

and a way of life, rather than feminism in a Pakeha sense'. She observed that although 'there are some things our women can't do in terms of protocol', there was 'always ... work for Maori women, always an important role to play'. Moreover, she stated, 'the reality is that today Maori women are running almost everything', and doing so 'very well', and there were also things that men were unable to do on the marae.¹³⁰ At the same time, she found it 'sad' that in the late twentieth century 'so-called protocol arguments [were] being used to try and marginalise Maori women, or [to] minimalise their say over matters that affect their iwi or hapu [sub-tribe]'.¹³¹ Turia similarly commented that 'if we recognise, and indeed we should, te mana o te wahine, that does not mean we elevate the status of women above men', emphasising the need for 'complementary, co-operative [and] respectful relationships'.¹³² While Māori and Pākehā women who entered Parliament did occasionally share goals and perspectives across the House, Māori women MPs often rejected a Western feminist approach to issues.

Indigenous Women in Parliament Across the Tasman

Throughout this book, I have discussed differences and similarities in experiences and media representations of famous Māori and Aboriginal women. Perhaps more than in any other field of endeavour, there have been stark differences between Māori and Aboriginal engagements with the parliamentary system. Clearly, the early incorporation of Māori into the political system was one of a number of ways in which the Māori experience of colonisation differed from that of Aboriginal peoples. Although the suffering and loss experienced by Māori under colonisation is undeniable, and despite the less than enlightened reasons for which the Māori seats were first introduced, it may be said that on the whole Aboriginal people have historically been farther removed from the centre of political power than have Māori. It is difficult to speculate upon the reasons for this difference, although they undoubtedly lie in the divergent histories of these two white settler societies. It may be that Māori leaders who emerged through traditional hereditary structures of authority within iwi were recognised as leaders within the Pākehā world more readily than were the elders of Aboriginal nations. This point is perhaps particularly important in relation to women's status, since Aboriginal women have long exercised significant influence as elders within families and communities which has often not been recognised by non-Indigenous observers. Fay Gale noted in 1990 that non-Indigenous men

130 S. Lee, 'Tupuna on Our Shoulders', in *Vision Aotearoa/Kaupapa New Zealand*, eds. W. Ihimaera, R. Capper, and A. Brown (Wellington: Bridget Williams, 1994), p. 222.

131 A. Brown, ed., *Mana Wahine: Women Who Show the Way* (Auckland: Reed, 1994), p. 38.

132 Turia, 'Being a Maori Woman in Politics'.

tended to seek Aboriginal men ‘to take leading roles in Aboriginal affairs rather than accept the reality of the position of women in their communities’.¹³³ A long line of strong Māori women in leadership roles is also evident throughout Māori history, from the female figures of mythology, to the women who signed the Treaty, to women in organisations such as the MWWL. Te Puea Hērangi was a nationally prominent woman of great mana (prestige or authority) and influence, and the Māori Queen, Te Ātairangikaahu, was also widely respected and loved. Lee once commented that ‘I face an arduous task following in the footsteps of Maori women who have become a symbol for change, like Te Puea and those who later followed her path’.¹³⁴

Despite the differences evident across the Tasman in the political experiences of Indigenous peoples, however, Māori and Aboriginal men and women who entered legislative assemblies in Australia and New Zealand sometimes faced similar problems, such as a lack of influence or difficulty reconciling party principles and personal standpoints as Indigenous people. Māori and Aboriginal men and women who became MPs also often viewed their role as parliamentarians similarly, as that of an advocate for Indigenous interests or a voice for Indigenous perspectives. This chapter thus highlights the multiple and complex meanings of the term ‘representation’. Besides referring to the narratives and images constructed of these women in the press, the term refers to their own positions putting forward the views of a group or an individual, and this aspect of the concept has been central to the present chapter. In this sense of the concept, both Indigenous MPs and women MPs were and are frequently understood as representing a constituency not merely through their role as representatives for an electorate, but also by virtue of sharing a group identity, which itself is often implicitly understood as being biologically determined. It is this understanding of political representation as occurring through the presence of a person with a particular group identity that has often motivated calls to increase the numbers of women or the numbers of Indigenous people in Parliament.

Conclusion

Until the late twentieth century, only two Māori women had entered the New Zealand House of Representatives. Yet those who entered it then sometimes faced similar obstacles to those faced by Rātana and Tirikātene-Sullivan decades before, and were often represented in the media in similar ways. As Māori holding seats in the nation’s decision-making body, these women were sometimes

133 F. Gale, ‘The Participation of Australian Aboriginal Women in a Changing Political Environment’, *Political Geography Quarterly* 9, no. 4 (1990), p. 391.

134 Brown, ed., *Mana Wahine*, p. 32.

depicted in oppositional ways which echoed representations of activists and social reformers, as conservatives and moderates or as separatists and radicals. As women in positions of power, they were often represented in gendered frameworks common to media coverage of many women in parliamentary office, both in New Zealand and internationally. In their own articulations of their parliamentary role, their position as Māori members of the House was often more central than was their position as women members. While Māori women MPs sometimes spoke about or promoted issues perceived as women's issues within Parliament, they more often concentrated upon Māori concerns and understood their role as being advocates for Māori within the House. If representations in the print media reflected highly mediated images of them to the media-consuming public, their efforts to represent Māori people in the House often reflected their own understandings of themselves and their work. The multivalent nature of the concept of 'representation' has been evident throughout this book, as famous Māori and Aboriginal women have been represented in the media by others through particular narrative frameworks, have represented themselves in various ways and have navigated multiple positions as representatives of their people. Like other famous Indigenous women in Australia and New Zealand, Indigenous women who held parliamentary office occupied an ambiguous position in relation to the settler nation. Often celebrated for their path-breaking achievement in reaching office, they joined representative bodies which had often failed to be representative of either women or Indigenous peoples, and through their determined advocacy challenged these settler nations to reshape their futures.