Introduction

Very few Aboriginal or Māori women became well-known outside their own communities before the middle of the twentieth century. Among those who did become more widely known, two in particular have continued to be remembered, and often to be celebrated. Te Puea Hērangi is frequently remembered as ‘Princess Te Puea’ for her connection with the second Māori King, Tāwhiao Te Wherowhero, whose granddaughter she was. She, however, repudiated the title as an alien one, unknown in Māoritanga (Māori culture or way of life). Even more erroneously, Trukanini is often remembered as the last of the Tasmanian Aboriginal people, despite this claim being clearly disproved. Te Puea received royal honours for her work as a leader of her people, her life’s work thus acknowledged by the Crown. About the time Te Puea was born, in the late nineteenth century, Trukanini’s skeleton was exhumed against her dying wishes, later to be displayed as an artefact. Such contrasting lives, and the popular narratives told of them, piqued my interest when I first read of them, and eventually led me to embark on this exploration of the assonances and dissonances evident in depictions of celebrated Indigenous women in Australia and New Zealand. Their stories provide a foundation for comparing media portrayals of Māori and Aboriginal women in the second half of the twentieth century.

Trukanini, Truganini, Trucanini, Trugernanner

Undoubtedly the most famous Aboriginal woman to live and die before 1950 was Trukanini, whose story has been told and re-told, imagined and re-imagined, many times since her death in 1876. In paintings and photographs, in histories and biographies, in poems, novels and plays, in scientific articles and even in song, the story of Trukanini has been repeated and re-shaped.¹ Lyndall Ryan has described her as ‘the most famous Aborigine in white Australian history’.² Trukanini became known for a tragic story, as the last Tasmanian Aboriginal person, whose death signalled extinction. Though this basis of fame became contested, particularly through the vocal presence of a continuing community of Tasmanian Aboriginal people, the label of ‘last of the race’ was frequently still attached to Trukanini, often amended to describe her as the last so-called full-

blooded Tasmanian Aboriginal person. As Ryan argued, ‘the figure of Trukanini has always been a site of struggle for ownership and possession of the colonial past’. Suvendrini Perera has similarly suggested that Trukanini’s body became ‘the site of competing narratives about power and powerlessness: agent or object, hostage or traitor, final victim or ultimate survivor?’ In the process of that struggle, Trukanini the woman was transmuted into a symbol, often lost under the weight of the different meanings ascribed to her story. Such a process of ascribing meaning to lives and achievements is central to the processes of fame, celebration and remembrance, to the phenomenon of becoming a prominent public figure. A brief examination of this process in popular representations of Trukanini and Te Puea is an appropriate beginning to this study, which takes as its central concern these processes of ascribing meanings to the lives and achievements of prominent Indigenous women through the multiple framings of their stories in the print media.

Trukanini lived during a time of tumultuous change for the Aboriginal people of Tasmania, then known by Europeans as Van Diemen’s Land. By 1818, the European population already outnumbered the Aboriginal population. Governor George Arthur’s efforts to end violence between Aboriginal people and settlers were unsuccessful, and in 1828 he pronounced martial law in relation to Aboriginal people in settled areas. In 1829, George Augustus Robinson travelled to the Bruny Island Aboriginal mission, where he was to take charge of those Aboriginal people already there, and to prepare for those who would be caught in settled areas. He developed the idea of persuading others to join the mission, and, with a group of Aboriginal people and several convicts, set out to do so. In 1835, he told the Colonial Secretary that all Aboriginal people had been taken away from the mainland (though in fact one further group remained outside the mission until 1842). After being brought in, however, Aboriginal people died rapidly. When the establishment was moved from Wybalenna on Flinders Island to Oyster Cove in 1847, only forty-seven people survived to make the trip, and by 1868 only three remained there. Among them was Trukanini.

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3 Ryan, p. 154.
Figure 1: ‘Portrait of Truganini’, Charles Woolley.

Trukanini’s date of birth is given variously, but most often as 1812. Many tellings of her life state that while she was still young, her mother was killed, her sister kidnapped, her uncle shot, and the man she was to have married murdered while trying to protect her from sawyers. She accompanied Robinson on his mission of conciliation, and is said to have saved his life, perhaps more than once. At Wybalenna, she and other inhabitants were subject to ‘a rigid daily routine’ that was ‘designed to expunge their traditional life’. In 1841, while in Port Phillip with Robinson and a group of other Aboriginal people, she and several others robbed shepherds’ huts, wounded four stock-keepers and killed two whalers. For these offences, the men were hanged, while the three women were acquitted and returned to Flinders Island. Trukanini spent the last years of her life with the Dandridge family, James Dandridge having been superintendent at Oyster Cove. She died in Hobart on 8 May 1876, afraid to the end that her body would be mutilated as had been the body of William Lanney, the so-called last Tasmanian Aboriginal male. The unpleasant saga of burial, subsequent exhumation and display of her skeleton in the museum of the Royal Society of Tasmania was only drawn to a close with the cremation of the skeleton and the scattering of the ashes in the D’Entrecasteaux Channel in 1976, a century after her death. Over twenty-five years later, the Hobart *Mercury* announced that remains of her hair and skin had been discovered in the museum of the Royal College of Surgeons in England, and were to be returned to Australia for burial.

Early depictions of Trukanini shifted through a variety of meanings, which Lyndall Ryan has explored in detail. Before her death, these included representations as ‘the epitome of the “noble savage”’, ‘a Pocahontas figure who saved the conciliator’, and later ‘a respected Indigenous citizen of the British empire, a look-alike Queen Victoria, a widow, awaiting her end and that of her people’. The exhuming of her body ‘represented a shift to the triumphalist discourse of science’. A central thread in many narratives of Tasmania and its Aboriginal inhabitants, as mentioned, was the idea that Trukanini was the last Tasmanian Aboriginal person, and that at her death Tasmanian Aboriginal people became extinct. This belief was as persistent as it was false, and it was her perceived status as the last Tasmanian Aboriginal person that was the central element in her continuing prominence in white Australian history and memory. In 1976, the year in which her skeleton was cremated at a ceremony attended by a woman claiming to be a descendant, she was still being referred to in the media as the...
last Tasmanian Aboriginal person. In the *Mercury* that year, she was described as ‘the last of the now extinct native Tasmanians’, as a ‘magnet of world-wide curiosity’ who had ‘lost not only her family, but her race’ and as ‘the sole survivor of the Tasmanian aboriginal race’. Where she was no longer depicted as the last Tasmanian Aboriginal person, she was often referred to instead as the last so-called full-blooded Tasmanian Aboriginal person, despite the offensiveness of such terminology.

A related narrative about Tasmanian Aboriginal people identified by Ryan was that of genocide, which became apparent as the impact of the Holocaust entered public discourse following World War Two. In the *Sydney Morning Herald* in 1976, the treatment of Tasmanian Aboriginal people was termed ‘the world’s most successful genocide’, while the *Mercury* made reference in 2002 to ‘planned annihilation’ and to Trukanini having ‘died in a kind of concentration camp’. The genocide narrative, argued Ryan, was ‘a humanist response to scientific discourses of extinction’ that ‘argued for Aboriginal agency in resisting extermination’, but it was ‘too limited to acknowledge the survival of Aboriginal peoples’. Trukanini became a ‘symbol of [the] extermination’ or the ‘attempted genocide’ of Aboriginal people in Australia. Bernard Smith saw her as the ‘spectre’ that haunted Australian history. Such narratives of the past also had implications for the present, denying the Aboriginal community in Tasmania their existence, and thus working against potential land rights claims. The film *The Last Tasmanian*, for example, through canvassing what its director saw as ‘genocide’ and through its failure to recognise the Aboriginality of descendants, stood opposed to Tasmanian land rights claims. Central to such a narrative was an image of Trukanini as a victim, and of her life as tragic. Nicholas Cree, writing in the *Mercury* in 1976, referred to her ‘tragic saga’ and her ‘unusual and tragic life’.

Portraying Trukanini as a victim could deny her agency, making her appear a passive object of colonial action. Such depictions echoed wider representations of Aboriginal people as passive, abject or belonging to the past, unable either to adapt to or to resist European settlement.

Contests over the meanings ascribed to Trukanini’s life often related to a question about how to best understand her actions in assisting Robinson. Representations

17 Cree, p. 6.
of her actions and motives sometimes placed her as a type of collaborator, a pawn, a dupe or even a traitor who betrayed her own people. The *Canberra Times* in 1974 claimed that Trukanini ‘led her people to slaughter’ when she ‘agreed to requests to bring [them] out of hiding’ in the belief that ‘a peace pact was to be signed’.  

Several depictions also sexualised her, representing her as a promiscuous woman and Robinson’s lover. One author described her as having been ‘infamous as a wench of incredible charm who teased and wiled her way through life’, and as one whose ‘sexual prowess was a legend among the two races’. The same author stated that she ‘had an uncanny way with men’ which she ‘used’ in ‘her role as mediatrix between her people and the British’.

Trukanini’s actions, however, have also been interpreted in a more positive light in some narratives, as a diplomatic effort to halt the bloodshed and ensure the survival of Aboriginal people. A 1977 article in the Sydney *Sun* referred to her setting out with Robinson to ‘bring [Aboriginal people] to safety’. In this article, she was depicted as wise and perceptive, and as having been motivated to rescue her people.

Trukanini has become a ‘cherished’ figure to the contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginal community, understood ‘as a woman who displayed strength and diplomacy in her struggle to find a way for her people to endure the savage impact of Europeans on her land’. She has also been depicted as a heroine of the resistance to European settlement. Her rebellion was seen as important by those who organised Black Vine, ‘a multi-media performance event … to pay tribute to the heroes and heroines of black Australia’.

As this brief discussion demonstrates, Trukanini has become a largely mythical figure, representations of whom are often more revealing of the discourses they are mobilised in aid of than of her own story.

### ‘The Greatest Māori Woman of Our Time’

If Trukanini was the best-known and most often remembered Aboriginal woman who lived and worked before the second half of the twentieth century, Te Puea Hērangi was and is the best-known Māori woman who lived and worked prior to that period. Indeed, Michael King considered her the first Māori woman to become ‘a national figure’. At her death in 1952, one author wrote that she had ‘won the great admiration and respect of Maori and pakeha [New Zealanders of European descent] alike’ through her ‘outstanding leadership’ and ‘untiring and selfless devotion to the interests of her people’.

Moreover, Te Puea was an internationally

19 ‘Truganini Burial Unlikely’, *Canberra Times*, 1 April 1974, p. 3.
22 Lehman, p. 722.
known figure. According to media reports, the United States, Australia, India and Tonga were represented at her tangihanga (funeral), which was also attended by members of the New Zealand Parliament, including the Prime Minister, Sidney Holland. Almost 300 ‘telegrams of condolence’ came from around the globe, and tributes to her were broadcast and published in England.\footnote{26 ‘Sacred Funeral: Tangi For Te Puea’, \textit{Te Ao Hou: The New World}, no. 3 (1953), pp. 4-5.}

\begin{figure}
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\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure2}
\caption*{Figure 2: ‘Princess Te Kirihaehae Te Puea Hērangi, wearing the CBE she received in 1938’.

Photograph. PAColl-5584-58. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.}\
\end{figure}
In many narratives, Te Puea was described in terms that set her apart from other Māori women. After her death, she was described in *Te Ao Hou: The New World*, a magazine published by the Department of Māori Affairs, as ‘the greatest Māori woman of the last half-century’.\(^{27}\) In a radio broadcast that was later published in the same magazine, journalist Eric Ramsden called her ‘the greatest Māori woman of our time – perhaps of all time’.\(^{28}\) And before her death, a 1951 article in *People* magazine noted that she was acknowledged by all Māori people to be ‘the most remarkable Māori woman living’.\(^{29}\) Such judgements were frequently repeated in later celebrations of her life. In his two books of famous New Zealand lives, Eugene Grayland included no Māori women besides Te Puea, writing that she had ‘achieved more than any other Māori woman in history’ and had become ‘the foremost Māori woman of her time throughout the country’ because of ‘her influence for Maori unity and the preservation of tradition’.\(^{30}\) Many portrayals of Te Puea thus placed her as exceptional, an almost larger-than-life figure.

Born in 1883, Te Puea was the granddaughter of the second Māori King, Tāwhiao Te Wherowhero. She came to be called ‘Princess Te Puea’, though she herself did not use the title. Indeed, as Ann Parsonson comments, she ‘would not have liked’ the ‘constant references’ to her as a Princess, since ‘it was a title originally bestowed on her by Pakeha, which she never used herself’.\(^{31}\) She was sometimes described as ‘the power behind’ or ‘the woman behind’ the throne of the Kīngitanga, the Māori King movement established in the mid-nineteenth century.\(^{32}\) Although her leadership role was not straightforward at first, she became a well-established leader over time, as her successes mounted. Her major achievement was in working ‘alongside three successive kings in re-establishing the Kīngitanga … as a central force among the Tainui people’ of the central North Island, and ‘achieving national recognition’ of the movement from both Māori, despite tribal divisions, and Pākehā.\(^{33}\)

Te Puea’s work encompassed all spheres of life as she pursued goals relating to health, social and economic welfare, cultural revival and political recognition. During the 1918 influenza epidemic, she worked to nurse the people, and to care for those left orphaned. She sought to create a hospital where Māori could be cared for in a Māori environment, to alleviate their fears of travelling to hospital, although in this she was blocked by officialdom. After World War One, she took on a long and demanding project to ‘rebuild a centre for the Kīngitanga’

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27 ‘Death of Princess Te Puea’, p. 33.
29 ‘Princess Te Puea, the Maker of Maori Kings’, *People*, 3 January 1951, p. 37.
32 For example: Grayland, *Famous New Zealanders*, p. 147; ‘Princess Te Puea’, p. 34; Ramsden, p. 8.
33 Parsonson, ‘Herangi, Te Kirihaehae Te Puea’.
Introduction

at Ngāruawāhia, buying and clearing land and building a marae (meeting place), known as Tūrangawaewae. She was deeply involved in negotiating for compensation for the confiscation of land. As well, Te Puea took an important role in reviving Māori culture. A concert party which she established travelled around raising money for the building at Ngāruawāhia. A tour of the North Island was ‘not only a financial success, but … also contributed to a revival of interest in haka, waiata, and poi’ (traditional dances and songs). She also sought to revitalise canoe building. The Kīngitanga, and Te Puea, gained ‘increasing official recognition’, as was evident in the 1938 visit by the Governor-General, then Lord Galway, to open a carved house built for the King, and to invest Te Puea with a CBE (Commander of the British Empire).34

Te Puea’s status as a Māori woman acting in a position of leadership was sometimes commented upon in popular texts and the media. Sometimes this was positive, as in descriptions of her as a role model for other Māori women. After her death, the Te Ao Hou writer who reported on her tangihanga commented that women ‘particularly felt the sharpness of their loss’ because she ‘had, especially, been their leader’. She had ‘shown them what a Maori woman could be’, the article continued, and ‘had been an example to look up to’.35 Ramsden wrote that she had been ‘obeyed … implicitly in all policy matters’, despite the Waikato iwi (tribe) being ‘ever jealous of male prerogatives’.36 At other times, gendered representations of Te Puea were less positive. Ramsden once described her in this way:

If a woman, and sometimes subject to the vagaries of her sex, Te Puea seldom let her emotions sway her judgement … Nevertheless, there were times when she could make use of her undoubted charm to achieve her objectives.37

Racialised and gendered representations of Te Puea sometimes appeared to imagine her in terms which downplayed the challenge she might pose to Pākehā, or to male, dominance through her visibility as a strong and proud Māori woman. Te Puea spoke of ‘the parallel paths of two canoes – Maori and Pakeha’ and considered that ‘the two peoples should learn to respect one another’s cultures so that they could live comfortably together’.38 Thus, although she was acknowledged to have strengthened Māori political structures and culture, she appears not to have been constructed as a threatening figure. Ann Parsonson has

35 ‘Sacred Funeral’, p. 4.
36 Ramsden, p. 8.
37 Ibid., p. 7.
38 Parsonson, ‘Herangi, Te Kirihaehae Te Puea’. 
pointed out that, while Te Puea was ‘recognised as a remarkable leader’, there was ‘little recognition … of the poverty and powerlessness that she had spent her life fighting’, either during her lifetime or at her death.\textsuperscript{39} In a short biographical article in 1936, James Cowan described her ‘heroic work of pure unselfishness’ for her people.\textsuperscript{40} Such a description not only played down the threat she presented to the Pākehā political order, but also placed her within a predominantly Pākehā discourse of selfless womanhood. In many portrayals, Pākehā seemed all too willing to ignore the more challenging aspects of her work, and to celebrate her in non-threatening terms.

\section*{Studying Media Representations of Famous Indigenous Women}

Clearly, significant differences are evident between Australia and New Zealand in relation to the remembrance and celebration of Indigenous women who lived and worked prior to 1950. Just as there is no equivalent figure to Trukanini in New Zealand, there is no equivalent figure to Te Puea in Australia. Te Puea was born to a position of political and social status within Māoridom, her place in the historical record almost assured by her lineage, though her standing as an influential leader, like her popular fame and celebration, were not thus assured. Trukanini, herself the daughter of a leader, was instead most known and remembered for something apparently unrelated to her social and political situation and largely outside her control, her longevity, though her experiences and actions during her life did augment her fame. Although close together geographically, both imagined as egalitarian settler societies, and sharing many historical experiences, Australia and New Zealand differed considerably in the extent to which Indigenous women of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were present in historical memory, and in the nature of the narratives told of those women.

Beginning research on this subject, I wondered if the conspicuous differences between the lives and representations of Trukanini and Te Puea continued to be evident in those of prominent Māori and Aboriginal women throughout the rest of the twentieth century, a period in which Australia and New Zealand were transformed in remarkably similar ways. As parallels in the experiences and depictions of these women began to accumulate, however, it became clear that conceptualising the stories of Te Puea and Trukanini solely in terms of difference also missed something critical. The lives and representations of both women, of

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{40} J. Cowan, ‘Te Puea Herangi: Princess of Waikato and Leader of Her People’, \textit{New Zealand Railways Magazine}, 1 September 1936, p. 17.
course, did and do reflect differences in the nature and impact of colonialism in their respective countries. Memorialised as the last of her people, Trukanini came to symbolise the destruction of Aboriginal people and culture, while Te Puea was celebrated as an architect of Māori cultural and political revival, a leader with significant influence who might be understood as embodying all that Pākehā viewed as best in Māori culture. Yet their stories also display parallels. In the late twentieth century, Trukanini too came to symbolise Indigenous resilience and resistance, while Te Puea’s work of renewal was necessary only because of the destruction of Māori life and culture wrought by colonisation. The persistence of certain narratives about these women may thus have as much to do with cherished non-Indigenous beliefs about Australian and New Zealand national identities and narratives of the past, and with deeply buried aspects of the national psyche in these two countries, as with the women’s own experiences. Though their lives followed vastly different paths, in different places and times, both Trukanini and Te Puea might perhaps be best understood as strong women who struggled boldly against the ravages of colonisation.

Popular framings of their lives and work represented both women in terms of particular ideas about race and gender. Patricia Hill Collins has argued that women of African-American descent in the United States ‘occupy a position whereby the inferior half of a series of … dichotomies converge’, and that ‘this placement has been central to our subordination’. In settler societies such as Australia and New Zealand, Indigenous women have been similarly placed at the convergence of a number of dichotomies based on ideas of race and gender, and this positioning has been central to their experiences of marginalisation and oppression. These intersecting dichotomies have shaped portrayals of Aboriginal and Māori people in popular culture, political and academic discourse and the media. For much of the period since European settlement, representations of Māori and Aboriginal people have been largely imposed from outside Māori and Aboriginal communities. Such representations often drew on entrenched stereotypes and imagined racial binaries. Marcia Langton has observed a ‘dense history of racist, distorted and often offensive’ portrayals of Aboriginal people in Australia, and in New Zealand too non-Indigenous representations of Māori have often been highly problematic. On both sides of the Tasman, racialised representations intersected in complicated ways with gendered representations in depictions of Aboriginal and Māori women.

Representations are neither transparent nor innocent, impacting on actual lives in complex ways. Negative or stereotypical representations have arguably

been powerfully implicated in the historical dispossession and repression of Indigenous peoples in many parts of the world. Intersecting racial and gender stereotypes have played a part in shaping the situations of non-white women in various social and political contexts. ‘Maintaining images of Black women as the Other’, Collins has argued, ‘provides ideological justification for race, gender, and class oppression’. Media representations, which are the particular focus of this book, can be remarkably powerful, not only reflecting widely-held social beliefs and attitudes, but also playing a constitutive role in the formation and maintenance of those beliefs and attitudes. Writing of the print media in Australia, Ann Curthoys has noted the importance of its roles in creating community, including or excluding groups or individuals, constituting and being constituted by the society in which it operates. The wide reach of the media, its political and social ubiquity and its apparent transparency mean that media representations are a critical subject for historical research.

A growing body of literature now considers representations of gender and race in popular culture and the media. In relation to the press, a major preoccupation has been coverage of women in politics or as world leaders. Repeated elements in depictions of these women included a focus on their appearance, a greater focus on the private and domestic aspects of their lives than was the case in biographical sketches about men holding similar positions, and a tendency to draw on common gendered frames in stories about women as political leaders. Another focus has been the portrayal or framing of the women’s movement in the press from the 1960s. Media representations of women involved in specific fields have also been the subject of attention, with a particular emphasis on

43 Collins, p. 68.
sporting women. Moreover, some individual periodicals have been studied for the ways in which they represented women’s lives and experiences. Susan Sheridan, Barbara Baird, Kate Borrett and Lyndall Ryan produced a valuable study of the *Australian Women’s Weekly*, exploring the ‘female-centred world’ it created for readers in the middle of the twentieth century, and the ways in which it framed ‘ideals of femininity and domestic life’ in those years. Many studies of the ways in which women have been represented in the media have, at least implicitly, focused upon white middle-class women, an imbalance which I hope this work goes some way towards redressing.

Considerable work has also been done to examine issues of representation and racial difference in the media. In Australia, this research has revealed a continual silencing of Aboriginal perspectives, a focus on stories which place...
Aboriginal people in a negative light and distorted representations of events and issues.\(^50\) One focus of attention in studies of representations of Māori people in the New Zealand media has been the inadequacies of press reporting of protest actions, which cast those involved as dangerous radicals, represented Māori voices as a ‘minority’ instead of as ‘equal Treaty partners’ and failed to provide adequate information about the historical context of the protests or about the issues involved.\(^51\) Much research into media representations of Indigenous people has focused on hard news, especially stories about Indigenous issues or crime reporting, rather than on soft news, such as human interest stories.\(^52\) Rod Brookes has pointed out that soft news stories are often considered less ‘important’ than hard news stories and are thus not frequently studied despite forming a large part of the content of many newspapers.\(^53\) As well, many studies of depictions of Indigenous people in the media concentrate on relatively recent events and issues. My focus on representations of famous Indigenous women throughout the second half of the twentieth century contributes to remedying these imbalances.

In the 1990s, scholars began to consider racialised and gendered representations together. A small number of studies in Australia have taken this approach to press representations. Cathy Greenfield and Peter Williams explored stereotypes evident in newspaper articles about Aboriginal women approaching the 1988 Bicentenary, Kathie Muir examined representations of Ngarrindjeri women in reporting on the Hindmarsh Island affair, and Jane Wilkinson investigated portrayals of ‘ethnically and socio-economically diverse women leaders’ in two Australian daily newspapers in 2001.\(^54\) Mele-Ane Havea investigated the ways that Aboriginal women were represented in the media through an analysis of stereotypes evident in the portrayal of the women involved in the Hindmarsh Island affair and of athlete Cathy Freeman. Utilising the work of Moreton-Robinson, Havea argued that the ‘dominant voice of the media is one of “white normality”’.\(^55\) In the title of her article, she advocated further ‘critical reflection’ on the ways in which the media represents Aboriginal women, a challenge I

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\(^{50}\) Banerjee and Osuri, pp. 270-271; Bullimore, p. 75; Meadows, ‘A 10-Point Plan and a Treaty’, pp. 56-58.

\(^{51}\) Barclay and Liu, p. 10; Saunders, p. 167; Stuart, ‘Tauiwi and Maori Media’.

\(^{52}\) This focus on ‘hard news’ in many studies of media representations of Aboriginal people was also noted by Alan McKee and John Hartley. McKee and Hartley, p. 16.


have taken up here. As these investigations of media representations have largely been contemporary studies located in cultural or media studies, a further aim has been to explore the intersections of race and gender in media representations historically.

I explore print media representations of prominent Māori and Aboriginal women in New Zealand and Australia during the second half of the twentieth century. I do not seek to contrast depictions of celebrated Indigenous women with some underlying reality, or to highlight the gaps and dissonances between the narratives told about these women and the stories the women themselves tell. Rather, I critically explore the representations themselves, and set them within a historical context that can help to explain how they arose and why they carried such continuing power. Representations of celebrated women are a part of a broader context, a historical moment, composed of public discourses, events, government policies and the actions and words of people, including those of the women themselves. There were always different voices, narratives and framings of these famous women and their lives, including those publicly articulated by the women themselves. Equally, there can be no one reading of any particular representation, because different audiences may understand the meanings of representations differently. In the same way that it is always possible to observe several competing representations at any particular time, any textual analysis must also be alert to the potential for texts to be read in a variety of different ways by different audiences. It is not possible in historical research to grasp fully the multiple ways audiences may read representations, but it remains important to analyse the texts themselves, as it is only by analysing common representations that their pervasiveness can be challenged.

This book foregrounds intersections of race, gender and nation in the shifting depictions of well-known Indigenous women in two white settler societies which are located in close proximity to each other, and whose histories have intertwined at many points in the past.56 Discourses of national identity across the Tasman have historically displayed both deep resonances and sharp dissonances, particularly regarding issues of race relations. As I began to read and think about this subject, I had conversations with many people about trans-Tasman differences, conversations that often suggested an incommensurability in the colonial pasts of Australia and New Zealand. Yet as I sat in libraries reading a variety of Australian and New Zealand newspapers and magazines, I frequently felt there was a disjunction between such popular beliefs about these two colonial settings, which emphasised differences between them, and the tone

56 Note that although I focus upon representations of Māori and Aboriginal women in this book, it is important to emphasise that gender should not be understood as an attribute of women rather than men, nor race as an attribute of Indigenous peoples rather than those of white European descent. A study of representations of famous white men could as easily explore ideas about gender and race. Further, both race and gender are socially constructed categories, and should not be accorded a biological reality.
and content of many popular media stories about Indigenous people. I began to notice recurring themes in many depictions of prominent Aboriginal and Māori women, which were at once clearly comparable and yet often vitally different from each other. More than that, both Australia and New Zealand are settler societies which have had to acknowledge repressive colonial pasts in order to move forward into postcolonial futures, a process neither has reached the end of, although New Zealand is arguably further along it. As Katherine Ellinghaus has observed, ‘hauntingly analogous stories of indigenous oppression’ are evident in such settler societies.57

Widely held ideas about New Zealand’s superiority in race relations contributed to a myth of racial harmony that formed a significant strand in conceptions of national identity. New Zealanders frequently expressed the view that race relations in their country were better than those in other settler societies. In 1956 an editorial in Te Ao Hou: The New World, though advocating greater understanding between Māori and Pākehā, began with the observation that visitors to New Zealand ‘frequently express amazement at the excellent relationships they notice between Maori and European’.58 In 1971 Keith Sinclair assumed the superiority of New Zealand race relations in a comparative article seeking to explain why this was so.59 Commentators from other parts of the world have sometimes reinforced this relatively positive view of relations between Māori and Pākehā.60 Such views sometimes seemed to rest both on an assertion that Māori were a superior type of native people than in other places and that Pākehā were a better group of settlers than were found elsewhere (notably Australia, where convicts formed a large part of the early population).

Although it cannot be disputed that Māori experienced much suffering and loss under colonisation, there were reasons for considering race relations in New Zealand to be better than was the case in Australia, as is outlined in Chapter One. As Barbara Brookes has suggested, while New Zealand ‘shared with Australia a view of itself as a “white man’s country”’, Māori were ‘included in the definition of whiteness’ at least partially and strategically, and were thus not so thoroughly ‘excluded from conceptions of the nation’ as were Aboriginal people.61 Nonetheless, significant broader similarities are evident across the

61 B. Brookes, ‘Gender, Work and Fears of a “Hybrid Race” in 1920s New Zealand’, Gender and History 19, no. 3 (2007), p. 502. As Brookes notes, the idea that Māori and Britons had a ‘common Aryan heritage’ was ‘vigorously promoted’ in the late nineteenth century in New Zealand. Brookes, p. 502, citing T. Ballantyne,
Tasman with respect to Indigenous-settler relations. Māori and Aboriginal people both suffered the impacts of violence, disease and social change after the arrival of Europeans, and both experienced loss of language and culture under destructive assimilation policies. As Claudia Orange observed, New Zealand in several ways ‘has been merely a variation in the pattern of colonial domination of indigenous races’. Moreover, the second half of the twentieth century saw an intensification of Indigenous rights movements in both Australia and New Zealand, and a strengthening of a shared sense of Indigeneity among various groups around the world. In the emergence of what has sometimes been called the Fourth World, it is possible to observe the globalisation of Indigeneity.

The Women: A Stellar Cast

Identifying a number of women who became well-known either nationally or internationally in these years, I explore their lives as renowned, sometimes controversial, public figures. I examine the telling, re-telling and representation of their lives and work in the print media, as well as considering the extent and nature of their own involvement in those processes. In concentrating upon portrayals of famous or celebrated women, I focus upon representations of those Māori and Aboriginal women who were most visible in the public arena during the period. Terms like ‘famous’, ‘celebrated’, ‘prominent’ and ‘significant’ are often used almost interchangeably in public discourse. I am concerned particularly with the phenomenon of fame. The women whose lives and media portrayals are the subject of this book were or are all prominent or well-known public figures. Not all of them could be described as celebrities, and they are not necessarily those most celebrated within their own communities. But all of them are women who became widely known in Australia and New Zealand, at least for a time, and whose lives and achievements have been publicly celebrated. It was these women who were most frequently featured in the media, and their lives were often lived in public view. Their words, actions and achievements were frequently observed and reported upon, and through that process invested with a variety of meanings. Some were accorded a place within the celebration of famous national figures or national heroes in Australia or New Zealand, their lives and efforts deemed to embody virtues or qualities seen as part of...
a particular national identity. Others occupied a more ambiguous position as celebrated Australians or New Zealanders, their lives and achievements working rather to unsettle widely accepted national narratives. For the audiences who read about their lives and achievements, all were potentially inspiring figures. Strong, creative, successful Indigenous women with a media presence, they were perhaps able to leave a mark even on those who encountered them only through the highly mediated instrument of the press.

Identifying celebrated Indigenous women was no simple task. A helpful strategy was to identify those included within the pantheon of people celebrated as great Australians and New Zealanders in the past and today. Different people celebrate different figures, for different purposes and at different times. I therefore investigated a range of texts from the present and the past in order to allow some of those differences to be explored, as well as to identify those Indigenous women who were most often publicly celebrated. The texts chosen included official and semi-official publications, dictionaries of biography, popular books of famous Australians and New Zealanders, articles in magazines and newspapers, websites, children’s books and other texts. Although largely sharing a focus on well-known people associated with Australia or New Zealand, these texts do not form a coherent genre, varying both in aims and in intended audience. Reading them, I identified those Indigenous women most frequently included as famous or significant Australians and New Zealanders, what they were celebrated for, and in what types of publication they appeared. For practical reasons, and because many women who did not appear so frequently in these texts were also not often featured in the media, I have focused on those most frequently included. Thus, many women known and celebrated by their own communities or in specific contexts may not feature here, though their stories and their achievements undoubtedly deserve greater attention.

Two further issues of definition required addressing: who was Indigenous and who was female? Defining what constitutes Indigeneity and its specific forms is contested terrain, and not part of the project undertaken here. In a practical sense, however, it was necessary to determine a way of identifying Indigenous women among the larger group of celebrated women in Australia and New Zealand. Since I was exploring representations, it seemed expedient to include any women identified as Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or Māori by those compiling books, websites and other texts about celebrated Australians and New Zealanders, as well as those who self-identified as Indigenous. Immediately a question arose as to the potential inclusion of women who, while not Indigenous, were discriminated against in similar ways. Faith Bandler, whose father was from Ambrym in Vanuatu, was active in Aboriginal rights organisations and was sometimes identified as Aboriginal in the media. When she was appointed a Fellow to the Senate of the University of Sydney, the Sydney Morning Herald
described her as an ‘Aboriginal author’, claiming that she was thought to be ‘the first Aboriginal to hold such a position at the university’.\textsuperscript{64} A tiny correction notice the next day announced that she was in fact ‘of New Hebridean descent’.\textsuperscript{65} Similarly, significant Pacific Island communities exist in New Zealand, and women from these communities may sometimes have had parallel experiences of the media to those of Māori and Aboriginal women. I have here focused upon Māori and Aboriginal women, while accepting that this distinction may in some cases be an arbitrary one.

Moreover, a person’s claim to Indigeneity may become contested. Such was the case for Roberta Sykes, who was active in the movement for Aboriginal rights and often described as Aboriginal. After the publication of her three-volume autobiography, Sykes was criticised by several Aboriginal women for adopting an Aboriginal identity and totem not her own, and for failing to challenge the frequent media assumption that she was Aboriginal.\textsuperscript{66} Lacking much knowledge about her family connections, Sykes often described herself as ‘Black’, thus ‘creat[ing] an ambiguous identity’.\textsuperscript{67} Was I to make a determination as to whether women such as Sykes should be considered Indigenous, and therefore be included here? This was both impossible and inappropriate for me, a Pākehā New Zealander, and I have therefore left the position of Sykes as ambivalent as she herself does, through including media reports and stories about her which identified her as Aboriginal. Nor was the category of women an uncomplicated one. Simple biological binaries between men and women are not always workable. Georgina Beyer was born a man, underwent a sex change operation and became New Zealand’s first transsexual MP. Was I to include her? Again, I did so through including articles about her as and where appropriate to my discussion of media coverage of Māori women in politics.

Who, then, were the Māori and Aboriginal women most frequently included in books, articles, online lists and other texts about well-known Australians and New Zealanders? In Australia, tennis player Evonne Goolagong appeared most frequently, followed by poet and activist Oodgeroo Noonuccal (formerly Kath Walker), athlete Cathy Freeman, magistrate Pat O’Shane, reformer and public servant Lowitja O’Donoghue and Trukanini. In New Zealand, opera singer Dame Kiri Te Kanawa was most frequently featured, followed by Te Puea Hērangi and fellow Māori leader Dame Whina Cooper, tour guides Rangitīaria Dennan and Mākereti (Maggie Papakura) and politician Iriaka Rātana. (See Tables 1 and 2 below). A large number of other women also appeared in a small number

\textsuperscript{64} ‘University Post For Aboriginal Author’, Sydney Morning Herald, 15 November 1978, p. 8.
\textsuperscript{65} ‘Correction’, Sydney Morning Herald, 16 November 1978, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{67} S. Kurtzer, ‘Is She or Isn’t She? Roberta Sykes and “Authentic” Aboriginality’, Overland, no. 171 (2003), p. 50; R. Sykes, ‘In the Public Interest?’, Australian, 24 October 1998, p. 27.
of texts.\textsuperscript{68} Although the differences between the two countries in terms of the achievements of celebrated Indigenous women were less striking across the entire list of women identified by this process, the lists of those most frequently mentioned display a marked disparity between Australia and New Zealand. In New Zealand, three of the six women are known for their leadership (within a tribal setting or within government circles) and three for their achievements in arenas in which perceived feminine attributes such as grace and beauty were valued (the performing arts and tour guiding in the thermal areas of New Zealand). In Australia, two of the six women are celebrated for their sporting achievements, three for their path-breaking achievements in various areas and their advocacy for Aboriginal peoples (in different leadership contexts from those reflected in the New Zealand list), and one is remembered as a tragic figure.

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|l|l|}
\hline
Name & Times included in texts \\
\hline
Cawley, Evonne (nee Goolagong) & 18 \\
Noonuccal, Oodgeroo (also known as Kath Walker) & 16 \\
Freeman, Catherine (Cathy) & 14 \\
O’Shane, Patricia (Pat) & 12 \\
O’Donoghue, Lowitja (Lois) & 10 \\
Trukanini (Truganini, Trucanini, Trugernanner) & 10 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Aboriginal Women Featured in 63 Texts about Famous Australians}
\end{table}

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|l|l|}
\hline
Name & Times included in texts \\
\hline
Te Kanawa, Dame Kiri & 19 \\
Hērangi, Te Kirihaehae Te Puea (Princess Te Puea) & 16 \\
Cooper, Dame Whina & 11 \\
Dennan, Rangitīaria (also known as Guide Rangi) & 9 \\
Papakura, Mākereti (also known as Guide Maggie) & 8 \\
Rātana, Iriaka & 7 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Māori Women Featured in 45 Texts about Famous New Zealanders}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{68} For a full list and further discussion, see K. Fox, ‘Representing Difference: Celebrated Māori and Aboriginal Women and the Print Media, 1950-2000’ (PhD thesis, The Australian National University, 2009).
Introduction

Analytical Framework and Outline

Several strategic decisions were necessary in the research and writing of this book. First, I focus on representations of Indigenous women. I seek to contribute to an understanding of the ways in which gender, race and nation have intersected in media representations, rather than privileging race or gender as a category of analysis. It is, however, important to examine whether or not framings of famous Indigenous women were replicated in representations of Indigenous men or non-Indigenous women, particularly those famous for similar achievements. I therefore selectively compare depictions of famous Indigenous women with those of famous Indigenous men and those of famous non-Indigenous women. Readers may notice an absence of discussion of other pertinent categories of analysis, especially class and religion. Practical considerations restricted such discussion. However, although I focus upon the intersections of race, gender and nation in the media representations I discuss, the book is framed with an awareness of other such categories. Ideas about class were often an important element in narratives about famous Indigenous women, such as those depicting their rise to fame as a rags-to-riches tale of success. Religion presents an interesting case, for while important in the lives of some of the women discussed, it was rarely explicitly treated in media portrayals. Hence, though Whina Cooper’s Catholicism was a central aspect of her life, and may have played some role in shaping public perceptions of her, it seemed to be largely invisible in press depictions, and hence does not figure in my discussion.

Second, I concentrate on the period between 1950 and 2000. These years witnessed major political and social change in both Australia and New Zealand, enabling the exploration of shifts in representations during a period of great transformation. The embrace of assimilation in its varied forms, its gradual displacement, and the social and political impacts of Indigenous rights and second wave feminist movements on both sides of the Tasman, in particular, both inform and are illuminated by this study of representations. Moreover, many more Māori and Aboriginal women became widely known and celebrated in these years than previously.

I have occasionally consulted oral history interviews conducted by others and published or deposited in libraries and archives. I have not myself carried out interviews, for several reasons which became apparent to me during the research process. A number of practical concerns suggested themselves early on, the most significant being that the women whose media experiences I discuss were based in far-flung parts of Australia, New Zealand and the rest of the world, and that while some were still in the midst of their careers, others had retired or died. Reaching all of them would not be possible, and any interviewing would of necessity be selective. More importantly, these women had throughout their
careers been subjected to the glare of publicity and the pressure of being in constant demand to answer questions, many about issues of race and gender. Rosalie Kunoth-Monks, a long-time advocate for Aboriginal people, told her story to Helen Chryssides for *Local Heroes*, published in 1993. Asked to talk about *Jedda*, the 1955 film which made her famous, she replied with a sigh: ‘Jedda? Surely everyone knows that story by now’. What would this book gain, I wondered, that would justify my being one more person harassing these women with questions on the same issues, following a well-worn journalistic path? I seek to explore depictions of famous Indigenous women in the public forum of the press, and I have therefore chosen to contrast those depictions with the ways in which the women publicly represented themselves, articulated their own stories and challenged narratives produced in the media. In order to discuss these women’s own articulations of themselves and their work whilst allowing them the privacy that the media rarely do, I chose to discuss only their publicly stated opinions and memories. Such a decision also meant I would not privilege private interviews in which I might seek a reality behind the media stories, which is itself a common framing of celebrity stories in the media.

Finally, I focus on the print media, both for its continuing significance throughout the period and for practical reasons of manageability. Similar research could and should be carried out for other forms of media, such as radio, television and film, the aural and visual dimensions of which might add intriguing elements to representations. Is television, for instance, with its very immediate, ephemeral nature, more susceptible to producing stereotypical representations? What difference does the combination of visual and aural elements make? Or the aural nature of radio? More research is badly needed. I explore a variety of genres in the print media, analysing and contrasting representations of celebrated Indigenous women in these different genres, and the resulting narratives of their lives. One such genre is newspapers, focusing on major dailies, and including material from smaller regional newspapers where practical, as these may reveal variations in narratives along local and national lines. Another is magazines, a category within which important genre differences exist. Narratives and representations can vary greatly between current affairs magazines and women’s magazines, for example. Women’s magazines also display a variety of approaches in their content. While the *Australian Women’s Weekly* and *New Zealand Woman’s Weekly* have historically promoted the virtues of domesticity and homemaking, feminist magazines and younger women’s magazines may take very different approaches. Where relevant, special interest magazines (such as music- or sport-focused periodicals) were also included. Particularly interesting are the genre differences between magazines produced for Indigenous people by government departments and those produced by Indigenous organisations, although work by

Indigenous authors did sometimes appear in the former. Representations in earlier magazines such as *Dawn* and *Te Ao Hou* might differ greatly from coverage in newer Indigenous-controlled publications such as *Deadly Vibe* and *Mana*. Along with analysing stories which appeared in the print media, I have also drawn upon biography, both popular and academic, and autobiography, both collaborative and single-authored, each of which brings its own considerations of voice. Finally, published interviews, both full transcripts and edited texts, provide a genre in which the subject speaks more freely, although also raising issues of memory and recall. The contributions of the women themselves in fashioning their own representations complicates understandings of representations in the media and acknowledges their own agency in constructing images of themselves.

In this book I begin the historical investigation of the multiple ways in which well-known Māori and Aboriginal women were represented, remembered and re-imagined in the period between 1950 and 2000 as they strode a national, or a world, stage. In Chapter One, I provide a brief discussion of the historical contexts in which the representations explored in the rest of the book were created. I focus upon shifts in government policies relating to Māori and Aboriginal peoples’ lives, the continuing and changing nature of Māori and Aboriginal protest activity (particularly the intensification of such activity on both sides of the Tasman from the late 1960s) and the ebb and flow of the feminist movement in Australia and New Zealand. As well, I briefly introduce the media landscape in both countries, commenting upon the shifts in media industries which took place during the period.

Chapters Two to Six focus on particular well-known women, analysing the ways in which their stories were told and re-told in the press, and the complex ways in which the women themselves were depicted. The second chapter focuses upon representations of women who became known for their sporting achievements, especially Evonne Goolagong, and the third upon portrayals of women who became prominent in the performing arts, notably Dame Kiri Te Kanawa. Chapter Four signals a shift away from forms of fame in which political issues may be more muted and toward those in which political issues were often inherent. It focuses upon women who became known for their literary or film-making endeavour, especially Kath Walker (later known as Oodgeroo Noonuccal). Chapter Five takes that emphasis further, examining representations of women who were well-known for their efforts in achieving social and political change, particularly Dame Whina Cooper. Finally, Chapter Six investigates representations of Indigenous women who entered the political system as Members of Parliament, focusing upon Māori women in New Zealand.

All chapters consider the ways in which these well-known women publicly constructed and narrated their own stories, as well as the ways in which others imagined them in the media. Throughout, the multivalent nature of the concept
of representation is an important theme. As well as being portrayed in the media, these women represented themselves through their own articulations of their lives and work, chose to or were expected to act as advocates for all Māori or Aboriginal people, and frequently engaged in representational practices through the very nature of their work. Each of these aspects of representation forms part of my discussion of ‘representing’ well-known Indigenous women. In the conclusion, I offer some reflections on the common themes evident in representations of Māori and Aboriginal women in the print media in the second half of the twentieth century, on the sometimes glaring differences between the experiences and representations of Māori women and those of Aboriginal women, and on wider issues about the ways in which race and gender were imagined in constructions of national identity on either side of the Tasman. It is my hope that exploring common depictions of well-known Indigenous women in a comparative way might reveal not only the complex and multiple ways in which concepts of race, gender and nation were understood during these years of transformation, but also many of the ongoing ambiguities, tensions and uncertainties that have been endemic in the national imaginings of settler societies.