



# Skin Deep: Settler Impressions of Aboriginal Women

*Liz Conor*

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## **Skin Deep: Settler Impressions of Aboriginal Women** Liz Conor

Skin Deep looks at the preoccupations of European-Australians in their encounters with Aboriginal women and the tropes, types and perceptions that seeped into everyday settler-colonial thinking. Early erroneous and uninformed accounts of Aboriginal women and culture were repeated throughout various print forms and imagery, both in Australia and in Europe, with names, dates and locations erased so that individual women came to be as anonymised as 'gins' and 'lubras'. Liz Conor identifies and traces the various tropes used to typecast Aboriginal women, contributing to their lasting hold on the colonial imagination, even after conflicting records emerged.

The colonial archive itself, consisting largely of accounts by white men, is critiqued. Construction of Aboriginal women's gender and sexuality was a form of colonial control, and Conor shows how the industrialisation of print was critical to this control, emerging as it did alongside colonial expansion. For nearly all settlers, typecasting Aboriginal women through name-calling and repetition of tropes sufficed to evoke an understanding that was surface-based and half-knowing: only skin deep.

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