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A Strange Affection: Gender, Race, and Interspecies Relations in Francis Ratcliffe's Australian Travelogue

**Abstract**

Settler colonialism by the early twentieth century reshaped the Australian landscape, through which English ecologist and future conservationist Francis Ratcliffe (1904-1970) traveled in the name of scientific and economic evaluation. His travelogue *Flying Fox and Drifting Sand* (1947) detailed his stories of studying fruit bats (flying foxes) in less-densely-settled areas and provided a glimpse of settler life in the outback. Through close reading of this text, this thesis analyzes his interspecies approach to ecology; how race and gender frame those interspecies relations; his affective relationship and attentiveness to the animals and environment, and how travelogue opened possibilities for differential conceptions of epistemology, embodiment, science, and nature. The thesis investigates how intra-active and response-able approaches to nature can be read in historical accounts of scientific exploration. His relationships to white settler Australians and interest in conservation develop through intersecting stories of masculinity, colonialism, objectivity, animality, and race to offer a nuanced subject position in his travel narrative.

**Key words:** Australia, gender, race, settler colonialism, interspecies relations, environmental history, pest species, flying foxes