

## Coming of Age in Meerkat Manor

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By



The latest issue of [American Ethnologist](#) includes a very interesting article on the relationships between meerkats (a type of diminutive social mongoose inhabiting southern Africa) and the biologists who study them as part of the [Kalahari Meerkat Project](#). While the biologists' project has been in place since the early 1990s, more recently these particular meerkats have also become the stars of the widely successful television series, *Meerkat Manor*. In his article "["I fell in love with Carlos the meerkat": Engagement and detachment in human–animal relations](#)" [Matei Candea](#) explores this entanglement of science, entertainment and sociality in light of the recently burgeoning scholarship on human-animal relationships.

Here's his abstract:

Relationship, connection, and engagement have emerged as key values in recent studies of human–animal relations. In this article, I call for a reexamination of the productive aspects of detachment. I trace ethnographically the management of everyday relations between biologists and the Kalahari meerkats they study, and I follow the animals' transformation as subjects of knowledge and engagement when they become the stars of an internationally popular, televised animal soap opera. I argue that treating

detachment and engagement as polar opposites is unhelpful both in this ethnographic case and, more broadly, in anthropological discussions of ethics and knowledge making.

Read: Matei Candea. 2010. "[I fell in love with Carlos the meerkat](#)": [Engagement and detachment in human–animal relations](#). *American Ethnologist*, 37(2):241-258.

Photo: [Discovery Channel](#)

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