

**Panel F1**  
**Microtalks**  
Auditorium



**Rebecca Stanton**

**And They All Lived Happily Ever After? The Attenuation of Violence towards Non-Human Animals in Animated Disney Feature Films**

I would like to talk about my PhD thesis, which is a work in progress. My thesis explores depictions of animal abuse and violence towards non-human animals in animated Disney feature films.

Non-human animals (hereafter: animals) are depicted in almost-every animated Disney film. Their roles are varied: they are both the clothes and the clothed, the eaters and the eaten, the abused and the abusers. They are almost-always there; sometimes alive, sometimes dead. However, whilst their happy lives and practical uses are at the forefront of Disney entertainment, the violent realities of animal abuse are usually hidden from view. For example: Why do Disney depict happy skilled hygienic rats (e.g. *Ratatouille* and *The Rescuers Down Under*), whilst the reality is that a large percentage of rats are subject to violent cosmetic and medical tests for the benefit of humans? Why are viewers told that fur is completely unacceptable, but that leather is totally fine? And, why are dogs usually friendly, but wolves often aggressive?

This research uses theories of animation (cel and CGI), anthropomorphism, speciesism, and animal abuse, to support its central argument.

My research is important because previous studies have proven that unrealistic depictions of animals are one of the main causes of normalized animal abuse.

**Biography**

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My name is Rebecca Stanton and I am a full-time first-year PhD student at Northumbria University, Newcastle (U.K.). I hold a BA and MA from Loughborough University (U.K.).

My PhD researches how and why violence towards animals is attenuated or justified in animated Disney films. My research is important because previous studies have proven that unrealistic depictions of animals are one of the main causes of normalized animal abuse. The violent realities of animal abuse tend to be negated in popular representations, thereby indicating that animals serve particular functions for humans (such as companionship or entertainment). Disney, and most areas of the media, are minimizing and denying the violent realities of infringements on animal welfare, animal abuse, and speciesism. This is a problem because it is unlikely that attitudes towards animal welfare will change whilst the media continues to attenuate, and therefore normalize, animal abuse. My research uses theories of animation, anthropomorphism, speciesism, and animal abuse, to support its central argument.

The first chapter of my research is being presented at Oxford University as part of Oxford University's annual Animal Ethics Conference in July.