

Example of essay on assimilation and the queer monster

[Entertainment](#), [Movie](#)



Sam Miller's "Assimilation and the Queer Monster" is an interesting article which explores how queer people have been portrayed in film over the years. He makes some valid points about the changes that have occurred in the sexuality of antagonists. However, while he puts this down to global changes such as terrorism risk, it seems more likely that acceptance of the gay culture is at the heart.

In the past, homosexuality has been awarded to evil characters in countless films. Miller's examples include: Mrs Danvers in Rebecca and Norman Bates in Psycho, to name just a few. This is an interesting point and while I was probably aware of it on some level, it is not something to which I have given much consideration. However, Miller seems to be correct. Mrs Danvers, for example, is a bitter woman who makes the protagonist of Rebecca feel unwelcome and victimised in her new home. That Mrs Danvers was fond of Rebecca and did not want Maxim to remarry, would have been enough of a motivation for her dislike of the new woman. However, seemingly in order to create a more sinister character, Mrs Danvers is depicted as a single, spinster lesbian. Of course, her sexuality is never explicitly referred to, as is the trend in films from around the same time. Nonetheless, the implication is there and, strangely, the suggestion of her lesbianism does serve to make her more menacing.

Miller points out that, despite this history in film making, matters have now changed dramatically. He argues that since 9/11, a trend has emerged of antagonists in the form of vampires, werewolves and other supernatural or mythical beings. This has, for the most part, eradicated the use of queer

characters as evil. According to Miller, the changing world has resulted in these changes in trend.

The most obvious response to this theory is that being queer is now much less controversial than it was at the time of the earlier films. While it is true that the world has changed a great deal in the last decade in terms of what people are worried about, surely the impact of gay acceptance is of greater significance.

Although there is still a stigma attached to being queer, matters are slowly improving. Furthermore, in a country obsessed with political correctness, there are not many film makers would waste their time and money making a film which stigmatised or devalued queers. For me it is this latter reason, rather than global changes, which is a larger factor. Nowadays, as Miller points out, antagonists or evil characters in recent films are often supernatural or mythical creatures. Perhaps this is because, in our seemingly politically correct country, there is no other way of creating an menacing character without offending members of the public.

However, there are exceptions to this rule. *Notes on a Scandal*, for example, which was made in 2006, contained an antagonist closer in nature to Mrs Danvers. Judy Dench played a bullying, obsessive and creepy woman who, it soon became clear, was a lesbian. On the other hand, the difference between this film and *Rebecca* is that in the former, the character's lesbianism was a vital part of the plot.

Miller's article clearly points out the changes in how sexuality has been used negatively in film over the years. However, his suggested reasons for the changes seem incomplete.

Works Cited

Miller, S. J. "Assimilation and the Queer Monster." Print.