

# Dopple-Gay-England

## A Comparative Discussion of the Medieval Character Archetype as Literary Therapy for the Underprivileged Queer Community

Andrew Hamlin

### Abstract

Upon primary examination of the depiction of gender roles in medieval literature, particularly the role of women in certain discourses, character types may seem to reinforce typical gender roles. However, upon closer examination, specific examples of a non-hegemonic discourse may be found. This project argues that the non-normative gender roles of female characters in medieval literature, chiefly The Wife of Bath from Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, should be seen as an allegorical solution to the present day rash of LGBT suicides. This article is framed by highlighting specific moments in medieval literature in which these characters upend traditional gender and class roles. The author analyzes medieval texts and their present-day incarnations in popular shows like *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*, suggesting that LGBT youth may use these characters to seek solace from feelings of isolation and depression. By linking medieval texts and their present day representations, this author fashions a transformative discourse that aims to resist normative constructions of gender and sexuality, helping LGBT youth to do the same.

---

Many, at first, may find the launch of my motivation to be a bit macabre, but I feel confident in saying that I have personally been inspired by the Werther Effect. This phenomenon of contagious human behaviors being copied by individuals for self preserving or destructive purposes was coined in reference to the mass number of copycat suicides replicating the suicide committed by Werther in Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's novel, *The Sorrows of Young Werther*. Despite the fact that the novel does not valorize or glamorize Werther's suicide or other characters' reactions to it, the number of suicides recreating Werther's were astronomical. It is clear that Goethe's writing had an affect on many young men who could relate to his protagonist. So it is not in question that literature

holds the power to captivate, influence, and affect people. But what should be noted is the actions committed contrary to the sort of language used in describing Werther's suicide— people take from it what they will. It is clear that, even though his suicide is not viewed positively in the story, something about Werther's actions convinced others to follow suit, or follow "dress-costume."

This phenomenon, in itself, is not inspirational to me. However, knowing that literature contains this potency is. It is unfortunate to say that the rate of LGBTQ suicides has dramatically increased over the years at a rate that finally challenges a culture of bullying, oppression, and hate— one would hope, at least. But these suicides are not committed in an attempt to copy literary figures such as Werther, but most— if not all— of these acts have been committed as a reaction to oppression against their sexual orientations and gender expressions. Knowing that Werther has had such a devastating effect on the lives of many in terms of committing suicide, it becomes my hope that that power may be honed and channeled into more helpful outlets: a therapeutic tool in order to help underprivileged members of the queer community cope with the social aggression acted toward them and lessening the contemplation of suicide as a means to escape social degradation.

With a slight detour with the Anglo-Saxons and Arthurian Legend, the paper will focus on Morgan La Faye as a medieval template for therapeutic means to the gender queer community. The reason she has been chosen is that she remains greatly influential in contemporary western culture but is also the starting point for much of the British and American literary canon. the Wife of Bath will be discussed as a character who has transcended time in her original literary forms and works but have also been reshaped and recontextualized throughout the proceeding literary eras to speak to the contemporary audiences of the past. The Wife of Bath acts outside of what is seen to be appropriate for females. Though not necessarily occupying male space in every action she commits, she does transgress socially prescribed limitations on how women should behave, specifically in regards to speech, making her gender queer as a literary figure.

The problem, however, with using medieval literature as a source of therapy for today's generations is that the literature, itself, is oftentimes highly inaccessible. This restriction occurs for two reasons: the first is that the works that these characters originate in are written in an antiquated form of the English language, a form that is seldom taught in its original form in school systems, and therefore, not truly and formally presented in order to be absorbed. In the

event that these works are taught before reaching the university level, they are usually taught in a translation that accommodates modern English speakers. Second, whether using a translation or reading the texts in their original form, the genius of the authorship writing these characters makes some of the traits, and behaviors, and actions of these characters ambiguous and uncertain. This lack of certainty with these characters does not necessarily make them less credible as sources of literary therapy; it just makes their literary quality harder to access as readers since much time is spent navigating through the language and deciphering the plot of the text before being able to reach their therapeutic potential with explication.

To accommodate this problem, I will not discuss the Wife of Bath exclusively. I will, instead, bring in a parallel character from a more contemporary form of literature to appease a more present day audience and allow the work devoted to this topic to be applicable to more than just those who are able to access the original literature. The recontextualized form of the Wife will be discussed through Anya Christina Emmanuella Jenkins from Joss Whedon's hit television series, *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*. Using the first seven seasons of the series as literature, I will discuss both the ways in which the contemporary character parallels and channels the essence of her medieval template and also how she reaches out to contemporary, underprivileged members of the queer community, from this point on to be referred to as the "population" or the "community." The term "underprivileged" is used to describe those who are not granted access to full expression of their sexual orientation or gender queerness due to outlying social pressures.

The hope in speaking on these characters is to begin discussion on a diverse set of topics revolving around forms of oppression against the population. But to begin the conversation, the discussion will cover transcending the boundaries of the true exercise of freedom of speech in regards to these characters. Through exploring this topic, and arguing that the literature is accessible to the population, this paper will work to provide literature as an experimental play space for those who are unable to act like the characters they are exposed to in "Buffy." And while emulation may not be an immediately viable option for the population the way that it seems to have been for audiences of Goethe, the literature of "Buffy" creates an earmark on hope for the potential of the freedom and expression exhibited by these characters. Again, the intention of this particularly framed discussion is not yet to create change within hegemonic systems for members of the population, but to invite this population into mental

comfort by giving them literary characters that they can relate to, a more positive sort of relationship than is exhibited by the Werther Effect.

I speak in this paper not from a background of psychology or a specialization in literature and the mind. However, I do speak from the experience in finding solace as well as simple entertainment from "Buffy." It was not until later in my undergraduate career that I began drawing parallels between the medieval figures and their modern versions, a testament to the necessity of modern forms of these characters to act as therapy for the community. And that is what this whole paper is: a testament. I work hard to draw the parallels between the medieval and the modern and argue in a scholarly manner the ways in which every character steps out of the frame of sexual and gender normalcy. And while I turn to literature that theorizes and discusses the interactions between the brain and the literature it is exposed to, I write of these effects based off of what I have experienced. The same way anyone would bring his/her individual interpretations to literature, I provide interpretations of my experiences in regards to my readings. And further, though I generalize experiences by using my own or those of people I know, my intentions are not to transpose my personal experiences onto the entire community or to imply that every member of the community undergoes the same experiences or receives such experiences in similar manners. I generalize the way I do because I firmly believe that when an individual of the community suffers, the community at large suffers. This discussion will target a collective group experience and the ramifications of being generalized and othered as "queer" in a pejorative sense, but the term "queer" will be used throughout the discussion in its newly reclaimed form by the political branch of the community. In this sense, the discussion of characters are meant to empower the targeted population of this paper. And though members of the community who are experiencing the oppression I speak of may disagree on a personal level with my explication of character analysis and ideas of application and vicarious living, I hope to open the door, and the mind, of my community to finding comfort in literature that works to reach them as people.

Beginning with *Beowulf*, take note on how the longest and greatest speeches of the oral epic are reserved for the men: Beowulf, Hrothgar, and even Unferth despite his role as society's antagonist. In fact, the only female speech is reserved for Wealtheow, Queen of the Danes, who uses her speech to take Beowulf into her family, for Beowulf to be taken as a son into her familial care; she speaks on behalf of the honor of other men. But the boasting, the pride, the slandering, and the challenging is all reserved for the men. In *Sir Gawain and the*

*Green Knight*, Gawain must display his worth greatly through his ability to speak. And though Queen Bertilak has much to say in the romance, her reputation does not depend on her exercise of speech. Rather, the reputation she is expected to have is validated by her stereotypical use of the female seductress' language. Although exhibiting rhetorical success in her interactions with Gawain, she only fulfills what is expected of her at the time by filling the role of the seductress, the temptress; this is her use of dialogue. On the complete contrary, the Wife of Bath in Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* completely shatters the gendered bounds of speech: her discussion of her sexual liberation and numerous husbands in her prologue, and female autonomy in her tale are huge milestones for females. The Wife's prologue is the longest and most autobiographical, most telling, of the prologues in the story. Although sexuality is the topic of much of her speech, she does not work to deceive or underhandedly lure her husbands in any way; she is very upfront about what she wants and what she does, and the autobiographical features of her prologue shatter the gendered bounds of speech by not only speaking on ideas but also revealing that she acts upon these ideas. Because speech is reserved for males and the Wife of Bath goes so far out of the bounds of how females should be speaking, especially for her time-- compared to Queen Bertilak-- it is no challenge to label the Wife of Bath as being gender queer: she speaks like a man.

In wifhood wol I use myn instrument  
 As freely as my Makere hath it sent.  
 If I be daungerous, God yive me sorwe:  
 Myn housbdonde shal it han both eve and morwe,  
                   Whan that him list come forth and paye his dette.  
 An housbonde wol I have, I wol not lette,  
 Which shal be bothe my dettour and my thral,  
 And have his tribulacion withal  
 Upon his flessh whil that I am his wif.  
 I have the power during al my lif  
 Upon his propre body, and nat he ("Wife of Bath's Prologue" 155-165).

First, she claims autonomy over her sexuality. She will use her "instrument" to her own accord without the decision of a man telling her whether or not she can do so. And while many women may choose to be sexual beings, such behavior typically remains veiled from public discourse even in marriage. The Wife of Bath, however, openly claims agency for her sexual behavior and exhibits no shame for it. Many women might experience, or were expected to experience

shame, for 'lowering themselves' to such acts or speaking of such acts at this time, for it was thought that they had removed themselves from a moral compass and the guidance of Christ. But she claims God to her side imploring Him to give her "sorwe" should she not use her instrument the way that He had intended it to be used for. She expresses a hunger for sex, stating that her husband will enjoy it every morning and every night: she does not worry about presenting herself the way one would expect a woman would present herself, especially when it comes to her own sexuality.

What is more is that she claims power over any husband that she will have sex with. This is not to say that she emasculates her husband. Nonetheless, her husband is her "dettour" and her "thral." She is the Achilles to his Briseis, but she will get more physical gratification from her husband than Achilles ever did with Briseis; the Wife of Bath holds more control over her 'possession' over her husband(s). She, alone, seems to have the power to decide when she chooses to separate from each respective husband and has no problem replacing him with a new one contrary to Achilles' loss of his war prize. But the idea of her having "power" during all of her life is a bold statement to make. She is publicly announcing her behavior of taking control and power over men— in itself, a form of performing her control to her audience by commanding their attention— and not submitting to the expected role of wifehood in which she might be treated, parallel to the way she inverts her relation with her husbands. Again, this is not about emasculating her husband in terms of humiliating him or compromising his social image. But she does emasculate him in the sense that she takes control sexually, blurring the gender roles of a dominating male and submissive female during intercourse. Although heterosexual in practice, the Wife of Bath becomes queer for her time when she steps out of her role in sex and takes on the male's assumed sense of control. And again, her proclamation of her behavior further establishes her as a gender queer character.

The Wife of Bath finds herself recontextualized in the character of Anya Christina Emmanuella Jenkins, medieval housewife converted vengeance demon after casting a spell to turn her unfaithful husband into a troll. However, once losing her powers and returning to human form, Anya's practice of speech goes beyond the bounds of what is accepted as appropriate for a women even in her modern day context: she is confrontational, openly discusses her own sexuality as well as others, and feels no shame for her own sexual practices or her proclamations of them. She says to her partner, Xander, "[Frankly,] it's ridiculous to have these interlocking bodies and not... interlock. Please remove

your clothing now" ("The Harsh Light of Day"). In her relationship, Anya has no qualms being the bearer of sex, and she verbalizes her desires to her partner. And although Anya speaks within the safety of her relationship, where public criticism may not reach, she also has no hesitation to discuss her sexuality in front of others. Practicing her wedding vows in front of her maids of honor, she says:

I, Anya, promise to love you, to cherish you, to honor you, ah, but NOT to obey you, of course, because that's anachronistic and misogynistic and who you do you think you are, like a sea captain o-or something? [. . .] I, Anya, promise to cherish you... Ew, no, not cherish. Uh, I promise to have sex with you whenever... I want, and, uh, uh, pledge to be your friend, your wife, and your confidant, and your sex poodle ("Hell's Bells")

The fact that Anya nonchalantly states these vows in front of her maids of honors and knowing that these vows will also be told to her partner in front of a populated church atop an altar shows that Anya holds no reservations speaking on behalf of her sexuality. Though comical and slightly discomfoting to observe, Anya transgresses the idea of being a modest woman, publicly announcing her sexuality in one of the most sacred of ceremonies: her wedding. In this instance, she particularly parallels the Wife of Bath in that the Wife speaks on sex being within the sanctity of marriage. Further, her speech posits her equal if not dominant role in her marriage to come. She states that she will not obey Xander because such behavior and practice is outdated and unequal; she continues to blur the gender lines in the same way that the Wife of Bath does. Both the Wife and Anya express a claim to power and control as well as their sexuality. By speaking in the manner that they do, they step outside of the traditional female mold by discussing topics that are typically reserved for men but taking it a step further and speaking about these topics from the traditionally male standpoint. Not only are they removing themselves from speaking like women; they are speaking like men.

These female characters are counter to members of the LGBTQ community in that they are able to freely express themselves verbally without being truly reprimanded for their behavior. This difference comes from the fact that these characters are characters; they are within the realm of literature, acting within a play space that acts as a safety zone for the audience, who is unable to speak similarly in the nonfictional world. For example, The Wife of Bath is interrupted by the Pardoner, who takes offense to the Wife's preachy tone when preaching

is reserved for men, and Anya is oftentimes given questioning stares and correctional instructions on how and why to not speak the way that she does even from the most credible of characters. However, neither of these two women are ever truly hindered or punished for the gender queerness in their speech. On the contrary, the underprivileged members of the queer community do not always possess the tools for such free speech, for they oftentimes receive negativity that the two characters do not.

As sexual orientation identity is accepted, Cass writes that some continue "a philosophy of fitting into society" which may involve a "continued maintenance of a passing strategy (pretending heterosexuality)" (1984, p. 151) in order to protect oneself from "the (possibly negative) reactions of others towards one's homosexuality" (p. 152)—or according to affect theory, to avoid shame (Kaufman & Raphael, 1996). (Greene and Briton 2012).

While developing sexual or gender identity, hindering one's speech becomes a tool for social survival: if the individual refrains from expressing him/herself in ways that are associated with homosexual or other queer tendencies, the individual may pass as "straight" and may not have to worry about the (possibly) "negative reactions" of others. But this mode of survival limits the individual from truly expressing him/herself and the person becomes prohibited from speaking in ways that those who are a part of the heteronormative are not: surveillance over chosen words, expressed thought, paralanguage— constantly hovering over one's expression in the attempt to not be discovered for sexual straying. John Austin claims that in today's culture, performativity involves a loss on the focus of self and an invested focus on performativity to accommodate the need of contributors to society. On one hand this may be true, but for the population, there is, instead, an extra focus on the self in order to appear like they blend in with the heteronormative. They do not have the same sort of self capital that allows the heteronormative to be able to focus on contributive performativity and so spend their efforts concentrating on appearing heteronormative. These methods of performativity become a form of what Austin refers to as perlocutionary performativity: the performing individual attempting to persuade outsiders that he/she is heteronormative. However, I wish to label this particular type of persuasion under the category of perlocutionary silence. For the persuading, convincing, and deterring that occurs here is not a matter of persuading someone into attending a social event, or convincing someone with an argumentative essay, or deterring someone from acting upon a dangerous act. This type of convincing does not allow there



to be an alternative: a separate (anti)social event, the opposing argument, or the dangerous act. Instead, the only option for acknowledgment is the individual's association with heteronormativity. The purpose of this performativity is to deceive others from affiliating the performer with a queer identity; association with this identity is not an option. In this sense, the performer acts upon perlocutionary silence in that, although speech and language may be acted upon, an idea and an identity are silenced; they are veiled by the performer and are not meant to be considered as an option, as persuading, convincing, and deterring imply that there is an option that is meant to be strayed from. In this case, the purpose is to perform the idea that the individual is not straying, is not trying, a skewed version of modern sprezzatura; there can be no question of the performer's heteronormativity, and the means through which this social safety is obtained is through the regulation of one's speech and other behavior.

The two female characters then become therapeutic because they are able to express their sexual tendencies and gender queerness without the threat or realization of any substantial negativity that the queer audience would anticipate for themselves should they speak that way. Both characters do meet some form of resistance from fellow characters, but these reactions simply acknowledge that resistance is to be met. Nonetheless, the characters thrive in their freedom to speak. Even today, the Wife of Bath's prologue and tale are one of the most popular to read from *The Canterbury Tales*— she continues to be assigned in nearly every literature course that covers the time period because that quality of expression is contained in her segment of the story. But because she is oftentimes removed from the younger populations who come to read her, she finds herself reembodyed in Anya, the comic relief of the series, the fool of any Shakespearean play with tremendous insight and the language to express it. Through affect theory, which states that experiences and emotion may be vicarious alongside literary figures, the expression becomes a vicarious means through which the hindered population may experience a lack of restraint in speech. By observing Anya and taking part as her audience, the population sees a world in which the gender queer are able to speak in ways that the population is socially prohibited from.

But in relation to being gender queer, one must be careful when discussing gender expression and associating expression to certain groups or perceived hierarchies. Halberstam asserts a problematic schism lying between female masculinity and male masculinity: female masculinity is its own entity, its own

independent form of gender expression and removed from male masculinity. Therefore, female masculinity is not subservient to or lesser than masculinity embodied by males because female masculinity is not dependent upon male masculinity to exist and thrive. With this said, let it be noted that Anya's masculinity is not an attempt to mold into a male masculinity, and the population is not challenged or invited by Anya to embody male masculinity. Rather, the audience recognizes that Anya acts freely, and they become challenged to embody their own gender organically as well. Anya does not actually speak like a man; men do not speak like her. When she accuses Willow of speaking behind her back, she role plays the part of Willow, saying "I can just hear you in private, I dislike that Anya. She's newly human and strangely literal," to which Willow replies, "What? I don't say that. No one says that. No one talks that way" ("Into the Woods"). Even in this fictitious world, there is still a similar expected manner of speaking, which Anya breaks and other characters are highly aware of. For the fellow characters, her speech patterns are a slight obstacle in communication; for a queer audience member, they are comic relief. But Anya's innate speech tendencies allow audiences to acknowledge that she does not think twice about expressing herself, she does not try censoring herself, she does not modify her speech to appease others. What makes her speech gender queer is not solely the fact that she is speaking in more presumably masculine ways; it is the fact that her organic speech patterns embody their own unique boldness and strength, qualities typically thought to be occupied by males.

Another important distinction to discern is the ways in which speech, itself, is separated and categorized in order for people to make the social prescriptions that they do: there is much discussion on speaking masculinely and femininely, like a man and a woman. It is not being born a biological male that grants freedom of speech for an individual and being born a biological female that hinders speech. Rather, there are certain topics of discussion that are reserved for each sex dependent upon prescribed gender roles. And it is moving outside of those appropriate topics that make these women so transgressive in their speech. It is not necessarily the speech itself that grants these women their status; it is their movement into spaces previously occupied and closed off as well as bringing awareness to female autonomy and transgression that creates the possibility for an audience member to play with mentally. So aside from openly speaking about sex, which is not considered to be ladylike, Anya works outside of the parallel with the Wife of Bath in also discussing her lack of a desire to be "burdened" with the domestic lifestyle, occupying a prominent role in the

workplace, and even strategy in combat, all topics that are socially appropriate exclusively for men to discuss.

Anya breaks away from the typical female mold by asserting her lack of desire to take part in the traditional domestic lifestyle. In the midst of playing "The Game of Life" board game, Anya becomes distraught because she is "burdened with a husband, and several tiny pink children, more cash than [she] can reasonably manage." But when she is told that she is winning the game, Anya reevaluates and recontextualizes the situation to fit her own desires: "Ooh, I'm so pleased! Can I trade in the children for more cash?" ("Real Me"). In this instance, Anya reveals that she is uninterested in having a life that has children as part of its makeup. Dawn, Buffy's younger sister, seems repulsed at this idea, and while it should not be put past Anya to actually sell children for money, the statement that she makes is for one of her own autonomy. She refuses to conform to the notion that she should be forced into having children because she is a woman. And she speaks openly on her own behalf to obtain that lifestyle for herself, even if only within the context of a game. For the same way in which Anya's character acts as a play space for the population, the board game is a literal play space in which she is able to assess the lifestyle she wishes to pursue.

In addition to her lack of enthusiasm directed toward childbearing, Anya wishes to remove herself from the domestic, traditionally female, sphere and move into the workplace, which is usually a role filled by a male figure. She takes on a job in retail, working for the magic shop in town. And while working in retail is traditionally a female role, Anya chooses to fulfill this role, and she, again, is extremely vocal in her ambition for this job: "Every time I close out the cash register, the dance of capitalist superiority" ("Bargaining Part 2"). Dances behind the cash register displays Anya's enthusiasm for the work that she has independently chosen to take part in. It is the element of choice that makes Anya's speech so entertaining: the joy elicited in her voice expresses that society has not placed this role of the traditional female retailer upon her; she has chosen it for herself. On top of her choice, she vocalizes her ambition by celebrating her capitalist success. Success in the workplace is usually reserved for men, and considering Anya is in a heteronormative relationship, the fact that she is ambitious in making money in the workplace shows that she is able to transgress heteronormative hegemony. She pursues success in the workplace, which shows that on top of not necessarily wanting to have children, she also challenges the notion that the male in the relationship is the ultimate

breadwinner; Anya chooses the role that she fulfills as opposed to having one assigned to her.

Last, Anya challenges heteronormative gender roles by speaking up in the discussion of combat. In the episode "The Gift," there is heavy discussion and brainstorming on how to defeat Glorificus, the main antagonist of the season. The conversation seems to be going nowhere and Anya refrains from proposing ideas and takes on the role of a cheerleader:

Anya: Okay, but I'm still not hearing enough ideas. She's a god; let's think outside the box.

Spike: Why don't you go think outside the bleeding box?

Giles: Yes, Anya, apart from your incredibly uninfectious [sic] enthusiasm have you anything else to contribute? ("The Gift").

The men of the discussion become frustrated with Anya's attempts to cheer them on. And instead of embodying the expected trope of the hysterical female, Anya speaks up and presents the group with ideas that may actually be helpful in combat against the banished hell god, Glory:

Anya: The Dagon Sphere.

Giles: Sorry?

Anya: When Buffy first met Glory she found that magical, glowy [sic] sphere that was meant to repel Glory. We've got it in the basement. It might drive her away or hurt her. Oh. And Olaf the troll god's enchanted hammer. You wanna fight a god, use the weapon of a god.

Spike: Nah, that thing's too heavy to...

[Buffy easily picks up the hammer]

Spike: Yeah, good.

Buffy: I like this. Thanks.

Anya: Here to help. Wanna live. ("The Gift").

Anya shows great poise in militant preparation. While the rest of the group is struggling to brainstorm methods to stop Glory from succeeding in her evil deeds, Anya proposes two extremely helpful ideas in a matter of seconds. She shows great logic and strategy in battle, highlighting her deviation in speech even more: it is, again, not the idea that men have more freedom in speech than women. It is the fact that the discussion of battle is typically reserved exclusively for men, for it is they who traditionally take part in battle. Through frustration of not fulfilling their roles as men, Giles and Spike challenge Anya to speak up and as opposed to maintaining gender roles in the topic of battle, Anya breaks the mold. She is able to occupy male space through her speech by aiding the cavalry in their preparations for battle, and she supersedes the male characters in their own space. This is not to suggest that Anya is necessarily superior in any way, but the inconsistency between expected gender roles and the output of these characters' conversations displays the ways in which prescribed gender roles may not always benefit those involved. If Anya had not been challenged to occupy male space, the male characters may have harmed the group at large by not allowing there to be a flux in the discussion.

Further, Buffy validates Anya's speech by being able to pick up the hammer and saying that she likes the idea. The ideas expressed through Anya's speech gain power when they manifest themselves in Buffy's actions. And even though Anya responds in a way that is serious to her but comical to the audience, saying "Here to help. Wanna live," the idea she puts forth is that women are capable of aiding people as well. Going back to the recently discussed notion of Anya aiding the group prepare for battle when the men could not, Anya acknowledges that what is important is the safety of all and her own desire to remain alive, not staying in her socially appropriated space as a woman. The issue is completely removed from gender roles and expression; it is about the preservation of life, and Anya's speech acknowledges the importance of the situation.

Overall, Anya's weapon is her speech. Repression of speech is oftentimes interpreted to mean repression of thought, but the manner in which Anya speaks demonstrates how the individual has thoughts that are contrary to what may be expected. And so thoughts may be hidden by censoring or veiling speech, this is not to say that the thought does not exist. As opposed to thinking before speaking, Anya speaks what she is thinking. This sort of freedom is

something that the hindered LGBTQ community yearns for as it is constantly told which gender roles to fulfill, who to express love and affection toward, and the like. Repressing their speech does not hinder their thoughts or their desires for what is so innate to them. But having the thoughts are not enough. Having these thoughts are involuntary acts of desire, and this is problematic for the population for two reasons. First, if the desire must end at the thought, the desire itself never fully realizes, and the individual may never fulfill his/her yearning. Secondly, because the thought, itself, can not be fully repressed, the individual is still able to connect his/her desire to the socially broadcasted idea that gender and sexual deviance are wrong. The individual may not feel any less "wrong" about his/her removal from normalcy; there has only been a decision to attempt veiling these deviations from the public sphere through the means of altering one's speech, but covering the desires does not eliminate them from within the individual.

However, the innate manner in which Anya is able to express herself and be successful bridges a gap between what the population is hindered from and what the population yearns for. Anya's speech creates a realization for these people by acting upon what they can not. Upon self-observation, Anya attempts to describe and analyze herself from the other characters' perspectives and takes on their voice: "She speaks with a strange evenness and selects her words a shade too precisely" ("I Was Made To Love You"). Within the context of the show, this particular expression of self comes off as comical because the fact is that this is how she expresses herself: though not necessarily safe from the realm of demons that intrudes upon her town, Anya is safe in her expressivity because the show acknowledges that ideas of engendered and sexual exploration are not evil like the demons pouring forth from varying hell dimensions and do not need to be dealt with as such. Unfortunately, this exact same quote when recontextualized to LGBTQ youth takes on a whole new meaning. In the real world, the population does not have the convenience that Anya is granted in her fictional role. When applied to the real world, this becomes a matter of self-preservation and an attempt to seek out safety through silence or heavily modified speech. Expression becomes modified "a shade to precisely" in order to create a certain image that does not deviate from heteronormativity and does not remove one from a realm of perceived safety. Through the character of Anya, this targeted group of people are leant a voice through which they can be expressive, crass, sarcastic, sexual, and critical. Though this may not truly be enough to help aid the population through what they are experiencing, Anya's voice provides a means through which the

population may experience comfort in a play space and hope that they will one day have the same voice.

Through all of the convolution of self, self-image, and self-expression, there is still the question of investing all of these emotions into this fictitious realm. But the aim here is to be able to take a phenomenon that people are already experiencing—being influenced by literature—harnessing it, and channeling it into more helpful forms than copycatting Werther's suicide, especially since LGBTQ youth suicides are occurring at such an alarming rate. So since people have already shown to be so invested in allowing literature to influence the self and its actions, it is important to acknowledge literature's power over people and use it to help people as opposed to harming them. Some of the skepticism might come from the idea of placing the truth of reality into a fictitious realm, and it might also have to do with fear of what has already happened like the Werther Effect. For the former, there is an unwillingness to allow for a suspension of disbelief, and with the latter, there is a fear of what happens when your suspension of disbelief is overridden by believing the fiction too seriously. But Holland explains in *Literature and the Brain*, "With literary works and other media, it is that, because, the reality-testing systems of the frontal lobe are weakened, the emotional systems that the reality-testing systems normally manage become relatively stronger" (102). Holland's words here do not speak to a positive or negative effect of suspending one's disbelief, which, in itself, acknowledges that both are completely viable options. But what the passage does suggest is that one's ability to access certain emotions becomes stronger, to learn about the self. This is the power of literature. The skepticism is understandable: literature has had some rather horrid effects on humanity at times. But the idea is to be able to grow stronger and embrace one's presence in that power as well as allowing it to strengthen a part of the self that society refuses to nurture; Anya has to do this as an ex-demon, part of her being. Holland says that literature is the virtue through which the self is able to reflect, and in this sense, nurture qualities or traits that the self may have not been aware of.

These are my assertions of what literature can do. Holland says that he has not "tried to relate particular literary works to brains, because [he does] not think it is possible at this stage of neurological science" (352). I have tried just that. As I have stated before, I am not any sort of prodigy of the brain. But as a member of a targeted group, I can speak to how the particular literary works of these queer figures, both medieval and modern, have spoken to me. I have not tried relating

literary works to brains by means of science. I have done so as a reaction to my experience, trying to to explain what draws me to these characters and their respective works. This discussion is meant to aid the community of those who are deemed “queer” and othered for sexual exploration and gender expression outside of normalcy, a community I align myself with. Though speaking of my own experiences and of those who I know on a general basis throughout this discussion, my aim was to target the collective experience because it is the amalgamation of individual experiences that shape a community. And the point is not to dehumanize and demonize the heteronormative or hegemonic for being outside of that community; they are all a part of the same system and pressure that leaves the queer population more visibly oppressed. Though this discussion, by no means, comes close to reaching that community in its entirety, I write this with the hope of reaching out to as many as possible. And it is with that hope, that I begin this discussion of targeting the homosexuals, bisexuals, transgender, transexual, asexual, intersex, and others not because they are queer, but because they are people, people just like those of the dominant culture. And by finally targeting this group as people— as humans— I hope to show them that there is a support system and a community that is extremely present and that there is no need to take the same means that lead to Werther’s end.

### Works Cited

- “Bargaining Part 2”. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. UPN. 2 October 2001. Television.
- Chaucer, Geoffrey. *The Canterbury Tales*. *Norton Anthology of English Literature*. 8.1. 2006. Print. 257-275.
- “Gift, The”. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. WB. 22 May 2001. Television.
- Greene, Darrell C., and Paula J. Britton. “Stage of Sexual Minority Identity Formation: The Impact of Shame, Internalized Homophobia, Ambivalence Over Emotional Expression, and Personal Mastery”. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Mental Health*. 16.3. Taylor and Francis Group, LLC. Print. 188-214. 2012.
- Halberstam, Judith. *Female Masculinity*. Duke University Press. Print. 1998.
- “Harsh Light of Day, The”. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. WB. 19 October 1999. Television.
- “Hell’s Bells”. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. UPN. 5 March 2002. Television.
- Holland, Norman. *Literature and the Brain*. Gainesville, Florida: The PsyArt Foundation. Print. 2009.



"Into the Woods". *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. WB. 19 December 2000. Television.

"I Was Made To Love You". *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. WB. 20 February 2001.  
Television.

"Real Me". *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. WB. 3 October 2000. Television.