Sexual identity and desire have and will continue to be complex. In my research, I explore the concept of self-identity and related to sexuality and gender through research on queerness in the medieval period and The Divine Comedy, specifically. My goal is to show the complexity, fluidity, and fragility of identity and to show how self-identity is transhistorical. Ideas about identity have changed since the 14th century, but have also remained consistent. I define modern concepts related to sexuality and the definition of identity I am using. Then, I translate these terms to medieval Florence. After, I connect these concepts transhistorically and to identity in The Divine Comedy.

I analyze Dante's treatment of sexuality and gender in the poem. In the first part of the poem, Inferno, Dante places sodomites in a circle deeper in Hell than the second circle of Lust. Heterosexual lust is a lesser sin than homosexual lust. However, in the next part of the poem, Purgatorio, homosexual and heterosexual lust are placed on the same level. Additionally, Dante shows an intention to counter the gender binary by making two main characters, Virgil and Beatrice, experience multiple gender role reversals.