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Hozier, TikTok, and Sapphic Rhetoric

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HOZIER, TIKTOK, AND SAPPHIC RHETORIC

by

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B.A. May 2022, Virginia Wesleyan University

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ABSTRACT

HOZIER, TIKTOK, AND SAPPHIC RHETORIC

Sophia Marie Kovalcik
Old Dominion University, 2024
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Through the process of social circulation and critical imagination, Sappho's poetry, which maintains rhetoric that women, nature, and love are related to ritual and feminine divinity, intersects with queer digital rhetoric. Via discussion of feminist spirituality rhetoric, Marie Cartier's lesbian theology, and rhetorical and literary analysis of Sappho's lyrical fragments, I explore her Ancient Greek mythological, cultural aesthetics. I then connect sapphic rhetoric to two contemporary artifacts that represent or influence contemporary feminist, digital, and queer identities: the lyrics of the Irish musician Andrew Hozier-Byrne, known as Hozier and TikTok comment sections surrounding Hozier's music and concert clips.

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This thesis is dedicated to the fifteen-year-old version of me who,
upon entering her first queer relationship, discovered Hozier's 2013 self-titled album.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Even though we cannot go back in time to watch *how* Sappho, famous author of Ancient Greek hymnic lyrics, engaged with her friends, audiences, and lovers, through the feminist rhetorical practices of social circulation and critical imagination, it becomes clear that poetry of antiquity maintains feminist qualities. Sappho was able to create space for women via her religious, sensual, and spiritual narratives. Her rhetoric still intersects modern lyrical spheres as well. The purpose of this thesis, therefore, is to demonstrate specific aesthetics of feminist and queer identity formation as a modern continuation of Sappho's rhetoric. Beginning with discussions of social circulation, critical imagination, feminist spirituality rhetoric, lesbian theology, and comment section discourse analysis, it becomes clear that Sappho's lyrical qualities reappear via sapphic, feminist lyrics of Hozier's 2013 and 2019 albums. The goal of these three chapters is the following: to explore sapphic rhetoric in Sappho's time and our own, then to explore Hozier's lyrics as an extension of sapphic rhetoric, and, finally, to better understand through appraisal theory and discourse analysis classifications, what fans believe is sapphic about his lyrics. The following methods will be used through the chapters to express how sapphic rhetoric has evolved. Given the following definitions, one can visualize a connection between sapphic rhetoric in antiquity and modernity.

Social Circulation and Critical Imagination

Jane Montgomery Griffiths, author of "Sappho, Performance, and Acting Fragments" writes that to *act* as Sappho and perform her rhetoric is to embody Sappho. Yet, to do so is a complicated process. She writes, "Her poetry, her historical identity and our reception of both seep into each other through the gaps, erasing the comfort of secure definitions" (194). While a

secure definition or tradition would be helpful, critical imagination encourages us to fill in the gaps the best we can. “Critical imagination” (Royster and Kirsch 20) is one of the primary methods I will use to identify sapphic rhetoric. It is a term involving the feminist rhetorical practices, as illustrated by Jacqueline Jones Royster and Gesa E. Kirsch, authors of “Feminist Rhetorical Practices.” They explain this process, they use the following essential and guiding question: “How do we make what was going on in their context relevant or illuminating for the contemporary context?” (20). Sapphic rhetoric, although originating in antiquity, is not only a discussion of women’s lives in Ancient Greece but a continual, modernized discussion of current feminist, queer narratives.

Who gets to engage in critical imagination? To suggest that only scholars and educated individuals can practice this would be elitist and problematic. Therefore, I will use Appraisal Theory and the CMC Act Taxonomy, explored later in this introduction, as a method by which to analyze comment sections on popular Hozier-related TikTok videos. Digital rhetoric and queer rhetorics coalesce in online spaces, such as TikTok, according to Trent Kays, author of “Between Queer and Digital: Toward an Understanding of the Rhetoric of Digital Queerdom.” Kays considers the queer community involvement online to be “expansive” (436) and “about performance of any identity at any moment in any accommodating space” (Kays 432). The queer performance can be caused by a reluctance to be ignored, erased, or removed from online spaces (436). Queer users of an online space or community have the power to make a space continually accepting, even if the “positionalities of its users across time and space” (Kays 436) and “malleable and formed based on the fluid interactions” (Kays 436). Similarly, Griffiths writes that one embodiment of Sappho can be “created by the interplay of contextual knowledge and imaginative construction” (195). This imaginative construction process goes beyond simply

accepting our modern contextual knowledge of lesbianism and queer history as sapphic - it also relies on a clear attempt to merge past and present expressions of everyday feminist rhetoric and desires. This merging of past and present can occur via queer digital rhetoric.

Likewise, Jane Snyder, author of *Lesbian Desire in the Lyrics of Sappho*, argues, "Sappho's poetic world, whatever its source of inspiration or origin, was a female one" (2). Sappho's lyrics define women and femininity in spiritual, feminist, and romantic contexts. This continual mapping of Sappho's voice and Greek themes within online and modern lyrical spaces is a function of feminist social circulation, which, "invokes connections among past, present, and future in the sense that the overlapping social circles in which women travel, live, and work are carried on or modified from one generation to the next and can lead to changed rhetorical practices," (Royster and Kirsch 23). Not only does this social circulation mesh past and present and change rhetorical practices but the *medium and space* of the rhetorical practices change based on generation. Lloyd F. Bitzer writes in *The Rhetorical Situation* the following: "In short, rhetoric is a mode of altering reality" (3). The desire to define new aesthetics and alter reality exists within online spaces. Therefore, digital rhetoric via online spaces is evidence of sapphic rhetoric being circulated.

Digital Rhetoric: Choosing TikTok

Digital rhetoric involves digital media spaces. Aaron Knochel, author of "Assembling Visuality: Social Media, Everyday Imaging, and Critical Thinking in Digital Visual Culture," argues that photo-sharing apps like *Flickr*, another social media site involving an "associative web of images" (14). Philips, Miller, and McQuarrie also express that Pinterest and other social media themes are "future-oriented" or create a "holistic vision of the future" (8) of one's values. Even without images present, there exists organization within language used in comment

sections that speaks to this “web” (Philips et al 14) and “holistic vision of the future” (Philips et al 8). Likewise, in the words of the researchers, apps like Pinterest aren’t “very social,” and people tend to interact “with themselves” rather than other users (Philips et al 8). I am interested in spaces where socialization among Hozier’s fanbase occurs abundantly, which includes synthesis of everyday, individual perspectives. It is the location where I will map an “associative web” (Philips et al 14) of sapphic and feminist desires.

TikTok was almost banned due to anxiety that the app would allow the Chinese Communist Party the ability to access the information of American users (Koleson 2) and may be banned this year (Oremus and Harwell). A ban could end discourse on the app surrounding the “entertainment, connection, and legitimate livelihoods” (Koleson 5) of its users, and, more concerningly, the self-expression of TikTok’s already marginalized queer user base.

What occurs in these malleable spaces where queer individuals interact are what Trevor Boffone and Sarah Jerasa consider signs of “affinity groups” (10). Affinity groups, according to these researchers, are created frequently by teenage TikTok users (10). Queer affinity groups, then, are created when people express shared interest in queer topics. Despite the threat of the future TikTok ban, young generations continue to combat erasure and use TikTok as a way to “participate in literacies” (10) that are queer, especially when they do not have the freedom of such discussions in school and home settings. They may gravitate towards a sapphic music scene and videos that discuss content related to Hozier’s lyrics and performances. The area of my discourse analysis covers a queer affinity group. Even if TikTok will not last as an option for queer affinity groups and literacies in the United States, these discussions deserve attention, even if comments are anonymized.

Discourse Analysis - What Fans Consider Sapphic

The final chapter will discuss TikTok commenters' overall assessment of Hozier's lyrics and his persona via comment section-based discourse analysis. Discourse analysis of comment sections typically surround social meanings imparted by phrases left by internet users. Often, social salience of an idea or opinion is expressed via judgment or a person, concept, or object, etc. Topics can vary, but because this thesis interacts with queer digital rhetoric, queerness will be the focus of judgements, claims, etc. This can be explored via Appraisal Theory, a method of categorizing how an individual or individuals might react emotionally to a variety of topics. Peter White, author of "Appraisal Theory" explains that appraisal is identified within three subcategories of discourse analysis:

- 1) positive/negative assessment presented as emotional reactions (labeled 'affect'),
- (2) positive/negative assessments of human behavior and character by reference to ethics/morality and other systems of conventionalized or institutionalized norms (labeled 'judgment'), and
- (3) assessments of objects, artifacts, texts, states of affairs, and processes in terms of how they are assigned value socially (labeled 'appreciation'), that is, in terms of their aesthetic qualities, their potential for harm or benefit, their social salience, and so on. (2)

Appreciation, one of the subcategories of Appraisal Theory, occurs in a TikTok comment that might explore personal "social salience" (White 2) - such as *how and why* something is important to a fan - of Hozier's lyrics. Fans, typically through claims that speak to their own feminist desires, explain why his lyrics have become a text or an artifact of queer, digital, sapphic rhetoric. I have found Appraisal Theory can encourage rhetorical analysis by acting as a close reading of shared social scripts, claims, and desires within online queer affinity groups.

The ways that a commenter expresses appreciation within the comment itself would also fall under yet another discourse analysis classification scheme known as the CMC Act Taxonomy. The classification scheme, created by Susan C. Herring, Anupam Das, and Shashikant Penumarthy and developed to categorize computer speech acts, has been used when exploring Soundcloud comment sections (Ishizaki, Hiromi, et al.) This scheme uses the following terms:

“ACCEPT, APOLOGIZE, CLAIM, DESIRE, DIRECT, ELABORATE, GREET, INFORM, INQUIRE, INVITE, MANAGE, REACT, REJECT, REPAIR, REQUEST, THANK” (Herring et al.)

For the analysis of TikTok comment sections, I will focus primarily on coding for the following speech acts as they occur in discussion of sapphic music, Hozier, the LGBTQIA community, and related topics:

1. DESIRE

a. Examples:

- i. **I wish** I was this talented of a writer...
- ii. **I hope** to find a love like the one expressed in these lyrics...

2. CLAIM

a. Examples:

- i. Hozier **is** probably bisexual because...
- ii. **I don't think** that a *man* can write about sapphic experiences because...

3. ACCEPT

a. Example:

- i. **I agree** with these lyrics

ii. I **realized** that I am queer after listening to his music

In the third chapter, I will be coding for comments that express appreciation and then define the specific speech acts that create the comment. I aim to look for connections between fan accounts of Hozier's music, theology, and feminist spirituality, as I believe they are concepts that speak to modern and ancient sapphic rhetoric. Claims about sapphic desire and Hozier's impact in a feminist sense are important; likewise, the expression of one's *desire* to be loved or viewed in a particular way could be a first step to the critical imagination of a feminist future within queer affinity groups.

Feminist Spirituality

Sappho became a literary vehicle, lyrical inspiration, and a window into the Ancient Greek worldview of spirituality and same-sex desire. Sappho's rhetoric mirrors the Goddess spirituality movement, a fringe movement blossoming in the 1960s and 1970s, which involved views held among feminist and spiritualists who argued, in essence, that womanhood should be seen as divine.

Feminist spirituality, according to Jon P. Bloch, author of "Countercultural Spiritualists' Perceptions of the Goddess," centered around women, womanhood, and "self-empowerment through a specific 'naming' of female experience as divine" (181). It also functions to "shun what are perceived to be patriarchal values that promote gender inequalities" (181) and subvert patriarchal thoughts about gender and nature. Bloch writes that "mainstream society inaccurately perceived... a separation of the "sacred" heavens from the "mundane" earth - or the "('sacred' male god from the 'mundane' woman)" (184). Sapphic rhetoric can challenge these dualistic beliefs, arguing that love for women, dialogue with Goddesses, nature, and ritual are interconnected and sacred. Marcella Althaus-Reid, author and senior lecturer at the University of

Edinburgh writes in “The Queer God” that queer practices and perspectives may have been negatively impacted by religious “subjugation of women and also of nature” (154). For example, the Christian Genesis story “is interesting,” she writes, “because women and nature are seen as subjects under men and a masculine God. They are the ‘other’ who are in ‘need of mastery and control’ (154). Jennie Klein writes in “Goddess: Feminist Art and Spirituality in the 1970’s” that a goal for the Goddess movement was an effort to create “a cosmic covenant of sisterhood through the raising of female consciousness,” (580). This is not a new movement or perspective; Sappho was able to construct a space for women that was led by women and centered feminine deities in the same kairotic move.

Theology

Sappho encourages the connection between women in a space defined by the spiritual presence of deities associated with love and desire. As Jennifer Larson explains in “Greek Nymphs Myth, Cult, Lore,”

The myth and cult of Eros encompassed same-sex as well as heterosexual love. The god was often worshiped in conjunction with the principal deity of sexual desire, Aphrodite, whose domain included all the paraphernalia of female beauty. (Larson 223)

In her discussions of American lesbian bar culture, sexuality, and sacredness, Marie Cartier defines theology in a similar sense. The following luggage from *Baby, You Are My Religion: Women, Gay Bars, and Theology Before Stonewall*, expresses connections between divinity, religion, and queer sexual desire:

Theology is that search for god, that *finding of god* and whether or not named, that ability to *see god* and to *name the “you” beloved*, as god. This kind of naming began the search for *something named* and sacred ...I believe that the bars practiced *theology* by

seeing the homosexual as a self that did not need to become the past but could be birthed into a new relational future. (214)

Theeology, although derived from lesbian bar culture, is present through Sappho's lyrics and Ancient Greek female-centered symposia. Sappho's voice is an expression of love for women and love between women. She includes women in feminine spaces by focusing on Greek ritual celebrations. Theeology involves the practice of connecting spirituality to queer and women-centric spaces. These spaces, however, do not need to only exist within physical bar spaces. They can exist online, too.

The technique of venerating women and searching for god in women (therefore, rhetorically engaging in theeology) has ties to antiquity and into social media-based, queer affinity groups. Sappho also calls upon Aphrodite, the Greek deity associated with pleasure, love, and femininity procreation, for guidance through hymnic lyrics. She also speaks to Eros, another deity closely associated with Aphrodite. Now, young adults speak via TikTok to each other using modern sapphic lyrics as a shared interest.

Religion and Creating Spaces for Women

Sappho's ancient prose highlights a shared experience for young Greek women that mirror's Cartier's definition of the religious elements found in lesbian bars:

In this space they were able to meet lovers, or rather find someone to love, have community, find themselves, have a sense of belonging, and, in general, find a structure in which they could create meaning for their lives. Isn't that what many of us credit religion with helping us to do? (4)

Sappho writes of a community of Greek women who spent significant time with one another while engaged in religious symposia and ritual events for deities. Her lyrics are "subjectively and

objectively woman-centered,” (64) according to John J. Winkler, author of “Double Consciousness in Sappho’s Lyrics.” She and other women expressed both desire and spirituality in shared spaces. Additionally, Sappho’s personalized connection to Aphrodite is well documented in her lyrics, suggesting that she felt it was important to share that feminine divinity was a part of her everyday life and worldview. Sometimes she takes on the voice of Aphrodite, interpreting the goddess for her listeners in a conversational format. In doing so, she exercises knowledge of the divine and Aphrodite’s message. Her lyrics communicate an appreciation of Greek women and a love for Greek womanhood through ritual narratives.

Sapphic: A Circulation of The Definition

The term sapphic, too, expands via social circulation. The label sapphic is derived from Sappho’s name, and it can be used to define one’s sexual identity. Sapphic can be used by “lesbians, bisexuals, and pansexual people of various genders,” (Hamou). This term will also be used frequently to describe same-sex desire between individuals. Sapphic is a category that many use either as a descriptor of lyrical content and narratives or as an identity. Likewise, straight, cisgender men can create sapphic lyrical content. In other words, sapphic content can be created from a non-feminine source. There is a wide range of identities, expression, artistic mediums, and authorship that fall under the category of sapphic.

Non-Essentialist Understandings of Online Sapphic Identities

Orsatti and Remier, authors of “Identity-Making: A Multimodal Approach for Researching Identity in Social Media,” suggest that we adopt a “non-essentialist understanding,” (6) of online identity formation. They summarize this non-essentialist way of thinking about identity formation in the following:

A non-essentialist understanding is able to grasp the multiple and social nature of identity formation, where identity is 1) not simply an accumulation of memories, 2) comprised of multiple identities, 3) socially constructed, and 4) grounded in actively living our everyday lives in a material world. (6)

The many narratives we create online via commenting are valid and often autobiographical, even if they are multi-dimensional. Some identities may be feminist dreams for the future. Others can safely express queer emotions or desires within the internet's anonymity. I will use Orsatti and Remier's definition to explore sapphic rhetoric as it pertains to digital spaces and comment sections. This outlook recognizes that people often hold multiple identities online, so as one expresses their connection to music, discovers their sexuality or spiritual identity, the definition of oneself expands and circulates.

Artifact 1: Poetic Fragments in Translation

In the second chapter, I explore and explain how Aphrodite worship and same-sex desire combine to create a tool for demonstrating the themes of sapphic rhetoric. This chapter includes a literature review and rhetorical analysis of Sappho's poems using various interpretations. The interpretations include those published and written by authors such as Josephine Balmer, Diane Rayor, Jim Powell, Anne Carson, and Bliss Carman.

To set the framework for this chapter's particular discussion, it is crucial to come to an explanation as to how I read Sappho's fragments. In *Working With Spoken Discourse*, Deborah Cameron states that typically, often without realizing it, we interpret text as the following sequence: "where A and B are sentences, we assume that A followed by B means 'A *and then* B' or 'A *and consequently* B'" even if the narrative order we project isn't always the most "accurate" or "traditional" interpretation of spoken or written language (11). Although Sappho's

poems and lyrics are fragments in which lines are unfinished, I will use this A line *then* B line structure to explain her poems, reading them as though they do not maintain gaps or missing lines. Regardless of the interpretation chosen for analysis, I prioritize content before structure, focusing on same-sex, religious, and feminist content rather than syntax and line breaks.

Artifact 2: Contemporary Lyrics

Hozier's lyrics will be used as a case study to explain how Sapphic rhetoric appears in modern music. I will focus on his use of ritual, Greek literary references and themes, and veneration of women in his lyrics. This involves devotion as a tool to describe love for women, which mirrors Ancient Greek worship of feminine deities.

Many have argued that Hozier's work is "sapphic," and therefore belongs in the Sapphic Pop genre. Sapphic Pop contains lyrics that are "an ode to women" (Gutowitz). The singer of the ode to women does not need to be a feminine individual or identify as a lesbian or bisexual create this narrative. This is because sapphic is a sexual identity and a style of writing that many people can use in any artistic expression. Julie Crawford argues that that the term sapphic, "applied to both (poetic) form and (homoerotic) content, was employed to appeal to women readers" (980) and that "signaling and invoking female same sex desire points to the critical need to recognize female same sex desire and the vocabulary and creative scenes used for imagining its fulfillment" (993). Although Hozier, at the moment, identifies as a cis straight man, his lyrics capture a queer, feminist narrative in the sense that he describes women akin to powerful, mysterious forces of nature, such as sunlight. Hozier often rejects and subverts the message that nature and women need to be controlled. His lyrics also describe women as nature-like and, likewise, depict nature as evidence of divine femininity.

Artifact 3: Online Rhetoric

Sapphic rhetoric is also explored in online spaces. Through appraisal theory, judgment of Hozier and his music provides yet another avenue to explore what sapphic means to everyday individuals. What makes this chapter unique is that it explores fan expressions as a process of definition. Aaron D. Knochel writes in “Assembling Visuality: Social Media, Everyday Imaging, and Critical Thinking in Digital Visual Culture” that to use social media involves “performance” (14). What we depict of ourselves online may be vastly different than how we present ourselves offline. Our opinions, likewise, may change depending on our audiences and mediums of connection. This does not mean that a comment section is less valid to explore nor does it mean that sapphic aesthetics are less legitimate in online spaces. While queerness is allowed to exist among the digital rhetorics of TikTok, we should document it.

CHAPTER II

DEFINING SAPPHIC RHETORIC

Jane Snyder, the author of *Lesbian Desire and The Lyrics of Sappho*, writes, “Since there are so many literal gaps in the tattered texts with which we are dealing, in effect, all readings of Sappho are ‘fictions of Sappho’” (3). Additionally, according to Sandra Boehringer, author of *Female Homosexuality in Ancient Greece and Rome*, scholars have proposed that Sappho was not a lesbian but a schoolteacher; others argue that because she was such a great poet, she could not have experienced same-sex desires (20). It is important to note that, according to Athenian comedies, Sappho was also depicted as a “lustful woman with many male partners” or even a prostitute, according to Maarit Kivilo (188). These early interpretations examine Sappho’s desire through a heterosexual lens. While Sappho does include men in her writing, ignoring the presence of homosexuality in her writing generates a limited reading of her lyrics.

For the purposes of exploring the feminist rhetoric, theology, and feminist spirituality in her work, I will focus on the homosexual content in her lyrics. This aligns with a tradition by which Sappho’s image, according to Kivilo, changed to that of a “passionate poet and teacher, lover of women, and proto-feminist muse” (18) during the late twentieth century. Sappho writes about her lovers and “girl companions,” (Kivilo 184). She writes, for instance, “for mortal women. Know that with your [heart] you would [free] me from all my troubles” (Sappho fragment 23, lines 7-10, Rayor 39). In multiple fragments, Sappho’s “speaking voice vividly evokes homoerotic desires and anxieties” (65) writes Anne Klinik, author of *Woman's Songs in Ancient Greece*. To ignore her love for mortal women and her lyrical focus on women would, thus, result in an antiquated rhetorical reading.

Ancient Theology and Symposia

Symposia for Greek women, a space to practice femininity outside of the presence of men, mirrors the four tenets of theology. For instance, symposia and other religious events encouraged women to meet in safe, spirituality-based, ritual, and feminist contexts (Blamer). The act of protecting women, allowing women to rest, and bringing women into a space of visibility via lyrical content is likewise how Sappho's work is connected to feminism, theology, and the feminist spirituality movement.

Greek symposia originated as events where women were excluded; they began, according to Joan Burton, author of *Women's Commensality in the Ancient Greek World*, as "small, elitist, male-defined after-dinner drinking parties" (146). However, female-centered symposia, where those who were once uninvited could be with one another, were just as important. Burton writes that practices in symposia were to "share meals with female friends" (150) within a religious or spiritual context. She also notes that the religious celebrations that helped define symposia gave women opportunities to express themselves in a non-male-dominated space. Through worship and ritual, they were allowed to exist outside of strict gender roles. Sappho's love for women binds themes of sensuality and religion within these ritual contexts. As translated by Bliss Carman, the following fragment illustrates this rhetorical situation:

Will none say of Sappho,
 Speaking of her lovers,
 And the love they gave her,—
 Joy and days and beauty,
 Flute-playing and roses,

Song and wine and laughter (Sappho fragment 59, lines 1-6) ¹

Those who worshiped Eros and Aphrodite at these events with “songs and wine and laughter” (Sappho fragment 59, line 6, Carman 36) performed rituals that “provided important opportunities (both formal and informal) for women to establish a sense of self-identity and community” (Burton 151). Festivals honoring Demeter would last several days, and a festival known as Skira, celebrating Greek goddesses Athena and Demeter, was an event where “women ate garlic, a pungent food linked with sexual abstinence” (Burton 151). Another ceremony honoring both Demeter and Dionysus was called Haola; during such a festival, women would tell “ribald jokes to one another, drink wine, and eat food shaped like genitals” in the ritual space (Burton 151).

Sappho is likely to have played her music and shared her lyrics with other young women in these spaces. Sappho calls upon Aphrodite in many of her verses, and, according to William D. Furley’s chapter on the rhetoric of Ancient Greek prayers, “Aphrodite presides over all forms of sexual union, matrimonial and extra-marital, heterosexual and homosexual” (72). Likewise, Furley includes that Aphrodite encouraged and sanctified “social cohesion,” (72), which speaks to the importance of functionality in women-led symposia and other women-centric spiritual events. Sappho, too, through her lyrics, popularized the Greek world of women-centric social cohesion. Small, all-night parties celebrating Aphrodite and Adonis would include women from nearby neighborhoods; in Lesbos, women like Sappho could “call to Aphrodite to pour nectar mingled with the festivities into golden cups, evokes drinking festivities set in a luxuriant sanctuary of Aphrodite” (Burton 153). All the while, men were excluded and were forced to stay outside (Burton 153). This is what is perhaps most important; after all, to *write* of spaces that are

¹ See page 36 of Bliss Carman’s *Sappho: One Hundred Lyrics* for a complete translation.

not male-centric and to *participate* in the culture of women-centric space is to engage in an ancient version of theology.

This is explained via the following passage. According to Cartier, the lesbian bar would develop its own kind of spiritual and community-based joys:

In the gay women's bar communities, Eucharist was this breaking bread and/ or having a drink with someone, often for the first time, when someone else knew who you were—a homosexual—and was willing to break bread with you knowing that was who you were. The tradition of having a drink (alcoholic or non-alcoholic) in community with someone else was continued in order to keep the community alive in anticipation of "joys to come" These joys might be a possible relationship, continued community, or the simple joy of helping to keep the bar open so one would have a space/place to return to. (208)

Aside from drinks, community, and joy being key to a gay bar experience and symposia experience, there is also a shared rhetoric of safety, supervision, and protection. In supervision of female deity inspired Greek cult spaces, women could protect and supervise one another.

Josephine Blamer writes in the introduction to her translations of Sappho's work,

Their [Greek women's] purpose was marriage, their glory, chastity, their world, the home....Outside the home, religion was the only public activity in which women could participate. They supervised the cults of the female deities such as Aphrodite, Hera and Artemis and it is therefore not surprising that these figure prominently in Sappho's poetry (15)

The majority of Greek women would have been confined to their roles as a wife and homemaker (Blamer 14), yet Sappho's lyrics center religion as a public activity where she and other women could meet and collaborate. Janett Morgan's research in her chapter "Women, Religion, and the

Home,” highlights the protection Greek women who bonded, both spiritually and communally, could experience among one another during religious events. She writes, “The use of the roof offers protection to the women. They can ... lose their self-control whilst retaining the protection of the home. They can become visible and audible without coming out into the city” (300).

Religion provided visibility and protection among Greek women just as the lesbian bar provided protection for 20th century women. Therefore, Morgan’s message echoes a similar concept to Cartier’s theology. Although symposia and festivals within the house were not exactly what one would consider a lesbian bar, they were spaces where women could relax within the company of other women and participate within a culture counter to the one expected of them.

In shared ritual spaces, Greek women could be visible and powerful. Sappho illustrates the space for them through music where they could subvert gender roles and be free to express themselves. Winkler writes that it is possible that Sappho violated Greek gender roles, such as those enforcing that “a proper woman was to be silent in the public world” and that “a proper woman accepted the administration and definition of her sexuality by her father and her husband” (Winkler 41). Sappho, in centering the experience of women’s sexuality in her lyrics, provides a feminist lens into the Greek world. Sapphic rhetoric allowed feminine individuals to imagine a world where they were deserving of adoration. The subversion of puritanical religious and sexual scripts become key to modern readings of sapphic and Sappho-inspired songwriting practices.

The presence of a particular feminine deity may not have been directly present in the lesbian bar culture, and yet, similarly, Cartier writes that, “we must consider this place [the lesbian bar] was sacred, whether or not it is so named sacred by all of those who utilized it” (195). The lesbian bar space is rare and unique in its ability to affirm lesbian desire and create

community. So, too, there are rare and unique instances when Greek women had their own spaces. The following fragment expresses this situation. As translated by Diane Rayor, Aphrodite has caused Sappho to be overcome “with longing for a girl:”

Sweet mother, I cannot weave –
 slender Aphrodite has overcome me
 with longing for a girl. (Sappho fragment 102, lines 1-3)²

As weaving was a typical gendered occupation for women in Greece, Sappho writing that she can not use a loom indicates that her love for women disrupts her ability to follow gender roles. She “cannot weave,” (Sappho fragment 102, line 1, Rayor 85) and, therefore, is unable to follow Greek society’s guidelines for women because of her love for another woman. Therefore, her desire, in this instance neither centers on men. It also does not center the version of sexuality and submissiveness that Greek men requested and expected of Greek women. Fabiola Araujo, author of “Phenomenology of Eros and Aphrodite on Sappho,” writes that Aphrodite, the Goddess associated with, “goodness, justice, and wisdom” (64) is to blame for her distraction or her inability to conform to societal ideals. Another of Sappho’s songs speaks to a memory of symposia, worship, and love between young women. Sappho addresses a young woman who desperately does not wish to leave her side. She sings to her companion to remind her of the times they shared:³

If not, let me remind you
 . . . the lovely times we shared.

² Translated by Diane Rayor on page 85 of *Sappho: A New Translation of the Complete Works*.

³ Translated by Diane Rayor on page 78 of *Sappho: A New Translation of the Complete Works*.

Many crowns of violets, roses, and crocuses together
 . . . you put on by my side

and many scented wreaths
 woven from blossoms
 around your delicate throat.

And . . . with pure, sweet oil
 [for a queen] . . .
 you anointed . . .

and on soft beds . . .
 delicate . . .
 you quenched your desire.

Not any . . .
 no holy site . . .
 we left uncovered,
 no grove . . . dance
 . . . sound. (Sappho fragment 94, lines 10 - 28)

When Sappho writes that there was “no holy site we left uncovered / no grove . . . dance . . . sound” (Sappho fragment 94, lines 25 – 28) she is likely speaking of the symposia or an event taking place at a temple setting. She combines these final lines with images of women

adorned with garlands and flowers, combining a narrative of worship and desire. Hence, the erotic experience overlaps the ritual celebration. Additionally, alongside instances of desire, the protection of women is vital to the continuation of theology in ancient sacred spaces.

In yet another set of fragments, Sappho writes, according to Bliss Carman's translation, about her experience passing by the door of a sleeping woman:

When I pass thy door at night

I a benediction breathe:

'Ye who have the sleeping world

In your care,

Guard the linen sweet and cool,

Where a lovely golden head

With its dreams of mortal bliss

Slumbers now!' ⁴ (Sappho fragment 36, lines 1-7)

"I a benediction breathe" (Sappho fragment 36, line 2) might signify a Greek spiritual utterance. This position that she takes, standing outside the door, looking within the room and from above the woman, and speaking of mortals in this manner suggests that she speaks from a place removed from "mortal bliss" (Sappho fragment 36, line 6). She assumes the role where she supervises and protects another woman. These fragments prove that her desire to protect other women combines with Greek spirituality.

Fabiola Araujo explains that communication with Greek deities "constitutes a time-space in which the personal dissolves" (9). This means that Sappho relinquishes her authority over her situation and yields to spiritual intervention in "Ode to Aphrodite." In this fragment, the

⁴ This translation can be found on page 26 of Bliss Carman's *Sappho: One Hundred Lyrics*.

distinction between Sappho and Aphrodite dissolves. Sappho speaks as Aphrodite. Roger Travis, author of “The Descent of The Goddess: Ritual and Difference in Sappho’s Prayer to Aphrodite,” writes that Sappho is “giving Aphrodite a voice to pronounce the final and eternal play which grips Sappho and her beloved,” (71) suggesting that this performance would allow her a position as an intermediary between the goddess and herself. Her rhetoric is “invoking the traditions of ritual prayer” (Travis 37). She creates a relationship with her deity when her voice overlaps with that of the goddess. Anne Carson, author of *If Not, Winter: Fragments of Sappho* argues a similar point as Travis. She writes that in the following verses ⁵ from the same poem, Sappho “shifts midverse to the direct speech of Aphrodite,” and, likewise, that there exists an “eerie casualness to the immortal voice simply present within Sappho’s own” (358):

In my crazy heart. Whom should I persuade (now again)

To lead you back into her love? Who, O,

Sappho, is wronging you? (Sappho fragment 1, lines 18-20)

Sappho gives Aphrodite a voice here; the goddess speaks through her. Therefore, Sapphic rhetoric involves drawing feminine deities into one’s personal life. This act involves supernatural power and wisdom displayed rhetorically by a mortal woman. The line between mortal and divine appears, here, to be fluid via Sappho’s powerful voice. To imagine oneself discussing love with a deity, such as in the following verse, is a feminist act: “Stand beside me, goddess, my ally” (Sappho fragment 1, verses 27-28)⁶ when speaking to Aphrodite. Sappho’s lyrics provide access to a deity that protects mortal women, is allied with mortal women, and, additionally,

⁵ This translation can be found on page 3 of Anne Carson’s *If Not, Winter: Fragments of Sappho*.

⁶ This translation can be found on page 4 of Jim Powell’s *The Poetry of Sappho*.

inspires the empowerment of feminine sexual desire. Thus, Sappho is using a feminist method of critical imagination.

Beyond speaking as Aphrodite, Sappho is able to call deities into physical spaces with a celebratory expression. Yet, she does so in a way that highlights feminine sensuality as well as ritual. John J. Winkler writes that “Sappho is ... proving a way to experience such ceremonies, to infuse the celebrants’ participation with memories of lesbian sexuality” (Winkler 64).

Ceremonies likewise involved deity-inspired *charis*, a Greek term meaning “I rejoice,” or “I feel pleasure,” (Snyder 85). The implementation of *charis* depends on the context; sometimes Sappho includes the names of the muses or Charities as the inspiration for *charis* and, other times, praise and joy are indirectly implied (Snyder 85). Sappho, in centering women’s sexuality within joyful, shame-free, *charis*-inspired celebration displays a feminist act. Sappho writes the following of her legacy in connection to love via *charis*, as translated by Bliss Carman:

When I have departed,
 Say but this behind me,
 Love was all her wisdom,
 All her care.
 Well she kept love's secret,—
 Dared and never faltered,—
 Laughed and never doubted
 Love would win.⁷

(Sappho fragment 60, lines 1-8)

⁷ This translation can be found on page 35 of Anne Carson’s *If Not, Winter: Fragments of Sappho*.

Sappho imagines a future where love, even love in secret, has its moment and wins. To do so, she suggests that though “laughter” love wins. This is an example of a joy-inspired expression of love in Sappho’s lyrics.

Aphrodite: Anguish and Insane Desire

Joy is not the only rhetorical method by which goddesses like Aphrodite are incorporated into sapphic rhetoric. One must also recognize that deities that influenced love and sexuality could also impart feelings of anguish. This is expressed through a translation of fragment 23. Aphrodite causes Sappho to love an individual who perhaps does not share her affections:

How can someone not feel repeatedly over-
powered, Cypris, Mistress, by who she loves,
without wanting mostly to find release from
the anguish you nourish?

Once you’ve pierced me, why to no purpose keep on
tearing me in two with insane desire?⁸ (Sappho fragment 23, lines 1-6)

Powell writes, “The second stanza refers to Sappho’s involvement with the temple of Zeus, Hera, and Dionysus at Messon” (64). This information confirms that prayer to Greek gods is entwined in her love life and writing, although not in a joyful sense. Here, Sappho speaks directly to the single entity Cyprus/ Mistress, referring to Aphrodite, to find a “release” from her “anguish” (Sappho fragment 23, lines 3-4) in an erotic and pained emotional sense. She feels “overpowered” by “who she loves” (Sappho fragment 23, lines 1-2). Aphrodite is given agency

⁸ This translation can be found on page 9 of Jim Powell’s *The Poetry of Sappho*.

and influence in connecting Sappho to her lover. In this case, Sappho experiences sickness in her passion though communicating with deities.

Sapphic Rhetoric, Nature, and Ritual Space

Along with joy and anguish, the kariatid setting of sapphic rhetoric is sometimes located in nature-inspired settings. Take, for instance, fragments where Sappho invites Aphrodite into ritual space in nature. This is expressed in the following fragment:

Come to me from Krete to this holy temple,
 here to your sweet apple grove,
 altars smoking with
 frankincense.

Cold water ripples through apple branches,
 the whole place shadowed in roses,
 from the murmuring leaves
 deep sleep descends.

Where horses graze,
 the meadow blooms
 spring flowers, the winds
 breathe softly...⁹

(Sappho fragment 2, lines 1-10, Rayor 27)

⁹ This is translated by Diane Rayor on page 27 of *Sappho: A New Translation of the Complete Works*.

Sappho constructs her affection for women through the lens of a nature-based setting. Monica Cryrino, author of “Pandora's Jar: Lovesickness in Early Greek Poetry,” argues, sensually is expressed via Sappho’s characterization of the divine in nature-inspired locations (110). Likewise, Annette Giesecke, author of the chapter “Lyric Space: Sappho and Aphrodite's Sanctuary,” in *A Companion to Greek Lyric* also writes that, “The natural setting of Sappho’s temple...can instantly be characterized as fertile, comforting, breezy, shady, fragrant, and cool” (181). The landscape signifies youth, fertility, and, therefore, youthful femininity; it is a location that has been cut out, cultivated from the wilderness, and fashioned to be “suffused with feminine allure” (Giesecke 188). Apples were associated with fertility and erotic passion; they were provided as gifts celebrating a “fruitful union” at Greek weddings (Giesecke 182). According to Christopher Faraone, apples in Greece were “designed to produce sexual desire in the female” (230). Sappho uses apples to create a positive narrative about female sexuality. Roses, expressed in the line “the whole place shadowed in roses” (Sappho fragment 2, line 6, Rayer 27) are bound to Aphrodite's origin story (Giesecke 182). Not only does Sappho cater to Aphrodite by summoning her to a familiar place, but Sappho also uses nature as a method to speak about feminine sexuality. In doing so, she incorporates feminist spirituality rhetoric that emphasizes connections between femininity, divinity, and the natural world.

Yet another fragmented poem¹⁰ of Sappho’s speaks to a romantic garden setting:

Well I found you in the twilit garden,

Laid a lover's hand upon your shoulder,

And we both were made aware of loving. (Sappho fragment 37, lines 1-3)

¹⁰ This translation can be found on page 26 of Bliss Carman’s *Sappho: One Hundred Lyrics*.

Nature, a garden space, speaks to the narrative of sensuality, love, and femininity in these lyrics. Winkler writes that pleasure and worship are “held together in the mind,” (64) in Greek ritual spaces. The same can be said for any nature-inspired location. This fragment also speaks to themes of theology, since two individuals (Sappho and her lover) have found one another in a safe and shared setting. Combining an image of a garden with a romantic narrative is also indicative of feminist spirituality rhetoric.

In yet another fragment,¹¹ Sappho writes:

In the apple boughs the coolness
Murmurs, and the grey leaves flicker
Where sleep wanders.

In this garden all the hot noon
I await thy fluttering footfall

Through the twilight. (Sappho fragment 16, verse 1-6)

These lines call upon a similar image of femininity, passion, and rest, as we have seen defined earlier in the sacred grove in Crete. Sappho is setting the scene for a soft, sensual, supernatural atmosphere. Again, she uses apples to weave in narratives of sexuality. The verses inspire an image of a winged creature or divine individual ascending from above - perhaps a spiritual, otherworldly, or god-like visitor who meets lovers in the garden space. This wording inspires an image of a divine visitation in nature, insinuating rhetoric based in feminist spirituality.

Sappho’s rhetoric, ascribed from her lyrics, centers the lives, passions, and experiences of women in ritual spaces. Through ritual and worship, she is able to illuminate her love for women and focus on women in spaces excluding men. In doing so, she challenges gender norms

¹¹ This translation can be found on page 17 of Bliss Carman’s *Sappho: One Hundred Lyrics*.

imposed by Greek patriarchy while dually providing access between Aphrodite, a protector and guide, and mortal women. She creates a safe space for women, which is connected to lesbian bar theology. As they do in lesbian bar settings today, Greek women had a chance to express themselves as both enlightened and sexual individuals. Her work expresses feminist spirituality as well as centering women as instrumental to Greek ritual. Through conversations with Aphrodite, she expresses love's hardships as well as joys, meaning that her narratives of love are realistic and authentic. Sapphic rhetoric inspires one to imagine ancient women and their connection to deity worship, ritual, and love in modern spaces. Hozier's lyrics are an example of critical imagination and modern social circulation of sapphic rhetoric, as the following chapter covers in detail.

CHAPTER III

HOZIER AND SAPPHIC RHETORIC

Sappho's work has inspired many men and women to write about love. For example, Sappho's lyrics could have inspired Bruce Springsteen, Bob Dylan, and John Lennon (Hall). In the present day, themes of sapphic rhetoric can be seen in Andrew Hozier-Byrne's (known primarily by fans as Hozier) music, especially his first two albums. The tradition of seeing women and love for women presented as wise, powerful, empowered, sensual guides his lyrics. When listening to his music, women might begin to see their sexuality positively. Others could relate to the narrative of same-sex love and desire feeling dually transgressive and worthwhile.

What lies at the center of Hozier and Sappho's love songs and poems is the worship of femininity and the ritual of same-sex love. Hozier's lyrics have been defined as "sapphic" and emulating narratives of lesbian desire by his fans since 2013. In her blog post, "What Is It With Lesbians And Hozier?" Jordan Currie, a Toronto journalist, poet, and obvious fan of Hozier, writes that she can "hear an echo of her (Sappho's) spirit" through Hozier's "mythic depictions of women and femininity" (Currie). "The Sound of Sapphism," an episode from Vulture's *Switched on Pop* podcast, describes Sapphic Pop as a "a quasi-genre of music by and/or for femme folks who are attracted to other femme folks," (Cruz). Likewise, the term sapphic is a broad identifier of love for women: "terms like 'sapphic' or 'wlw' (woman-loving woman) have grown in popularity in an attempt to name a shared identity that's broader than 'lesbian'" (Cruz). In addition to sapphic being a descriptor of love between feminine individuals, the term is also used to describe lyrics that "are almost always associated with the words yearning and softness" (Cruz). Hozier's work falls into this Sapphic Pop category. His music, as will be discussed in this chapter, continues the major rhetorical themes of Sappho's work.

Hozier's 2013 hit "Take Me To Church" became an international hit and intentionally expresses same-sex desire through religious images. Other songs, such as "Sunlight" and "From Eden," depict women as powerful and nature-inspired. In these lyrics, he also uses Biblical and Greek references to frame his love for women. "Sunlight" includes lyrics about Icarus and Daedalus, and "From Eden" includes figures such as Satan. "Cherry Wine" and "Jackie and Wilson" also references one's lover as divine. In "Take Me To Church," Hozier defines himself as pagan, worshiping his lover as though she is a goddess. He also describes love as a divine and transgressive act in "Be." With all of these qualities, his lyrics can be considered sapphic. The following lyrics discussed are from Hozier's 2013 self-titled album and his 2019 album, *Wasteland Baby!*

Worship of Women

Hozier's fanbase has considered him a figure who can write about their love for women since his 2013 release of "Take Me To Church." The following are key lyrics from this song which express this rhetorical situation:

Knows everybody's disapproval

I should've worshiped her sooner

If the Heavens ever did speak

She is the last true mouthpiece (Hozier lines 3-6)

The terms "worship" and "Heavens" speak directly to themes of worship and ritual within a romantic love narrative. These lines are proof of a major theme: this is a "a song of praise to his lover" (Baker). Similarly, worship and ritual are themes of Sappho's lyrics. She calls upon Aphrodite in "Ode to Aphrodite" and other songs. Her prayer to a feminine deity connects her to love and defines her love for women. Sappho's devotion to the goddess is defined by inserting

herself and others into a ritual space. Hozier's rhetoric implies a similar narrative; his devotion to his lover is viewed through a worshipful lens.

The following lyrics are from "Take Me To Church:" indicate sapphic qualities:

If I'm a pagan of the good times
 My lover's the sunlight
 To keep the goddess on my side
 She demands a sacrifice (Hozier lines 29-32)

Ritualistic themes of sacrifice and devotion are also present here, explained by his use of "sacrifice." Hozier even calls his lover a "goddess" and "the sunlight" - two images that tie into Sapphic rhetoric. He even calls himself a "pagan," further drawing his use of lyrics to Sappho's. Eller writes in the first chapter of "The Myth of Matriarchal Prehistory" that "myth," which, in Hozier and Sappho's case, would include that of Greek myths, Biblical myths, or rituals, "does not need to be true—or even necessarily be *believed* to be true—to be powerful, to make a difference in how people think and live, and in what people value" (6). Therefore, the combination of worshipful themes and same-sex love is powerful enough to change how people view desire. Perhaps, as it appears according to these comments, a new kind of devotion for women is noted, appreciated, and legitimized, making lesbians feel seen. Hozier does the same coupling of erotic themes, devotion, and worship in "Take Me To Church." The following lyrics from "Take Me To Church" describe this combination: No masters or kings when the ritual begins/ There is no sweeter innocence than our gentle sin." (Hozier lines 53-54)

The "sin" Hozier speaks of is same-sex love. These lyrics indicate that men can use sapphic rhetoric and write about same-sex love and love for women as ritualistic. Similarly,

“NFWMB,” another song by Hozier, expresses a lover's devotion and presents a narrative of powerful worship. The song contains the following lyrics:

If I was born as a blackthorn tree

I'd wanna be felled by you

Held by you

Fuel the pyre of your enemies. (Hozier lines 17-20)

Hozier desires to be in a position of surrender to a woman, willing to do whatever she needs with him to meet her desires. He would gladly become a sacrifice for his lover. This is an example of how Sapphic rhetoric, which positions women as powerful, is expressed in modern lyrical content.

Hozier writes, likewise, in “Jackie and Wilson” that he longs to live with his lover whom he calls Isis:

Lord, it'd be great to find a place we could escape sometime

Me and my Isis growing black irises in the sunshine

(Hozier lines 19-20)

Calling one's lover Isis insinuates pagan worship and that his lover is powerful, mystical, and akin to a deity. Isis according to Reginald Witt's “Isis in the Ancient World,”

was, after a long period of Egyptian worship, “Constantly visualized as a drama of birth, death and resurrection” (38). She was also renamed “named Demeter... by the Greeks” (Witt 38).

Calling one's lover Isis and positioning a woman as godlike gives her a status of control, power, and ability; it is an act of theology and feminist spirituality.

Devotion Inspired by Nature

Hozier uses nature to describe feminine beauty, continuing the sapphic rhetorical qualities that align with feminist spirituality. In Hozier's song "Sunlight," he writes the following:

Oh, and these colors fade for you only

Hold me, carry me slowly, my sunlight

Oh, your love is sunlight

Oh, your love is sunlight (Hozier, "Sunlight" lines 29-32)

Describing a lover using nature as a theme illustrates that she is beyond human, overpowering, untouchable, inspiring, and divine. According to Cyrino, "Radiance is a traditional literary motif in portrayals of divine epiphany, and in Greek narratives, when gods reveal themselves to humans, they are often surrounded by dazzling light" (Rayor 70). Hozier describes his lover as "sunlight" that carries him. His lyrics also subvert the narrative that women should be controlled, oppressed or enamored with men who are the speaker of the prose/poetry/lyrical content. Instead, Hozier allows his lovers to take on a presence that is larger than his own; she is the sunlight, a formidable leader, and a timeless, ancient being. She also carries him, which subverts the romantic narratives that women lack strength or are the individuals in need of support from their masculine partners. Sappho, too, describes Aphrodite as golden and even writes about her chariot ascending from the heavens (Rayor 25), which, in comparison to Hozier's lines about the sky and the sun above, draws on similar imagery. To Hozier, his lover has power and is a divine symbol of nature.

These lyrics also include references to the Greek myth of Icarus and Daedalus.

Each day, you'd rise with me

Know that I would gladly be

The Icarus to your certainty

Oh, my sunlight, sunlight, sunlight

Strap the wing to me

Death trap clad happily

With wax melted, I'd meet the sea

Under sunlight, sunlight, sunlight (Hozier, "Sunlight," lines 31-38)

This myth centers around a man and his son attempting to flee Crete using wings fashioned from feathers and wax and has a tragic ending. In his lyrics, Hozier positions himself as Icarus welcoming death to illustrate how devotion connects myth to nature and love. The line "each day you'd rise with me" speaks to love and desire as a feeling or an event that occurs daily and is akin to a ritual. Like the sunlight, his lover meets him and persuades him to escape a mindset or a lifestyle; she ends up causing his demise, but again and again, he persists. If to be close to a woman is to burn and fall to one's death, Hozier doesn't mind.

Hozier writes in "Like Real People Do," the following lines:

I will not ask you where you came from

I will not ask and neither should you

Honey, just put your sweet lips on my lips

We should just kiss like real people do (Hozier, "Like Real People Do," lines 10-12)

After he is buried by his lover, they study one another - past and present uniting and then falling in love. There is a sense of secrecy in many of Hozier's lyrics - two lovers find themselves alone in nature and are able to create their own love narrative. This speaks to sapphic identity formation, especially in the context of secret relationships. This is, again, where devotion comes

into relationships; one might have to be devoted to the idea of new experience to pursue a new, more authentic version of love that comes with entering a sapphic relationship.

A Love That Is Transgressive

In “Be,” Hozier references Biblical original sin and portrays love as an act of defiance and feminine empowerment. This fits a narrative of love as agency and a woman’s love as a transgressive and radical act. The following lyrics show love as causing one to be removed from paradise:

Be as you've always been (Lover, be good to me)

Be like the love that discovered the sin (Lover, be good to me)

That freed the first man and will do so again

And, lover, be good to me (Lover, be good to me)

Be that hopeful feeling when Eden was lost (Lover, be good to me).

(Hozier lines 15-19)

Love “that freed the first man” couples themes of spiritual experiences and erotic experiences. Also, describing love as feeling sinful and yet freeing encapsulates the emotions that might be experienced in a same-sex relationship. In including and subverting references to Christian Biblical mythology, Hozier does what feminist spirituality does, which is to argue that a patriarchal view of love and religion is never the only lens to which one should view sexual relationships and femininity. He views Eden as a space where people were captive. Likewise, arguing that Eden being lost as a “hopeful” feeling creates the argument that what his lover, akin to an Eve character, has done does not condemn humanity but imparts freedom and enlightenment. There exists the argument that Eve, representing women, did not sin; what has

been called sin was instead an act of agency. Hozier references Eden and describes his lover as magical in another of his songs titled “From Eden.” The lyrics go as follows:

There's something tragic about you

Something so magic about you

Don't you agree?

.....

I slithered here from Eden just to hide outside your door (Hozier lines 3-13)

These lyrics are yet another example of how modern sapphic content mimics Cartier’s theology and the feminist spirituality movement. First, calling one’s lover magical enough to tempt one outside of the metaphorical, perfect Eden suggests feminist spiritual rhetoric because he is “naming” his lover as powerful and “as divine” (Bloch 181). These lyrics align with Cartier’s idea of theology because, here, Hozier sees a woman’s love and sexuality as world-altering.

The following lyrics are from Hozier’s “Cherry Wine” - a song that follows the narrative of a toxic and yet passionate relationship. Despite the obvious conflict present between the lovers in this song, there is the message present suggesting that even problematic relationships with women are, at times, still beautiful and divine. This song also includes themes of devotion.

A segment of lyrics from Hozier’s “Cherry Wine” goes as follows:

Her fight and fury is fiery

Oh but she loves

Like sleep to the freezing

Sweet and right and merciful

I'm all but washed

In the tide of her breathing

And it's worth it, it's divine. (Hozier lines 22-28)

When he writes, "and it's worth it, it's divine," (Hozier, "Cherry Wine" lines 28)

Hozier suggests that whatever suffering comes from their relationship, he would endure it to be by her side. This line also aligns with Cartier's theology because loving a woman is seen as a powerful and spiritual encounter. This relationship is difficult, but perhaps no less passionate and devotional in nature. Likewise, "I'm all but washed" speaks to an image of renewal in a spiritual sense. Hozier's lover has the power to sanctify and redeem a relationship or another human being; this is another example of how Hozier positions his lover as having positive supernatural abilities in his lyrics.

Hozier's lyrics can be explored as a part of a sapphic rhetorical tradition. The dimensions of love and desire that he emphasizes are in a pagan-like devotion to woman akin to ultimate surrender or worship. Sappho's lyrics have historically been a vehicle for immortalizing homosexual human experiences, and Hozier, therefore, continues this tradition. Hence, one of the major descriptions that factors into how Sapphic rhetoric functions - an interface with the divine while describing feminine desire - is undoubtedly present in his lyrics. Like Sappho's fragments express, Hozier's lyrics are oriented to the worship and empowerment of women. As this is only one way that Sapphic rhetoric has circulated into modern love songs, the following chapter will explore how Hozier's fans define sapphic desire via Appraisal Theory and CMC Taxonomy. Ideally, the final chapter will provide insight from everyday listeners that coincides with this chapter's rhetorical study.

CHAPTER IV

FAN OPINIONS

In the 20th-century lesbian bar space, homosexual women could find community, safety, sincerity, and shared culture. Through his lyrics, Hozier was also able to construct a narrative for women, often entwined in religious lyrics, settings, and atmospheres that positioned women as powerful figures. Feminist spirituality and theology (Cartier 214) are present in his lyrics; according to comment section discourse analysis, this becomes evident. TikTok comment sections can function as a creative outlet for exploring what sapphic means to everyday individuals. Through TikTok comment sections, one can discuss queer femininity, same-sex desire. There exists a genuine and anonymous narrative by which people can safely recognize “the other” (Cartier 214) in comment sections. The act of seeing oneself online and presenting oneself through comment sections and queer affinity spaces also requires queer self-definition. Comments reflect shared desires and opinions about what is considered sapphic about Hozier’s lyrics.

Defining Queer Aesthetics Online

Online spaces, such as video games or fashion blogs on Pinterest and Flickr, have already been labeled as sapphic and have developed algorithms that feed into this aesthetic. In her article, “Sylvan Sapphics: An Exploration into Sapphism and Cottagecore,” Sophia Brousset writes that cottagecore aesthetic subverts lesbian tropes of predatory behavior and objectification of sapphic women. She concludes that cottagecore is appealing, because “it allows for sapphism, a stigmatized identity, to find a sense of community, one that is both liminal and imagined” (Brousset). What Brouset means by “liminal and imagined” is that online spaces and affinity groups offer a safe and comfortable anonymity for sapphic individuals where they do not have to

interact in person to feel like a part of a community. Even though this aesthetic (inspired by clothing, images, house decor, or even video game designs) provides a method of escapism for people who feel like it is hard for them to connect safely with other sapphic individuals in their community, a non-digital reality of that aesthetic may still be resigned to the imagination. This means that the idea of living the cottagecore aesthetic would look like living in a cabin in the woods with one's lover or being able to live comfortably outside of a capitalist system. Perhaps this is possible for some, but for most young internet users, it is more of a dream. Dreams and desires are subject to change, just like an individual's online persona. Orsatti and Remier, introduced earlier, address this phenomenon. This does not mean that these topics, as dreams and desires, are not discussed and circulated often. Therefore, TikTok may provide yet another way, such as via comment sections, to express methods of critical imagination and create new opinions of what sapphic means to an online generation.

Sapphic rhetoric is a tool derived from ancient poetry that can be reconstructed, recontextualized, and re-accentuated in the Sapphic Pop music genre, namely Hozier's lyrics. Beyond Hozier's lyrics, another modernized way to code for Sapphic rhetoric exists through discussion of his lyrics. Therefore, this chapter will employ discourse analysis (via both CMC Taxonomy and Appraisal Theory) to define what kind of language Hozier's fans on TikTok utilize when describing his lyrics as sapphic.

The Selection Process

Curious about the "social salience" (White 2) of Hozier's lyrics, this process involved coding not just for positive appreciation but for instances of claims, acceptance, and desires, I can better explore the types of comments inspired by Hozier's lyrics. In order to select comments, I used the five following videos. I first searched "Hozier sapphic" in the TikTok

search bar. I then scrolled under the “Top” videos, as they appeared to have more views and comments. From there, I selected videos that displayed a minimum of 10 comments. The selves we present online - via art, username, profile picture, and comments are often subject to change. Hence, I will be focusing only on comments to limit the variables of this project. The following are descriptions of the five videos followed by three comments selected from each comment section. More comments, along with a brief analysis, are available to view in charts found in the Appendix section.

Video 1

The first video, posted in 2023 by a creator, Katerina, displays Hozier performing “Take Me To Church” at a concert in Paris. The video captures a few lines of his song. In the caption, Katerina writes, “we all wish Hozier was real #hoziertok #hozier #hoziertiktok #hoziertour2023 #hoziertakemetochurch #finelookinghighhorse #takemetochurch #hozierparis.”

Below are anonymous comments found via comment section analysis that display appreciation of Hozier, his lyrics, and his impact on romantic narratives. This video has, as of February 2024, 2025 comments and 553,000 likes.

Example 1: “invented love”

Commenter A writes:

its crazy how hozier invented love

This claim demonstrates that fans can see how Hozier, via lyrical content, has at a minimum inspired a new way of loving others. However, he did not actually invent love; perhaps Hozier instead speaks to a genre of writing about love - one that empowers women. His lyrics allow people to see love in a way that speaks to what they want in reality. His narratives of romantic love subverts standard, patriarchal narratives.

Example 2: “devotion”

Commenter C writes:

he doesn't sing about love, he sings about devotion

This comment suggests that Hoizer's lyrics are distinguishably related to devotion. While this comment does not clearly indicate that love is a lesser form of lyrical content than devotion, it may suggest that devotion is inspired by the video, which displays live lyrics from “Take Me To Church.” Devotion is, according to this comment, a paramount feature of Hoizer's rhetoric.

Example 3: “worship Her”

Commenter E writes:

Love her < worship Her

This comment illustrates that Hoizer's lyrics inspire the claim that to worship a woman is greater than loving her. The capitalization of Her suggests, likewise, that to worship a woman would be to regard her as deity-like, which Hoizer does in these lyrics. Commenter E appears to support the idea of Hoizer's rhetorical move to place women on a pedestal.

Video 2

The following comments are from a video posted in 2023 by creator Evelyn. The caption of the video goes as follows: “I have been laughing at this headline all afternoon 🤪 our accidentally sapphic king #birex #hozier.” The video demonstrates the creator laughing and smiling over an image of a Rolling Stones article titled “Accidental Sapphic Icon Hozier Stands With His LGBTQI+ Fans,” written by Charlie H. Stern on May 2nd, 2023. This video has in total, as of February 2023, 223 comments.

Example 1: “always allowed”

Commenter A writes:

This man is always allowed in the lesbian bars

This comment indicates acceptance of Hozier within lesbian spaces. Such a claim involves seeing Hozier and/or his lyrical content as indicative, perhaps, of lesbian theology and feminist spirituality. Additionally, to write “always” instead of “should be” or “could be” indicates that this commenter assumes that Hozier has already earned permission from community members. Therefore, he is welcomed into lesbian spaces.

Example 2: “sapphic icon”

Commenter B writes:

sensuality, attention to detail, ardent expression...of course he's a sapphic icon lol

Commenter B claims that Hozier is a “sapphic icon,” referencing the article in the video, because he captures “sensuality, attention to detail, ardent expression.” This claim is unique in that Commenter B offers a description of what this commenter believes to be indicative of sapphic lyrical content. Adding “lol” at the end of the comment indicates that having to express *why* Hozier is a sapphic icon is amusing and that the answer should be obvious.

Example 3: “something divinely feminine”

Commenter C writes,

it's the yearning and the way he talks about women 🧡 it's the way he sings about women ❤️

something divinely feminine about it i think

Commenter C claims that Hozier's writing is “divinely feminine” because his lyrics express desire for women that they view as typically shared only by a feminine writer or lyricist. This demonstrates that Hozier has entered a space that is typically indicative of rhetoric by women for women. This results in his lyrics being called “feminine.” Likewise, “yearning” for women appears to be a key rhetorical feature of Hozier's lyrics.

Video 3

The following comments are taken from a post by user @MigraineMarian. This 2023 video suggests that someone should “do their postgrad thesis” on the connection between Hozier and the sapphic/ lesbian community. The hashtags are: #hoziertok #hozier #lesbian #lesbiansoftiktok #wlw #sapphic #lgbt #queer #lesbianmusic.” The video has 14 comments and 3,816 views.

Example 1: “so adoringly”

Commenter B:

I was denying being a lesbian for years when I heard his 1st album &it helped me not be
ashamed of how I felt abt women bc he writes so adoringly

Commenter B claims that Hozier’s adoring style of writing in the first album helped her become less ashamed of her sexuality. He helped create a positive narrative of loving women, as Sappho did, that helped women to express their desires for one another. His lyrics encourage identity formation and acceptance.

Example 2: “Not just love songs”

Commenter D writes:

Not just love songs but filled with Agony and struggle and adoration like real

Commenter D claims that Hozier’s lyrics go beyond discussions of love but seem more “real” because they do not shy away from “Agony” (capitalized to provide emphasis) “struggle and adoration.” This indicates that Hozier’s fans appreciate that his lyrics capture a depth and authenticity about love and romance. Likewise, as this comment is in response to a discussion about the lesbian community and Hozier’ lyrics, this claim would suggest that a lesbian audience is looking for “real” and transparent romantic narratives.

Example 3: “very lesbian of him”

Commenter E writes:

he doesn't write songs about loving a woman, he writes songs about ADORING a woman.

Cherishing and worshiping women is very lesbian of him 😊

The smiling emoji surrounded by hearts after the phrase “very lesbian of him ” indicates that writing about cherishing, adoring, and worshiping women is positive as well as sapphic. The capitalization of adoration suggests that this commenter feels passionately that adoration is a prominent feature of Hozier’s lyrics. The connotation of adoration includes respect and tenderness, which might be a theme of sapphic romantic narratives. Adoration separates Hozier’s writing from more patriarchal tendencies of writing about love, such as using objectification as a means to describe women.

Video 4

The 2023 video, posted by user @ttara.s13, is a lip-synced audio to Hozier’s “Talk,” with the caption “like.....???? this song is literally my roman empire #hozier #eurydiceandorpheus #wastelandbaby #talk #andrewhozierbyrne #hozierlyrics #hoziertok #hoziercore #fyp #foryou.”

Example 1: “greek mythology”

Commenter B writes:

greek mythology + hozier = heaven

Commenter B’s claim that the combination of Greek mythology and Hozier (meaning, perhaps, the Greek mythology expressed via his lyrics) is an ultimate perspective. They seem to claim that it makes sense for Greek mythology to combine with Hozier’s lyrics. This comment reinforces the opinion that Hozier’s work shares a direct connection to themes of Greek antiquity.

Example 2: “this devotion”

Commenter C writes:

i want this devotion

Commenter C writes, via a statement of desire, that they long for the devotion expressed in Hozier’s lyrics. This suggests that Hozier’s devotion to women is what appeals to people because they long for the same experience in a relationship. They also might long to embody and impart the devotion Hozier writes of in their personal relationships.

Example 3: “a man who understands”

Commenter G writes:

THE FACT A MAN WROTE IT i would kill to be loved by a man who understands

This comment, like Commenter C writes, suggests that Hozier understands what people want in a relationship. The capitalized phrase is indicative of the commenter’s amazement and surprise; perhaps the individual is not used to feeling understood by male lyricists. Thus, in seeing and hearing that a man can write of love and understand women, commenters can engage in feminist critical imagination. The phrase “i would kill” is an exaggeration, but it speaks to the intensity of the commenter’s desire. Hozier’s rhetoric is powerful; through listening to his lyrics, women can develop standards and hope for fulfilling relationships.

Video 5

This video, posted in 2023 by user @chessreed, involves the creator lip syncing to Hozier’s “Work Song.” Text included in the video reads: My Roman Empire is the fact that Hozier wrote his. A man actually wrote this about a woman. The caption reads: Work song... #romanempire #hozier #worksong. 5,827 comments have been made on this video.

Example 1: “what GODDESS”

Commenter C writes

my question is what GODDESS made him write this song like i need to know

Aside from the desire for the fan to know who Hozier writes about, this comment suggests that Hozier’s writing is inspired by women. Goddess, capitalized for emphasis, stands out in this comment. This comment is dually an instance of a claim and desire. The commenter claims that Hozier writes his song about a goddess. This statement could imply that he writes about a woman described as supernatural or an actual goddess, which is an instance of both theology and feminist spirituality. This comment could also suggest that Hozier, through his writing, is a conduit of a feminine spiritual being. This theory would imply that he has divine insight.

Example 2: “love me like”

Commenter D:

Can someone love me like the way he writes

This comment, an expression of a commenter’s desire, indicates that Hozier writes about love that is desirable. It echoes example 2 from Video 4. People seem to want to experience a literary depth to their romance.

Example 3: “had a girl inspire me”

Commenter E writes:

Had a girl inspire me to write poetry once. I wonder who Hozier’s was

Commenter E, through an example of desire (“I wonder”), insinuates that Hozier was inspired by a woman. They can also relate to his artistic experience and, perhaps, his source of inspiration.

This comment embeds a possibly personalized sapphic scenario (if the commenter identifies as sapphic) into Hozier's relationship with his lover.

In Summary

Many commenters from all four videos explored above express that Hozier must have been inspired by a woman when writing of love, desire, and devotion. Some individuals clearly long to be the subject of the romantic narratives he creates, and yet others argue that his lyrics are sapphic and that they want to love women the way he does via the narratives he designs. He is able to capture the experience of a woman's love for another woman. Commenters reason that his music is sapphic because his lyrics are devotional, inspirational, and even involve the worship of women. Some invite him into lesbian bar spaces, which emphasizes how his music and presence, if included in lesbian spaces, speaks to Cartier's bar theology. As explored in the two previous chapters, a key feature of Sapphic rhetoric involves what would be now considered feminist spirituality and the inclusion of divine female symbology. Aphrodite, for instance, is the subject and focus of many of Sappho's lyrics. Sapphic rhetoric begins within ritual spaces for Aphrodite; within Ancient Greek society, through storytelling and song, she was devoted to expressing connections between feminine empowerment, spirituality, feminine sexuality, and the supernatural terrain.

Like Sappho, it appears that fans praise Hozier's work for going a step beyond the traditional love song written by a man; he places devotion, even up to a worshipful extent, *for women* at the heart of his rhetoric. They even claim that he, too, is inspired by a goddess figure. The act of expressing opinions via claims, desire, or both appear genuine. Yet, these commenters never express that they have any degrees, specialties, or major educational experiences involving music analysis or rhetorical analysis. Their ethos is embedded in the listening experience and,

perhaps, individual queer experiences. Yet, it appears that comments such as the ones discussed above speak to the everyday practice of defining what constitutes sapphic rhetoric and/or aligns with a sapphic identity and a sapphic audience. It appears that individuals attach to music that affirms their romantic, sexual, and gendered identities. Women also want to see other women empowered in relationships and romantic contexts, as expressed in these comment sections. The discussion of Hozier's lyrics in contemporary online spaces allows people to express their romantic ideals.

A Hunger for Female Symbology

Hozier's lyrics, according to these comments, paint love for women in a devotional and worshipful sense. Cynthia Eller writes in "Divine Objectification: The Representation of Goddesses and Women in Feminist Spirituality" that it has become increasingly typical for both spiritual feminists and non-spiritual/ non-religious feminists to long for images of women as divine goddesses. She writes, "They are inclined to hang their goddesses around their necks, set them on their altars, or tack them to their walls" (23). These comment sections express a growing desire for music artists to express connections between femininity, divinity, and devotion. A key phrase that Eller uses is the "ongoing hunger for female symbology" (24). There is a hunger to experience a time when femininity was sacred - women were not objectified and instead regarded as powerful goddesses and mortals. I believe that new generations hunger for divine female symbology, just as Greek women did.

Discussing sapphic lyrics via TikTok can be feasible, especially if the user's passion is the expression of lesbian desires. Additionally, according to Jennifer Stokes and Bianca Price's "Social Media, Visual Culture and Contemporary Identity," there exists a fluid "online persona" that one creates when using TikTok. She writes that "everyday user shifts their own

representation” (159) and compare themselves to others. Stokes and Price also write that teens and young adults learn to mold and shape their online identity construction steadily and gradually. It’s a “time-consuming process” (160) and yet offers the benefits of community building. Technology, such as TikTok, makes it easier for people to engage more voices and visual components with fewer identity limitations. There is a dynamic interplay of modern phrases and erased lesbian histories at our fingertips. Sapphic kairos that isn’t limited to the expression of a learned translator, the experienced witch/pagan, or the experienced artist.

The voice of the creator - the author(s), designer, author of a post - multiplies into a dialogic web of meaning. This multitude of comments is also a multitude of queer voices and queer experiences and, therefore, there can be no unitary or absolute language or identity of a comment section. The meaning behind sapphic builds over time. The meaning will undoubtedly change as histories are altered by online discourse; for women to be seen as divine appears to be an intense and never-ending desire.

Ultimately, how users comment projects a stylized reflection or a showcase of their passions and values that could fall under the process of sapphic identity formation. Also, the comments can reflect the dreams and histories within us as well as the ones that occurred before us. In comment sections, writing and posting as an act of vulnerability, yet, because online identities are not so static, and our propensity for expressing ourselves may not be so frightening. TikTok, as other social media apps do, allows for the evolution of identity; as we comment, removing and replacing words as necessary, the meaning shifts, and self-discovery is molded as it is recorded. We can update what matters to us and refine them for the purposes of clarity and creativity. This makes commenting perhaps less permanent when compared to published text or a permanent art form.

These comments suggest that sapphic lyrics create a positive cultural tradition. There is the freedom to share and circulate ideas, identities, and aesthetics. Commenting creates community rather than individuality and isolation. Sappho, Aphrodite, and their Greek world are beyond our comprehension, yet these universal stories, images, and ideas bind us together, even in short interactions.

Digital platforms allow for the playful circulation of ideas that represent a movement, community, and the overall aesthetic of that movement or community. The sapphic community, clearly, has not forgotten its roots and appears to associate with their queer histories. The overall opinions on what sapphic means is highly individualized, and what one considers sapphic isn't always informed by adhering to the present options which relate directly to women, love, and femininity.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

Sapphic rhetoric, explored in the following three chapters, is deeply feminist in its ancient origins and modern formats. It can provide a window into an appreciation for Ancient Greek religious and cultural contexts that:

- A) Center feminism, femininity, and queer sexuality
- B) Involve rhetoric based in feminist spirituality
- C) Involve rhetoric based in Marie Cartier's theology

Sapphic rhetoric also allows and feminine individuals, such as those using TikTok as an affinity group to discuss queer music and queer literacies, to imagine a world where they are deserving of following expressions of adoration listed below. These terms have been, via modern and ancient patriarchal narratives, reserved for men:

- a. Devotion
- b. Worship
- c. Praise
- d. Empowerment

Sapphic rhetoric subverts patriarchal romantic narratives, such as those which position men as guides for women, protectors of women, and wiser than their feminine love interests. Sapphic rhetoric positions women as wise, guiding figures and protectors of men and women. She allows for a variety of speakers, some being goddesses and others cis men. Anyone can continue her rhetorical tradition. Therefore, for sapphic "love to win" (Sappho fragment 60, lines 8, Carman 35) one must dream up a future where it is not only possible but not concealed - in other words, sapphic desire can be *visible* between women. Sappho did not live to see a time when we have

the technology to share our desires in such an outward, bold, and public way, but that does not mean that she did not use her literary abilities to catalog her desires, the lives of Greek women, and the joys they experienced together. Cartier, too, catalogs the wonder and religious elements that occur in safe, supportive, queer spaces, which is why theology still plays a large role in what we can dream into sapphic spaces. Additionally, the circulation of feminist rhetoric - via feminist spirituality in particular - shows that women desire to be seen through and loved through a lens of spirituality.

There is, likewise, no unitary authorial language of sapphic rhetoric, there are only patterns of text and history that show themes of sapphic desire and language of sapphic desire. Sapphic desire can signify a variety of definitions given multiple contexts, especially through digital rhetoric. Heitkemper-Yates, in discussing how visual narratives occur, writes that there exists an “interpretation – and re-interpretation – of a coded text” (313). Given this fact, one might then wonder *who* decides on the interpretation of what is or isn't *sapphic*. An individual on TikTok who experiences sapphic desires and longs for positive, divine female symbology may interpret Hozier's lyrics differently than someone who does not. Likewise, re-interpreting what is *sapphic* into lyrics that do not originate from a sapphic-identifying individual is, evidently, possible, given the expansion of the definition of *sapphic* itself. The process requires malleability of internet-based ideas. The ability to identify sapphic rhetoric in modern music is, additionally, not one that belongs solely among professional musicians, college-educated individuals, rhetoricians, or news reporters. Instead, the definition process begins with the layperson, and importantly so, because if one ignores the layperson's opinions, authenticity and novelty of a cultural definition diminished.

For the layperson to claim something as *sapphic* often, as explored more thoroughly in the Appendix, involves a combination of community and individual desires and acceptances. Additionally, this generation's online expression of feminist, queer culture and identity indicates that women, queer and straight, are desiring to be desired differently. There appears to be a hunger within my generation to explore sacred femininity and to see themselves as sacred. This may possibly be because women are taught to avoid or suppress desires to see oneself as worthy of praise, worship, influence, wisdom, and devotion. The beauty of seeing oneself or other women through a lens of inspiration, guidance, and devotion is the antithesis of a patriarchal lens. The patriarchal lens of viewing women aims to diminish women in comparison to men within both romantic relationships and religious contexts; likewise, men are often positioned as godlike, controlling, powerful, and the individual who acts as a catalyst for a woman's sexual desires and sexual exploration. Yet, when one looks at Sappho and Hozier's lyrics, this isn't the only narrative. A woman is a goddess, capable of imagining her own incredible power via her sexuality. Each generation of young women have always needed to see themselves written as powerful, as one's "Isis," (Hozier, "Jackie and Wilson," line 20) as one's guide.

What becomes important as a major conclusion of this project is that the voice of TikTok affinity groups deserves immediate and thorough attention. For as long as TikTok remains an app that I and other researchers in the United States can use, we should view it through a lens of queer cultural studies, discourse analysis, rhetorical analysis, and multiple other lenses. In short, we have to use what we have while we still have access.

Future Research Ideas

Given more time to explore these topics and perhaps a stipend to travel outside of the United States, I would very much enjoy exploring lesbian weddings aesthetics in Lesbos. Greece

has legalized same-sex marriage this year, which is fantastic for multiple reasons - one being that Greece is known for its ancient history of homosexuality and, dully, because Greek queer couples have endured negative mental health due to the stress of staying closeted or feeling othered (Kaprinis, Stergios & Charalampakis). Therefore, what would be an ideal addition to this research would be a study of lesbian Greek wedding ceremonies. I am curious as to what weddings will be designed to appear like Ancient Greek, Sappho-inspired ceremonies. Likewise, if TikTok remains available for individuals in the United States to use as a location of expression and study, observations could remain strictly online. This would eliminate financial burdens of travel and, perhaps, allow for the immediate gathering and analysis of written data (via comment sections). Without TikTok, I may not be provided an easy window into the new world of Greek lesbian weddings.

An additional interest of mine is to develop an ethnographic or interview-based study of a Hozier concert. I will be attending a concert this summer where he will be performing, and it would be interesting to interview his fans to see if their ideas develop or echo definitions of sapphic rhetoric as have been explored in this project.

Finally, the study of sapphic visual digital artifacts, given that I can gain permission to do so, might involve sites like Pinterest. On this site, I have seen posts from pagan, Hellenistic, and wicca-inspired individuals who argue that one can embody Aphrodite through the consumption of clothing, drinks, perfumes, household objects, and altar-specific items. I would explore the idea of Pinterest as a guide on what to consume to make someone feel aligned with a modern Aphrodite.

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APPENDIX

Table 1: Comments Derived from 2023 TikTok Posted by User Katerina

Commenter (Anonymized)	Comment	Appreciation	Desire	Claim	Accept
Commenter A	its crazy how hozier invented love	Hoizer invented love (positive)		how hozier invented love	
Commenter B	Bros singing about devotion	Hozier sings about devotion (positive)		singing about devotion	
Commenter C	he doesn't sing about love, he sings about devotion	Hoizer = sings about devotion (positive)		he sings about devotion	

Comment er D	If there is any divine beings out there hozier is one of them	Hoizer = divine (positive)		If there is any divine beings out there hozier is one of them	
Comment er E	Love her < worship Her	Hoizer helps distinguish that worship of women is better than love for a woman (positive)		Love her < worship Her	

Table 2: Comments Derived from 2023 TikTok Posted by Evelyn

Commenter (Anonymized)	Comment	Appreciation:	Desire	Claim	Accept
Commenter A	This man is always allowed in the lesbian bars	Allowed in queer spaces = positive		This man is always allowed in the lesbian bars	
Commenter B	sensuality, attention to detail, ardent expression...of course he's a			he's a sapphic icon lol	...of course

	sapphic icon lol				
Commenter C	<p>it's the yearning and the way he talks about women 🙄</p> <p>it's the way he sings about women ❤️</p> <p>something divinely feminine about it i think</p>	<p>Hozier = divine + feminine (positive)</p>		<p>it's the yearning and the way he talks about women</p> <p>it's the way he sings about women</p>	

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Table 3: Comments Derived from 2023 TikTok Posted by User migrainemarian

Commenter (Anonymized)	Comment	Appreciation:	Desire	Claim	Accept
Commenter A	I heard a cover of Cherry Wine and 100% thought it was written by a sapphic 😊	Cherry Wine = written by a sapphic		thought it was written by a sapphic	

<p>Commenter B</p>	<p>I was denying being a lesbian for years when I heard his 1st album &it helped me not be ashamed of how I felt abt women bc he writes so adoringly</p>	<p>helped me not be ashamed (positive) he writes so adoringly (positive)</p>		<p>he writes so adoringly</p>	<p>when I heard his 1st album &it helped me not be ashamed of how I felt abt women</p>
<p>Commenter C</p>	<p>he doesn't write songs</p>	<p>ADORING a woman. Cherishing</p>		<p>he writes songs about</p>	

	<p>about loving a woman, he writes songs about ADORIN G a woman. Cherishin g and worshipin g women is very lesbian of him 😊</p>	<p>and worshipping women = very lesbian of him 😊 (positive)</p>		<p>ADORING a woman. Cherishing and worshipping women</p>	
<p>Commenter D</p>	<p>Not just love songs but filled with</p>	<p>filled with Agony and struggle and adoration =</p>		<p>Not just love songs</p>	

	Agony and struggle and adoration like real	Real (positive)			
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Table 4: Comments Derived from 2023 TikTok Posted by User ttara.s13

Commenter (Anonymize d)	Comment without analysis	Appreciation :	Desire	Claim	Accept
Commenter A	yESSSS like he ISNT comparin g to them but is personify ing the DESPER ATION	Personifying desperation + devotional love + hunger for a person (positive)		personif ying the DESPE RATIO N of DEVOT IONAL LOVE. that HUNGE	

	<p>of DEVOTI ONAL LOVE. that HUNGE R for another person.</p>			<p>R for another person.</p>	
<p>Commenter B</p>	<p>also the fact that he uses this greek story to compare his devotion and love but really his pretty words are just pure</p>				

	seduction ????? on my knees				
Commenter C	i want this devotion	Lyrics = devotional	i want this devotio n		
Committer D	greek mytholog y + hozier = heaven	greek mythology + hozier = heaven (positive)			greek mythol ogy + hozier = heaven
Commenter F	I want to love her the way Hozier speaks of his love	Hoizer speaks of a desirable love (positive)	I want to love her the way Hozier speaks of his love		

Commenter G	THE FACT A MAN WROTE IT i would kill to be loved by a man who understan ds	Hoizer understands women and the love that people desire (positive)	i would kill to be loved by a man who underst ands		
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Table 5: Comments Derived from 2023 TikTok Posted by User chessreed

Commenter (Anonymized)	Comment without analysis	Appreciation	Desire	Claim	Accept
Commenter A	funny how 23	Inventing love at a	Claim that he		

	<p>year old Hozier one day was like hey, might just invent love. and then goes and writes work song</p>	<p>young age = positive appreciation</p>	<p>invents love (citing Work Song)</p>		
<p>Commenter B</p>	<p>Oh to be the woman hozier writes about</p>	<p>Indicates that to be the subject of Hoizer's writing is desirable</p>	<p>Desire to be the subject (woman) that he writes about</p>		

<p>Commenter C</p>	<p>my question is what GODDESS made him write this song like i need to know</p>	<p>Goddess (human or non-human) inspired = positive, powerful writing (clearly appreciation for his work)</p>	<p>Desire to know who inspired his lyrics</p>	<p>Claim that a Goddess inspired his lyrics</p>	
<p>Commeter D</p>	<p>Can someone love me like the way he writes</p>	<p>Commenter longs to be the subject of Hoizer's romantic narratives = appreciation for his lyrical content</p>	<p>Desire to be the subject of romantic lyrics</p>		

Commenter E	Had a girl inspire me to write poetry once. I wonder who Hozier's was	Connection to personal experience. Understandin g = appreciation	Desire to know who he writes about		
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VITA

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