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## The History, Drivers, and Social Issues of the Cottagecore Movement

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## INTRODUCTION

Cottagecore is an internet-based aesthetic that revolves around a romanticized rural lifestyle, which is shared through social media postings on every mainstream platform. In the essay *'Cottagecore' and the rise of the modern rural fantasy*, the author Anita Kashi, explains how Cottagecore is characterized by “images of pretty cottages adorned with climbers and flower-laden trellises, soft-focus sunbeams streaming through dense foliage, dappled wooded pathways and earthy mushrooms growing in abandon, tea tables and picnics in shaded gardens near gurgling streams laden with homemade sourdough bread and scones, soft cotton dresses with smocking and embroidered with strawberries and butterflies...” (Kashi, 2020). The exact nature of each image can vary greatly, but they are all designed to invoke feelings of romantic escapism, a break from the chaos and technology of the modern lifestyle.



Common themes found in the subculture include light colors, flowers, nature, and traditional activities. There is a focus on traditional skills, such as housekeeping, sewing, baking,

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<sup>1</sup> Fig. 1

Marathon, "Rectory Cottage, Withyham." *Geograph*, 2 July 2012, <https://www.geograph.org.uk/photo/3023144>. 9 January 2022

and gardening (Higgins, 2020), however these activities are done for pleasure and relaxation, rather than as chores or tasks, as well as often being done as an aesthetic activity, rather than a representation of the reality of completing such tasks. Social media postings may be focused on nature or physical surroundings or may highlight one of these skills. They are rarely instructional or about survival, but rather are designed to have a magical detachment from the ‘real’ world, to aid in the feelings of escape.

Cottagecore has many names, and the desire to escape to a dream-like rural landscape has been around far longer than the internet. There are many subcultures that have developed from or alongside Cottagecore that contain many of the same ideals with slightly different aesthetic focuses. These include genres such as ‘Grandmacore’, ‘Goblincore’, ‘Fairycore’, ‘Farmcore’, ‘Bloomcore’, etc. Many of these other subcultures contain the same basic ideas of escapism but contain differences around the skills, clothing, decorations, or images that are used to express the aesthetic. For the purposes of this exploration the focus will be on Cottagecore, however many of these other subcultures fall into escapist media, and contain similar benefits, issues, and histories.

It may be helpful to think of these genres as ‘search terms’. Digital natives have developed a wide variety of ways to categorize ideas and images on the internet to help sift through the volume of information available, Cottagecore being only one example of this. These terms allow the creation of an online community for people who want to engage in these aesthetics and make finding the resources and images associated with them easier. These search terms are morphine's using the ending -core generally relating to a music, film, or artistic aesthetic. In Luu’s article “The Punk Rock Linguistics of Cottagecore”, they analyze how this trend of using a major theme of the aesthetic with the ending –core developed from the term ‘hardcore’ in its association with punk music (Luu).

Throughout history, forms of escapism have occurred repeatedly, under different names and cultures, however there are several common themes which tie these movements together. Primarily, within the works themselves, there is a strong focus on the natural world, either through the setting or as a tool to inspire emotion in the viewer. The settings and characters are rural, often featuring common tropes or imagery to invoke the idea of a rural lifestyle, however they are not a reflection of reality. There is a romantic view of rural life present in all 'Cottagecore' art forms, the work is not meant to sustain life, but rather is more of a hobby, a total detachment from the realities of rural living. Additionally, another common theme found in 'Cottagecore' and its other derivations, is homoeroticism. This theme of queerness is present throughout most historical forms of rural escapism and continues into the present with Cottagecore. While romantic or sexual themes may not be the focus in many rural escapist works, it can often be clearly seen as an undercurrent adding to the romanticization of the lifestyle itself.

Outside of the actual works, the creators of these art pieces share a class status. Even into the modern day, rural escapist arts are made by and for the upper and middle socioeconomic classes. They target a group of people who have the type of status that allows a leisurely lifestyle and are disconnected enough from the reality of rural life that it can be made into a romantic game. Especially in the modern Cottagecore, those who have the time to engage in activities solely for the pleasure of doing them tend to be from a class of people that have financial stability paired with leisure time not common in rural lifestyles. Both the artists and the consumers of the works fit this mold, leading to an even greater detachment from the reality of rural life.



## HISTORY

Themes of rural escapism have been present for much of written history, and while the context and focus changes from century to century, the underlying desire to escape an unappealing life into nature is present through all of it. In the essay *Cottagecore Debuted 2,300 Years Ago*, Angelica Frey posits that the earliest writings assigned to this style of escapism are attributed to Theocritus in the third century BCE, who is considered the founder of Pastoral Poetry (Frey, 2020). However, the earlier works of Sappho during the 6th century BCE contain the vast majority of the themes associated with this genre of poetry and could be considered some of the first written examples of Pastoralism. This form was later expanded on through Roman writers, before gaining a resurgence in popularity many times throughout Western history, including during the Rococo movement and Victorian England (Frey, 2020). Not only do these escapist writings have a strong impact on modern Cottagecore, but through them many of the same themes and drivers reflected in the modern movement are visible.

Theocritus's writings are considered bucolic poems - writings which contain rural or pastoral themes ("Bucolic"). The poems are set in some natural element and often feature people who live in some version of a rural lifestyle. While many of the characters are shepherds, this is not a set rule and characters may also appear as travelers or other people passing through the romantic landscape. The poems contain heavy descriptions of the natural world, as well as often have a magical element, usually in the form of an element of Greek mythology (Bulloch, 2016).

Theocritus' poems have a focus on nature, love, leisure, and often contain political or social messages criticizing the lifestyle of Hellenistic urban dwellers. While the most common focus was on shepherds, the poems are far removed from the reality of life, with the characters living a life of leisure, poetry, love, and singing, rather than focusing on the difficulties and harsh conditions present in a shepherding lifestyle (Frey, 2020). And while Theocritus has been

criticized for his inaccurate portrayals of rural life, his shepherds and peasants speak in highly educated forms and expressing sentiments of the high class, it is clear the choice to provide a fantastical version of rural living was purposeful and designed to appeal to educated upper class Greeks living in large urban areas, much like how modern Cottagecore is focused towards the upper-middle socioeconomic class (“Theocritus” 2008)

Idyll I is a perfect example of the leisurely life featured in most of Theocritus’s pastoral poems. The writing has two narrators, a shepherd and a goatherd, who are engaging in a challenge of poetry and song, a common trope among bucolic poetry. These two characters, while technically still working, are leisurely singing and talking instead of tending to their animals. The shepherd starts the poem by directly referencing the goatherd’s skillful pipe playing, “Low music o’er the spring, and, Goatherd, sweet; Thy piping; second thou to Pan alone’ (“Idyll I..., l. 2-3). From there the poem continues on through the game of artistic competition, a leisurely activity when compared to the work of rural life.

One of the most defining aspects of the pastoral genre is the use of natural imagery and outdoor settings. This comes through in a variety of different ways and is used to create the romantic and fantastical elements also found in this genre. In Theocritus’s poetry these nature themes are incorporated in two main ways: as a way to set the scene and describe the physical attributes of the setting or objects, or as a way of describing people and emotion. The first is common at the beginning of poems to place the reader in the rural setting, using specific imagery to create a full picture. Unlike modern Cottagecore, which is heavily image based, Theocritus was limited to describing the settings of his works. To inspire the reader into imagining the pastoral setting, Theocritus must use poetic descriptions of nature to express the nature theme.



The other common use of nature themes is to describe the idea of a person or emotion. Nature imagery is used to inspire the reader into an understanding of something that may not be a physical attribute or to convey a beauty that might be lost through a purely physical description. In *Idyll I*, Theocritus writes “Thyrsis, let honey and the honeycomb; Fill thy sweet mouth, and figs of Aegilus; For ne'er cicada trilled so sweet a song” (“*Idyll I...*” l. 146-147). This passage is not describing a physical occurrence in the poem, there is no honey or cicadas [cicadas]. Rather, this imagery is used to describe something that has no physical form, in this case Thyrsis’s song. Using nature themes in this context not only allows a description of an emotion that may be missed through purely physical descriptors, but it also furthers aids in the development of a romantic understanding of the setting and pastoral life.

Pastoral, as well as other forms of escapist art, tend to be heavily romanticized versions of life. This comes through in the fantastical elements added to make the life described more desirable than reality, as well as often having a focus on romantic love. Theocritus’s poems are well known to be detached from the reality of pastoral life, with his characters more commonly found lounging and singing, than actually tending to the animals (Green, 237). His characters are in love with life, themselves, and often each other. Many of the poems have strong homoerotic themes underlying romantic and physical desires. “Mindful of this, be gentle, is my prayer; And love me, guileless, ev'n as I love thee; So when thou has a beard, such friends as were; Achilles and Patroclus we may be” (“*Idyll XXIX. Loves*”). In this example, the romantic love is clearly stated, as the narrator pleads his love to be gentle with his heart. He chooses to relate their relationship to that of the Greek hero Achilles and his companion Patroclus, drawing on a hypothesized idea of the two heroes having a romantic relationship.

There is limited information about the life of Theocritus, and thus the socio-political context of his life must be inferred. However, the context through which this genre appeared is important to recognize and consider in the trend of Cottagecore and its many iterations. It is certain that Theocritus was born in Sicily and later moved to Alexandria, where many of his poems were written, presumably under the patronage of the royal family of Ptolemy II (Bulloch, 2016). Theocritus's poetry appears targeted to an upper-class audience, people who would have been well educated and have had limited connection to the reality of the rural setting in which the poems are placed (Bulloch, 2016).

Alexandria was, and remains, a large urban center. Founded in 331 BCE by Ptolemy I, Alexandria quickly became an urban mecca and major place of late antiquity. The city, being located along the Nile River, was an important trading location, with easy transport of goods from middle and upper Egypt (Emory, 2001). Like modern urban centers, the high volume of trade present in the area allows for cheap and easily accessible goods, however these circumstances also lead to a distancing from the production of said goods. This lack of connection and understanding behind the processes and creation of everyday items lends itself to the romanticization of rural living present in pastoral poetry. This exact theme can be found in Cottagecore today, with the advent of modern farming, shopping, and shipping, people have become increasingly removed from the production of everyday food and goods. Without a direct understanding of the processes required to produce goods, the creation and use of them in Cottagecore imagery romanticizes the process. The idea of ease and a lack of struggle to access goods romanticizes the lifestyle being promoted in these artistic productions.

While the pastoral genre is generally considered one of the first clear examples of rural escapism, many of the same themes can easily be found in earlier writings, pre-Theocritus. Many

early arts have been lost to history, however there are fragments that show these ideas of romanticization, and escapism have been present for much of Western written history. Because much of the context may be missing from earlier art it is hard to argue the claim that Theocritus was the first creator that really cemented in the pastoral genre. However, an important artist to recognize in the development of rural escapist art is the Greek poet Sappho. The bulk of her poetry has been lost over time; however, the remaining verses contain almost all the themes that modern Cottagecore embodies.

Sappho's poems are heavily romantic, focusing on love for people, life, and nature. The settings, when given, are outdoor, in rural spaces, surrounded by nature and a mystical feeling of being detached from strict reality. The characters, however, are never put to work, they live the same type of leisurely life as those found in Theocritus's writings. Many of the same themes found in 'official' pastoral poetry are clearly present in Sappho's writings.

The poetry employs fresh produce to set the scene of rural richness, often including a variety of plants that ripen during different seasons, such as Poem 45, which sets a scene of blooming roses (spring), fields of wildflowers (summer), and heavy apple boughs (fall) ("Goddesses") (Roche 71). This creates an image of unending richness of food, an implication of a never-ending growing season and enough food to avoid worry over survival. While the reality of growing food does not match this fantastic creation, using it in the poems further creates a romantic setting in which there is space to gorge oneself on the luxuries of life.

Her use of nature themes extends beyond just the settings, as she uses the imagery to create strong descriptions and inspire emotions in the readers. Poem 92 describes young women, "Like the last red apple; sweet and high" and "Like the mountain hyacinth", to invoke imagery of their beauty and unattainable status (Roche 104). Using nature to convey this inspires in the

reader not only an understanding of the aura of beauty (as opposed to a pure physical description), but also the emotions these women inspire in the writer.

Further, Sappho's poetry has strong homoerotic themes. In the current day, she is generally accepted to be queer in some form, though this has been debated by scholars for centuries (Roche 34). Many of her surviving writings, written with an unmistakable female narration, focus on the beauty and love of other women. The poetry focuses on physical desires, often invoking a magical element to the love discussed, disconnecting the topics of the poems from strict reality. A wonderful example of this can be seen in Sappho's poem about a lover named Gongyla, *Please*:

Come back to me, Gongyla, here tonight,  
You, my rose, with your Lydian lyre.  
There hovers forever around you delight:  
A beauty desired.  
Even your garment plunders my eyes.  
I am enchanted: I who once  
Complained to the Cyprus-born goddess,  
Whom I now beseech  
Never to let this lose me grace  
But rather bring you back to me:  
Amongst all mortal women the one  
I most wish to see.

(Roche 97)

The intensity of this poem is created through its interweaving of mythical and natural imagery to invoke in the reader an understanding of the depth of the feelings the narrator feels for the subject, Gongyla. The poem is a clear example of the homoerotic themes present in many of Sappho's poems. While the focus is rarely on the absolute physical pleasures of sex and love, the reader can infer these ideas from the longing expressed through the poem.

Most of Sappho's life is unknown and most of our information comes from general assumptions taken from her writings and a few Greek historians. Scholars have generally accepted she lived primarily on the island of Lesbos and came from an educated, aristocratic background (Roche 30). The island was a rich area of trade and was in the process of a social change as the invention of coinage was occurring in close proximity (Roche 15).

Sappho's writing is generally written in simple lines; however, it is clearly orientated towards educated classes, with the themes focusing on the types of leisure only available to higher class citizens. Her poetry is written in colloquial language, rather than the formal writings that would have been traditionally used when directed at the upper classes ("Goddesses"). However, the focus of the majority of the poems recovered is ideas of love, romance, and engagement with the Gods. Sappho takes her lifestyle, as an upper-class woman, and simply transplants it into the rural setting. The target audience for these poems would be people who could relate to, and were interested in, the pursuits of love and romance, rather than people whose focus in life is the hard work needed to survive. While the writing itself may be simple, the themes it expresses are those that the upper classes of society would be concerned with, implying a target audience of people who were more educated and removed from the rural lifestyle expressed in the poetry. Much like Theocritus writing to the residents of Alexandria and modern Cottagecore's target of the upper-middle classes, this allows an increased romanticization of the pastoral lifestyle as presumably the readers were not experiencing it firsthand, requiring imagination and the descriptors in the writing itself to create the rural fantasy.

The next clearest reiteration of this pastoral genre is by Virgil in the Roman Republic. Virgil wrote three main bodies of work, the Eclogues, the Georgics, and *the Aeneid*. While all

share similar themes of nature, fantasy, and escapism, it is the Eclogues that fall into pastoralism. Virgil followed Theocritus's bucolic style, often pulling scenes directly from the earlier poems. The Eclogues is a collection of ten connected poems. The characters and their circumstances are recurring through the series, however there is not a storyline, and the poems do not appear in chronological order. The poems are short pieces, focused on goatherds and shepherds out in their fields. The same themes found throughout other examples of pastoralism are easily seen in this work.

The poems fit the pastoral framework almost perfectly, all are set in outdoor, nature focused landscapes. They describe their settings in beautiful detail, focusing on the natural elements to an almost magical extent, giving the reader the impression, they are set in a golden age, where all the bounty of nature is provided with no work from the people themselves. While some of their descriptions are more of a wishful dream, they all form the idyllic rural wonderland found across pastoral escapism. "Springtime valerian, and trailing ivy, Egyptian beans, and smiling acanthus, all poured out profusely from the untilled earth" (Ferry, IV l. 23-25). The speaker directly says, there will be no work required to harvest this bounty, a rural paradise with an excess of goods and distinct lack of required labor. And while the characters are still goatherds or shepherds they are disconnected from the reality of that form of life through the natural abundance and lack of real struggle shown throughout the poems.

Virgil also includes strong themes of love and romance inside the poems. While in many of them, these feelings are mentioned as parts of other stories, a distant person, or a god, Eclogue II focuses solely on a young man's unrequited love for another:

"See, the lovely Naiad makes a bouquet  
Of the palest violets and scarlet poppies for you

Flower of fennel, narcissus blossoms also,  
With yellow marigold and hyacinth,  
And bound together with twine of cassia  
And other fragrant herbs. And myself  
Will gather chestnuts as an offering,  
And also downy peaches, and waxen plums”

(Ferry, II l. 58-65).

The poem is blatantly homoerotic, with no shame in a man pining for another man and follows the theme of a love detached from reality. The character tells a tale of a lifestyle they could live, where the natural world provides the goods and beauty needed to fill the fantasy. Virgil was born in 70 BCE, while there is evidence that he was brought up in a rural setting, he is also known to have had a good education, suggesting a family wealthy enough to support his studies and later his career as a writer (Fowler and Fowler). The Eclogues are the first set of poems attributed to him, and generally regarded to have been written around 42 BCE and published by 38 BCE (Fowler and Fowler). This was a particularly turbulent time for Rome, with Ceasar’s murder just before in 44 BCE, and the resulting instability had a direct impact on Virgil’s life. In 40 BCE the Roman government confiscated land to distribute to their supporters, and it is generally inferred that Virgil’s familial land was included in this (Fowler and Fowler). Virgil’s life has many of the same themes as can be observed in both Sappho and Theocritus, with an upper-economic class style of education paired with a desire for a rural lifestyle. The social and political atmosphere of the Roman Republic at the time of the poem’s writing harkens back to the idea that it is during a turbulent social change that people crave the simplistic and bountiful life found in pastoral imagery.

Over the centuries this pastoral imagery can be seen recurring during times where there is a social and political change that disrupts the upper classes' feelings of safety and security, however due to the changing nature of recording history, it is harder to pinpoint individuals

responsible for the resurgence, and rather it is changing trends in fashion and art that exemplify the pastoral genre. These examples include the rise of Rococo during the French Revolution, the Impressionist movement of the 1800's, the Victorian era, and the 1960's Beat Generation and the following Hippie movement. Each of these trends brings forward the idealized pastoral imagery as a dreamy escape from the difficulties of a changing society. Each uses natural imagery to invoke a sense of romantic relaxation, as well as idealized ideas of life and pastoral living in the art and fashion popular during the recurrence.

The Rococo movement, which began with an unsettling of power in the upper-class and nobles, brought architecture modeled after shells, full of curves and spirals, and focused on dressing in light, flowing clothing, calling forth images of innocent country women wandering through pastures in their unfitted underclothes (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Rococo") (Charles and Carl). The movement began after the death of King Louis XIV in 1715, when his absolute power was handed down to his 5-year-old grandson ("Effect of Social & Political Events on Rococo Art"). This death brought instability to the noble houses who, through vying for power and trying to hold onto their status during a turbulent time, turned towards a similar aesthetic of the milkmaid or shepherd.

The most famous character of this movement is Marie-Antoinette, who was one of the leaders of the Rococo style. While the style was far more extravagant than the pastoral precursors, filled with bows and ruffles, it filled the role of romance, with its many layers of silk and light colors. And outside of the court the nobles engaged in the type of pastoralism being seen today in Cottagecore. The escape to the rural, paired with a fantastical act of labor. The most 'traditional' acts of pastoralism were in the young queen's escape to her personal residence the Petit Trianon (Nitschke). It is here she not only could engage in the de-structured lifestyle



fantasized in pastoralism, but also became both a pastoral icon and highly criticized woman through her dressed down look seen in the portrait *Marie Antoinette in a Chemise Dress*, by Elisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun (Nitschke).



The Impressionist movement, which followed close behind, brought ideas of romantic and dreamy art focusing on natural landscapes and the reality of life. As a rebellion against neo-classical ideas of art, where the images were to be depicted in perfect form, following set rules on representation and imagery (Brodszkaya). Impressionism instead focuses on the reality of life yet seen through an artist's gaze. The imagery focuses on nature, the human form, and naturally occurring scenery, rather than engineered sets designed to show off the wealth of the subject or

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<sup>2</sup> Fig. 2  
Louise Vigée Le Brun, Elisabeth, “Marie Antoinette in a Chemise Dress.” *The Collector*, 1783,  
<https://www.thecollector.com/marie-antoinette-controversial-fashion-queen/>. 9 January 2022

the technical skill of the artist (Brodszkaya). Much like the modern-day imagery found in Cottagecore, the subject may be hazy and out of focus, creating a magical overlay to a simple scene. The focus in both trends is to show a romanticized version of reality.



Moving into the Victorian Era of England, as the industrial revolution took hold and people's lives changed dramatically under the need for factory workers, the new bourgeoisie created through the changing power structures, romanticized the countryside and the image of the pastoral lifestyle (Karen). The movement was full of contradictory ideas about nature, which is seen as both innocent and peaceful, and yet also full of danger and temptation (Karen). The result is a fantasy of tamed nature, and an idealized version of the pastoral living of pre-industrial

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<sup>3</sup> Fig. 3  
Monet, Claude. "Woman with a Parasol, Madame Monet and Her Son" National Gallery of Art, 1875.  
<https://www.nga.gov/collection/art-object-page.61379.html>

society (Karen). The romance of the countryside is clearly evident in the art and literature of the time, labelled the Romantic Era. The focus on love in the poets and artists of the day belayed a fantasy of longing for true love that would not be an everyday occurrence in a time where social classes were still starkly differentiated. However, this poetry and music filled the pastoral longing for a romantic escape from the drudgery of life.

Perhaps the most familiar resurgence of the pastoral fantasy is that of the Beat and its later growth into the Hippie movement in the 1960's and 70's as a result of the changing economy and a rebuttal of the capitalist trends that came out of the post-war boom in the 1950's (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Hippie"). Popular with young, middle-class people, this trend focused on a desire to return to people's 'natural' state and focused on ideas of free-love and life, romanticizing a life that wouldn't rely on hard labor (either in a factory or a rural setting), and instead focused on the creation of art that reflected these idealized views of the world (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Hippie").

The Beat Generations imagery and art reflected many of the recurring themes of Cottagecore found in the previous iterations, this time with the inclusion of photography to further boost the movement's visual aesthetic. The movement focused on people in natural aesthetics, with images usually in outdoor spaces and in unstructured styles of clothing. Additionally, the focus on free love incorporates both pastoralism's romantic emphasis, as well as the support of queer romance.

The most recent revitalization of this trend is Cottagecore. While the names have changed over the centuries, Cottagecore contains the same underlying themes and drivers as seen in before. There is a focus on natural imagery and a rural lifestyle, as well as an overt theme of queerness running through the majority of the media being created for this trend. The trend

began its rise to popularity during a turbulent time politically, with the divisive policies of President Donald Trump in the United States, as well as the rise of a global pandemic affecting people's social life. As with every recurrence of the pastoral trend, the exact images and media through which the ideas are expressed has changed, but there are connections to the past throughout this modern iteration. The romantic poetry of Sappho, Theocritus, and Virgil can be found in the music and images, and new poetry is being created, such as Taylor Swift's album *Folklore*. Her song, *the lakes*, from the album, is a perfect example of the same Cottagecore themes found in the pre-modern poetry still being used today:

Take me to the lakes where all the poets went to die  
I don't belong, and my beloved, neither do you  
Those Windermere peaks look like a perfect place to cry  
I'm setting off, but not without my muse

(Swift)

The song uses natural imagery to express emotions and make the listener understand the motivation behind the words. Additionally, it adds an element of fantastical romanticization through the use of the word "muse," both expressing their role in the speaker's life, but also adds the element of magical creation associated with the myth of a muse.

The art and photography used on social media to exemplify Cottagecore harkens back to impressionist and Rococo art, with people existing in natural habits, in a hazy and natural form. The images tend to be photos or collages now; however, they are visually simple, with the focus being on the natural setting and romantic emotions the photographer is trying to express. The fashion trends found in Cottagecore are clear modernizations of Rococo and Victorian styles, featuring flowing feminine styles, often with longer skirts and corsets. The clothing brand *Selkie* directly pulls from Rococo imagery, with big skirts, pastel colors, and feminine details like

ruffles and lace. and the ideals of love and nature preservation are drawn from the Beat Generation movement.

## CAPITALISM

From the history of cottagecore and pastoralism, it is easy to see that this form of romantic escapism often arises as a result of uncomfortable social change and a feeling of instability in the middle/upper socioeconomic classes that inspire people to look for more peaceful lives. Modern Cottagecore is no different and there are most likely far more contributing factors that could be listed here, however this will focus on the disillusionment many people who are drawn towards Cottagecore are feeling towards the modern capitalist system.

To be interested in this type of romantic escapism a person must be part of a very specific group of society. They must be well enough off that they are not constantly worrying about finding enough money and goods to survive, however they are not rich enough to feel fully supported and benefited by the current system. They have access to leisure time and unnecessary goods, yet they are still required to engage in the capitalist system and as such do not have the ability to fully participate in the idealized leisure. And finally, they must be disconnected from the activities they are romanticizing, whether this comes from being wealthy enough to not need to engage in them or to be from a space (i.e., cities) that does not allow easy access to the rural lifestyle. These are the types of people that have engaged in pastoral escapism for centuries, as seen from analyzing its many occurrences through history.

Capitalism, the economic system where private entities own the factors of production, has been the primary economic system in the United States since its conception (“Factors of Production - The Economic Lowdown Podcast Series”). However, more and more people are discussing the shortfalls and dissatisfaction that this system creates (whether this is a new phenomenon, or the internet simply allows more visibility to the issue is a topic not addressed

here). There are many factors that lead to dissatisfaction with the system, particularly in the middle economic classes, who have the platform to engage in capitalism, yet not enough power to rise up into the upper classes through the system. While the hardest hit people under the capitalist system are those who would be classified as lower economic class or below the poverty line, Cottagecore is not often engaged in by these groups. Much like the general history of pastoral escapism, these people rarely have the free time or tools needed to engage in this type of romantic leisure, and most likely are not interested in participating in a romantic version of labor when daily life is itself full of labor.

Many factors of Cottagecore are a direct response and turn away from modern capitalism. These include ideas of anti-consumerism, focus on traditional skills, and a distaste for the capitalist work structure. The first of these is clearly seen in the focus on reusability, creation, and innovation found within the aesthetic. There is a strong focus on environmental choices, such as thrifting and repurposing. While the aesthetic isn't against 'things', there is no focus on maximalism vs. minimalism, it generally steers people away from purchasing new items from major corporations. People are inspired to find things secondhand or hand-made, which creates a sense of uniqueness and further distances them from the capitalist system.

Much of the online community surrounding Cottagecore and its sibling aesthetics use the term "late-stage capitalism" to describe the economic system they are reacting to. Late-Stage Capitalism is a way for people to express their frustration with the inequalities and hypocrisy they see in the modern capitalistic economy (Estevez). It focuses on how the system seems rigged against the 99%, with big corporations and those with the most liquid capital able to bend the laws and regulations to help themselves, while leaving those in need to suffer at \$7.25 an hour (Estevez). Cottagecore, in its desire to live a disconnected lifestyle, is inherently against

capitalism, and posits itself as an opposite to late-stage capitalism in particular. While its clear Cottagecore is not a new or unique aesthetic, in this iteration it is placing itself as a reaction to this economic system creating inequality and instability.

The focus on traditional skills is another way the movement distances itself from capitalism. Under this economic system the focus is on skills and jobs that create the most financial gain for the laborer, and many traditional skills have been pushed aside by modernization. Hand-making a garment takes far longer than if done by a machine, both in the time required to make it and the time needed to learn the skill. Under capitalism, this is a loss of a money-making opportunity, and not considered “worthwhile”. Society encourages the development of skills that assist companies in generating wealth, and traditional skills are relegated to ‘hobbies’. The Cottagecore movement inspires people to once again look to these skills as a way of creating usable items, such as clothing, home decorations, and gardening. Focusing time on activities that do not generate income is a fight back against the idea that all skills need to create financial gain, and in doing so, fight against the idea that financial gain is the most important piece of life.

This is also strongly connected to the distaste of a capitalist work structure. The societal understanding for many years has been that ‘working hard, and making money, will get you everything you need in life’. While ideas around joy in work and a work-life balance have become more and more mainstream, Cottagecore goes beyond this, with the aesthetic relying on not engaging in this system. There is a discourse in much of Cottagecore that engaging in the capitalist work system in any context breeds unhappiness, and there is no ‘balance’. The ideal life, in the aesthetic, is one in which a person does not ‘work’ (in the sense of trading labor for financial gain), but rather engages in activities that provide something directly to themselves,



either enjoyment or a physical good. The dissatisfaction with the need for constant work just to survive drives those who engage in this aesthetic to imagine a world where the work is done for the simple human joy of accomplishment, rather than the need to live in a system that regularly abuses its middle and lower economic classes for the benefit of the rich.

In an essay titled *Estranged Labor*, Karl Marx describes some of the ways capitalism is alienating its workers. The essay delves into the underlying issues with capitalism that cause the dissatisfaction found in the discourse around 'late-stage capitalism'. The first three types of alienation he describes can be clearly connected to the rise of the Cottagecore movement. These are the alienation of the laborers from their products, the labor process, and nature (Marx). The first of these talks about how the laborer does not own the products of their own labor, they are owned by a capitalist dictating what is produced and how (Marx). From this process, the laborer is also alienated from the production itself. People are engaging in labor not to satisfy themselves, but rather to survive. People must work to live, rather than living to work (Marx). Finally, the process alienates workers from nature and their own humanity (Marx). They are stripped of their upper-level functions, and it is only their animalistic functions that they retain for themselves. This describes how when a laborer must work to live, the time they spend living is only done to further their ability to work, such as through eating and sleeping.

In Cottagecore's rebuttal of capitalism, it directly addresses these alienations, looking to resolve them and bring value back to the laborer. The aesthetic urges participants to engage in labor for their own satisfaction, creating things solely for their own pleasure, rather than the monetary gain of a larger capitalist system. The movement focuses on doing things for the enjoyment of it, and while this is an idealized version of life, it still inspires laborers to engage in labor for the enjoyment of it, rather than the requirement. Finally, Cottagecore pushes people to

re-engage with nature and their full self. Rather than only having time for animal functions, every action is for their own life and own enjoyment. The movement is about bringing value and satisfaction into life through the use of aesthetic imagery, even if it contains no monetary or larger cultural value.

## FEMINISM

The fight for a woman's place in society has been a long and complex history. There have been great feminist women from the earliest days of complex human social structures, and many of their names remain well known today. However, it wasn't until the nineteenth century that modern day feminism began to emerge as a distinct and recognizable movement (Rampton). Women in the home has been a long-established image in western societies. The wife or mother figure maintains the house, bringing in the feeling of warmth and home. Women have been the center of domestic life for centuries, keeping the house warm, the table full, and the children safe. This movement has since become known as the first wave of feminism and worked towards women's right to vote and give women access to education (Rampton). The first wave also laid the groundwork for many of the themes that began to rise to the forefront of the movement found in the second wave. This period, starting around the 1960's and going on through the 90's, had a strong focus on bringing equality to a variety of spaces, from the office to the political sphere (Rampton). The Cottagecore movement seems to almost dismiss the hard work of the early feminists in its return to simple domestic life. However, upon closer examination, Cottagecore itself is a protest against the patriarchal ideals pervasive throughout western societies.

The third wave brought about changes in feminist ideas around sexuality, intersectionality, and gender expression. While the first and second waves included many of these ideas, this third wave brought these concepts to the forefront of the fight and used them to connect with a new generation of women who have grown up with the ideas of feminism built into their view of the world (Snyder). It's from this movement that Cottagecore begins to draw many of its basic ideas about embracing femininity and intersectional identities.

It is from third wave feminist ideas that Cottagecore has flourished in the 21st century. The desire to expand feminism beyond the image of a middle-class white woman being invited

into the office has driven a good portion of the movement (Snyder). The basic premise of Cottagecore is to engage in activities that bring the individual enjoyment and satisfaction, while complying with the aesthetic of the movement. However, Cottagecore itself is only one aspect of a multi-faceted aesthetic movement growing on the internet. The idea being that any interest and aesthetic should be respected and enjoyed by anyone who is interested. These 'internet aesthetics' argue that 'femininity' and 'masculinity' as concepts of gender are outdated, and should be enjoyed as is, equally, and by any gender. Cottagecore looks to recapture an idea of femininity and innocence found in Pastoral imagery, but the aesthetic inspires participants to value this femininity and its hobbies as highly as the traditional images of masculinity and power are valued.

Another big focus of the early feminist movements was on the "Cult of Domesticity". The conversation was focused on a "set of societal standards placed on women of the late 19th century" which held that a woman's value was in her ability to act as the idealized wife and mother in the home (Wigington). The argument of these early feminists was that these roles held up by the social ideal of the perfect wife and mother were a large contributing factor to women's oppression. Alexandra Kollontai, a Russian feminist and leader, went so far as to suggest that a woman's liberation was only possible if they were freed of the burden of children, positing that it should be the duty of the state to take care of the children and free the mothers to join the workforce (Foreman). The underlying assumption for this argument is that until women are able and allowed to equally fill the roles occupied by men, they will never find equality in life.

Cottagecore, an aesthetic that focuses on the domesticity and home tending, seems, on the surface, to be a complete dismissal of the hard work of these early feminists. However, upon closer examination this movement embodies a type of Feminism only available through the hard

work of these early feminists. The fundamental requirement to be oppressed is for there to be an oppressor. In the traditional home, under the patriarchal society this role has been filled by the man, husband, and father, and it is this figure that cultivates this “cult of domesticity”. It is for the man of the house that dinner is made and placed on the table by the time he arrives home, it is for the man that the house is cleaned, and the clothes are washed, and it is for the man that the woman is designed to fulfill the visual role of the beautiful housewife. Where Cottagecore differs from the traditional idea of domesticity is this lack of a masculine role, and it is in this action that the trend is in protest of the patriarchy.

Cottagecore encourages traditional homemaking tasks, whether that be cooking, cleaning, sewing, or any other of the numerous skills and activities one can engage in to create a home. However, the encouragement is for a self-focused action. Homemaking is not done to create a space for another party, but rather to bring joy and peace to the person engaging in the activity itself. So, while this style of home management may have been a tool of the oppressor to maintain power, this trend is working to reclaim those traditional activities in a space that allows the freedom that comes from choice.

Furthermore, this intentional focus on homemaking and ‘women’s activities’<sup>4</sup> is a direct attack on the patriarchal values of Western society. For many years women have worked towards earning a seat at the table - in the conference room. And while it is important that the value and freedoms that this fight has allowed women to embrace is not dismissed, it is still women striving for a space in the patriarchal system. And while women now make up a large portion of the work force, there is a stark lack of men that moved into homemaking, leaving that work

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<sup>4</sup> This term and usage in common discourse around feminism and work relates back to the work associated with white, middle-class women. It is important to acknowledge, when using this language, the way it excludes BIPOC and low-income women across history.

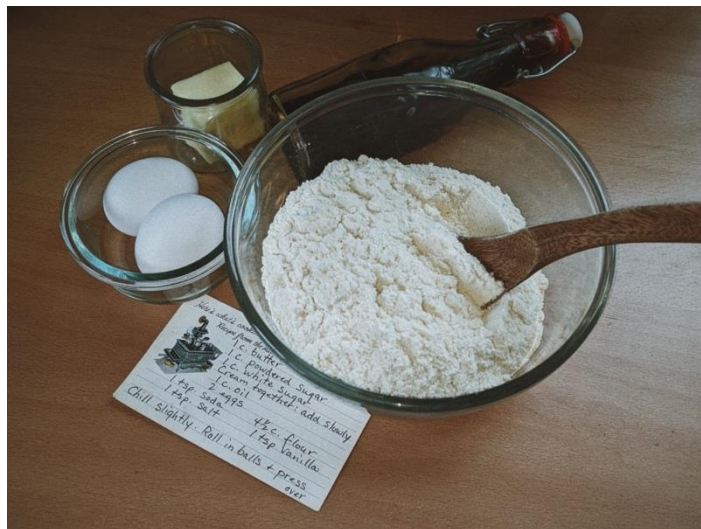
relegated to women that may be working another full-time job outside the house. There will remain an inherent devaluation of this work until the time when men move in equal parts to homemaking (Naraharisetty).

Domestic work is incredibly important, the maintenance of the home and raising of children has profound effects on western society's ability to function as it does, and yet there is almost no discussion about the inequitable distribution of this work. The dismissal of “women's work” is not a new idea, nor is it particularly surprising to find it plays a role in the societal view of domestic work. In a patriarchal society, value is placed on the work men engage in, and so, to establish their value, women have been striving for an equal share of that work. The work viewed as traditionally ‘feminine’, such as homemaking, cooking, and cleaning, is still looked down upon in western society. As Rohitha Naraharisetty puts it in her article *Unpacking ‘Housewife’ And Its Problematic Implications*, “...the work which women do, or are associated with doing, is valued less and feminine labour such as care-work and domestic chores become relegated to the unpaid or lesser paid end of the work spectrum”. Women who choose to live as housewives or stay at home moms are criticized for not using their privilege to work, and men are traditionally discouraged from pursuing these roles, as they are considered demeaning or ‘not real men's work’.

Cottagecore rebuts this viewpoint, placing high value and esteem in these traditionally feminine skills. The aesthetic empowers people to pursue these skills that for many years have been put aside in the woman’s fight for equal rights. Western society has reached a point that people are beginning to see the limits of the patriarchy’s power and have begun looking to reclaim the activities that bring them joy. The ideas around housework as a chore, or demeaning task, are being replaced in Cottagecore with the idea that these activities can be done in a way

that brings self-worth and seen as meaningful work. It is a reminder that just because an activity is traditionally feminine, it does not mean it is not enjoyable or worth engaging in.

An important piece of Cottagecore is the reclamation of traditional activities, such as fiber arts, sewing, baking, gardening, and home keeping. These activities are ones that have been pushed aside, not only in feminism as the attention was turned to the more ‘masculine’ identity of working in the capitalist economy but have also been left behind through capitalism and its insistence that activities that do not generate income are worthless. In a dismissal of both traditional ‘masculinity’ and capitalism, Cottagecore urges its participants to reapply themselves to activities done simply for individual pleasure. It's a rebuking of hustle culture and the idea that happiness comes from income generation.



It is important to note that the Cottagecore aesthetic does not align itself with the TradWife movement. The TradWife, or Traditional Wife, subculture is a right-wing movement focusing on women filling traditional gender roles. This movement looks to have women re-assume the roles available to women before the modern feminist movements (White). While on the surface both movements are a reclamation of traditional tasks and activities, Cottagecore is open to anyone who connects with the aesthetic, regardless of their gender or sexual expression.

Additionally, Cottagecore does not require a masculine counterpart, and in fact, the role of the ‘husband’ is not present in most Cottagecore media. Men are welcome to engage in the aesthetic, however their involvement mimics that of any other participant, rather than being the ‘man’ or patriarch of the home.

While the movement holds up femininity and the image of this traditional ‘feminine’ image, Cottagecore itself is an open and intersectional aesthetic. There is no requirement or rule for participants to be of any gender, age, class, or race. While there is a strong majority of white women featured in many of the images, there is a growing movement to include all other identities, the only requirement is a desire to participate and an interest in the aesthetic. Each of the intersectional identities participating in Cottagecore have their own discourse around its interaction with feminism, as well as many additional equality issues such as racism, classism, sizeism, and homophobia<sup>5</sup> (Jean).

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<sup>5</sup> For further information on these issues see the *Further Readings*.



## QUEERNESS

As visible throughout the many iterations of the pastoral escapist movements, there is a theme of queerness or homoeroticism present. This current version, Cottagecore, is no exception. It is commonly discussed as a lesbian aesthetic, harkening back to Sappho's version of the escapist fantasy.

Cottagecore has a strong connection to some feminist ideas found in the 1970's, during the recurrence of the rural escape genre found in the 'hippie' movement. There was a discourse around women only communes, an idea that shares many characteristics with modern Cottagecore (White). The movement in the 70's featured ideas about creating women focused communities based around communal and back-to-nature living. There are many differences between these two movements, including Cottagecore's isolationist style life, as well as its acceptance of people across the gender spectrum, they both focused on escaping a patriarchal society and traditional skill sharing as a radical practice to stand up against societal ideas of gender roles and work value (White).

The most powerful part of the gender expression reclamation found in Cottagecore is that no activity is coded in gendered ideas. There is a dismissal of the traditional ideas of outdoor vs indoor, hard vs soft labor. While Cottagecore may be described as focusing on traditional feminine activities, they are not restricted to the 'feminine activities' more commonly seen in upper socioeconomic classes. Traditional activities such as baking, sewing, and knitting are very common in Cottagecore, however, the aesthetic also romanticizes activities like gardening, hiking, land management, and building. The one pre-requisite of whether an activity can be considered Cottagecore is not the gender associated with it, but rather whether it is traditionally related to the idea of rural living. The activity may have traditionally been associated with

‘masculine’ genders; however, it still falls under the romantic rural escape and as such, can be seen in Cottagecore.

This inclusion of a variety of activities, and the resulting genderless orientation of them, allows for a greater variety of gender and sexual identities to be represented in the aesthetic. This makes the movement accessible and supportive to a wide variety of people, which helps build its reputation for being a ‘queer aesthetic’. However, it is important to note, the movement is open to and accepting of any gender or sexual orientation, and while the term “Cottagecore Lesbian” is very prevalent, many who participate would not fall under that title.

Western society has a common discourse around lesbian and women loving women that applies a filter of heteronormative to a relationship that in its literal definition cannot fit that mold. Heterosexual society has developed a relationship mold, where there is a masculine and feminine role to fill. One of the clearest ways to examine this is in the language and imagery popularly used to discuss lesbians. Starting in the 1920’s the term “dyke”<sup>6</sup> has been leveled at lesbians both as a descriptor and as a demeaning slur (Lee). The term does not simply refer to a lesbian, but rather places upon them the image of masculinity, implying the idea that to love a woman, one must be masculine (Lee). Popular media further ingrains this idea through depictions of lesbians as masculine women, with common jokes focused around finding lesbians at Home Depot, working in auto-shops or construction, or having short hair and low voices. This type of imagery is hurtful not only to lesbians, who may feel forced into this image, but also to women in general, as some heterosexual women may find this ‘masculine’ imagery to fit the way they wish to express themselves and yet in doing so they are denied their own sexual identity.

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<sup>6</sup> The usage of this word is highly debated in queer communities and is used here in lieu of any other generally understood replacement. Please see *Further Readings* for more information on the usage and history of this term.

Cottagecore is one of the many ways women are fighting back against this forced expression. Lesbians who prefer to express themselves through a more feminine image use Cottagecore as a descriptor and space for safe expression. It is a way to find other like-minded people, and in itself a descriptor about gender identity. While the aesthetic is not by any means restricted to feminine presenting lesbians, the term “Cottagecore Lesbian” is used to invoke a specific and new image of a woman who loves other women and should be recognized as a powerful tool for the reclamation of gender expression previously denied.

## ENVIRONMENTALISM AND DIY CULTURE

An interesting intersection between feminism, anti-capitalist sentiments, and Cottagecore is its drive for sustainability. The Cottagecore movement has a strong emphasis on being environmentally friendly, encouraging participants to thrift, make, and find pieces to fill out their aesthetic, rather than purchase them from major retailers. This shows up clearly through the embracing of 'Do-it-Yourself (DIY) Culture' to access Cottagecore items, avoid engaging in a capitalist market, and re-establish value to activities traditionally dismissed as 'feminine'. These themes are heavily intertwined and relate back to a masculine view of the economy and worthwhile activities. According to traditional ideas of masculinity, power comes from control over women, economy, and the environment. The idea of the DIY culture found in Cottagecore is a rebuttal of all three of these concepts. Not only are participants encouraged to create things for simply their own enjoyment, ignoring the economic gains working within the economic system provides, Cottagecore encourages its participants to act as stewards to the environment, being as sustainable and ethical in their actions as possible.

While these 'DIY' projects may not generate income or a capitalist view of 'value' they provide a genuine benefit to the creator. Often these activities cost more money than purchasing the finished item would, due to the availability of cheap labor under capitalism, however in doing the work themselves, people generate not only joy from the action but also tend to create items that have a lower impact on the environment than their purchasable counterpart. Further, the DIY culture is a support to the idea of independence woven through the Cottagecore movement. Not only are the participants able to be independent from the capitalist economy, but additionally it supports the lack of 'masculine' figure in the household. A woman who is self-reliant is far more capable of living without the power of a husband, and this can be seen in the Cottagecore imagery of feminine figures thriving alone.

Cottagecore encourages these hobbies through the visual act of participating in them for social media, rather than simply showing the finished products. The acts themselves fill the Cottagecore aesthetic of living simply and slowly. Many of these traditional hobbies engaged in for aesthetic purposes, also have very real helpful applications in a home, and include projects such as gardening, cooking, sewing, and cleaning<sup>7</sup>. Participants are encouraged to make their own clothes, thrift them, or buy from local artists. Additionally, the type of living shown in the images generally has a low carbon footprint. From making things from the land and limiting purchasing, the movement has a drive to inspire an environmentally friendly way of life.

This seemingly innocent version of sharing a skill has its roots in a practice of radical skill sharing, designed to empower people and give them the skills needed to establish their own place in society, independent of their family or socioeconomic status. This idea of sharing knowledge being a radical activity has grown out of anti-capitalist movements, especially in the urban centers of North America, as a way to fight back against the alienation of the system (Hemphill and Leskowitz). In the article *DIY Activists: Communities of Practice, Cultural Dialogism, and Radical Knowledge Sharing*, authors David Hemphill and Shari Leskowitz discuss the rise of the Do-It-Yourself (DIY) movement as a rebuttal against capitalism. They note, the iteration of this radical skill sharing seen in the early 2000's DIY movement is based on earlier practices and theories found in the Beat Generation of the 1960's. Similarly, these same ideas are now being reflected in the Cottagecore movement. Through sharing how to create and remake items, these movements fight back against the capitalist systems that focus on consumer spending and purchasing.

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<sup>7</sup> For ideas and links to projects and DIY's that fall under the Cottagecore aesthetic see *Further Readings*.

In the DIY community of the 2000's, spreading information for skills and activities was an expressly political statement (Hemphill and Leskowitz). The members of these groups used skill sharing events, self-published zines, pirated radio shows, and any other means necessary to disseminate information and encourage informal learning (learning outside of a structured institution) (Hemphill and Leskowitz). The idea behind these actions is that in giving people the information to create things for themselves, they are standing up against an economic and political system that keeps power in the hands of the corporations (Hemphill and Leskowitz). While Cottagecore is not expressly aligned with these DIY counter-culture movements, it does stand in opposition to capitalist ideas, and through the skill sharing and traditional activities focused on in the aesthetic it is clearly engaging in this idea of radical skill sharing.

Interestingly, both the DIY movement and Cottagecore have run into similar issues around corporations co-opting the aesthetic, in direct opposition to the basic principles of the aesthetics. For the DIY movement this came with the rise of 'hobbies and crafts' being sold to the general population as a way to engage in this skill sharing, without it being a radical statement (Hemphill and Leskowitz). Cottagecore also finds itself in a similar position as major corporations take the visual aesthetic and sell mass produced items in an attempt to tap into the movement. Not only does this undermine the political statement of the activities, but also goes against both groups' stances on being environmentally friendly and engaging in these activities as a way to lower their impact on the earth.

## ISSUES AND HYPOCRISIES <sup>8</sup>

When considering any movement, it is important to consider the hypocrisies and issues which may exist. The key to understanding the Cottagecore movement is to recognize that it is first and foremost an aesthetic trend. While those who participate in the trend may hold general values, it is inherently a visual trend which developed in a visual medium. As Cottagecore gained popularity it began to accumulate other aspects which rounded out the trend into a bigger movement. However, with this growth, certain hypocrisies have become clear and should be kept in mind when participating in or discussing this aesthetic.

The clearest is the lack of technology evident in an online aesthetic. As part of its ‘escapist’ nature, Cottagecore is also escaping the complications present on the internet. However, there is an inherent contradiction in an aesthetic that idealizes a technology free life, while also being designed specifically to be seen on the internet. This poses a challenge for those wanting to engage in the trend to live in this romanticized world, while also being present in the spaces that value the world itself.

The trend also has issues concerning representation. While the movement holds itself to be open and accepting of anyone who is interested in participating, there is a strong lack of visual diversity in the most popular images and representations of the trend. The most common imagery is a young, thin, white woman in pretty dresses and aesthetically arranged spaces. These images exclude people of color, different sizes, different genders, and economic classes that may not have access to the clothing and props found throughout the imagery (Jean). While in theory these people are welcome and accepted in the trend, the lack of representation makes it difficult for people to feel like they are capable of participation.

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<sup>8</sup> Further information and sources for many of these issues can be found in *Further Readings*.

As a further commentary on the visual aesthetic and reality, there is an element of perfect imperfection seen in Cottagecore imagery. Since the aesthetic is a romanticized version of life, this perfection fits the story being woven by the aesthetic, however, due to the prevalence of social media, there is a perception that people are living this life seen online. However, this perfection and romantic lifestyle isn't actually possible, and there is a disconnect in acknowledging the beauty of the aesthetic and its actual feasibility in the world. This can create a struggle for people who may be trying to emulate this life they are seeing online, while still living in this reality.

Additionally, the focus on DIY culture and environmentalism has run into an issue as mainstream retailers have tried to tap into the trend. From Shein to Target, companies are looking to capitalize on the popularity of this movement. While on one hand, this opens up the aesthetic to a wider audience of people who may have a harder time finding, making, or purchasing ethically made or thrifted items, it also seems to go against some of the base ideals of Cottagecore. The commercialization of the trend has turned romantic escapism into an income generating trend for companies that disconnect the visuals of the imagery from its underlying social meaning. While this is by no means an uncommon result of a trends popularity, it is causing issues in the community of those who choose to engage in Cottagecore as they grapple with the dichotomy of engaging in the exploitive and capitalistic society, while also acknowledging the need for these companies to fill gaps in the trends accessibility.



## CONCLUSIONS

Cottagecore is a turbulent mix of past and present, nature and technology, social issues, and escapist fantasy. However, at its base, Cottagecore is a way for people to find serenity, self-expression, and a community in a time where life has become increasingly more turbulent and unpredictable. The community is still growing and changing, and these conversations are just in their beginning phases, and yet are important to consider as the aesthetic becomes more mainstream and popular. It is important to remember where things evolved from, but it is equally important to remember that the past does not define the future, and the goal of this aesthetic, and the many others growing on the internet, is to bring people together.



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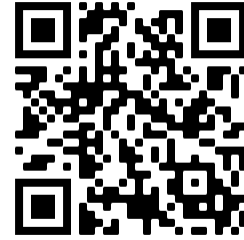
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## FURTHER READINGS

All further readings and sources are located on this website to enable easy access: <https://masonmarie.wixsite.com/wwucapstone>

### Issues:

There are many aspects of Cottagecore that deserve further discussion and analysis. Here are some articles that give a broad overview of some of these issues:



*Cottagecore, a beautiful aesthetic with issues to address* By Harper Klotz

<https://www.michigandaily.com/arts/digital-culture/cottagecore-beautiful-aesthetic-issues-address/>

*A Glimpse At How Cottagecore Becomes Wholesome Trend Embraced By Black, Gay And Plus-Sized People* By Womanly Live

<https://womanlylive.com/a-glimpse-at-how-cottagecore-becomes-wholesome-trend-embraced-by-black-gay-and-plus-sized-people/>

### Racism

While the aesthetic itself does not support racist ideology, it is built off of racist systems. It is important to be aware of the impacts of the systematic and ingrained racism that is inherent in Western Cultures. For Cottagecore specifically this can be seen in its basis and focus on the aesthetic of European Colonialism, and the lack of representation of People of color in the media. The impacts of this ingrained racism is important and far reaching. As Cottagecore continues to grow in popularity, it is essential that these systems be broken down to allow people of color a space in an aesthetic that has grown out of a society built on their oppression.

*Why is Cottagecore so White* By Angely Mercado

<https://grist.org/climate/why-is-cottagecore-so-white/>

*Cultivating Freedom* By Yannise Jean

<https://www.bitchmedia.org/article/black-women-cottagecore-whiteness>

*Is the “Cottagecore” Aesthetic Racist* By Abigail Reasor

<https://www.hercampus.com/school/vcu/cottagecore-aesthetic-racist/>

*Cottagecore, colonialism and the far-right* By Claire Ollivain

<https://honisoit.com/2020/09/cottagecore-colonialism-and-the-far-right/>

*Black Women Embracing ‘Cottagecore’ Is an Act of Defiance* By Leah Sinclair

<https://zora.medium.com/black-women-embracing-cottagecore-is-an-act-of-defiance-3df8696d8811>

*Revisiting the “cottagecore” trend through the lens of Black American heritage* By Michele Wright

<https://nobasicgirlsallowed.com/revisiting-the-cottagecore-trend-through-the-lens-of-black-american-heritage/>

### **Sizeism**

*Why Plus-Size Women Are Reclaiming Cottagecore For Themselves* By Marie Southard Ospina  
<https://www.refinery29.com/en-gb/plus-size-cottagecore-fashion>

### **Queer Representation**

*How Queer Folks and WOC Have Made Cottagecore Their Own* By Shannon Vize  
<http://www.femestella.com/woc-queer-wlw-cottagecore/>

### **Further Cottagecore themed media:**

#### **Reading lists**

*20 cottagecore books to imagine a simple, cozy life in nature* By Lucy  
<https://www.tolstoytherapy.com/cottagecore-reading-list/>

*25 Cozy Cottagecore Book Recommendations* By Sandra's Shelf  
<https://sandrasshelf.com/cozy-cottagecore-books/>

Lisette @bookishmoodboards\_

[https://www.instagram.com/bookishmoodboards\\_/?hl=en](https://www.instagram.com/bookishmoodboards_/?hl=en)

#### **Music lists**

##### **Youtube Playlists:**

a cottagecore aesthetic playlist

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RmSRmhHtGwA>

Cottagecore Vibes. Chill out, study, read or dance in the garden

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nhEoqAIozRM>

##### **Spotify:**

Cottagecore daydreams

[https://open.spotify.com/playlist/6ftc6TjALsEIIjbMsnC0t5?si=CWoiVcFYQiKz8EId6couzQ&utm\\_source=copy-link](https://open.spotify.com/playlist/6ftc6TjALsEIIjbMsnC0t5?si=CWoiVcFYQiKz8EId6couzQ&utm_source=copy-link)

Cottage Core playlist

[https://open.spotify.com/playlist/7t3MKMvhY5trdFwj6QMFKG?si=20QilQ39SFKPI8GMctn91g&utm\\_source=copy-link](https://open.spotify.com/playlist/7t3MKMvhY5trdFwj6QMFKG?si=20QilQ39SFKPI8GMctn91g&utm_source=copy-link)

Cottagecore but you're in jail for five counts of arson

[https://open.spotify.com/playlist/4GdYgrBlnV6SFBLMyGsjoX?si=kM3y7W-EQheHhdGpnPhi1A&utm\\_source=copy-link](https://open.spotify.com/playlist/4GdYgrBlnV6SFBLMyGsjoX?si=kM3y7W-EQheHhdGpnPhi1A&utm_source=copy-link)

#### **Videos**

*Cottagecore Style Is Much Older Than You Think* - Karolina Żebrowska

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nnsxwJKxkJ8>

*The Paradox of Cottagecore | Rejecting Hustle Culture - The Take*

<https://the-take.com/watch/the-paradox-of-cottagecore-rejecting-hustle-culture>

*the rise of the cottagecore aesthetic - Kristen Leo*

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qYtRXVkv\\_ps](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qYtRXVkv_ps)

*COTTAGECORE explained | The ONLY video you'll ever need - Nadiife*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MYD-WwfmhIY>

### **Instagram**

Paula Sutton @hillhousevintage

<https://www.instagram.com/hillhousevintage/>

@cottagecoredream

<https://www.instagram.com/cottagecoredream/?hl=en>

@cottagecore.aestheticc

<https://www.instagram.com/cottagecore.aestheticc/?hl=en>

Margarita Ponomareva @marbevoch

<https://www.instagram.com/marbevoch/?hl=en>

### **DIY and Cooking:**

*33 DIY Projects to Create a Cottagecore Aesthetic in Your Home* By Big DIY Ideas

<https://bigdiyideas.com/33-cottagecore-diy-projects/>

*DIY Cottagecore Aesthetic* By Gathered.

<https://www.gathered.how/arts-crafts/cottagecore/>

Cottagecore Recipes

<https://www.tumblr.com/tagged/cottagecore%20recipes?sort=top>