

# Phoenix



*cottagecore issue*

April  
2023



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## Introduction

Written by Zoya E. Toshi - Edited by Helenie Demir

Dearest readers, welcome to the third issue of Phoenix for the academic year. I am particularly excited for this issue—one that is adorned with dainty field flowers, spending afternoons baking in a quaint stone cottage, and lying down in grassy meadows, welcoming all of nature...

Much like Romanticism in the late 18th century, there is an emerging appreciation for the so-called "simple things in life": taking a step back and rethinking what our current world is all about. What was it like before phones? Before Google? Before instant gratification?

"Cottagecore" is an aesthetic that idealises a rural life, mainly English and European countryside life. Ironically, this trend has been spread primarily through social media platforms. People share how they have been taking on life at a more slowed-down pace with things like making clothes, baking bread from scratch, pressing flowers, and reading. Cottagecore doesn't entirely include hobbies, but watching themed movies, reading books of the period, and wearing periodical clothes is a way of appreciating the utopian provincial and creative life.

We hope this issue brings you a colourful and blooming daydream of all things beautiful and simple.

Dear Albi(oneers),

When originally presented with writing the Word of The Board, I was really taken aback. Am I really not aware of what cottagecore is? Have I been living under a rock?

Fortunately, the world wide web exists, and after a very deep dive into what this aesthetic consists of, I discovered that it has been part of my life for a substantial amount of time.

As a young baby Anna, living in Italy, I watched many cartoons: Anna dai Capelli Rossi (Anne of Green Gables); Heidi, Focchi di Cotone per Jeanie; D'artagnan e i Moschettieri del Re; Lady Oscar, etc. Apart from all of these cartoons being anime adaptations of popular western writings, they all feature the beautifully captivating cottagecore aesthetic. As I grew older I became enamoured with Studio Ghibli films. According to the internet, nearly all of their filmography depicts aspects that fit within the aesthetic, which (not going to lie) enhances my immersion in their films.

As the deadlines for the third block approach, I would love to trade places with Anne or Heidi and live in a cute little cottage/farmhouse, reading books all day and frolicking with my little animal friends. Unfortunately, for now, I cannot do that, but once the spring fully sets in and the flowers have bloomed, I might visit the mini-zoo near my house and read amongst the goats and bunnies.

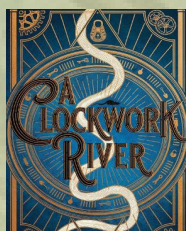
Toodles,  
Anna Alborghetti (a flower girl at heart), COI '22-'23

## Word of the Board





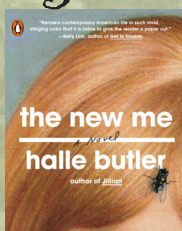
# What we're reading



AITANA  
*A Clockwork River*,  
J.S. Emery



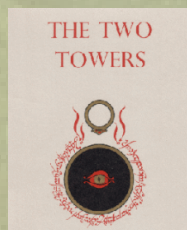
ALEEZA  
*The First to Die at the End*,  
Adam Silvera



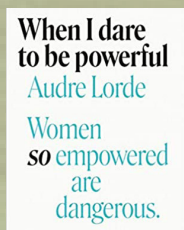
ANNA  
*The New Me*,  
Halle Butler



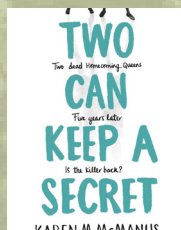
ANNA-MARIA  
*The Yellow Kitchen*,  
Margaux Vialleron



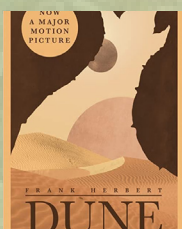
CHARLIE  
*The Two Towers*,  
J.R.R. Tolkien



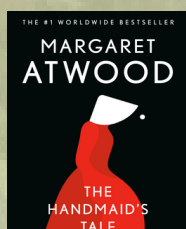
DANIEK  
*When I Dare to Be Powerful*,  
Audre Lorde



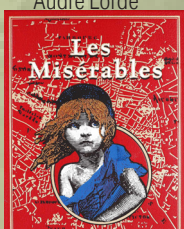
DIONE  
*Two Can Keep a Secret*,  
Karen M. McManus



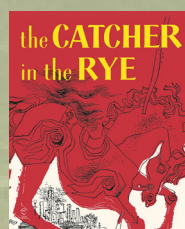
EMILIE  
*Dune*,  
Frank Herbert



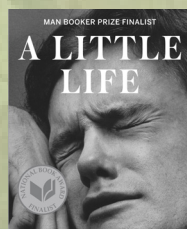
EVA  
*The Handmaid's Tale*,  
Margaret Atwood



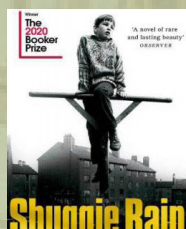
HELENIE  
*Les Misérables*,  
Victor Hugo



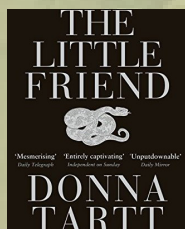
HESTER  
*The Catcher in the Rye*,  
J.D. Salinger



JONATHAN  
*A Little Life*,  
Hanya Yanagihara



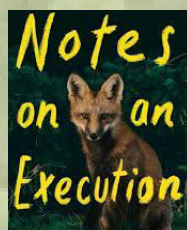
JUDE  
*Shuggie Bain*,  
Douglas Stuart



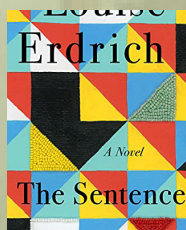
LUCA  
*The Little Friend*,  
Donna Tartt



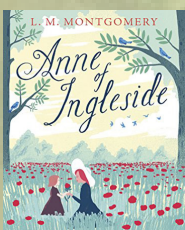
LUKA  
*Dune*,  
Frank Herbert



MARIT  
*Notes on an Execution*,  
Danya Kukafka



MOHANA  
*The Sentence*,  
Louise Erdrich



NINA  
*Anne of Ingleside*,  
L.M. Montgomery



TESSA  
*The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes*,  
Suzanne Collins



YULE  
*The Prince of Milk*,  
Exurb1a



ZOYA  
*Animal Farm*,  
George Orwell



ZUZIA  
*Daisy Jones & the Six*,  
Taylor Jenkins Reid



**PHOENIX**  
Magazine for students of English  
Language and Culture  
at Utrecht University.

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Issue Design by Zuzia Gelauff

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# *How to Stay in that Lavender Haze*

Written and Photographed by Eva Bleeker

Edited by Helenie Demir

Being surrounded by nature can have a relaxing and almost healing effect on a person. Sadly, not all of us have been gifted with green fingers, so this comfort is often of a temporary nature, leaving us filled with guilt every time we see the withered remnants of our formerly flourishing companions. Wouldn't it be wonderful, then, if we were to be able to create eternal flowers? This power has been granted to us by the art of crocheting. Learn here how to create everlasting lavender flowers, which stand for purity, serenity, and devotion.

## Materials:

- Lavender coloured yarn (Check the label to see what size crochet hook is suitable. I recommend using yarn suitable for a hook with a diameter of 3.00 mm)
- Crochet hook
- Textile glue
- Garden sticks
- Scissors

Tip: If you are unfamiliar with the terms slipknot, slipstitch, or chain, you can look up a video tutorial online.



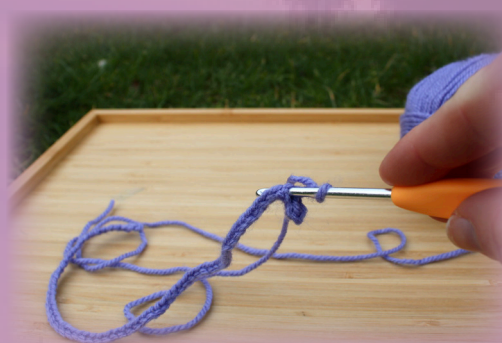
Step 3) Place your hook into the 3<sup>rd</sup> stitch from your hook and do a slip stitch.



Step 4) Make a slip stitch into the next stitch.



Step 5) Chain 3



Step 6) Make a slip stitch into the same stitch you just made your chain of three from.



Step 7) Make a slip stitch into the next stitch.

Step 8) Repeat step 5-7 four more times. You will have 5 petals in total plus the top petal.



Step 1) Make a slipknot and place this upon your hook.



Step 2) Chain between 85 and 100 (depending on the size you want the flower to be).



Step 9) Now chain 4 instead of 3. The rest of steps 5 to 7 remain the same. Do this 5 times to create 5 more petals.



Step 10) Now chain 5 instead of 4 and continue the process, creating 5 more petals like this.



Step 11) Now chain 6 instead of 5, creating 5 more petals. This process results in the petals increasing in size from the top downwards.



Step 12) Now chain 7 instead of 6. This is the final increase you will be doing, so you can continue making petals with a chain of 7 until you reach the very bottom of your initial chain.



Step 13) After crocheting all the petals, cut off the yarn and pull it through the loop on your hook.



Step 14) Take one stick. If yours aren't green, you can wrap green yarn around them to create a more realistic coloured stem. Wrap your flower around it.



Step 15) Put some glue on the top of the stick and place your top petals on this. You can secure it with a clip to ensure it dries correctly.



Step 16) Place the rest of the petals how you want them and glue the bottom of the flower to the stem.



Step 17) Cut off the remaining ends of yarn and your crochet lavender flower is finished!





# Making Merry— In Praise of Hobbits

Written and Photos Edited by Jonāthan van Noppen - Edited by Luka van den Berg

“In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit.” It is with this famous line that author J.R.R. Tolkien opens *The Hobbit*, precursor to the monumental epic fantasy series *The Lord of the Rings* (LOTR). While the latter series was intended for a more mature audience, *The Hobbit* was written expressly for children. This world is filled with all manner of exotic races, from goblins to elves to wizards to dragons. However, the central character—Bilbo Baggins—is in sharp contrast to these creatures. We are introduced to him as an unassuming character, content with life in the Shire. He spends his days smoking his pipe on his porch and entertaining guests with delicious, home-grown food from his pantry. Tolkien’s primary purpose in making hobbits the main characters in both series was to make them relatable to the audience. Imagine for a moment if Aragorn was the main character in LOTR. He might be one of the most competent characters in the series, but his lack of flaws and the larger-than-life aspect would create a distance between him and the reader and make him feel less approachable.

Tolkien was fascinated with early



medieval English history, and many of the elements of the time period worked their way into his depiction of Middle Earth. The Shire—the hobbits’ dwelling place—is loosely based off early Anglo-Saxon counties, where farming and familial values were upheld and people indulged in the simple pleasures of drinking, feasting, and making merry. These characteristics of hobbits carried both a blessing and a curse. Bilbo’s seeming lack of experience in fighting earns him the unflattering assessment from Gloin that “[he] looks more like a grocer than a burglar”. However, near the end of *The Hobbit*, after Bilbo has proved his worth to the company of dwarves, Thorin Oakenshield exclaims:

“There is more in you of good than you know, child of the kindly West. Some courage and

some wisdom, blended in measure. If more of us valued food and cheer and song above hoarded gold, it would be a merrier world.”

Because the hobbits were not driven by ambition or selfish intent, they were primary candidates for bearing the One Ring. This can be clearly evinced in the person of Gollum. Although he had the ring for an extended period (over 500 years!), he was only able to hoard the ring instead of using it to its full potential. Also, although his body and mind were greatly corrupted under the power of the ring, he was still able to resist Sauron to a certain degree by keeping his physical form instead of turning into a Nazgul like the Nine Kings of Middle Earth.

The landscape of Middle Earth is sprawling and varied, filled with epic battles and mysterious intrigue. However, the element that Tolkien focuses much of his energy on in depicting are the common lives of a select group of hobbits caught in the midst of these grand events. In the end, it is not the strength of man nor the plotting of the Council of Elrond that defeats the Dark Lord, but rather two foolhardy and noble hobbits.





## *Beltane*

Written by Aitana Montoro - Edited by Nina van Veen

The Holly King steps down from his throne of thorns and ice as the forest begins to fill with life. The flowers shyly peer from between the leaves of grass, tossing their heads to the sunbeams that warm the woodland at last, and fruits weigh down the wrinkled arms of trees with their ripe heaviness. Snouts raise from the rain-soaked ground and claws tear roots and wilted leaves from the doors of dens. It is time for the wheel to turn, for the everlasting circle to commence again. Again, and again, it is an old tale. The Oak King has arrived after the long-lasting coldness, cupping sunlight and hope in his hands of moss.

Beltane is the Gaelic seasonal festival that celebrates the beginning of the pastoral summer season. A festival of bright bonfires, mischievous faeries, and flower

crowns. A day for the townsfolk to sing like hummingbirds, songs of joy and delight for a summer of plentiful crops. The rites of Beltane were held every summertime to ensure a season of fertility and a good harvest to feed the hungry mouths and famished bodies that the unforgiving winter had left in its wake.

On Beltane, peasants decorated hawthorn trees with shells and candles; they prepared abundant feasts and crafted floral wreaths as offerings to the queen of the faeries, to the Queen of May. The young men and women of the village danced around the maypole, light feet knocking on the doors of the sleepy earth, and intertwined colourful ribbons as their dresses swelled like lilies to the playful beat of clapping hands. Many weddings and ceremonies

of handfasting were held during Beltane because it was a day of prosperity and celebration.

One tradition was to build bonfires, because they represented the dawning of the light half of the year. Fire was a symbol of purification, so the townsfolk walked with herds of cattle between the flickering exhalations of the bonfires. The burning tongues of the fires murmured under the blinking lights of the stars and the roaring flames burned brightly until sunrise.

The rituals of Beltane were also a protection against malicious faeries of the forest. The villagers braided flowers in the tails of the cows to protect their milk and placed black coal under butter churns so that faeries would not steal the butter.

## *Tote Bags and Cottagecore: A Perfect Pairing*

Written by Daniek Garst - Edited by Eva Bleeker

Cottagecore, the aesthetic trend that romanticises rural living and traditional skills, has gained popularity in recent years. Its focus on simple living, sustainability, and the use of natural materials resonated with people, and elements of this aesthetic can now be found on every Pinterest board. Tote bags, with their practicality and versatility, have become a staple accessory in the cottagecore lifestyle.

Tote bags are often made of natural materials like canvas, linen, or cotton which aligns with the use of natural materials promoted in cottagecore. Additionally, tote bags can be used for practical pur-

poses, such as carrying produce from (super)markets, which represents cottagecore's emphasis on traditional skills, like growing and harvesting your own food – real in the case of (farmer's) markets and romanticised in the case of supermarkets. The simplicity of the tote bag also fits well with the cottagecore aesthetic; cottagecore promotes a simpler slower, way of life which the simple design of tote bags represents.

Moreover, tote bags can be decorated by hand with floral or vintage patterns, all of which evoke a sense of nostalgia that is also associated with the cottagecore aesthetic. Also, the soft and pas-

tel colour palette often associated with cottagecore translates well to the decoration of tote bags, giving it the same romantic quality as the aesthetic.

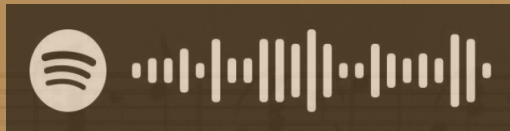
In addition, though alluded to before, tote bags are a sustainable choice which is one of cottagecore's core values. By using a tote bag instead of a single-use plastic bag, waste is reduced significantly while simultaneously promoting the lifestyle to others.

Overall, tote bags and the cottagecore lifestyle go hand-in-hand; they are both promoting sustainability and traditional skills whilst looking charming.



## Emilie's Playlist

Written by Emilie Wiingreen



1. "Soldier, Poet, King" by The Oh Hellos
2. "Two Birds" by Regina Spektor
3. "Home" by Cavetown
4. "Fairy Fountain" by Super Guitar Bros
5. "Crystals" by Of Monsters and Men
6. "Halcyon" by The Paper Kites
7. "Mrs Magic" by Strawberry Guy
8. "Flowers" by In Love With a Ghost, Nori
9. "Landscape With a Fairy" by aspidistrably
10. "Runaway" by AURORA

Do you ever wish you lived a simple life in the countryside, frolicking through the fields, gathering mushrooms from the nearby forest, and harvesting self-grown vegetables from your garden? If any of these slightly apply to you, this playlist is perfect for dreaming yourself away. As a lover of the cottagecore aesthetic, these songs are what make me feel like I am living just that life. From classics like "Soldier, Poet, King" by The Oh Hellos and AURORA's "Runaway" to perhaps lesser-known songs like "Crystals" by Of Monsters and Men and Strawberry Guy's "Mrs Magic," this playlist will certainly get you in the mood to start an at-home garden and wear peasant dresses. What I hoped to do with this playlist was to help people find new artists that truly adhere to the cottagecore aesthetic whilst also including the songs we all know and love. As much as I would have loved to create a playlist of 100 songs, it will stay at 10 for the time being. But, if you are interested, I will most definitely continue adding songs to this playlist in the future so that we can share this magical dream of living in our lovely cottages and gathering our own food.

1. "From Eden" by Hozier
2. "cardigan" by Taylor Swift
3. "Soldier, Poet, King" by The Oh Hellos
4. "Téir Abhaile Riu" by Celtic Woman
5. "Solstice" by TAVIA
6. "Would That I" by Hozier
7. "august" by Taylor Swift
8. "Traveling Song" by Ryn Weaver
9. "For Island Fire and Family" by Dermot Kennedy
10. "Sunflower, Vol. 6" by Harry Styles

## Daniek's Playlist

Written by Daniek Garst



I was very excited to create a 'playlist of my life' in the theme of cottagecore for this issue. Before the compilation of this playlist, I wouldn't have classified myself as part of the cottagecore aesthetic, but more as a light and dark academia type. However, I gladly took on the challenge of re-discovering some of my most beloved songs and finding that they do indeed fit the cottagecore aesthetic. In the back of my mind, I kept thinking, 'What songs would I listen to on repeat if I were baking fresh bread in my deserted cottage in the woods?' And here they are! Of course, the classics such as Hozier and Taylor Swift are present, but hopefully, there are also some new gems for you! This playlist is aimed to create a sense of comfort and serenity with here and there some hints of nostalgia and simplicity. Whether you're looking to unwind after a long day or seeking to romanticise your own life in the cottagecore aesthetic, this playlist is the perfect accompaniment to help you slow down and appreciate life's simple pleasures. So, sit back, relax, and let the soothing melodies transport you to a world of warmth, tranquillity, and charm.



## Cottagecore in Video Games

Written and Illustrated by Emilie Wiingreen

Edited by Aleeza van der Giessen



PICKING  
ORANGES

Have you ever wished to live the cottagecore life of your dreams? Well, look no further! There are many games out there that can provide you the pleasure of living a good life, farming, exploring love affairs, or simply helping your neighbours. One of the first games that comes to mind when mentioning the cottagecore aesthetic is *Animal Crossing*. A simple game where you live a comfortable life farming goods, purchasing furniture for your house, and acquire lovely neighbours that essentially function as cute animal companions. *Animal Crossing* especially saw a rise in popularity as covid flooded the world and the newest game called *New Horizons* got released. However, this is far from the only game on the market that offers an emerging cottagecore experience. No matter what it is that you seek, there will be a game for you. Do you wish to manage your own farm far away from the city and find your true love? Try out *Stardew Valley*. Or do you perhaps wish to live in a fantasy world? Then *Sun Haven* might be for you! Maybe you have already tried everything but never found something you liked? Then I highly recommend checking out the game *Little Witch in the Woods*. The game is yet to be fully developed, but offers the wonderful life as a witch, brewing potions, making friends, and gathering mushrooms.

## Maleficent: The Ultimate Cottagecore Fantasy

Written by Nina van Veen - Edited by Charlie Edelbroek

If there is one movie that gives off major cottagecore vibes, it is definitely the 2014 movie *Maleficent*. These days, Disney produces an ongoing stream of live-action versions of our favourite animated classics. Some of these are destined to fail while others are mere replicas of movies that were made before. *Maleficent*, however, differs quite extensively from the original *Sleeping Beauty*. The movie's main character is not Aurora and even though there is a prince, he's not all that important. Instead, the movie focuses on Maleficent and shows us that perspective can make the difference between villain and hero, even though it is rarely that black and white. In the 2014 version, Aurora lives in a cottage in the woods with three fairies who are supposed to take care of her. Because these three fairies turn out to be slightly incompetent in looking after a baby, Maleficent gradually takes over the task herself and, even, develops a relationship with her, which leads to Aurora seeing Maleficent as her fairy godmother. She gives Aurora access to her home, the Moore, an enchanted place full of fairies, magical creatures and many other fascinating wonders. It is the ultimate cottagecore fantasy. For everyone looking to escape into a world of magic, forests and peace, look no further; *Maleficent* is most certainly the place to be.



# Solivagant /sō'livəgənt/

## Noun

A solitary wanderer

## Adjective

Rambling alone; marked by solitary wandering

## WORD OF THE MONTH

SELECTED BY

HESTER SCHNEIDER

EDITED BY

HELENIE DEMIR

When I think of cottagecore, I think of escaping the big city, with all its rustling noises, and go to the countryside, where I can let myself succumb to deafening silence. Don't get me wrong, I like being around people, but there is just something magical about entering nature on your own and wandering with no specific purpose or destination in mind. How wonderful is it to talk to yourself without any interruptions from another?



## Plantsheff with Marlies Riemens

Interviewed and Written by Anna Preindl

Photographed by Marlies Riemens

Photos Edited by Yule Brückner

Edited by Luka van den Berg

*For this block's Phoenix edition, we have decided to temporarily transform our bookshelf into a plantsheff rubric. In theme, this time we are going to learn all about house plants from our interviewee. We have decided to interview this year's Albion secretary, Marlies, as she happens to have a marvellous plant collection. On a Monday morning, we met up in the shack for our interview and drank some hot cocoa on the company dollar. So, let's hear it!*

**First off, tell us when it was that you got into house plants.**

I think it's been most of my life. I think I started with a weird cactus obsession, but like the baby ones. So, I collected those, and they ended up dying after a few months and then I just got more cacti. Then it slowly developed into house plants, and I don't have cacti anymore. Yeah, it's been a while.



**Where did you gather your knowledge about them?**

Mostly through YouTube, I think. There's a lot of people that that have great content about house plants, how to take care of them. TikTok too? No, I don't really use TikTok. I'm not sure how the plant situation on there is.

**Do you have a secret for a lush home garden?**

Keep track of when you want to water your house plants. Make sure that you have a water metre. Don't water them too much. Just spend time on them and see if they need water. Clean the leaves,

as they get really dusty as well, and if you have cleaned it, it looks 10 times nicer. Chop off the dead leaves, then it looks like you know what you're doing. Oh, and plant food during the summer. Basically, when it gets a bit warmer, so from now until the end of summer.

**Who inspires you in this hobby?**

There is one person on YouTube who does plant videos who I really, really like a lot. She's got beautiful house plants; her name is *Wild Fern*. Amazing plants. I really like them. That's about it. The person that keeps me going most







on the plant thing is probably my best friend because she also has a very big plant obsession. We constantly just kind of trigger each other to get more plants and to take care of them.

**And do you name your house plants?**

I don't know. I don't really name them.

I have, I think, one plant that has a name. It's a pink neon Syngonium and it's called Nia.

**Another important question, how was your learning curve and did you have a green thumb right away?**

As I just said, you know, I killed off a lot of plants. In the beginning it's a lot of trial and error because most plants need to adapt to their environment. The way you need to take care of them sort of depends on the environment that they are in. So, for instance, a plant that will thrive in my home will do horribly in someone else's house with the same exact care. So, it's a little trial and error, seeing what works, what doesn't. Yeah, I killed a lot of house plants, but they're doing OK now.

**What's the best house plant to get as a gift?**

For a beginner, someone who's not into plants, I would say the snake plant (sansevieria). It's hard to kill off, you can leave them without water for months, and they will still be thriving and give you new leaves.

**Do you have a favourite house plant? If yes, why?**

Do I have favourites? I think maybe the Silver Sword Philodendron. It's not living its best life, but I'm working on it. And then I also have a Syngonium mottled mojito that is really pretty. It's a modelled one. I got it recently as a baby and it's thriving. It's doing amazing and I am obsessed with it. **Is it a rare one?** It's not super common, but it's not rare and overly expensive.

**What would you generally avoid with the upkeep?**

I would say don't overwater them. That's basically it, I think.

**Do you have any tips on propagating plants?**

Depends on the plants you're trying to propagate. Every plant has sort of a different way of propagating. Most common plants always have little nodes. Like philodendrons, pothos, monstera; they all have spots on the stems which form the aerial roots, and you can chop them off just below there and put them in perlite, and later put them in water. Somehow the perlite makes the roots grow faster and easier, so that always works for me. What I also heard is great to use is sphagnum moss, but it is a bit difficult to get around here. But I heard it works really well. Basically, you just have to keep it moist.

**Which one is your least favourite or most difficult?**

I think it's my new calathea. Yeah, so pretty. It's a beautiful plant, but it hates me so much. I am fighting for its life every day. It's taking a lot of energy and it's not happy.

**Which one would you recommend as a beginner plant?**

My recommendation, especially for beginners and the issue of overwatering, is philodendron. They do not really make a fuss. Also, make sure you got your podcast radio tools. But you know, philodendron are in my experience really easy to take care of. Recommend!

**If you were a house plant, which one would you be?**

That is a very difficult question. I don't know? My mind is saying Philodendron Florida Ghost, but I cannot give you a reason why. It is a very beautiful houseplant and I really like the leaves. It's a vibe.

**How do you feel about this edition's theme, cottagecore?**

I love cottagecore. You know, if I had a choice, I would just be like a hermit in a cottage somewhere in the middle of a forest by a lake. To bake all day and take care of my plants. I paint and stuff. This is the ultimate life goal for me.







I don't want to toot my own horn too quickly, but the crowds will let it be known: this cake is absolutely incredible, and nothing short of worth the time you'll spend in the kitchen to make it. Now, just to be honest between you and me: I genuinely suck at measurements. Measure with the heart, people! My general rule of thumb, however, is that – no matter what – a cake should not be dry. Hence, you simply **MUST** make sure that you don't let the cake dry out in the oven (the cake should be set, but it is fine if a toothpick doesn't come out fully clean upon testing), and you should never be shy of butter in a cake. Any cake recipe telling you to use vegetable oil means you should run and never look back! Having established this, here is what you will need and do.

## Ingredients

### For the Cake

- 280 grams butter, softened
- 250 grams fine sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 5 eggs, at room temperature
- 250 grams self-raising flour (more if the mix seems too wet)
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- A bit of salt
- Zest of one lemon
- 2 teaspoons of cardamon (powder)
- Tea leaves from 1 Earl Grey tea bag, crushed until it is a fine powder
- 150 ml milk
- 2 shots of rose water (yes, just grab your nearest shot glass)

### For the Earl Grey Syrup

- 240 ml water
- 4 Earl Grey tea bags
- 200 grams fine sugar
- 2 teaspoons of vanilla
- About a shot of rose water

### For the Frosting

(measurements depending on whether or not your cake is layered)

- 500 grams of mascarpone (which is about two tubs)
- 200 grams simple cream cheese
- Powdered sugar to taste
- Some lemon zest

## Directions

Preheat the oven to 160°C. Line the base of your desired tin(s) and rub a little bit of butter along the sides to keep the cake from sticking. Using an electric mixer (or hand whisk, if you are in need of a workout), whip the butter and sugar together for 3 minutes until light and fluffy. Add the vanilla, some lemon zest, rose water, and then the eggs one at a time, whisking until combined. Add a pinch of salt. Then remove from the mixer and sift in the self raising flour and baking powder. Fold these in with the Earl Grey tea leaves and cardamon, using the milk to keep the batter moist. Or, alternatively, if the batter seems too runny, add a bit more flour. The batter should be about the thickness of Greek yogurt, more or less.

Now, put your water on the stove. When it starts to bubble slightly, lower the heat and add your sugar (mix well to dissolve) and throw in your teabags. Leave to simmer. When the syrup is nice and dark, like a cup of tea that you forgot the bag in for too long, add the rose water and vanilla. Set aside to cool.

Once this has cooled a bit, add a few tablespoons to your batter (careful, though, you don't want the heat of it to cook your eggs!). Again, measure with the heart, and if you're brave: give it a cheeky taste. You should be able to taste the rose water and earl grey well, so if this is too subdued, add some more of the syrup or rose water depending.



Pop the batter into your desired cake tin(s) and smooth over the top using an angled spatula or a dough scraper. Place in the oven gently. Victoria sponges are known for being a tad temperamental, so best to not open the door while it is baking. Bake for 25-30 minutes. Be mindful, though: this is dependent on the thickness of your cake. If you have kept the batter for one tin, bake it a little longer, say 30 to 40 minutes. If you have divided it, keep an eye on it and perhaps check the status at the 25-minute mark. Once the time is up, take a quick peek and use a toothpick or a thin knife to see if the inside of the cake is cooked. As I said, the toothpick doesn't have to come out clean (preferably not completely, or the cake will be a bit dry), but there shouldn't be much batter sticking to it. If the latter is the case, pop the cake in for another 5 to 10 minutes or so. Let the cake cool down completely.

As this cools down, mix together your frosting. These measurements genuinely depend on your tastes and preferences. I'd suggest you do not make the frosting too sweet, as to balance out the sweetness of the cake.

Once the cake is cool, take your trusty toothpick and poke a few holes on the top of the cake. With a spoon, carefully drizzle your earl grey syrup over the top, so that the cake can soak it up. Don't overdo it, though, you don't want to drown your cake and leave it soggy. Once done, assemble the cake with the frosting, and decorate it however you please. For the extra people amongst us: might I suggest rose petals and shaved almonds?

Tip: Leftover earl grey syrup can be used in your next cocktail experiment, or can be added to a London fog latte.

## Enjoy!

Written by Mohana Zwaga - Illustrated by Zuzia Gelauff - Edited by Helenie Demir

## *The Sound of Music*

Written by  
Anna Preindl  
Edited by  
Nina van Veen

Until a year ago I had never heard of *The Sound of Music*—which sounds insane, considering that I grew up on very similar hills that are very much also alive with the sound of music. I was introduced to this filmographic gem by my roommate Camille and our friend Lia, who were going to visit Salzburg last summer and asked me all about it—until I realised that everyone seems to know this very important piece of film that, for some reason, is very gatekept in the German-speaking media that I have grown up with. I like to call it Austria's dirty little secret because it seems to be not nearly as broadcast here as it is every-

where else in the world. Indeed, all the references to Nazi influences were cut out of the German version, as well as Julie Andrews' escape to Switzerland. Thus, the German version of the movie has a happy ending. Regardless of that, it did not do as well as it did in the US. Still, this movie keeps enforcing positive stereotypes about Austria and the Austrians. Are they to be believed? I would deny this, yet all I can say is that there is no harm in enjoying this cult classic and singing along to all of it. And it does continue to be a great marketing tool for the city of Salzburg, which also has to count for something.



## *Girl, Serpent, Thorn: Cottagecore Subverted?*

Written by Hester Schneider  
Edited by Aleeza van der Giessen

Imagine a life in the countryside without any interruptions... Imagine a life where you can fill in your entire day without obligations... Imagine a life where you have a personal garden to tend to... You could read all day long while the vivid colours of the blossoming roses surround you. Sounds pretty perfect, right? This is exactly the life that Soraya—protagonist of the fantasy novel *Girl, Serpent, Thorn*—has been blessed to live. Or is it? What if I told you that all these elements of a seemingly wonderful life were the exact conditions that made Soraya's life nearly unbearable?

Indeed, *Girl Serpent, Thorn* follows the story of Soraya who is poisonous to the touch (much like her roses). She has therefore been condemned to live a solitary life in her family's palace with merely her garden for company. She lives the life that many cottagecore admirers dream to live. It would be the perfect place to escape the inescapable, the daily grind, and reconnect with your past.

Yet, all that Soraya has ever desired is to be among the people. She has a fervent desire for human touch and yearns to live a normal life. She, much unlike us, desires the exact opposite of what cottagecore entails. Even her own family seems to shun her. Then, one day, a handsome

young soldier, Azad, brings her what could be the first spark of hope she has ever dared to hold. Parvaneh, a female div, has been found and she might be the only thing that can teach Soraya ways to escape her curse. However, divs are what this world deems to be monsters. Could Soraya's pursuit for Parvaneh create an even bigger divide between her and her family?

*Girl, Serpent, Thorn* is a story not only about (queer) love, but about growth (kind of ironic when you think about the poisonous rose garden). It is about learning from past mistakes in more ways than one, discovering one's strengths and weaknesses, and finding your place in the world. This retelling of *Sleeping Beauty* (containing elements from *Tangled* and *Rappaccini's Daughter*) with Persian cultural influences seems to get to the heart of desire. Even though the story might seem to be cottagecore subverted, it does get to the crux of choosing what you want from life. Soraya really blossoms as she learns more and more about who she is and what her place in the world is. In the end, cottagecore is merely a term for that desire. In essence they are the same. It is about daring to hope, daring to imagine (and perhaps even execute) a life opposite to your own. Whether that is escaping from the busy city dynamics to the quiet and peaceful countryside, or a move from the calm, secluded life to be among the people; it is all escapism in the end.

The novels of Jane Austen have been around for quite some time; her first novel, *Sense and Sensibility*, was published more than 200 years ago. Cottagecore, on the other hand, finds its origin in the 2010s and has thus not been around for a very long time, especially when compared to Austen's novels. Despite this gap in time, the cottagecore aesthetic is most definitely present throughout the various stories Austen has written. In *Sense and Sensibility*, for example, the sisters Elinor and Marianne move to Devonshire, where they live in Barton Cottage. Even though their new life is more modest and simple than they were used to, the Dashwood family finds a warm welcome in the neighbourhood and consequently finds happiness in their humble cottage.

Similarly, the heroine of *Pride and Prejudice*, Elizabeth Bennet, loves taking long walks and spending time in nature. Even though women of her class and status in this period rarely walked and preferred to go by carriage or horseback, Elizabeth clearly prefers to go on foot and take in the fresh air. She doesn't mind the exercise or the mud on her clothes. The cottagecore aesthetic can also clearly be seen in the 2005 movie adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*. Keira Knightley's beautiful outfits, a proposal in a gazebo looking over a lake while it's pouring, a second proposal in a field just as the sun is rising, a trip to explore the beautiful nature of England, and many other aspects of the film that give the viewer a calm and peaceful feeling and emphasise the beauty of nature and life in the countryside. Most of Austen's novels are set in the countryside and advertise the beauty

## *Cottagecore in Jane Austen*

Written by Nina van Veen  
Illustrated by Emilie Wiingreen - Edited by Eva Bleeker

of such a life. In Austen's time, London was an important social site in society where many people spent at least a part of their time. Austen's heroines, however, rarely seem to go there. Jane Bennet, Elizabeth's older sister in *Pride and Prejudice*, spends some time in the capital to recover from the disappointment of lost love, but the only account that the reader receives of her time there is through her letters to Elizabeth, and even those are not very elaborate. Thus, Jane Austen shows her readers that life in the countryside can be beautiful and fulfilling, and that love and happiness can be found there. So, even though her novels existed long before cottagecore did, lovers of the aesthetic are very likely to fall in love with Jane Austen. Anyone looking for inspiration will be sure to find it in Austen's novels and the various adaptations that have been made throughout the years.





# *The Rural Renaissance: Tracing the Connection between Pastoral Poetry and the Cottagecore Aesthetic*

Written by Daniek Garst - Edited by Marit Vogels

The rise of the cottagecore aesthetic in recent years has brought renewed attention to the pastoral themes and imagery that have long been a part of the literary tradition. Cottagecore is a trend that celebrates a return to a simpler way of life, often featuring elements such as quaint cottages, gardens, rural landscapes and domestic labour. In many ways, cottagecore can be seen as a modern manifestation of the pastoral tradition in literature.

Pastoral poetry has a long and rich history, dating back to ancient Greece and Rome, where poets such as Theocritus and Virgil wrote about rural life and the beauty of the natural world. In England, pastoral poetry became particularly popular in the 16th and 17th centuries. Some famous examples of pastoral poetry include "Lycidas" by John Milton and "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love" by Christopher Marlowe.

One of the key features of pastoral poetry is its celebration of rural life and the simplicity of nature. Similarly, cottagecore aesthetics often feature images of idyllic rural landscapes, cosy cottages, and vintage-inspired clothing and decor. Both pastoral poetry and cottagecore embrace the idea of living close to nature and finding beauty in the simple things in life.

Another important aspect of pastoral poetry is its use of pastoral characters, such as shepherds and farmers. These characters often represent a simple way of life and a connection to nature that is lost in more urban settings. Similarly, cottagecore aesthetics often feature images of people living simple lives in the countryside, tending to their gardens, and enjoying the company of animals.

At the same time, it's important to note that the connection between pastoral poetry and cottagecore is not a one-on-one correspondence. While both celebrate the beauty of the natural world, there are also some important differences

between them. For example, pastoral poetry is a literary genre that often employs complex language and poetic forms while cottagecore is a visual aesthetic that relies more on visual imagery and symbolism. Additionally, themes of love, sex, and seduction feature heavily in pastoral poetry, but these themes are absent from the cottagecore aesthetic.

Despite these differences, the relationship between pastoral poetry and the cottagecore aesthetic is undeniable. Furthermore, both pastoral poetry and cottagecore can be seen as responses to social and political unrest. In the case of pastoral poetry, it emerged during a time of political turmoil where Britain's ancient regime was slowly removed from its position of power and replaced by the bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie in turn displaced the people of the country from their homes with the Acts of Enclosure. The pastoral form as a reaction idealised a vision of country life in which humans lived in harmony with nature, a way of life that, with the rise of capitalism, seemed to disappear. Similarly, cottagecore has emerged during a time of increasing societal and environmental stress, again idealising nature to offer a sense of comfort and escape from anxieties of modern life.

However, these idealised manifestations are not the real picture and it's important to remember that. While both pastoral poetry and the cottagecore aesthetic provide a refuge from social and political realities, they are not attainable realities; both nature and the domestic sphere are messy, maintaining it is hard work and sometimes they're dangerous spaces. Nonetheless, a harmonious, simple existence within nature is a fantasy that's desired, as it has been for hundreds of years in some form or another. And it's enjoyable, so don't be alarmed and keep romanticising your life, but be aware of its limits and don't forget to appreciate your life as is.



# Tea Time with Sajed Chowdhury

Interviewed, Written and Photographed by Mohana Zwaga - Edited by Marit Vogels

*In this issue's Tea Time, we invited Utrecht University's new addition to the English Literature Department: Assistant Professor of Early Modern Literature, Sajed Chowdhury. I met up with Sajed in the wonderful springtime sun in front of the Academy building. We wandered around a bit, chatting and taking photos, and finally settled in for the interview. We talked for hours about his time in academia, his interest in early modern poetry, Virginia Woolf, and the art of perseverance.*

## **What did you study, and what was your background for that?**

I completed my undergraduate degree at the University of St Andrews in Scotland. The atmosphere at St Andrews was very traditional: your readers would probably label it as #darkacademia. I then completed my PhD at the University of Sussex. I was drawn to Sussex because of the wide variety of scholars working there on gender and sexuality studies and cultural theory of the body. Prior to my doctoral study, I worked as a Theatre Administrator at the Barbican Centre in London (where I was part of a small team that produced an international dance, opera and theatre programme). I also worked as a Script Developer for various new writing theatre companies in London, including the Soho Theatre and Writers' Centre and Paines Plough. After this, I decided to apply for funding with the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) to pursue my MA and PhD, which I then got. The AHRC is the British equivalent of the NWO. When I got this funding it was like winning the lottery, so I took it and studied for a couple of years.

## **When did you become interested in early modern women's writing in particular?**

This interest started when I was in secondary school. I went to quite a conservative, single-sex school. We studied a lot of men's writing, including many canonical authors from the early modern period: John Donne, Shakespeare, Marlowe, Milton... Big names. When I was reading *Paradise Lost*, I thought: 'This can't be the only seventeenth-century representation of Eve! Milton must have had female contemporaries – what did they write?' So, I went to my local library and picked out *The Penguin Book of Homosexual Verse*

(edited by Stephen Coote, printed in 1983). That's when I first came across Katherine Philips, a seventeenth-century woman poet, who writes in a similar fashion to Donne but does something completely different by focusing on female friendship. I realized then that Philips could not have been the only woman to write during the early modern period.

## **I feel like that's quite special, a young boy seeking that out by himself!**

I suppose, but I was an avid reader at that point. I thought I would study English, as the school system at that time didn't really provide us with many options (other than going to university to study traditional academic subjects). I would love to have been a physiotherapist, but I didn't know what that was at 16, and if you said that to your teacher, they would have responded with: 'just be a medical doctor!' So, I suppose if I weren't an academic, I'd probably be a physiotherapist!

## **Can you talk a bit about your current research project on women and alchemy?**

I did my PhD on early modern female poets' conception of the 'metaphysical'. We think of metaphysical poetry as pertaining to John Donne, George Herbert, and Andrew Marvell, predominantly focusing on the soul and the body, scientific imagery, and the use of tightly controlled poetic forms. I was interested in how women poets (such as Katherine Philips) deployed metaphysical ideas and concepts in their verse. I found that a lot of the time early modern women writers were alluding to alchemy – the craft of chemical transformation. When I researched this further, I discovered that many women were using alchemical and chemical techniques in the running

of their households, and that's when I realized this could really be a book!

## **Much of your work focuses on women's poetry. Do you consider poetry and the poetic form to be a possible means for women writers in early modern Britain to seek freedom of some kind?**

We shouldn't generalize: one early modern woman's experiences might be vastly different from another's. So, I was thinking about foregrounding two contrasting examples to answer this question. Let's begin with Hester Pulter, a seventeenth-century woman poet (and contemporary of Andrew Marvell), who lived in Hertfordshire. Her poetry remained in manuscript and was never printed during her lifetime. Pulter mentions in her verse that she is 'shut up in a Countrey Grange'. But in her poetry, she voyages into the cosmos. So, there is this sense of freedom in her poetry: her speaker can transcend earthly boundaries and has out-of-body experiences; on several occasions, she aspires to make contact with the transcendental divine realm.







The second example that I thought of when considering your question was Mary Wroth, who wrote a series of sonnets during the early seventeenth century. We could say sonnets themselves are very restricted in their form, and Wroth writes about being caught in a labyrinth. Wroth composed love poetry about her cousin and lover, William Herbert, who was unfaithful to her. In her sonnets she describes feeling trapped by her desire and this sense of entrapment is articulated via her use of the sonnet form. By expressing this desire, however, there's a sense of agency, because women at that time were meant to be chaste, silent and obedient—not love poets. Yet Wroth writes repeatedly about her erotic feelings. What we find in Wroth's sonnets is a paradoxical interplay between entrapment and liberation.

### **What is it that continuously draws you to poetry?**

Partly it's strategic: it's much easier to re-draft an essay on lyric poetry than it would be on a long prose work. But the other reason, I think, is that poetry reminds us of the importance of close reading: we have to think very carefully about why poets choose specific forms and words

to articulate their sentiments. Poetry also solicits slow reading: this is why I try to encourage my students to engage with it—many undergraduate students prefer the quick reading of fast-paced novels—poetry forces us to slow down.

### **What would be your advice to young, aspiring academics?**

If you're interested in doing a PhD, it's going to be a slog, especially with the continual redrafting. I think it is important to really love your topic because you're going to be spending a lot of time with it! In terms of funding applications, ask yourself two key questions: why is your work important and why does it matter? Prior to joining Utrecht, I had a Marie Curie fellowship at Leiden University where I completed the first draft of my monograph, *Women Writers and Alchemy in Early Modern Britain*. When I applied for the Marie Curie grant, I had to think carefully about how I could make alchemy accessible to a panel that would not necessarily know about women's writing or early modern science. Perseverance is also crucial! If I hadn't received funding for my monograph, I would still have drafted it—but it would have taken much longer. So, if you are committed to your research—don't give up!

### **What literary work do you believe everyone should read in their lifetime?**

If I had to choose only one work then it would be *Orlando* by Virginia Woolf. The central character, Orlando, moves through four centuries (starting in the sixteenth and ending in the early twentieth). He/she changes sex in the eighteenth century. Woolf subtly and wittily alters her style of writing for each of these different time periods to capture what she calls the 'spirit of the age'. We thus get a snapshot of four centuries of literary history in one short novel. It is a trans novel in a way, one of

the first in English. It's also a love letter to Woolf's friend, Vita Sackville-West. When Woolf started to compose *Orlando*, she wrote that she wanted to 'kick up' her heels 'and be off'; you really get that sense of enjoyment when you read the novel.

### **What about researching keeps you going?**

A lot of my research is archival: analysing handwritten works from the past that have not been printed. What keeps me going in the archive is the thrill of discovery. You don't know what you're going to find! When I was working as a European Research Council Postdoctoral Researcher for 'RECIRC: The Reception and Circulation of Early Modern Women's Writing, 1550-1700', my colleagues and I were repeatedly coming across anonymous, and hitherto unknown, seventeenth-century 'literary ladies' in the archives: handwritten works that are signed or ascribed to an unnamed 'gentlewoman'. When transcribing and reading these works, we would ask ourselves the questions: who are these anonymous ladies? Are they imagined women writers or actual female authors? What are their stories? How do their works change our understanding of the early modern literary landscape? The intellectual questioning that archival discovery prompts is a real motivator!

*We talked some more about literary research, getting funding, and the perils of working in academia, gushed over Virginia Woolf, laughed about her criticism of James Joyce and the academic Woolf versus Joyce divide, and discussed Sylvia Plath's poetry and (literary) aesthetics. Finally, we wrapped up the interview and said our goodbyes in the late afternoon sun that thankfully had emerged. Sajed, thank you again for the chat, and your wonderful contribution to this issue!*



# The Significance of Flowers: Symbolizing Stories through Flora

Written by Helenie Demir - Edited by Marit Vogels

"There's rosemary, that's for remembrance. Pray you, love, remember. And there is pansies, that's for thoughts..." These lines are spoken by Ophelia in *Hamlet*. This particular scene in the play has been thoroughly analyzed because of the flowers Ophelia hands out to the people of the court after her father's murder. She has flowers for memory, regret and dishonesty, but she doesn't have any for faithfulness. Each flower she hands out is like an insult to those who didn't do anything to prevent her father's death.

Ophelia is just one of the many instances in literature where flowers play an important role in storytelling. The red rose, for example, makes multiple appearances in stories like *Beauty and the Beast*, *Alice in Wonderland*, and *Romeo & Juliet*, symbolizing romance and passion, among other things. Quite often the underlying connotation of flowers stems back from mythology or religion. Sticking with the red rose, the goddess Aphrodite once had a lover, Adonis, who died during a hunting trip. From his blood that soaked the fields sprung the very first red rose, marking the flower as a symbol of love, transcending even death.

Consider F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. Nick Carraway, Daisy, and Myrtle are all named after flowers. Caraways are delicate, white flowers that are all scrambled together, symbolizing faithfulness, like Nick's unwavering loyalty towards Gatsby. The white petals of a daisy are pure and virtuous, but once you reach the yellow core, you'll find carelessness and van-

ity. Myrtles are one of Aphrodite's main representative features and they stand for hope, love, and prosperity... slightly ironic if you ask me, but who am I to question both Fitzgerald and Aphrodite?

A more modern example of flower symbolism would be *The Hunger Games*. Katniss is named after the plant because its leaves are shaped like an arrowhead. It is also edible and the first food that Katniss learned to find in the woods to support her family. Her father told her, "as long as you find yourself, you'll never starve," adding a whole new layer to her character and name. As for Primrose, she represents youth and optimism. Seeing as how she developed from a defenseless child to a hopeful and unwavering medic, the name suits her. Primroses also have medicinal purposes and were considered as sacred in Celtic Druidry practices, holding cleansing and purifying properties. I think that tells you Suzanne Collins knew what she was doing.

It is almost impossible to look at a flower and not think of it as meaning anything. The hidden meanings are often in the names, as can be seen in the examples mentioned. Every single flower has a symbolic meaning with its origins being in various places, such as mythology or religion. For any aspiring writer out there, do your research. Babynames.com is all fun and games, but a name truly fits a character when it is symbolic of something. The best stories are those with multiple layers and endless new discoveries. Flowers are a simple, yet effective tool to achieve exactly that.

## Zodiac Signs as Flowers

Written by Anna Preindl

Edited by Helenie Demir

**Aries - Poppy**

**Taurus - Hibiscus**

**Gemini - Marigold**

**Cancer - Forget-me-not**

**Leo - Chrysanthemum**

**Virgo - Daisy**

**Libra - Geranium**

**Scorpio - Iris**

**Sagittarius - Daffodil**

**Capricorn - Milk Thistle**

**Aquarius - Hyacinth**

**Pisces - Aster**



FENUGREEK



BILBERT



LORNOX



FENUGREEK



ARISTOLOCHIE



ALCANTARA



# Re-imagining Childlike Wonder in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

Written by Helenie Demir  
Edited by Aleeza van der Giessen

Long before Twilight used the “it was all a dream” trope, Lewis Carroll did it not once, but twice. According to him, the loss of the inner child is one of the greatest grievances an adult can experience. *Alice in Wonderland* is labeled as a children’s story, but for Carroll, it was important to write a book that would speak to both children and adults alike. The sheer ridiculousness of Wonderland is filled with funny altercations like a hookah-smoking caterpillar, but also packed with valuable lessons: do not make rash decisions, never be rude, and appease the Red Queen who wants to see your head dangling off a guillotine.

Aside from the strange and unique set of characters, the aesthetics of the world itself have been the source of inspiration for many other stories, paintings, and more. A cottage in the woods, a rabbit running wild, talking flowers, tea parties in the forest—Wonderland is a land simply filled with wonder. There is a reason why multiple adaptations and retellings of this story exist. My guess is because it offers an attempt at limitless imagination. The story is as crazy as crazy can get, but that’s the wonder of it. The book has been a world to escape to for all ages for generations, and, like a dream, it is the true embodiment of escapism.

## Explore the world of Wonderland in these adaptations and retellings:

Original Disney version (1951)

Tim Burton (2010/2016)

*The Chronicles of Alice*  
by Christina Henry

Once Upon a Time in  
Wonderland (2013)

*Queen of Hearts Saga*  
by Colleen Oakes

*Alice in Borderland* (2020)

*Heartless* by Marissa Meyer

## The Garden Apothecary

Written by Yule Brückner  
Edited by Hester Schneider

We have all heard of black tea, green tea, or even the more exotic rooibos tea, but did you know you can make medicinal teas from inconspicuous plants that you can grow in your own garden? Many of the plants we consider “weeds” actually have astounding healing properties. The roots of a Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*) can be cleaned, roasted, and then steeped to make a healthy substitute for coffee. The Stinging Nettle (*Urtica dioica*) might be a nuisance if it happens to touch your skin, but if consumed as a tea, it helps with lowering your blood sugar and blood pressure. Common herbs and flowering plants also have their benefits. Tea made from Peppermint (*Mentha × piperita*) can help with indigestion by drinking and inhaling the steam while steeping the leaves can help free the respiratory system in case of mild infection. A plant we are all very familiar with when talking about healthy flower teas is Chamomile (*Matricaria chamomilla*). Tea made from this plant can help with anxiety and restlessness, sore throat, as well as digestive issues and nausea. Thanks to its anti-inflammatory qualities, a teabag filled with dried chamomile flowers—wetted in warm water and then put on the skin—can be used as a compress to remedy any mild issues of the skin or mucous membranes, such as rashes, acne, or eye infections. Lastly, one plant that comes with a whole list of health benefits is English Lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*). The tea made from dried lavender blossoms reduces stress, improves quality of sleep, and soothes headaches and migraines, which makes it the perfect tea for students. It also strengthens the immune system and can even help alleviate period pain!

Sadly, the herbal teas you find in supermarkets have little left of their original benefits, which is why buying “loose herbal teas” at your local, specialised vendor is the way to go. And if the taste is too bitter for you, sweeten it with honey. Keep in mind, however, to add the honey when the tea has cooled down to drinking temperature, or else the healthy amino acids and vitamins in the honey are destroyed in the boiling hot water.



## *Cottagecore in Utrecht's City Centre*

Written by Charlie Edelbroek  
Photographed by Yule Brückner  
Edited by Helenie Demir

Sadly, not everyone who yearns for the Cottagecore life is actually able to live in a cottage somewhere far away from reality, which is why some seek this vibe in the city life. To make it easier for anyone interested, I explored the city centre on a sunny not-quite summer's day and compiled a list of places that gave me cottagecore vibes.

### ***Dille & Kamille***

*Oudegracht 190-192*

I feel like this is one of the more obvious places to go to if you're trying to find the cottagecore aesthetic in a city centre like Utrecht. It has all different sorts of loose tea leaves, pots, cutlery, tableware, flowers, plants, and often also children's toys made of wood or bamboo, like drawing pencils. The vibes of the store are comfortable, calming, and homely.



### ***Soep-er***

*Vismarkt 16*

Not to bring back soup (if you know, you know), but I ran into this place on my way home from work one day and was immediately greeted with flowers outside. Upon some further research, I saw that they also have coffee and a bakery and that they value radiating a rural France atmosphere. If that's not the most cottagecore thing I have heard then I don't know what is.

### ***Botania - the Brunch Club***

*Stadhuisbrug 5*

This cafe is situated in the same building as a store that has familiar vibes to Dille & Kamille, as it has flowers, plants, bamboo products as well as clothes. The cafe itself is surrounded by plants, as the name somewhat suggests. The wooden table tops and the green ceiling and walls really add to the feeling of the outside being brought inside.



### ***Tijm***

*Donkere Gaard 3, Pieter Nieuwlandstraat 5*

To be completely honest, I have never once visited this place, but I can't wait to change that because it looks so cute and I always regret not having the time to stop by when I see it. Not only do both of their locations look stunning with plants, wooden bars, and brick walls, but they also have a very diverse menu with options that look delicious.



## Keek

Twijnstraat 23, Springweg 16, Oudegracht 362

Just like the other locations on this list, Keek has very cosy vibes, with plants and their homemade bread displayed. Another big perk of Keek is that it doesn't allow people to sit behind their laptops all day, so it is the perfect place to escape to when the city life gets too much.



## The Yoghurt Barn

Vinkenburgstraat 15, Stationshal 9e

This one may sound very niche, but apart from various frozen yoghurt options, you can also order coffees, chais, smoothies, a single cup of tea, or even an entire pot. It takes the 'barn' vibes seriously as it is filled with wood and plants which add a lot to the cosiness of the place.

My last tip to you is to romanticise your life for the ultimate cottagecore vibe. Have lunch in a park on a nice sunny day or go on a walk and admire all of the trees and flowers that are blossoming around you. Or something like that, I'm not an expert. However, I do think that romanticising life is what cottagecore is heavily based on, so have fun living your absolute best lives.

## stay away

i don't dare to say hello  
afraid of the moment that you go  
the moment that you leave again

you're great to be around  
something made me feel so safe and sound  
can't have that ripped away again

easier to phase you out  
you are better not to think about  
can't get over losing you again

i won't start a conversation you see  
cause i'm not risking you stop talking to me

Written by Sarah O.

Flowers are blooming,  
Peace is all around  
It's in the air and in the garden,  
Woven in the ground.  
This life is very simple  
But here I am unbound  
So if you ever need me,  
You know where I'll be found.

Written by Nina van Veen



# Phoenix Ranks Guide to: Village Mysteries

Written by Zuzia Gelauff - Edited by Luka van den Berg



If you manage to catch the BBC during its Countryfile hour, rural England seems like a wonderful getaway. Full of historic sites, quaint villages, historic pubs with garden tables, mountain ranges, forests and farms... it is a part of Britain where time seems to have stopped in its tracks, far away from the chaotic hustle and bustle of the modern corporate world. Very fitting of this issue's theme, isn't it? Yet, if you flip the channel, or just wait long enough, television will show you a whole different side of English rural life – one filled with cold-blooded murder. After all, crime follows us everywhere, not just in the big city, and perhaps it is this juxtaposition between comfortable settings and heinous acts that call on storytellers as well as viewers. Either way, the genre has spurred in its popularity, so here's a short watcher's guide rundown of what to watch.

## **Midsomer Murders (1997–)**

This show has become a staple in British households. Having aired for over two decades, it would be easier to ask, "what has *not* happened in the county of Midsomer?" Detective Tom Barnaby (succeeded by his cousin John Barnaby) and his line-up of sergeants have pretty much seen it all, as, apparently, the quiet country life is not so quiet after all. No matter what village the job takes them to, there always seems to be some kind of county fair, party, banquet, contest, convention or event happening in the area; and with it, betrayal, conspiracy, corruption, adultery and, of course, murder. The episodes can get a bit long, but never dull, as the nearly 2-hour productions could fill up a whole season of any soap opera.

## **Agatha Christie's Miss Marple (2004–2013)**

Agatha Christie has held the Whodunnit Queen title for decades, so it should not come as a surprise that the most accurate depictions of her characters make an appearance here. While Poirot has lost his place on this list by technicality (having done more detective work in the urban areas), Miss Marple is still representing her author strongly. The 'elderly spinster', as Marple has been described, is a little know-it-all lady living in a large cottage that solves murders through the wonderful tactic of gossip and hearsay, connecting the dots through her incredible intelligence. She could catch a killer without ever leaving her comfortable armchair, probably even before her tea would go cold, and honestly, isn't that the life we all strive for?

## **Father Brown (2013–)**

Set in post-war rural England, in the fictional village of Kembleford, *Father Brown* follows its titular character as he barges his way - usually by accident - into murder investigations, accompanied by his group of faithful friends and parish members. Taking place in the 50s, you get to enjoy the vintage aesthetic as well as the simple village life, combined with just enough dramatics to make each episode distinct and charming in its own way... and we cannot forget the signature afternoon tea and scones.

## **Shakespeare and Hathaway: Private Investigators (2018–)**

No, unfortunately, this show is not about the Bard's mystery-solving side hustle. It follows Frank Hathaway, an ex-detective inspector, and Luella Shakespeare, a hairdresser, who team up to start a private detective agency. Set in the town of Stratford-upon-Avon, famously the birth- and burial place of a certain famous playwright, the show really takes advantage of its tourist locations as well as its theatrical history. The characters are always surrounded by thespian quirks, Elizabethan architecture, blooming flowers and, well... mysterious deaths.

## **Rosemary and Thyme (2003–2007)**

Laura Thyme, an ex-police officer, and Rosemary Boxer, a former professor of horticulture, team up after personal and professional heartbreaks to start a new life as gardeners for hire. A dream, some might think. If only it wasn't for the fact that they have a knack for taking on jobs where someone catches a terrible fate. But, apparently, being knees deep in the soil also gives one the perfect opportunity to keep an eye out on your sketchy employers. The two always manage to catch the killers in the end through the power of 'being nosy', as well as their botanical knowledge that often comes in clutch. I always found it quite strange that no investigator ever connected the dots that these two gardeners always seem to be followed around by death, but maybe that's just me.



## Honourable Mentions:

- Agatha Raisin
- Sister Boniface Mysteries
- Grantchester
- Agatha Christie's Poirot
- Death in Paradise (and spin-off Beyond Paradise)
- Miss Fisher's Murder Mysteries

## Extra: The Usual Suspects

*If you ever watch something and squint for ten minutes at someone's face, thinking, "how do I know this person" and spent the rest of the movie or episode trying to figure it out, you'll have a field day with these shows, as each distinct episode will have at least one (if not more) of these actors. The more you watch, the more it will become a pattern. It's all one big whodunnit-multiverse, really. Or you can play another I-Spy game, especially with the older series on this list, by spotting some A-listers cameos. Bonus points for those who made an appearance before their current fame status. Because, believe me, pretty much every actor is guilty of this.*

*How have you come this far in life without even knowing what type of cottage you are!? No need to worry anymore, though, because Phoenix has the solution for you! Ask a friend to read these questions out to you and find out what cottage you are today!*

## Quiz: What Cottage Are You?

Written by Yule Brückner - Edited by Anna Preindl

1. What does your ideal Sunday look like (if not reading this lovely magazine)?
  - a. Planting flowers and picking fruit trees (8 points)
  - b. Strolling through the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam (6 points)
  - c. Sipping mimosas and dining out at Hemel & Aarde in Utrecht (10 points)
  - d. Staying in bed all day (who even gets out of bed on a Sunday?! (4 points)
  - e. Taking a stroll through the countryside (2 points)
  - f. Checking the fridge for leftovers (0 points)
2. What's your favourite tea?
  - a. Is beer a type of tea? (10 points)
  - b. Herbal teas (8 points)
  - c. Green tea (2 points)
  - d. Honey-Lemon tea (6 points)
  - e. I can only survive on coffee (0 points)
  - f. Milk tea (4 points)
3. What's your favourite genre to read?
  - a. Syntax trees (-5 points)
  - b. Old English Literature (2 points)
  - c. Bildungsromane (6 points)
  - d. Encyclopedias (8 points)
  - e. Non-fiction (10 points)
  - f. Don't care, as long as it includes pretty pictures (4 points)
4. What's your spirit animal?
  - a. Rat (2 points)
  - b. Dog (8 points)
  - c. Cat (9 points)
  - d. Arab (the horse breed) (15 points)
  - e. Highland Cow (4 points)
  - f. Wolf in sheep's clothing (-1 point)
5. What is your preferred mode of transportation?
  - a. By foot because I still need to reach my daily 10k steps (1 point)
  - b. Public Transport (0 points)
  - c. Electric car (10 points)
  - d. Bicycle (4 points)
  - e. Horse-drawn carriage (2 points)
  - f. 1966 VW Bulli T1 Samba (7 points)
6. What's your next holiday destination?
  - a. Holiday? In this economy?! (0 points)
  - b. Bora Bora (10 points)
  - c. The Provence (1 point)
  - d. The Irish countryside (5 points)
  - e. Warwickshire (7 points)
  - f. The Botanical Garden in Utrecht (2 points)
7. Where do you see yourself in 30 years?
  - a. Living on a farm (4 points)
  - b. Stay-at-home parent (2 points)
  - c. Editor at a major publishing firm (6 points)
  - d. Successful writer capturing the hearts of the people (8 points)
  - e. Single with a bunch of cats (10 points)
  - f. Trophy spouse to a millionaire (69 points)

The sum of all your points will tell you what type of cottage you are. Check the results out on p. 30-31!



Birds sing a familiar melody, one of a distant memory that is blown into existence by a soft breeze but taken away just as soon. Only a brooding warmth in her chest is left, enhanced by the rays of sunlight gently stroking her face and eyelids, her vision turning shades of sunflowers and daffodils.

The soft grass welcomes her toes when she steps out the glass door of her bedroom. Outside, a late spring morning. Tiny blue flowers sway back and forth in a synchronized dance, singing when they skim, and touch each other. Forget-me-nots—her favorites. Honeybees guide her to a red and white checkered blanket as if smelling the sweet buns and warm tea that await her there.

‘Good morning,’ a warm voice greets her. The gentleman who makes her breakfast every day is sitting cross-legged on the blanket, a small blue flower in his hand. The wrinkles in his face emphasize his loving smile, eyes almost completely closed, crowned with silver brows the same color as his curls that refuse to disappear. A beautiful man her neighbor is, as much on the outside as in his being. He gently presses the flower in her hand and closes her old fingers around it. A forget-me-not—her favorite.

They eat together, then set out on a journey through the bright green forest with his dog, a big old Dane that seems to like her

better than his owner. They reach a wintery landscape, a path covered in fallen petals of blossom trees, making it seem like Christmas if not for the warm afternoon air. A memory, a foggy memory. Then an orchestra of soft *drip, drip, dripping* builds, swiftly turning to the clattering of drums. They link arms and laugh. ‘We’re too old to be running,’ she says.

They find shelter in her cottage, she wraps a blanket around him, standing close, smelling his perfume. Jasmine, lily—a memory. The pouring rain turns into a distant melody as he takes her in his arms on the sofa. ‘You’re beautiful.’ His words ignite her heart. He tells her a story about a woman who was his wife. She only wonders why such a lucky woman is never around anymore. It was a happy marriage, is all he reveals. They used to dance in the pouring rain, which he misses most. ‘Let us do exactly that,’ she proposes. A tear leaves his clear blue eye, the color of forget-me-nots—her favorites.

With soaked clothes but beaming smiles, they step inside after a long while. In a small vase on her kitchen table, he puts a blue flower. A forget-me-not—her favorite. He takes her hand and tells her to water the flower every day. ‘Forget me not.’ Her husband gives her a kiss. She merely smiles and thinks to herself ‘What a beautiful man my neighbor is.’

## Fig Jam

Written by Anna Maria Popo - Edited by Eva Bleeker

It is a late summer afternoon,  
In my grandma’s kitchen.  
She sits and sings,  
Her songs – sad and weeping, for what is lost,  
What is lost and vanished.  
Her songs ring in my ears,  
Words blurred, locked, gone – vanished in thin air – the end  
of my childhood.  
Words vivid, strong, and pure – breathing wild flair – the beginning  
of my adulthood.  
The smell of the fig jam overtakes my memories,  
The steam makes my eyes water –  
But the breeze behind me reminds me of our late summers.  
  
She taught me how to make fig jam

So one day “you could do it yourself”- she said.  
I did not want to think about it then.  
Her voice was softer when she wasn’t singing –  
“Cut the figs in half, add...and add...and add”  
“When will it be ready?” – I would ask.  
Her hands are mixing the pot full of purple,  
And the steam got hotter,  
And the smell got stronger,  
And her songs got softer  
And her smile smaller,  
“Patience.”

She wipes her hands on her yellow apron,  
And she sits me down to eat.  
She cuts the loaf of homemade bread she made yesterday,



# *The Courting of Periwinkle*

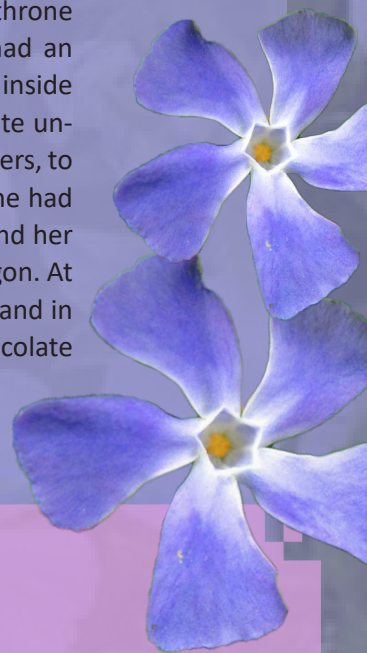
Written by Aitana Montoro - Edited by Charlie Edelbroek

Princess Periwinkle was going to commit a felony if another suitor appraised the graceful arch of her golden eyebrows. Sitting in the throne room, she listened absent-mindedly to the dreamy sighs of admiration that flew around the palace like headless carrier pigeons, and to the ardently passionate love confessions of the gallant men that desired to earn her affection. The princess was nodding lightly to all their praises, but her smile had more of squirming worm than crescent moon. What a dreadfully dull evening! She could have been in the royal gardens, picking flowers and playing the lyre; or in the drawing room of the oriental wing, gossiping with her chambermaids about the scandalous romances of the court and sipping warm tea by candlelight. The princess thought it useless to hear their flowery and over-affected compliments. Indeed her beauty was as unique as a needle in a haystack! It was obvious that her hair was shinier than the sad tawny locks of princess Rosemary from the greenwood's kingdom!

One suitor had the bulging eyes of a swamp-smelling toad, and another was as bald as a stone without moss. A prayer for the lost hair, Periwinkle thought. A penniless musician had sung a ballad of star-crossed lovers with a voice like a dying cat, and a poet had promised her to write a thousand sonnets about the blooming roses of her cheeks. Kings and dukes had brought jewels, brooch-

es of diamonds, and girdles ornamented with gemstones. A horrible little viscount had gifted her a gown stitched with golden threads, as if bees had sewn sunlight and honey into the fabric. The dress was charming, but the sight of the viscount's ugly face was enough to cloud the garment's radiant shine. Farmers and artisans offered her baskets of braided reeds, tapestries embroidered with colourful ribbons, and chickens that put eggs with two yolks. Oh, my! Two yolks! She had put a hand in her bosom for fear of fainting since hers was a delicate constitution for such majestic creatures. A peasant with a face full of pimples, like dots in a ladybug's coat, brought a cow into the palace, and with it, the pestilent smell of compost and sludge. The cow seemed tired of his bullshit, and Periwinkle sympathised deeply when it mooed in discontent. Even the jester had tried to woo her by juggling oranges and telling bad jokes.

A thunder of trumpets sounded every time one of the suitors entered the throne room, and the princess felt like she had an angry gnome pounding and thumping inside her head. Periwinkle wished to suffocate under the pile of treasures from her admirers, to be buried by rubies and love letters. She had been receiving suitors since daylight, and her stomach grumbled like a fearsome dragon. At this point, she was willing to give her hand in marriage to whoever brought her a chocolate cake or an apple pie.



It might be too hard today to eat –  
And the fig jam on top of it.  
My mouth waters, my feet too excited to stay still  
Before she hands me my bread, she kisses me on the cheek,  
“Patience.”

But that was then –

Today, the air is warm.  
It is blowing from the window to my left.  
Today, the figs are ripe, and ready,  
Cut them in half,  
Add sugar  
And water  
And lemon juice,

“Patience.”

I am looking at the clock  
And stirring the hot pot.  
I take a small spoon and try it for the first time,  
But it is not how I remembered it in my mind.  
Today, I call my grandma to ask her what I did wrong –  
She laughs so loud through the video call,  
Her laugh loud but warm –  
“Patience.”  
I can feel her kiss on my cheek,  
Warm and soft,  
“patience” – I tell her back,  
And now I am back to her front door –  
And I wait for a jar of homemade fig jam,  
Our nostalgic homemade lore.



Rocky (8)



mixed breed

The pound where we got them, said they were a male, which we thought was the case for the 6 months (which was why we named them "Rocky"). However, after some time when we finally got around to noticing that their defining feature hasn't appeared, we realised that we had a little lady instead.

Jonathan

Dean (9)



Dean can predict the rain.

Shih Tzus

Sammy listens to 1 command ... cuddles!

Sammy (9)

Zuzia

Banjer (13)

Dog



Banjer loves Apples

Danik

Lena (ancient)

cat



In her old age, she will pretend she's deaf simply when she isn't having any of it.

She loves to be carried around, digging her nails into her victim's shoulder while purring.

Mohana

Aleza

Biko (11)

Great Dane



Biko sings along to music (howls) when there's a harmonica in the song.

Marit

Maan (3)

cat



When she wants bellyrubs, she'll just grab your arm

Gizmo (14)

evil black cat



Whenever she sits in boxes, she is convinced we can't see her.

Zoya

Oscar (11)

Labrador



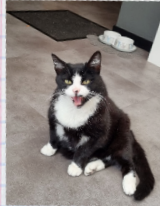
Oscar will eat everything but is allergic to everything

Eva

Marit

Figaro (17)

cat



He is quite a big & grumpy boy

Ninja (4)

cat



Truly lives up to his name

Marit

Izzie (5)

Cockerspaniel



She will howl when I video call, or if she hears my voice on recording (even when I'm in the room)

Her way of cuddling is pressing her nose against your nose with force

Mohana

Eva

Mojo (12)

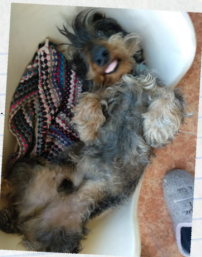
Tiger Chihuahua



Mojo's inner battery runs on sunshine

Willy (10)

Dachshund



Faithfully devoted to the arts. Lives for the drama & could join the circus as an acrobat if he desired. However, has aspirations to become a vacuum cleaner. The family is greatly supportive of his dream.

Aitana

Danik

Lux (5)

cat



Lux loves cheese spread



Sterre (3)

cat

She loves sucking on her blankie before a nap

Marit

Yoki (16)

Dog

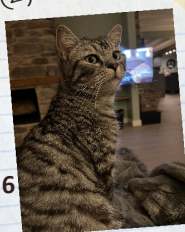


Yoki is a picky eater

Luca

Mauw Mauw (2)

cat



Mauw loves yogurt

26

Danik

Phoebe (16)

a.k.a. Kotek  
a.k.a. Gothie

Persian cat



She will join your Teams meeting ... invited or not

Zuzia



## *Asbion Abroad*

Written and Photographed by Gernine Koek

Edited by Hester Schneider



I, Gernine, went on my exchange with a lot of nervous and excited energy. For me, I would not only be exploring a different country, I would also, for the first time, be living on my own. When I eventually arrived in Tallinn, Estonia and started settling in, I quickly realised how amazing this exchange is. It's mostly a whirlwind of experiences for me! After just a month, I went on the ESN (Erasmus Student Network) trip to Lapland, and travelled to Santa's village, Tromsø, had a husky-sled ride, and saw northern lights! During normal weeks I join other ESN events or I go to a new museum (or bar) with my friends, and I travel within Estonia on the weekends with them. Now, we have the intermediate exams and I'll be going to Riga and Vilnius with some friends after that!

In Tallinn, courses last for the whole semester and have less study credits (6 or less). There are two exam periods, at the end of March and beginning of June. I am doing 5 courses right now, which is considered to be a normal amount. It's also different to Utrecht in terms of contact hours in the week; I have them either once (1,5h) or twice (3h) a week. One course, Middle Eastern Societies, even gives me assignments to make so we can meet only once every two weeks. Of course I'm also studying Estonian language, which I can truly say is one of the hardest languages ever; every word has 14 cases, of which we always need to know 3. Great for the study load with a test every week. The workload changes with every course, but overall, it's about the same as in Utrecht.



But enough about studying. Tallinn has a beautiful Old Town which I can't stop photographing every time the sun hits a church or one of the colourful houses. We're seeing more and more sun now, and it hasn't snowed in about 2 weeks, which is a new record since I've been here. The city looked absolutely beautiful in the snow, but to finally feel some sun on my face and not having to wear my thermal pants is also great. We were all advised in our first week to buy vitamin D pills for at least the first two months, as all Estonians take those. I do feel like that has helped in terms of depression. It also helps to get out of the apartment and go somewhere with friends or invite them over to

study together and watch Shrek.

My homesickness comes in waves. For me, it feels good to not try to distract myself, but to let myself feel it for a bit. Acknowledge it, and then go to a trampoline/climbing park with your friends and sing karaoke afterwards. So, if you are reading this and are still hesitating to go on an exchange, please do! It's the craziest thing I've ever done, and I'm getting so much out of it. If I can do it, you certainly can too.





## *The Magical World of Folklore and Evermore*

Written by Anna Maria Popo

Edited by Luka van den Berg

Let's take a quick trip to the past, and go back to the summer of 2020. Even though the sun was shining and the warmth covered our faces, it was one of the most isolating summers that we will probably remember for quite a while. It was then that Taylor Swift announced her surprise album – *Folklore* – less than a year after her last successful album *Lover*. While we all had to cancel our summer, Taylor Swift found herself working on a new project – her eighth album. As she explained, "In isolation, my imagination has run wild, and this album is the result, a collection of songs and stories that flowed like a stream of consciousness. Picking up a pen was my way of escaping into fantasy, history, and memory." And thus, one of the most emotional, heart-breaking, and beautiful albums was created.

"I'm on some new shit" is the opening line of her new album. Indeed, this album feels like a reinvention of herself while going back to her roots, and she effortlessly grabs our attention and dedication. *Folklore* is a story; a poetically written story of her career and the way she navigates her life, told through new characters that she created. Taylor Swift offered her fans a new world, a flowing experience of emotions that she crafted so beautifully in a simplistic way; her piano, her guitar, and her own writing – an escape from reality. *Folklore* is a timeless journey that we can return to when we feel lost.

But Taylor Swift did not stop there. Only a few months after *Folklore*, she released her ninth album: *Evermore*. It's the sequel to her story in *Folklore*, or the "sister record" as she calls it. The indie-folk album continues the narrative of the story, with new characters and stories to tell. Without the pressure of time, touring, and the press, Taylor Swift took her time and created a fairy tale, a world of lyricism, while again being influenced by her country roots and implementing indie and folk narratives. Through *Evermore*, Taylor Swift expresses the feelings of being frozen in time, unable to move, which reflected the way we all felt; isolated in our rooms, but sometimes in life as well.

After three years since the release of the two sister albums, we have left some of the most unexpected experiences behind us, but Taylor Swift's stories remain as beautiful as ever. And after those three years, we might have the chance to listen to those albums peacefully, and just be lost in the folk world she created for us. As I am writing this article, I am listening to *Folklore* and just embracing this magical world, and so should you.

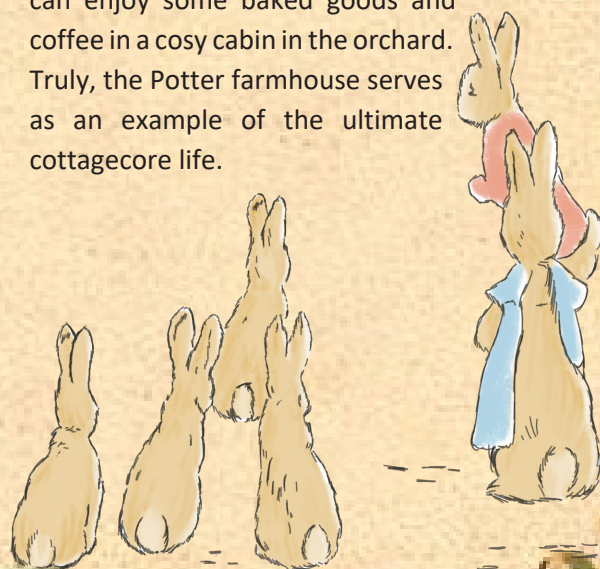
## *Beatrix Potter and the Tale of Peter Rabbit*

Written by Hester Schneider

Illustrated by Zuzia Gelauff

Edited by Nina van Veen

There is one children's novella that is the epitome of nostalgia for me, and that is *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*. I have such joyful memories of being read the story, and looking at the wonderfully delicate watercolour paintings of Peter and his siblings. The images have always seemed idyllic, and to me, they perfectly embody the cottagecore life. When I started thinking about it, I realised I have much more vivid memories of the garden that Peter races through to escape Mr. McGregor than would actually be possible. That is when I remembered something, and I asked my mom to confirm it. As a child, we visited Beatrix Potter's farmhouse retreat, which was the inspiration for many of her books. That was one of the most magical visits of my childhood, since it felt like Beatrix Potter's tales came to life. It is located in Lake District, England, so if you are ever close, I encourage you to visit. The outer walls of the house are filled with vines, hollyhocks, and other flowers. The inside of Hill Top house is filled with some of Beatrix Potter's belongings and most precious things. While you walk through the garden (which was restored to how it was in her time) you see the tales come to life, and afterwards you can enjoy some baked goods and coffee in a cosy cabin in the orchard. Truly, the Potter farmhouse serves as an example of the ultimate cottagecore life.





## *Nature Brought Her Solace, Comfort, and Friendship* Written by Eva Bleeker - Edited by Charlie Edelbroek

When all in life seems bleak and sorrowful, nature can appear to be our only source of true bliss and beauty. Anne Shirley, the protagonist of *Anne of Green Gables*, can be seen as the embodiment of escapism in nature, for no one romanticises the world's natural beauties as imaginatively as she does.

Anne was an orphan and experienced many horrors in the orphanage as well as while working in large families. She was bullied and abused, but never lost her exceptional imagination. Nature was her sole source of solace. When Anne was waiting for her new adoptive parent at the train station, she imagined sleeping in the wild cherry tree "all white with bloom and moonshine" if he wouldn't show. By imagining her refuge in nature,

she deferred great disappointment. If her promised new family were to be a lie, at least she could still rely on nature to protect her from the harsh world.

The romanticisation of the world around her through the personification of nature is Anne's coping mechanism for the loneliness she experiences when, again, society rejects her. She creates her own company in the "Snow Queen," the cherry tree outside her window, and the "Lake of Shining Waters." She sees plants as individuals and treats them as such, insisting even the geraniums need names to not hurt their feelings. Her imagination has made her incredibly resilient and can teach us all that "it's not what the world holds for you, it's what you bring to it."

## *Little Women: The Cottagecore Life Blueprint*

Written by Charlie Edelbroek - Edited by Anna Preindl

While I sincerely hope most of you are already, at least somewhat, familiar with Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*, I will give a short summary for those who aren't (which is somewhat disappointing). Go read or watch it, both the novel and the 2019 adaptation are highly recommended. *Little Women* tells the story of four sisters: Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy; their parents (though mostly their mum), Marmee; and Hannah, their servant. A majority of the novel feels very domestic, as the sisters learn to bake, do their chores around the house, squabble, get ready for social gatherings, act, help their neighbours, complain and be grateful. They're not necessarily a very wealthy family which results in a cosy and comfortable home life. This, together with the chores (and the visuals the film provides), creates a very cottagecore-esque vibe. So, if you're ever feeling up for a feel good (mostly at least) film with cottagecore vibes, *Little Women* (2019) is the way to go!

This was also the thought of the Academic Committee past 16 March, when they held a film night with snacks, drinks, a lively discussion and laughter (and maybe some tears). While watching the film, most of us were largely focused on Laurie's silly dramatics and Beth, but when the credits ended and everyone had recovered, we moved on to a few very thought-provoking questions. One of them was on the importance of an adaptation's fidelity to the book, what we value in an

adaptation, and if there is a way for the film to redeem itself. During this, we came to the conclusion that most deem it important for the film to portray the big scenes correctly and for the characters to be written and cast accurately according to the novel. We realised that for a bad adaptation to be redeemed, it would need to be a cinematographic masterpiece on its own. While I'd say that Greta Gerwig's 2019 adaptation is absolutely a cinematographic masterpiece, it is also definitely a good adaptation in terms of staying true to the essence of the novel. It is not entirely the same as the novel, as instead of telling the story in chronological order, it uses a lot of time jumps between the first volume of *Little Women*, when the sisters are young, and the second, *Good Wives*, when they're each living their own lives. This highlights the parallels between the two volumes and the developments each character has gone through.

Other discussion topics dived into our satisfaction with where the characters ended up and whether the roles within *Little Women* are still relevant or outdated in today's society. I think the last question is best answered by yourselves and thus I'll wrap this up. However, if you feel like you missed out on an amazing film night with a great discussion, you're absolutely correct and should keep your eyes open for any potential film nights next year, though it probably won't be as aesthetically beautiful as *Little Women*.



# *Cottagecore Fantasy Meets Actual Rural Life*

Written by Anna Preindl  
Edited by Hester Schneider

As we all know by now, the cottagecore aesthetic builds on the romanticisation of rural life, which is only realistic to sustain itself in a limited frame. Of course, you want to imagine yourself in a scenario where you bake fresh bread on a crisp Wednesday midday surrounded by your domestic animals while the sun shines through the clean kitchen window onto the quaint little grass-green counter space.

Having grown up on an actual tiny farm in the middle of the Italian Alps, I can tell you that it's not all home-churned butter and freshly baked sourdough to be living this life. If you are chasing after an aesthetic, be wary that in real life this type of chosen living is not really sustainable, mostly at least. Or, like everything in life, it does not only come with bliss. There surely is nothing wrong with dreaming though, of course! If diving into fantasy is what you wish to do, be my guest. In reality, living on a farm and sustaining oneself this way is hard work.

To better describe the scale of the farm that I grew up on, I want you to imagine a quaint little farmhouse and living house a few metres apart at the margins of a 3600 people town up on 1248 metres above sea level. This little town is called Toblach, but because of the complicated history of my little province, it also has an Italianised name: Dobbiaco. Anyways, at the margins of the town, 'on the sunny side', there is my

dad's farm. We have about 20-25 cows at most, bunnies and cats. In the past, we had pigs and chickens too, until one night a disrespectful fox massacred all but one of our domesticated birds. We have a flower garden, veggie patch, cabbage and potato patch and even grow our own wheat as well as lots of berry bushes. Pretty impressive, huh? It's my mum's entire pride and joy, and rightfully so. In the late summer, we go mushroom picking in the forest. You can also pick wild cranberries and blueberries which my mom loves doing, bless her heart, and conserve them by making jam or syrup. I think my favourite thing from the entire farm is the elderflower trees which have become huge over the span of my growing up. But of course, living on a farm isn't all that fun. It's a lot of hard work, being dependent on the weather and the land. If we wanted to, we could pretty much sustain ourselves with the land completely but we do not do that entirely. Realistically, most farms around where I live do offer part of their homes as holiday apartments, and many have other jobs on the side next to all the farm work.

What I am trying to say is, when you are living this life, you wouldn't think of romanticising it. It's all you know, and I understand city folk's romanticisation of it but, really, it takes a lot more than that fantasy to truly sustain a life like this.

## *Quiz*

**<10 points**

### **Cottage Cheese**

You are pretty basic. That doesn't necessarily have to be a bad thing, though! It also means you fit well with a variety of different things; granola, fruit, jams... You are also cherished by health food devotees and workout gurus, but that's pretty much it.

**20-29 points**

### **Cottage House**

You are the quintessential, quaint, quiet little cottage. You make everyone feel at home and are a friend to everybody.

**40-49 points**

### **Cottage Garden**

Who doesn't love to spend their summer days just lying on the grass in a garden filled with vegetables and herbs, fruit trees, perhaps a beehive, and countless flowers that fill every space? That is what you are; a safe haven for everyone to relax and recuperate in this hectic world.



# Results

## Escapism

Written by Zoya E. Tashi - Edited by Marit Vogels

### 10-19 points

#### Cottage Pie

The Shepherd's Pie sibling, you are savoury, juicy, and have been around for a looong time.

### 30-39 points

#### Cottages (Van Gogh series)

You are the series of paintings by Dutch painter Vincent van Gogh. People only know of you through association with your socialite friends. You live a simple life, which makes you think you are insignificant. But in reality, you are beautiful and important just the way you are.

### 50+ points

#### The University Cottage Club

Also known as the Cottage Club, this mansion is one of eleven private, elitist social houses associated with Princeton University in New Jersey, United States. As such, you are by far the most entitled individual to walk through the revolving doors of Drift 27. Blessed with the favour of the gods, you breeze through your student life seemingly in First Class. The only reason you applied for ELC is to pass the time until you publish your "bestseller" and become the next Stephenie Meyer...

For a couple of weeks in the Summer of 2018, my parents and I visited some friends I refer to as Uncle Toby and Auntie Joe. To me, these people were (and still are) amongst the best people I've ever known.

At one point in the previous year, they decided to give up everything they had: their apartment, jobs, and long-time friends. With a few crates of essentials and the savings they had, they journeyed over the Atlantic Ocean from Birmingham, England, to Michigan, USA.

The area they ended up in was a small town called Beulah. Dotted around were compact wooden and stone houses with seemingly never-ending plots of land. If I stood really still in these fieldy areas, I'd occasionally see delicate deer grazing and small hawks perched atop tall trees surveilling the area. The best was during the night when we would go outside and see clouds of fireflies.

Uncle Toby and Auntie Joe settled pretty quickly in the area as if it was meant for them. With the connections they made and a huge truck Toby bought, they gathered wood, bricks, and a few other things to start building their own house. I remember them FaceTiming us back in England and showing the progression of the build; from a wooden skeleton to a home with a warm hearth and a little area that Auntie Joe made with shoe brushes attached to the floor where one would brush off the grass and dirt from the workday before coming in. It was one of the loveliest houses I had ever been to, and being fifteen

at the time, it really contrasted with the things I already knew about home life. Just thinking that the pair had worked together to build their own house on a plot of empty land was very profound to me.

While we were there, I learnt a lot of habits and skills that I thought were reserved only for Scouts. Uncle Toby showed me how to take care of a coop of chickens, how to make kindling, and preparing for winter.

One day I remember with much fondness was all of us outside in almost 30°C sun, making a supply of logs to be kept on the porch of the house. It was a simple enough job, with Toby and my dad chopping the large logs into smaller pieces and my mum and I passing along the pieces of wood to Joe, who neatly arranged them in a tight stack. If you've ever thought about a gym membership while living in the countryside, think again!

In front of the porch was a greenhouse shaped like a large dome where Toby and Joe grew all sorts of things, mainly vegetables. My favourites amongst their patch included their home-grown tomatoes and spaghetti squash. I will never forget how I could just taste the earth in every bite, just as warm and hearty as the wood fire they stoked in the corner.

Although my parents and myself were disheartened at their moving away, I realise now just how much slowing down and appreciating nature really means. Escaping from a modern world for those two weeks was the best thing I ever did, and I hope to return to it soon.





## Phoenix's Favourite Flowers

Illustration by Zuzia Gelauff