The Rise of the Celtic Cyber-Diaspora: The Influence of the "New Age" on Internet Pagan Communities and the Dissemination of "Celtic" Music

Norelle McCoy

_The Irish diaspora provides an enormous consumer base for the selling of "Irishness" and nostalgia. However, the appropriation of the word "Celtic" as a marketing tool has expanded this target audience significantly, which has coincided with a renewed interest in "Celtic" mysticism and spirituality. The "New Age" movement is at the forefront of the Celtic renaissance. The plethora of Celtic websites advertising such wide-ranging topics as Druidism, Bardic paths, Celtic Wiccan ritual and Celtic reconstructionism bear testament to a renewed interest in Paganism and nature-based spirituality. The path to Celtic Pagan spirituality appears to centre on several core beliefs, some of which include cultivation of a creative spirit, reverence for the earth and a belief in early Celtic cosmology. The dissemination of Celtic mysticism via New Age websites invites anyone who shares these core beliefs to identify as Celtic, and more particularly as Celtic Pagans. This chapter will examine the various types of Celtic musics promoted on a variety of Celtic Pagan websites under the banner of Celtic popular music, and explore the way in which "Celtic" has become the vehicle for expressions of Paganism in late modern consumer societies._

THE CELTIC/IRISH CONFUSION

The Irish diaspora was exacerbated by the Irish famine that started in 1845. This generated a "sustained and continuous emigration" that saw the exodus of 2.5 million people between 1845 and 1855, a migration that profoundly altered the social and cultural structure of Ireland (Luddy & McLaughlin 2002: 567). Mary Robinson, the former president of Ireland, stated in her address to the Houses of the Oireachtas that the Polish-Irish Society in Cracow and the Mashonaland Irish Society in Zimbabwe bear testament to the notion that "Irishness" is not simply territorial. For impoverished emigrants leaving their homeland, their language, traditional music and dance were often the only cultural inheritance they could take with them.

There are over seventy million people who make up the Irish diaspora (Kenny 2003: 135), scattered as far afield as the Americas, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand (Bielenberg
Their influence cannot be underestimated, so it is hardly surprising that these people would provide a ready market for the packaging and selling of Irish products in their many forms. This may explain the plethora of websites catering to all Irish needs, which include a wide range of products such as shamrocks, Aran Island vests, heraldry, traditional Irish musical instruments, books of children's names, song books, international festivals, holy water from the Shrine of Knock and wake items for mourning the dead. The interchangeable use of the terms "Irish" and "Celtic" on many of these websites may have compounded the confusion about the meaning of "Celtic": so much so that the Irish Companion to Traditional Music suggests that the term "Celtic music" is "increasingly used in Britain and the US to denote 'Irish'" (Vallely 1999: 64). This confusion may have been exacerbated further by the British Broadcasting Company's 1986 popular television programme The Celts, a six-part documentary that showcased the music of the then-emerging Irish artist Enya. As well as composing the score for the series, she was featured at the start of each episode, and in two episodes that included her video clips. She subsequently released an album of the same name, perhaps cementing in the general public's perception the interchangeability of the words "Irish" and "Celtic":

Hale and Payton suggest that the term "Celtic": as applied to the people and languages of Cornwall, Ireland, Wales, Brittany, the Isle of Man and Scotland, "is in many ways a construction dating from the early modern period and the development of certain academic disciplines" (Hale & Payton 2000: 8). In his book The Last of the Celts, Marcus Tanner states that Celtic revivals that have occurred over "many centuries have had little direct connection to the lands or the people they claim as their inspiration" (Tanner 2004: 8). He further opines that the notion of the Celt has been fashioned by others to "act as a counterweight to what they perceived as deficiencies in their own societies; as symbols and representations of otherness, their factual existence has become increasingly unnecessary" (ibid.). In The Celts:
The Construction of a Myth, Malcolm Chapman presents the idea that the Celts, as a recognizable people, are a fantasy. He suggests that modern day "Celts" are only united in their opposition and resistance to the establishment - whether government or mainstream religion (Chapman 1992: 228). The notion of what defines a "Celt" is robustly contested in academic circles and, although there have been a number of definitions, often based on "language or material culture, none seems to provide an adequate description of the variety of 'Celtic' phenomena that are flourishing" (Hale & Payton 2000: 1). Amy Hale and Shannon Thornton examine this conundrum in relation to the Celtic Music and Arts Festival in San Francisco, which is described as a "pan-Celtic event but where 'Irish' served as the ethnic umbrella" (Hale & Thornton 2000: 100). They acknowledge that there was representation by other communities but that the Irish music component was by far the strongest - although this may be due to the fact that the organizer was the Irish Arts Foundation (ibid.: 99). The other mitigating factor could be the significant numbers of people who migrated to America during the diaspora, and who still claim Irish heritage - which could explain the proliferation of Irish arts and music organizations and the dominance of Irish music at supposedly "Celtic" events. In her article on religion and the internet, Monica Emerich states that the "great majority of the sites speak to Irish traditions and culture with little mention of the other Celtic territories of Brittany, Cornwall, the Isle of Man, Scotland, and Wales" (Emerich 2003: 23).

Since the advent of Riverdance, a pastiche of step dancing, traditional instruments and Irish mythology, which burst on to the world stage as a seven-minute interval "filler" at the 1994 Eurovision Song Contest, the public imagination appears to have been captivated by a craze for Celtic/Irish "cul-
tured" and an imagined "Celtic" past. While it may appear that Riverdance was an overnight success, it was actually part of the "Irish cultural renaissance" that saw the cultural landscape transformed as international acts toured the world, the film industry flourished, Ireland achieved unprecedented sporting success and the Celtic Tiger roared (Keohane et al. 2006). The descendants of the diaspora eagerly embraced this attractively packaged and nostalgic commodity, but the success of Riverdance is far more wide-reaching and complex, as it is "invested with the desires and filled out with the fantasies of the consumer/spectator/audience in a mutually fascinated gaze that constitutes the scene of the performance" (ibid.). The public thirst for the "authentic" in an increasingly globalized world may go some way towards explaining the desire for many to connect with a simpler time, divorced from the technologically advanced present. Joep Leersen points out that Celtic culture is on the periphery, and therefore has been imbued with a "mystical otherworldliness, exiled from the mainstream of historical progress" (Leersen 1996: 8). Following this train of thought, he opines that, as Ireland is the most peripheral of the Celtic lands, it is no surprise that it is often focused on as the place where there are the most traceable vestiges of culture and tradition. However, he points out that:

the common-place permeates Irish-related discourse: from the often and enthusiastically repeated truism that Ireland remained outside the sphere of conquest of the Roman Empire ... until the pulp fiction and New Age elucubrations of the present times.

(Ibid.: 9)

Norman Davies, in his attempt to define this growing fascination with the "Celtic" legacy, suggests that "Celticity":

combines a romantic attachment to a perceived Celtic heritage with a fascination for mysticism and animist spirituality that are taken to form its essential adjunct.
It is linked to reinvigorated nationalist movements, to the ecological movement, which shares a similar empathy for the spirits of nature, and also to the rise of "New Age" neo-paganism. (Davies 1999: 91)

Marcus Tanner also comments on the romanticism linked with the search for Celtic identity, stating that

revivals tended mainly to reinforce an image of Celtic societies as peripheral. They are quaint, rural, fairy-like, not quite real and something that the inhabitants of the "real" world can escape to when they feel like it, for rest and recreation. (Tanner 2004: 22)

The idea of a pastoral world populated by Noble Savages is examined by George Watson, who asserts that the Celt is unable to change because "change is a non-Celtic quality" and further observes that "tourist boards tell him that he must not change" (G. Watson 1996: 220). This concept of an ongoing connection to an idealized, pastoral idyll is described as "diasporic ethno-nostalgia" or "Celtitude" by Michael Dietler, who asserts that it is "bounded by genealogical connections (or at least purported ones) to a dis-tant homeland of the imagination" (Dietler 2006: 240).

This desire for a lost Celtic Eden and escape from the "ongoing and accel-erating process of globalisation" (Keohane et al. 2006) may explain the pro-liferation of websites that offer a cyber place for those who wish to identify as Celtic, despite a lack of genealogy. These websites invite anyone who shares certain core beliefs to claim Celtic ties.

SPIRITUAL CYBERSPACE

Michael Dietler defines the notion of a "global spiritual connection to the idea of the Celtic identity" as "Celticity": and points out that this move-ment - unlike previous nationalist and
regionalist Celtic movements - is "largely decoupled from essentializing notions of race, "blood": genealogy, or even language" (Dietler 2006: 239). He refers to the flourishing Neo-Druid movement, which has a very different idea of the traditional notion of what it is to be "Celtic" and the members of which identify as part of the neo-Pagan or New Age movements (ibid.: 240). Though "variously characterized and notoriously difficult to define" (Bowman 2000: 72), the "New Age" movement has been an important factor in the Celtic revival. Adam Possamai argues that the term "New Age" should be redefined to more accurately reflect the beliefs and practices of individuals (Possamai 2005); however, for the purposes of this chapter, the term will be used for websites and music charts that self-identify using this nomenclature. In examining a range of Celtic and New Age websites, it is notable that there is an emphasis on Pagan practices, with sites advertising such wide-ranging topics as Druidism, Bardic paths, Celtic Wiccan ritual and Celtic kitchen witchcraft - all of which bear testament to a renewed interest in nature-based spirituality. With the growing popularity of the internet, a variety of Celtic websites offer a cyber place for people to congregate and explore various Pagan practices in safety and anonymity. Michael York proposes that Paganism is a religion, and points out that it is a "legitimate, albeit different and distinctive, form of belief" (York 2003: 4). York explains that the spirituality for the Pagan is corporeal, thereby allowing for the "percep-tion of the divine in nature, for idolatry, for appreciation of the sacredness of place, for contact with the divine through both local geodynamics and pilgrimage to revered holy centres, and for multiplicity of manifestation" (ibid.: 13). He also notes that "Western neopaganism is an important new development and can be considered an aspect of paganism more gener-ally" (ibid.).

Hanegraaff posits that the term "Neo-Paganism" in a New Age context "clearly contains a polemical thrust towards institutionalized Christianity, which is held responsible for the decline of western paganism and the sub-sequent blackening of its image" (Hanegraaff 1998:
77). He avers that the problems of the modern world - particularly the ecological crisis - are a direct result of the loss of wisdom concerning humans' relationship with the natural world; however, it is significant that some Neo-Pagans do not reject Christianity. Hanegraaff gives the example of well-known Neo-Pagan figures Caithlin Matthews and Maxine Saunders, who "consider themselves to be both pagan and Christian" as they believe that the "true esoteric core of Christianity is perfectly compatible with the pagan worldview" and reject a "particular interpretation which happens to have become dominant in some church institutions" (ibid.: 77).

The Roman use of the term Pagan us referred to those whose customs and rituals were intrinsically tied to locality, and hence to land (York 2003: 12); however, Celtic cyber-pagans often have no fixed land to which they pledge allegiance, but rather identify themselves with the notion of the amorphous "Celtic lands": The blurring of these terrestrial boundaries is made evident by Rose Ariadne in her article, "Celtic Wicca" (2007), which refers to a "specific Wiccan path which incorporates several of the elements of the Celtic Tradition into their practices, beliefs and ritual": and stresses the importance of "love for and worship of Celtic Goddesses and Gods". This theme is then expanded as Ariadne discusses the Celtic "Triple Goddess Danu/ Anu in Her maiden aspect, Badb in Her mother aspect and Ceridwen in Her crone aspect": The blending of the Irish goddesses Danu, Anu and Badb with the Welsh goddess Ceridwen to form a "Celtic" Mother Goddess is just one example of the way in which "Cyber-Celts" are creating new paradigms for Pagan rituals.

The Celtic Cauldron blog (http://groups.yahoo.com/group/celtic-cauldron), an active list established in 1999, proclaims itself as a "group of individuals seeking the knowledge of the Celtic people, their traditions, beliefs, their way of life, and the Celtic Gods and Goddess [sic]": The moderator explains that the members are "following our own path, whether it be Celtic Wicca/Witta, Celtic Re-constructionist, Druid, Shaman, or Celtic Witch. We gather
here to learn from each other'. Forums such as The Cauldron: A Pagan Forum (www.ecauldron.com, accessed October 2010) also offer support for members to "foster an interfaith community of Pagans and their friends where all members could learn and grow spiritually and intellectually through discussion and debate - and have a good time doing so': The Celtic Shaman website (www.faeryshaman.org) offers apprentice-ships for those who seek enlightenment in the "Celtic Faery Faith': and urges those who enter the website to "tread the paths of Avalon and sail to Tir na nOg': Celtic shamanism is claimed to follow a path that is based on the "Faery Faith of the Celtic peoples of Western Europe and especially of Britain, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, Cornwall, Isle of Man and Brittany': Another organization that was "formed for the study and practice of the goddess-oriented nature-based religion of the ancient Celtic peoples" is the Celtic Witan Church (www.joellessacredgrove.com/Celtic/celtictraditions.html#witan, accessed October 2012).

This is a "fertility religion concerned with all aspects of prosperity, growth, abundance, creativity, and healing. The Church honors the Celtic deities with full moon rituals and sabbat festivals" (ibid.). (It should be noted that while these sabbats hark back to the celebration of Celtic fire festivals, such as Beltane and Samhane, the modern interpretation of such festivals may have little in common with the original rituals.) Groups such as the Moon Dance Coven (www.witchvox.com/vn/vn_detail/dt_gr.html?a=usnm&id=35270) have their own websites, though they are a "congregation of the Celtic Witan Church': The array of websites devoted to personal spiritual journeys into Pagan - and particularly Pagan Celtic - practices are staggering, with sites ranging from The Daughters of the Flame (www.obsidianmagazine.com/DaughtersoftheFlame), devoted to Brigit the Irish Fire Goddess, to the Ancient Keltic Church (http://ancientkelticchurch.org, accessed October 2010), dedicated to the "rediscovery and revival of the pagan mystery faith of the ancient Celtic peoples".
Douglas E. Cowan, the author of Cyberhenge: Modern Pagans on the Internet, comments that "many modern pagans are using the Internet in sincere attempts to create new forms of community, some of which were unimaginable little more than a decade ago" (Cowan 2005: x). Lisa McSherry observes that: "Where once we were prevented from reaching out, for fear of prosecution, we are now free to worship in the safety and privacy of cyberspace. No longer are we bound by geography in our search for like-minded Pagans" (McSherry 2002: 4). This ability to use cyberspace to reshape old traditions is expounded by M. Macha NightMare, who describes herself as a "Priestess of the Reclaiming Tradition" and explains that she and her sisters are keepers of the sacred flame of Brigit, the Irish goddess:

We honour our heritage as we take it into the age of the internet ... We construct the ways of our ancestors in our hi-tech, multi-cultural postmodern world. We carry Brigit's light of consciousness through the darkness and into the future.

(NightMare 2001: 296)

NightMare also has written about the use of the internet in contemporary witchcraft in a book entitled Witchcraft and the Web: Weaving Pagan Traditions Online. She cautions against casting spells in cyberspace unless the witch has practised the same spells in what she terms "terraspace". This is because "terraspace" uses traditional Wiccan practices which are linked to the earth, whereas in cyberspace "everything is connected" and is "truly magical, since all it is is energy" (NightMare 2002: 66-7).

THE CELTIC PATH

The burgeoning array of websites promoting new versions of Celtic identity are characterized by a "marked hybridity of practices and symbols and the use of cyberspace to
structure and commoditize transnational medias-capes of identity" (Dietler 2006: 240).

Dietler cites the rise of neo-Druid groups as an example of the very different way in which Celtic identity can be expressed, as opposed to the more traditional nationalist movements of the past. For example, The Druid Wisdom Exchange Network (http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Druid_Wisdom_Exchange) encourages anyone who is interested in "Druid teachings or Celtic Wisdom" to join, as do a plethora of other Druidic websites, thus using cyberspace as a virtual link for this "cyber-diaspora" to access their sacred groves of worship. Another example of a cyber community that offers a spiritual experience is The Summerlands (www.summerlands.com), which describes itself as a "Celtic Pagan Community dedicated to rediscovering, preserving, disseminating, and when necessary, recreating that which was lost to us ... the magick, his-tory, customs, and religions of our ancestors". This "Otherworldly time and space" encourages the visitor to "walk the Dreamways through the Dolmen" and experience the virtual reality of the world. Monica Emerich notes that nearly all of the Celtic websites make use of some sort of "Celtic symbol-ism in their design, as a logo, as button designs, or in graphics to reproduce sacred sites or objects - the means for cyber-rituals" (Emerich 2003).

Erynn Rowan Laurie states: "We can't rely on genealogy or geography to determine who is Celtic" (Laurie 1995). Rather, it is the desire to iden-tify as Celtic that is the essential signifier for tribal acceptance. Marion Bowman describes such individuals as "Cardiac Celts" (Bowman 1995) -that is, people who feel in their heart that they are Celtic. This spiritual affli-ation is a significant factor in the emergence of an overwhelming, and at times bewildering, number and variety of Celtic websites that offer a cyber place for like-minded people to congregate and explore various Pagan prac-tices. One such site, The Preserving Shrine (www.seanet.com/~inisglas), is mediated by Erynn Rowan Laurie, "poet, ftli and priestess": who outlines the nine core beliefs for following a Celtic path in an ethical manner.
Like the Neo-Druid websites, these beliefs include reverence for the earth, tolerance and polytheism. Laurie is also one of the co-founders of the Celtic Reconstructionist Paganism (also known as Celtic Reconstructionism, or CR) movement, which is a "polytheistic, animistic, religious and cultural movement" (NicDhana et al. 2006: 17). It began in 1985 at the Pagan Spirit Gathering in Wisconsin and continued through internet collaboration, concentrating on the establishment of traditions. Together with Kathryn Price NicDhana, C. Lee Vermeers and Kym Lambert ni Dhoireann, Laurie has published The CR FAQ: An Introduction to Celtic Reconstructionist Paganism (ibid.). This group relies on the internet, due to the diasporic nature of its membership. It acknowledges that:

> there are many more CRs whose main sense of community comes from participation in online forums and email lists. Even those who primarily practice with other CRs in person generally join in the online discussions, as that is currently the fastest and easiest way to collaborate with a wide range of people, and can lead to contacts for forming a local community. (Ibid.: 20)

The cultural origin of the members is not relevant, as "although many people of Celtic heritage are drawn to CR, being of 'Celtic descent' is not required" in much the same way as "you don't have to be Asian to be a Buddhist" (ibid.: 27). The preferred language is Modern Irish, and words like Failte - or "welcome" - are peppered throughout the handbook. The writers are adamant that this is not a Pan-Celtic group, but instead focuses on a "particular Celtic culture (Gaelic, Gaulish, Welsh ... )" (ibid.: 84). This is demonstrated by another co-author, Kathryn Price NicDhana, whose blog spot, "Amhran nam Bandia" (www.blogger.com/profile/10293181815707001620), promotes Gaelic polytheism. In her blog she classifies herself as "one of those Gaelic Polytheist, activist types, with a commitment to preserving traditional languages and cultures, protecting sacred sites, and a deep involvement in the surviving ancestral customs as part of a modern spiritual practice": Marion Bowman states that this "elective affinity" is indicative of the "phenomenon of people
regarding themselves as Celts for spiritual purposes" (Bowman 2000: 70). Emerich notes that Celtic spirituality accessed through various websites allows the individual contact with other like-minded people and their sites of traditional worship and ritual, as well as access to the way in which "participants negotiate particular versions of Celtic religion that reflect the age in which they live as well as their social and cultural location" (Emerich 2003).

"CELTIC" MUSIC ON THE INTERNET

The dissemination of Celtic mysticism through a wide range of websites over the last fifteen years has been instrumental in the promotion of the term "Celtic" and its increasing association with Ireland. Websites such as The Celtic and Irish Culture Web Ring (http://hub.webring.org/hub/celtring) promote traditional Celtic music, history, dance and literature. However, the traditional music on this site has a heavy emphasis on Irish music, as does the Celt.net website, which boasts "every Celtic thing on the web": ranging from Celtic ancestry to knot work and tattoos. Surprisingly, the only music listed is Irish music, with sub-categories including Irish Celtic music, Irish country music, Irish traditional music and multiple listings for Irish radio, magazines and performances. As previously discussed, extravaganzas such as Riverdance and its subsequent "spin-off" productions Lord of the Dance and Celtic Tiger, have led to a distortion of the meaning of the word "Celtic" and exacerbated the confusion associated with the terms "Celtic" and "Irish": The significance of this is that the term "Irish" is tied to an actual locality while the term "Celtic": as previously discussed, is a controversial, and for some fantastical, construct that has been used to market the myth of a lost age of enchantment.

In a more commercial vein, record companies have used the generic term "Celtic Music" as a marketing tool to boost album sales. The word "Celtic" may appear on a Chieftains recording
of traditional music, such as Celtic Wedding, or on albums featuring "mood music" such as Celtic Circle. When the words "Celtic music" are placed in the Google search engine, they generate an enormous number of hits, ranging from National Geographic's website to Celtic radio stations. A website such as Celtic Music Magazine (http://celticmp3s.com) has a category, "Things Celtic Music Directory" which provides a list of nearly three hundred bands in alphabetical order; however, despite the occasional Scottish and Welsh group, the overwhelming representation is by Irish bands or Irish-inspired bands. Fintan Vallely, in The Companion to Traditional Irish Music, describes Celtic music as a "fanciful term which expresses a world-view or record-shelf category rather than actual links between music genres" (Vallely 1999: 64). Michael Dietler claims that there is a new hybrid genre of Celtic music that encompasses "such things as what used to be called traditional Irish music, Scottish bagpipes and a New Age style with high-pitched vocals and synthesizers derived vaguely from Irish ballads" (Dietler 2006: 243). The dominance of Irish music in the contemporary Celtic scene is due to several factors, but it is significant that one of the greatest successes in the categories "New Age" and "Celtic" is the Irish singer, Enya.

In 2001, Willie Dillon of the Irish Independent commented that Enya's "lush brush-stroked harmonies give the impression of having been recorded amid towering banks of candlelight" (Dillon 2001). Of course, the reality is much more mundane, with her multi-layered sound comprising up to eighty vocal recordings combined with synthesized symphonic sound and Celtic-inspired pop melodies, meticulously assembled over a period of many months. The imagery in Enya's film clips and on her cover art reinforces the idea of arcane symbolism, which draws on both Christian and Pagan themes. For example, the clip for 'Amarantine': from the album of the same name, shows Enya wandering through an empty landscape that appears to be imbued with a magical quality, as evinced by the beams of dancing light and pools of glittering water. The word "amarantine" refers to the immortal, undying flower of
Greek mythology, the amaranth. In a newspaper interview with Henna Helne, Enya explained that she found the idea of an eternal flower appealing: "The poets describe an undying flower with that word, and I fell in love with that idea" (Helne 2005). In the film clip for the song, Enya is clad in a trailing, blood-red dress (the colour of amaranth), which ripples like water across the ground. As the dress touches the earth, the colour becomes vibrant, possibly echoing the Pagan idea of spilling blood on the land to renew life. There is a timeless, Eden-like quality to the world portrayed in the clip, and Enya is the only person who inhabits this magical realm, moving through the trees like a Faery spirit or a woman of the Sidhe, the immortal people of Irish mythology.

The nostalgic, calming power of Enya's music was made apparent in 2001 after the destruction of the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York on September 11. CNN used the haunting ballad "Only Time" from the album to accompany its film footage of the tragedy. This counterpointing of shocking images with soothing music reignited public interest in Enya's "dreamy, moon-drenched New Age music ... the antithesis of everything nasty and unpleasant in the world" (Dillon 2001). Her album, which was positioned at number 19 in the charts during the September 11 terrorist attacks, moved swiftly to number 2. Enya's comforting music conjured up notions of a safer, simpler time and pushed her album, A Day Without Rain, to the highest position she had ever occupied in the US album charts.

With album sales now in excess of 80 million, it is not surprising that Jacques Peretti of The Telegraph claimed that her fan base was "getting bigger, growing like some unfathomable geothermal confection of dry ice and Celtic gobbledy-gook that scientists struggle to explain" (Peretti 2008). Her following seems unaffected by harsh reviews from some critics, such as describing her music as "soothing Body Shop Muzak. Elevator New Age balm to light a candle to and soothe the furrowed brow. Uplifting nonsense concealing the most cynically calculated mood music in the history of (Middle) Earth" (ibid.). Her popularity shows no sign
of diminishing as her latest album, The Very Best of Enya, attained number 1 status in Billboard's New Age Chart in 2010.

MARKETING THE SPIRITUAL

Enya's music is meticulously produced, packaged and marketed, which has garnered an enormous fan base and given the artist her title as "the reigning Irish queen of Celtic music". Though Enya is not Pagan, her music is promoted and dispersed on a wide range of Pagan websites - including, for example, the Pagan Pentagram Radio, which describes itself as the "oldest continuous Shoutcast pagan music stream" (http://tunein.com/radio/%C3%B1ine-Minogue-m230557), Pagan Presence (www.paganpresence.com) and The Rowan Leaf (www.summerlands.com/marketplace/Rowanleaf/bookstore.htm) - the "Celtic book, music and video store" attached to The Summerlands Celtic Pagan community which was discussed earlier in this chapter. In its advertisement for the CD Fairy Lullabies by Gary Stadler, The Cybermoon Emporium (http://witchcraft-supplies.com/PaganMusic.html), even promotes the artist as having an "Enya-esque" quality to the vocals that will allow the purchaser to "close your eyes and drift away":

A quick browse of Amazon's Celtic New Age section offers the following suggestions for lovers of "Celtic" music: Windham Hill Classics: Celtic Legacy, Celtic Tranquility, Celtic Spirit, Celtic Treasure, Mystic Irish Rain, Celtic Treasure: The Legacy of Turlough O'Carolan, Celtic Meditation Music, Heart of the Celts: Songs of Love, Celtic Magic: Eleven Irish Instrumentals and The Best of Celtic Music. Reading though the recommendations by the general public, the recurring comments concentrate on the "spirituality": "meditative nature" and "uplifting experience" associated with listening to this type of music. YouTube offers a wide array of film clips when the words "Celtic": "New Age" and "Celtic Pagan" are
entered. Enya has been discussed already; however, there are many other examples, including Damh the Bard, a performer who has a great number of clips with titles such as "Cauldron Born": "The Hills They are Hollow": "Noon of the Solstice": "Lugnasad": "The Mabon" and "Samhain Eve": There is live footage, as well as clips that have been compiled by fans. The music is heavily influenced by folk rock, while the footage features images of sacred places such as Stonehenge, as well as beautiful representations of nature. Other artists include Driadas, Celtic New Age, which has an instrumental version of the Irish melody "She Moved Through the Fair" played against a background of images of Dryads or tree spirits; albums include "A Celtic Tale" by Jeff and Mychael Danna which has elements of Irish traditional music and is supported by images of full moons, misty forests and wolves; and "Celtic Lounge II: Song of the Sea" by Sharon Knight, which offers a hypnotic melody line accompanied by acoustic guitar, percussion and flute. Sequoia Records' website states that "Song of the Sea" "evokes the indomitable spirit of the Celts and reminds us we can all view the world through the eyes of enchantment" (www.sequoiarecords.com/x921cd/The+Celtic+Lounge+II). It also suggests that "these spellbinding vocal and instrumental songs weave a mystical spell transporting you to the emerald Isle of dreams; a legendary land of misty green hills draped in morning dew, ancient stone fences along deep green hills and foggy cliffs that stand above the waves": This heavily romanticized description of Ireland offers the nostalgic view that the ancient Celts had a spiritual bond with the land and reinforces Marcus Tanner's idea of escaping to a mythical place for "rest and recreation" via a CD or YouTube clip (Tanner 2004: 22).

While by no means a comprehensive survey, the following results reveal that Celtic Pagan websites often have their own music links or stores to promote music relevant to their members. The British Druid Order, for example, links to the Pig's Whisker Music website (www.pigswiskermusic.co.uk/biography.htm), which opens with a solo harp playing an
Irish-flavoured melody. This site features the music of Robin and Bina Williamson, whose songs and music are described as "an evocative East-West harmonies [sic] of their voices with harp, percussion and other instruments in a style described recently as Indo-Celtic-Delta": The website for the Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids (www.druidry.org) promotes music by Claire Hamilton, who presents spoken word renditions of Celtic myths accompanied by harp, "inspired by the practice of the ancient bards": Other musicians who are promoted heavily on this site are Damh the Bard; Jules Bitter, a "well known and respected musician in the Celtic folk scene of Holland and Belgium": who is compared with traditional Irish bands Altan, Planxty and the Bothi Band; and Fiona Davidson, a Scottish harpist and singer who performs Scottish, Irish and Welsh tunes. The Wiccan/Pagan Times Music page (www.twpt.com/wpbeat.htm) has a section titled Wiccan/Pagan Beat Music Interviews, which features an interview with Adrienne Piggott of the pagan band Spiral Dance. She discusses the Irish influences in her music, citing the "Irish wonder tales taken from the Mythological and Ulster cycles" as part of her inspiration and describing how performing can become part of the ritual. The owner and programme director of Pagan Radio Network (www.pagan-radio.net) states that he has removed "most of the so-called 'generic' new age music from our playlists and [is] instead focusing on pagan music from around the world": The playlist is comprehensive and includes a number of Irish artists such as Altan and Aine Minogue, as well as many international performers, such as Faun, Sava and Trobar De Morte. The use of the inter-net in the dissemination of Pagan music is summed nicely on the Pagan Radio Network review page:

When one thinks of a Bard, one thinks of the Ancient Days when they roamed the country spreading the news of the day and pro-viding entertainment ... Only today, he travels the globe via cyber-space, spreading his message through beautiful lyric and song.

(Kelley 2011)
CONCLUSION

The Celtic revival is not a new phenomenon, having occurred in various guises over the centuries; however, instead of appealing to "antiquarians, Romantics, popular folklorists, artists, poets and minority interest groups" (Bowman 2000: 69), the present fascination with all things Celtic has been influenced and intensifying by several factors. The sprawling Irish diaspora has provided a marketing springboard for the sales of Irish products - particularly music; however, the interchangeable use of the terms "Celtic" and "Irish" has expanded this target market and provided a ready-made consumer base eager for "Celtic"-branded products. Peter Berresford Ellis notes that there has been "an astonishing upsurge of interest in practically every aspect of Celtic life - in Celtic languages, culture, music and history. Celtic interest groups proliferate and not just in the Celtic countries but throughout the world" (Ellis 1993: 12). The universal success of blockbuster shows such as Riverdance and Lord of the Dance bears testament to this statement. Another factor in the Celtic revival is that the advent of the internet has facilitated an interest in mysticism and spirituality, which has allowed people to browse in an online "spiritual supermarket" of "mix and match religion" (Bowman 2000: 71). The thirst for the authentic has seen the Celtic culture re-emerge imbued with a mystical glamour and romanticized as a pure tradition untouched by progress. The term "Celtic" has been manipulated as a marketing tool until it "means what I want it to mean, what I feel it means, and no one can tell me what 'Celtic' cannot include" (O'Loughlin 2002: 49). The final factor in the sustained interest in the Celts is the emergence of "New Age" websites, which are integral to the dissemination of "Celtic" Pagan mysticism and the promotion of "Celtic" music across a broad spectrum, appealing to those with Celtic genealogy as well as those cyber Celts who have a spiritual "elective affinity" for Celtic beliefs. Despite the overwhelming and relentless marketing of all things "Celtic": the online Pagan Celtic communities that have emerged from this latest revival bear testament to the
human desire to reconnect with the past and establish a sense of shared community and place - even if it is in the realms of cyberspace.