



PRIFYSGOL CYMRU
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
UNIVERSITY OF WALES
Trinity Saint David

Institute of Education and Humanities/
Yr Athrofa Addysg a'r Dyniaethau

**MA Dissertation Approval Form/
Ffurflen Gymeradwyo Traethawd Hir MA**

Student Name/ <i>Enw Myfyriwr</i>	Jennifer Brown
Degree Scheme/ <i>Cynllun Gradd</i>	MA Celtic Studies
Start date/ <i>Dyddiad cychwyn</i>	1 October 2023

I have completed Part 1 of my degree.

Yr wyf wedi cwblhau Rhan 1 o fy ngradd

Title of Dissertation: <i>Teitl eich Traethawd Hir</i> Modern Welsh Paganism: Practice, Identity, and Community in the 21st Century
Aims and Objectives: <i>Nodau ac Amcanion</i> 1. Demographics & Identity: Examine how modern Neo-Pagans, Druids, and polytheists with a Welsh cultural focus (or whose practice includes Welsh cultural elements) engage in self and group identity (interviews &/or surveys of modern practitioners will be required): a. Who are modern Welsh(-centering) Neo-Pagan practitioners? (Basic demographics collections e.g. age, nationality, gender identity, etc) b. What brought you to begin centering Welsh culture/include elements of Welsh culture in your Neo-Pagan practice?

c. Who is and is not considered a Welsh(-centering) Neo-Pagan by members of their own community?

- i. What should practitioners of Neo-Paganism who center Welsh culture call themselves? E.g. "I am a(n) ____."
- ii. Can/should persons who are not of Welsh nationality be practitioners of Welsh(-centered) Neo-Paganism or incorporate Welsh cultural elements into their Neo-Pagan practice?
- iii. Can/should persons who were not born within the borders of Wales be practitioners of Welsh(-centered) Neo-Paganism or incorporate Welsh cultural elements into their Neo-Pagan practice?
- iv. Can/should persons who do not currently live in Wales be practitioners of Welsh(-centered) Neo-Paganism? or incorporate Welsh cultural elements into their Neo-Pagan practice?
 1. Never lived in Wales?
 2. Never visited Wales?
- v. Can/should persons who do not have Welsh "blood"/ancestry be practitioners of Welsh(-centered) Neo-Paganism or incorporate Welsh cultural elements into their Neo-Pagan practice?
 1. If no, how much "blood"/ancestry is "enough"?
- vi. Can/should persons who cannot understand, speak, read, and/or write the Welsh language be practitioners of Welsh(-centered) Neo-Paganism or incorporate Welsh cultural elements into their Neo-Pagan practice?
 1. If no, what degree of fluency/mastery of the language is "enough"? (ties in with 2.b.)
- vii. Can/should persons who are largely or entirely ignorant of Welsh history be practitioners of Welsh(-centered) Neo-Paganism or incorporate Welsh cultural elements into their Neo-Pagan practice?

2. Cultural Engagement: Investigate how, why, and to what extent modern Neo-Pagans, Druids, and polytheists who self-identify as having a Welsh cultural focus (or a practice including Welsh cultural elements) draw on Welsh culture, traditions, and/or language (or not) by delving into the following questions (interviews &/or surveys of modern practitioners will be required).

- a. What is the interplay between Neo-Paganism and other aspects of Welsh culture and identity?
 - i. What gets emphasized and what gets de-emphasized or ignored from Welsh history, tradition, and culture when brought into the Neo-Pagan context and why?
 1. Modern holidays/observances/events?
 2. Historical/Traditional holidays/observances/events?

- a. Seasonal? Christian/Saints/Church-centered? Other?
 3. Modern customs? Traditional/Folk Customs?
 4. Modern foods? Traditional foods?
 5. Modern music? Traditional/Folk music? Hymns?
 6. Literature? (Historical? Modern? Christian?)
 7. Poetry? (“ “)
 8. Folk tales?
 9. Folk magic? Folk remedies?
- ii. Why are some traditional and cultural practices and/or literature considered important in the Neo-Pagan context (especially in light of the overwhelming majority of it being known to not predate Christianity) while others are not?
 1. Why are some Christian practices, writings, saints, and/or elements of these adapted into Neo-Pagan practice for some practitioners, while others are not?
 2. Do Neo-Pagans who incorporate Christian practices/elements, or who practice traditions stripped of their Christian identifiers/context, consider themselves to be engaging in appropriation of Christian religion or culture?
- iii. For those cultural/historical practices which are emphasized, what is the degree of support/involvement of the Neo-Pagan community in revival, survival/continuation, and knowledge-sharing efforts for these (e.g. the Mari Lwyd, Calan Gaeaf traditions, May Pole dancing, educational collaborations or productions centered on the Mabinogion, etc.)?
- b. What is the degree to which learning the Welsh language is viewed as a part of spiritual devotion &/or as a means of connecting to and supporting the culture (including for people who are not of Welsh domicile or national identity, may never be, and may never be able to visit)?

Abstract (approximately 500 words):

Crynodeb (tua 500 gair):

In addition to its reputation for revering nature, there has been increasing scholarly and public observation and (deserved) criticism of the inter-related issues of cultural appropriation, racism, and (white/European) nationalism across the Neo-Pagan community over the past two decades. There is also, however, a less well-investigated countermovement against these.

This countermovement has been sparking a growing number of intra-community discussions and actions amongst a wider swath of more

“mainstream” and eclectic groups and practitioners since at least the 2000s (and since the 1980s and ‘90s, considering the Reconstructionist movements are themselves a backlash against pseudo-history and cultural misrepresentation). The results of this push-back include the following being expressed via social media as well as more formal publications: greater concern for authenticity and accuracy, better bibliographies in some of the more popular lay Neo-Pagan-targeted publications, public distaste at the appearance of practice being reduced to mere “play-acting” or reenactment, calls to center non-white voices and voices from a practice/path’s culture of origin, discussions of Neo-Pagan responsibilities towards decolonization, publications discussing racism that specifically target Neo-Pagan readers, calls to discontinue use of over-harvested materials (environmental motive) and/or those which belong to closed cultural or religious practices (anti-appropriation/anti-racism/decolonization motive) and especially when these overlap, a rise in number and/or popularity of public-facing Neo-Pagans who are from the culture of origin teaching and speaking out against misinformation, and a generalized revulsion against what some in the community call “fakelore” (a play on *folklore*).

As Welsh culture falls under the “Celtic” cultural umbrella which has been prone to the sorts of issues enumerated above in Neo-Paganism, and in the interest of investigating the practical effects (or lack thereof) of this countermovement to-date in relation specifically to Welsh culture, this research will aim to examine: 1. how these practitioners self- and group-identify, 2. what brings people to a Welsh-centered Neo-Pagan practice to begin with, 3. to what degree do currently-practising Neo-Pagans who claim to have a Welsh focus (or an eclectic practice which includes Welsh cultural elements) center Welsh culture? 3.b. Which parts of the culture/history/language are emphasized in the Neo-Pagan context, and which are de-emphasized, overlooked, or intentionally ignored?

Being very much a minority religion, the Neo-Pagan community is notoriously very small, scattered across large areas which can make regular meetings in substantial numbers difficult (especially for those who have difficulty traveling due to financial constraints, lack of public transit, or disability). The Neo-Pagan community is also disorganized, with no central authoritative body or universally-held tenets. Each group, grove, coven, or congregation has their own rules and core principles. It is highly personal, and practices or beliefs which fall under the same or similar categorical umbrellas can vary considerably from person to person or group to group, with a significant portion of practitioners never or rarely participating in groups, gatherings, or events at all, preferring to be “solitary”. In addition, many Neo-Pagan practitioners do not feel comfortable sharing their personal beliefs for various reasons, and/or fear being “outed” as Pagan due to the potential for retaliation or alienation in their

communities, careers, or relationships. These facts are foreseen as potential barriers to gathering data and may limit the intersectionality of persons who may be more likely to contribute to data collection.

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Proposed Supervisor (to be completed by Programme Director):
Goruchwyliwr awgrymedig (i'w llenwi gan Gyfarwyddwr y Rhaglen):

Please indicate whether ethical approval for project is needed – YES
Nodwch a oes angen cymeradwyaeth foesegol ar gyfer y prosiect - OES

Please indicate whether sufficient resources are available for the project – YES
Nodwch a oes digon o adnoddau ar gael ar gyfer y prosiect - OES

The above topic, proposal, and supervisor have been agreed:
Cytunwyd ar y pwnc, y cynnig a'r goruchwyliwr uchod:

Signed : Programme Director/
Llofnod Cyfarwyddwr y rhaglen

Date:.....
Dyddiad

Please return this form to your Programme Director.
Dychwelwch y ffurflen hon at eich Cyfarwyddwr Rhaglen.

