

**SPECIAL SECTION**  
**PAGAN IDENTITY**

by Jason Pitzl-Waters

A large, full moon dominates the upper half of the page, set against a dark, starry night sky. Silhouettes of several birds are in flight, scattered across the moon's face. In the foreground, the dark, intricate branches of a tree are visible, some overlapping the moon. The overall mood is serene and mystical.

*The Brightest  
Lights in Our  
Sky*

**Today's Most Influential Pagans**



A few years ago I tried to draw up a list of the most influential Pagans within our diverse religious communities. While that list proved to be an interesting exercise, it failed to really define who was shaping our future. Often when you ask who the influential people are, you get the standard list of “BNPs” (Big Name Pagans): people who helped found well-known groups, like Starhawk, Isaac Bonewits, and Oberon Zell-Ravenheart, and authors who wrote important books, like Margot Adler and Raymond Buckland. But do lists like these translate into influence, or give an accurate picture of where we are collectively headed?

More and more, it’s clear that our future isn’t in the hands of an imaginary council of “famous” Pagans, but with scores of people working at the grass roots to maintain (and establish) diverse traditions as a genuine religious alternative on a global level. So instead of giving a “top ten” (or twenty-five, or fifty) of the biggest names, I’ll instead visit ten categories of people among us who are moving us forward. This perspective allows a broader range of participants, especially of younger Pagans and Heathens, while acknowledging the debt we collectively owe to the “guiding lights” who initially blazed the trails.

(Note: no matter how large the poll, or exhaustive the research, there’s always a certain arbitrariness in exercises like this. If you, or your personal picks, didn’t make this list, it wasn’t because they lack influence, but because space and resources are limited. Consider this the beginning of a conversation, not the final word. Please email your comments to [meditor@pangaia.com](mailto:meditor@pangaia.com) if you’d like your comments to be published in the next issue.)

**1 The New-Media Mavericks.** The early days of modern Paganism can be encapsulated as an era of magazines, newsletters, and hand-written correspondence; but our present (and future) is most certainly defined by our involvement in the new media provided by the Internet. Apologies to this fine publication and others like it, but an increasingly large number of Pagans and Heathens are getting their Pagan news from blogs (online journals or Web-logs), podcasts (audio programs syndicated over the Internet), and online communities.

### **Guiding Lights**

**Wren Walker and Fritz Jung of The Witches’ Voice**

[www.witchvox.com](http://www.witchvox.com)



*PCP crew: top row from left to right: Ashlee, Amber and Sam. Bottom row from left to right: Brandon and Jason. Not pictured: Dave.*

### **Shining Star: Crew of Pagan Centered Podcast**

I suppose it was inevitable that once Pagans started podcasting we would get our own version of the “morning zoo.”

The crew at the Pagan Centered Podcast cover a number of topics, both serious and silly (they even mention my blog), and give you their “average Pagan” opinions.

This often results in a barrage of in-jokes, yelling, and uproarious laughter. Possibly not the show you’d play for your Christian relatives, but certainly the show to listen to if you want to hear what they think of your Christian relatives. See [imbleedingprofusely.com](http://imbleedingprofusely.com) for the podcasts, or listen online at the Pagan Radio Network ([paganradio.net](http://paganradio.net)).

**The Constellation:** Blogs like “Letter From Hardscrabble Creek” (Chas Clifton), “Quaker Pagan Reflections” (Cat Chapin-Bishop), “MacRaven” (Dave Haxton), “Broomstick Chronicles” (M. Macha NightMare), and my own newsblog “The Wild Hunt” provide a cornucopia of Pagan news and opinion. (See <http://pagantheologies.pbwiki.com/Pagan-blogs>. Important Pagan and occult podcasts include “Thelema Coast to Coast,” “Lance and Graal,” “RavenCast,” and “The Wigglian Way.”

**2 Pagan Publishers.** It's easy to see who's been the most influential house in the world of Pagan publishing. The Llewellyn imprint fills the shelves of small local metaphysical bookstores and large bookstore chains everywhere. Recently, new Pagan-friendly publishers have made begun making inroads into this busy market.

**Guiding Lights:** Carl Weschcke of Llewellyn Worldwide & Michael Kerber of Weiser Books.



**Shining Star:**  
Immanion/Megalithica Press

www.immanion-press.com.  
Founded in 2003 by fantasy author Storm Constantine,



*Immanion Press devas Taylor Elwood and Lupa.*

Immanion Press began as a venue for Constantine's backlist. But it soon branched out as the Megalithica imprint, publishing nonfiction on esoteric subjects. Leading this effort are authors/editors Taylor Elwood and Lupa. Their authors include Celtic Reconstructionist Erynn Rowan Laurie, occultist Nick Farrell, magicians Nicholas Graham, Bill Whitcomb, Gerald del Campo, and ritualist Brandy Williams.

**The Constellation:** Other publishers include New Page Books; academic publisher Rowman & Littlefield, which recently launched a "Pagan Studies" series making Pagan scholarly work more accessible than ever before; O Books, who recently released groundbreaking books by Emma Restall Orr and Brendan "Cathbad" Myers; and influential UK publishers like Capall Bann and Green Magic Publishing.

**3 Periodical Pagans.** While new media mavericks blaze a trail into innovative methods of distribution, tens of thousands of Pagans and Heathens rely on magazines, journals, and newsletters connect with their community.



**Guiding Lights:**  
*Green Egg, The Wiccan, The Cauldron, Harvest, Circle Network News (now Circle Magazine), Of a Like Mind, The Beltane Papers, Pagan Dawn (UK).*

**Shining Star:**  
*The Pomegranate:*

*The International Journal of Pagan Studies*  
www.equinoxjournals.com/ojs/index.php/pom



At the forefront of Pagan-oriented periodicals is *The Pomegranate*, the first international, peer-reviewed journal of Pagan studies. *The Pomegranate* has pushed the boundaries of what a Pagan periodical can be, and helped establish a deeper tradition of Pagan thought. Not content to simply affirm our world view, *The Pomegranate* challenges us, invites outside scrutiny, and helps us grow.

**The Constellation:** Germanic Pagan-focused European journal *Tyr*, the UK's *Pentacle*, the recently-launched *Modern Witch*, the BBI Media family of titles: *newWitch*, *PanGaia*, *Sage Woman* (and new eldering magazine *Crone*) and many smaller journals.

## 4 Artists, Musicians, & Writers, Oh My!

Often so much attention is paid to authors in Paganism that we fail to properly honor those who create the art and music of our communities. Hundreds of gifted Pagan singers, musicians, painters, illustrators, and sculptors share their visions with us and the world — here are just a few of them.

**Guiding Lights:** Gwydion Pennderwen, Coil, Christchurch Garden Theatre, Lady Frieda Harris, and Pamela Colman Smith.



**Shining Star:**  
*The European Pagan Musical Renaissance.*  
(Pictured above: Neo-Celtic band "Omnia")

While America has a fair claim as the birthplace of modern "Pagan music," — some of the most exciting music in modern Paganism is now emerging across Europe, with artists like Omnia from the Netherlands, Faun from Germany, The Moon and The Nightspirit from Hungary, and Daemonia Nymphe from Greece. This renaissance of Pagan-oriented music raises the creative bar for our entire community.

**The Constellation:** Painter and sculptor Lauren Raine; illustrators Thalia Took and Kimberlee Traub; singer-songwriters SJ Tucker, Celia, Holly Tannen, and Wendy Rule; Pagan-oriented bands Incus, Emerald Rose, Dragon Ritual Drummers, and many, many more.



## 5 Academic Pagans.

There was a time when mention of academic “Pagan Studies” would be met with skepticism. No longer. Academic publishing houses publish books and journals every year on Pagan-themed subjects. As academic discourses “trickle up” into mainstream Pagan publishing, we can expect to find historical, sociological, and psychological data and narratives enriching and informing our religious lives.

**Guiding Lights:** Judy Harrow, Aidan Kelly, Isaac Bonewits, and Margot Adler.

**Shining Star:** Chas Clifton

While there are many new and exciting voices in Pagan Studies, the foremost is Chas Clifton. Founder of the Nature Religion Scholars Network, editor of the *The Pomegranate* and an editor for *AltaMira's*

“Pagan Studies” series, Clifton’s focus is scholarly exploration of contemporary Paganism. Chas is the author of *Her Hidden Children*, the groundbreaking history of Paganism in America, and editor of *The Paganism Reader*, an essential collection of historical source material.



Pagan Scholar Chas Clifton and friend.

**The Constellation:** Authors Ronald Hutton, *Triumph of the Moon*; Barbara Jane Davy, *An Introduction to Pagan Studies*, Graham Harvey, *Listening People, Speaking Earth: Contemporary Paganism*; Sabina Magliocco, *Witching Culture*, Sarah Pike, *Earthly Bodies, Magical Selves*, Wendy Griffin, *Goddessing: Contemporary Women and Goddess Rituals* (forthcoming), and Jenny Blain, editor of *Researching Paganisms*.

## 6 Polytheist Reconstructionists

Polytheistic reconstructionism, encompassing faiths that strive for cultural and historical authenticity in their religious practices, has grown into one of the most vital permutations of modern Paganism. Reconstructionist have acted as the conscience of our communities by encouraging solidarity with, and respect for, surviving indigenous religions, rallying for the cultural survival of languages and customs that inspire more syncretic Pagan traditions.

**Guiding Lights:** Sveinbjörn Beinteinsson, Isaac Bonewits, Vydúnas, Flavius Claudius Iulianus

**Shining Star:** Erynn Rowan Laurie

Part of the Celtic Reconstructionist movement that emerged in the early 1990s, Laurie exemplifies the melding



of creativity, research, and commitment that makes polytheistic reconstructionism such an influence on our communities today. Cofounder of the Inis Glas Hedge School, Laurie has authored two excellent works on Celtic spirituality (most recently *Ogam: Weaving Word Wisdom*) and is one of the co-authors of The CR-FAQ – an Introduction to Celtic Reconstructionist Paganism.



Celtic Reconstructionist Erynn Rowan Laurie

**The Constellation:**

Sannion, founder of Neos Alexandria; Northern Tradition author Galina Krasskova; Celtic Reconstruction visionaries Kathryn Price NicDhàna, Brenda and Bob Daverin, and Kym Lambert ní Dhoireann; Tamara L. Siuda of the House of Netjer; Lilinah biti-Anat of Qadash Kinahnu; and Pyrokanthos of Thiasos Olympikos.

## 7 Activists and Freedom-Fighters

While many Pagans and Heathens are devoted to looking inward, others are known for their attention to the world around us. They defend its ecosystems, fight for social justice and religious freedom, and build celebrations in which we envision, plan, and enact our religious lives.

**Guiding Lights:** Starhawk, The Chameleon Club, Selena Fax, Laurie Cabot, Karen J. Warren

**Shining Star:** Caroline Kenner

A longtime Washington D.C. activist Caroline Kenner uses her skills to advocate for modern Pagans. In 2006 and 2007 Kenner called pan-Pagan rallies in Washington D.C. to demand religious freedom and equality. The 2007 rally celebrated the recently-won right to place the Pentacle on military grave markers. The event united several large Pagan organizations working to establish Pagan military chaplains

and the approval of other specific Pagan symbols worn by Pagan and Heathen veterans. Kenner’s work embodies the new way activists are finding to work together.



Pagan Rights advocate Caroline Kenner

**The Constellation:** Glenn Turner, founder of Pantheon; groundbreaking Pagan chaplain Patrick McCollum; Maureen Duffy-Boose, President of CUUPS; Dagonet Dewr, cofounder of Pagan Pride Day; Christian Day, Salem impresario; Jerrie Hildebrand, member of the Lady Liberty League; Victoria Slind-Flor, journalist; John Machate, co-founder of the Military Pagan Network, and many, many, more.



## 8 **Celebrity Magicians**

Love them or hate them, some of the most influential Pagans aren't writing theologies or rallying outside prisons, but are superstars appearing on TV shows, concert stages, and other venues with audiences in the hundreds of thousands – or millions. Media favorites, for better or worse, they are what most people think of when they hear the words "Pagan" and/or "Wiccan."

**Guiding Lights:** Sybil Leek, Laurie Cabot, Kevin Carlyon, Cybill Shepard.



*Media Witch Par Excellence  
Fiona Horne*

## **Shining Star:** Fiona Horne



Fiona Horne has authored eight books on witchcraft, headed up industrial dance-band Def FX, starred in two "reality" TV shows, been interviewed on talk shows, posed nude for *Playboy*, and is developing a sitcom based on her life. No one can deny that she is one of the most public faces of modern Paganism.

**The Constellation:** Sully Erna, lead singer of Godsmack; author and lawyer Phyllis Currott; the Rev. Kendra Vaughan Hovey, a star of TLC's "My Unique Family"; Dani Filth of the band Cradle of Filth; Wiccan mega-lottery winner Elwood "Bunky" Bartlett.



*Activist, author and  
Witch Starhawk*

## 9 **Big Name Pagans**

No list like this is complete without the "BNPs."

**Guiding Lights:** Gerald Gardener, Stewart Farrar, Scott Cunningham, Alex Sanders, Z. Budapest

## **Shining Star:** Starhawk

Starhawk's name recognition, popular books, and multimedia savvy make her shine very brightly indeed. Starhawk is known by Pagans around the world, whether for delineating "how we shut down the WTO," her post-Katrina cleanup efforts in New Orleans, or as a commentator on Beliefnet. Her political stances spark controversy, but her passion for engaging her faith in the real world is unquestioned.



**The Constellation:** Selena Fox, founder of Circle Sanctuary and the Lady Liberty League; Heathen author and Troth officer Diana Paxson; Pagan Federation co-

founder Prudence Jones; Oberon and Morning Glory Zell-Ravenheart, co-founders of CAW (Church of All Worlds); "Father of American Wicca" Raymond Buckland; Isaac Bonewits, author and ADF (Druid Fellowship) founder; Ivo Dominguez Jr., convener of *Between The Worlds: A Grand Magickal Congress*; Asatru Folk Assembly founder Stephen McNallen; and uber-author Silver RavenWolf.

## 10 **The Visionaries**

In every generation there are those who give us a glimpse of the future. These remarkable individuals lead us to places we would never have imagined.

**Guiding Lights:** Ross Nichols, Shekinah Mountainwater, Aleister Crowley, Doreen Valiente, Harry Hay, Freya Aswynn, Deborah Ann Light

## **Shining Star:** T. Thorn Coyle

Integrating elements of Feri, Reclaiming, Sufi, Gurdjieff, anarchist philosophy, and punk subculture, Thorn Coyle presents a bold new vision for Paganism's future. Distilling her influences into a coherent ritual framework, her teachings have attracted an avid following around the world. Thorn embodies the best of a



*Next-gen Feri-punk spiritual  
teacher T. Thorn Coyle.*

practice that is aware and involved in the world, startlingly modern, yet respectful of tradition and spiritually disciplined.

**The Constellation:** Feri co-founder Cora Anderson; LGBT (lesbian-gay-bi-trans) pioneers Randy Conner and Judy Grahm; British metaphysical storekeeper Christina Oakley Harrington; the folk of Cherry Hill Seminary; interfaith organizers Gus diZerega, Don Frew, and M. Macha NightMare; advocate-musician Anne Hill; Celtic

preservationist Alexei Kondratiev; environmental radical Darryl Cherney; sex activist LaSara FireFox.

Of course, there are hundreds more, too many to count, – the Pagan/Heathen leaders of the future are emerging as you read this piece. Perhaps you know one? Perhaps you *are* one yourself... ▲

– JASON PITZL-WATERS is author of the Pagan newsblog *The Wild Hunt*, and hosts *A Darker Shade of Pagan*, a weekly podcast of Pagan and Pagan-friendly music. You can find out more about Jason by visiting his web site at [www.wildhunt.org](http://www.wildhunt.org).