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Earthwise Spirituality for Today

NATURAL PAGANISM

- Trees as Otherkin
- The Path of the Godless
- It's All About the Water
- Nature, Thou Art My Goddess
- Heathen Workings to Honor the Land Spirits
- From Soil to Sky: Genius Loci in Pagan Practice

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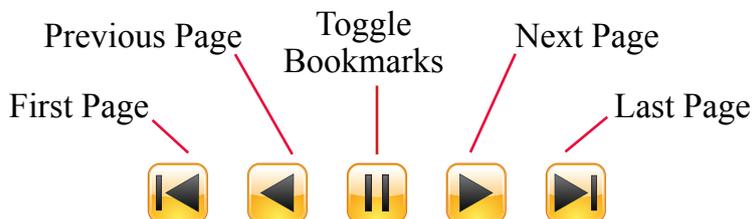


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NATURAL PAGANISM



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Earthwise Spirituality for Today



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People, Place, & Practice

20 It's All About the Water. I stand shirtless and barefoot on the dry ground. Everything is desperate for water. Then I feel a change in the air and my skin begins to prickle. *Article and Photos by Bryan Hewitt.*

33 Trees as Otherkin: Minoan Crete, Biblical Religion, and Paganism Today. The religion of prehistoric or "Minoan" Crete involved the cultivation of an intimate relationship with a literally living, numinous, landscape. *Article and Photos by Caroline Tully.*

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25 So You Think You Can Dance? How, exactly, do you go about becoming an animist? Walk with **Alison Leigh Lilly** on a journey into connecting with all beings. *With original artwork by Dan Goodfellow.*

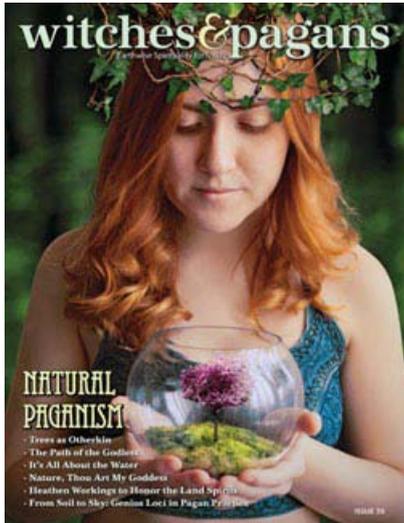
29 From Soil to Sky: Genius Loci in Pagan Practice. In paganism we often call on the *genius loci* – the spirit of a place – in our rituals. But how much time do we really spend with these spirits outside of that sacred space? **Lupa** describes how we can respectfully interact with these beings both in the wilderness and at home. *With original artwork by Bob Cuneo.*

40 Nature, Thou Art My Goddess. Druid **Nimue Brown** muses "Nature is what I hold sacred. Life is where I find my sense of the divine – not something stood behind life pulling the strings, but the moment-to-moment experience, with no more meaning to it than the glorious fact that it's all there."



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NATURAL PAGANISM



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CONTRIBUTORS the people who make the magic happen

INTRODUCING OUR NEW COLUMNIST



A visionary, and a practitioner of a variety of esoteric disciplines for decades, **IVO DOMÍNGUEZ, JR.** has been active in Wicca and the Pagan community since 1978 and

has been teaching since 1982. He serves as one of the Elders of the Assembly of the Sacred Wheel, a Wiccan syncretic tradition that draws inspiration from Astrology, Qabala, the Western Magickal Tradition and the folk religions of Europe. He is the author of many books, including *Casting Sacred Space: The Core Of All Magickal Work*; *Spirit Speak: Knowing and Understanding Spirit Guides, Ancestors, Ghosts, Angels, and the Divine*; *Beneath the Skins* and most recently *Keys to Perception: A Practical Guide to Psychic Development* (Weiser, 2017.) His new column, "Second Star to the Right," begins in this issue.

FEATURED ARTISTS

Fantasy artist **TANYA STEWART** (artwork for "River Women") has been doing original illustrations for SageWoman and Witches&Pagans for more than a decade. Find her on etsy at her shop "Teinne."



BOB CUNEO (artwork for "From Soil to Sky") is a life-long Connecticut resident and retired college studio-art professor. For 25 years, his inked drawings and four-color covers appeared in *Circle Magazine*. Two of his small drawings are in Ray Buckland's *Complete Book of Witchcraft*. As an independent Nature Spiritualist, Bob casts the Sacred Circle every morning.

The illustration career of **DAN GOODFELLOW** (artwork for "So You Think You Can Dance?") has included backdrops for theatrical productions, album covers, comic books, faeries and mythological creatures, animation and childrens' books. On the rare occasions that he isn't holding a pencil, he can be found playing his drum on the top of Glastonbury Tor. He lives with his family in Somerset, UK. See his work at <http://www.dangoodfellow.co.uk/>



WRITERS & INTERVIEWERS (IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)



PATRICK BUTLER ("River Women") is professor emeritus of political science at City College of San Francisco where he taught for thirty years. His life has been immeasurably enriched by the

spirituality of his "witchy" Pagan wife Antoinette. Retiring in 1997, they moved to Washington State where they live in a magical place on the shores of Puget Sound.

BRYAN HEWITT ("It's All About the Water") is a life-long Animist who grew up in the forests of the Pacific Northwest and Appalachia where he was trained by Land Spirits, Gods and Ancestors. As an adult, the training continued and he began to step on to the Awenydd path that he now follows. He completed the Bardic Grade course of the Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids in 2015 and is a regular participant in Reclaiming rituals. More of Bryan's work can be found at <http://paganbloggers.com/bryanhewitt/>.



ALISON LEIGH LILLY ("So You Think You Can Dance?") grew up a shy Irish Catholic hippie girl, exploring the woods and fields surrounding her childhood home with the same curiosity and enthusiasm she would later bring to her studies of



mysticism and nature spirituality. She now resides in the lovely, rain-drizzled cityscape of Seattle, where she lives with her husband, her black cat and two pet frogs. She devotes her time to cultivating a spiritual life founded on peace, poesis, and attentive engagement with the inner and outer landscapes of wildness, wilderness and nature. She explores these themes through podcasting, essays, articles and poetry, and her work has appeared in a number of publications both in print and online. Find her website at www.alisonleighlilly.com.

You know that kid who spent all her free time outdoors, turning over rocks, catching garter snakes, and learning the names of the trees? That's **LUPA GREENWOLF** ("From Soil to Sky: Genius Loci in Pagan Practice.") She is the author of several books,



most recently *Nature Spirituality From the Ground Up: Connect With Totems In Your Ecosystem*, and is the creator of the *Tarot of Bones*. She currently splits her time between the Portland, Oregon area and the coast of Washington State. More about Lupa and her works may be found at <http://www.thegreenwolf.com>.

A Pagan and Witch who returned to university in 2004 in order to study ancient religions, **CAROLINE TULLY** ("Trees as Otherkin") gained a PhD in Aegean archaeology from the University of Melbourne, Australia in 2016. Her dissertation focuses on images of tree worship from the Aegean, Levant, Egypt and Cyprus. See her blog, *Necropolis Now*, at: <http://necropolisnow.blogspot.com/> and her *Academia.edu* page at: <http://unimelb.academia.edu/CarolineTully>



JOHN HALSTEAD (Interviewer, "The Path of the Goddess") is Editor-At-Large and a contributor at *HumanisticPaganism.com*. John is also the editor of the anthology, *Godless Paganism: Voices of Non-Theistic Pagans*.



John writes about Paganism and activism at *AllergicPagan.com*, *Huffington Post*, and at *GodsandRadicals.com*.

Ponderer, singer of songs, teller of stories, hill walker, daydreamer, editor, and Green activist. . .

NIMUE BROWN ("Nature, Thou Art My Goddess") writes and works for Moon Books, and also creates comics and novels. Find her at <https://druidlife.wordpress.com>



CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS. We are currently accepting articles for the following issues. #37 "Plant Allies," #38 "Folk Magic & Conjure," #39 "Shamanism: the Wilderness Within," and #40 "Beyond the Veil: Paranormal Paganism." Call 503-430-8817, email editor2@bbimedia.com or use the contact form at www.witchesandpagans.com to find out more.



Without Nature, We Are Nothing

Gratitude is good, but humility is even better.

It is a glorious February morning here in western Oregon. The light of the rising sun woke me out of a sound sleep, on this, the third day in a row of clear, cloudless skies. Yesterday I walked up to our local graveyard, and was rewarded with a four mountain day: the snow-capped volcanoes Jefferson, Adams, St. Helens, and Hood all covered in deep blue white snow and sparkling in the unusual winter sunlight.

But my appreciation of this beauty is colored by a shadow of awe, even a tinge of dread. Last fall, in northern California where our family lived for over a quarter-century hundreds of suburban homes just like mine — surrounded by majestic trees — were consumed by a fire storm in a single night. More than forty lives were lost in the wildfire that roared down from the hills and reduced whole neighborhoods to ash and rubble. Later that season, wildfires ravaged much of the coastal hills of Southern California, and just last month a series of mudslides on the same hills burned by the Thomas fire killed twenty in Montecito.

2017 was notable for a series of startling natural disasters. We've all heard of Harvey, Irma, and Maria: a trio of hurricanes that wreaked havoc in Texas, the Caribbean, Florida, and Puerto Rico, leaving dozens dead and civilization shredded. But even more destructive were the events that took place largely outside of our field of vision. Monsoons in India, Bangladesh, and Nepal; flooding and landslides in Sierra Leone; mudslides in Columbia; and the earthquake in Mexico City were responsible for thousands of deaths and millions made homeless and destitute.¹

But what does this all have to do with Natural Paganism? In this issue, our contributors explore the spiritual relationship between humans and Nature. Is this a relationship of equals? Rivals? Friends? Enemies? Of (climate) sinners in the hands of an angry God?

For many post-modern Pagans, Nature is at the center of their spiritual practice. This is precisely how I came to be Pagan. Although I grew up as a devout Christian, as a young adult I came to realize that my experience of the divine occurred almost exclusively in the natural world. As a newly-converted Pagan, I trusted implicitly in Mother Earth as a beneficent Being Who poured out Her gracious gifts from pure love. Once I had discovered Her (and that there were people who loved Her, too) the next logical step for me was to worship Her.

This simple belief — that to be Pagan means to worship Nature as divine — remains ubiquitous. One example of this phenomenon is something that happened when I posted a preview of this issue's cover with its theme "Natural Paganism" to Facebook. A reader commented: *Are there a whole lotta pagan paths that are unnatural? Disconnected from nature? [I am] Genuinely confused by your theme.*²

But in the wake of anthropogenic climate change — highlighted by this year's plethora of natural disasters — it is no longer easy to simply avow that "Nature = Goddess" and rest easy in the assumption that Nature has our best interests at heart. It has become obvious that the nature of Nature is much more complex than my one-time creed — an innocent faith that I now realize rested significantly in my affluence, privilege, and naiveté — can encompass.

Nature remains central to my Pagan belief, although I no longer cling to a childlike faith in a "Mother Earth" who takes personal care of me and mine. Instead, to riff off the musings of 20th century Protestant theologian Paul Tillich: "Nature is being-itself: beyond essence and existence."³ In short, without Nature — in which I believe all existence is embedded (even that of the gods, fae, and other non-corporeal beings) — we are nothing.

Gratitude for the beauty and bounty of the world is laudable, but the most appropriate attitude for humans in relation to Nature is humility. During their triumphal parades, ancient Roman heroes were said to be accompanied by slaves who whispered a warning in their ears: *Respice post te, hominem memento te* (Look behind you, and remember that you are mortal.)⁴ We would do well to remember — both in times of bounty and beauty, and when we experience unimaginable change — that Nature has Her own agenda.

Endnotes

¹ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/stem-awards/design/deadliest-natural-disasters/>

² I explained to the reader that "This issue is about Pagan Paths that are specifically nature-centric, including Pagans who do not worship gods/goddesses. Many Pagans today are deity-centric and may not reverence nature."

³ I have replaced Tillich's term "God" with "Nature." <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/camelswithhammers/2011/12/the-impossible-god-of-paul-tillich/#Ht4B1o7I9of8D25.99>

⁴ http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/secondary/SMIGRA*/Triumphus.html

ANNE NEWKIRK NIVEN is the Editor of *SageWoman and Witches&Pagans magazines*, and the *PaganSquare.com* community blogosphere.