

Material Ecocritical Patterns in Neil Gaiman's *American Gods*

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Abstract. *This paper explores the material ecocritical connections of Culture and Nature in American Gods (novel and TV series) by Neil Gaiman. This fantasy drama centers on Shadow Moon's strange experiences related to his encounter with Mr. Wednesday, a mysterious character who engages readers in discovering various mythological patterns. Religion, imagined here as a struggle between the old mythological gods and the new scientific gods, functions as a metaphor for human knowledge, hierarchies of power, worship, sacrifice, the power of belief, dream, hope or universal irony. In the novel, space is not conceived as an empty human abstraction, but a locus within which the narrative is unfolding, revealing an interplay between the cultural subject and the natural object. The latter is no longer perceived just as an epistemological construct of the human psyche, but also a carrier of meaning. Thus, human subjectivity is not the only carrier of agency or narrative power, because the environment has also an agentive narrative discourse; in other words, it has a story to tell. The narrative gods represent a representation both of the human and of the natural and, in this way, Nature becomes the discursive/storied matter in which the sound of the silent non-speaking world is reenacted.*

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