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 reenchanted.*

Keywords*: Material Ecocriticism, American Gods, mythology, agency, matter*

1. The Sound of Silent Nature

Neil Gaiman's novel/drama television series "American Gods" is a popular fantasy that describes the life and habits in the small towns of America. The basic premise of the novel is that gods exist within the same realm as humans, from an indefinite immemorial time until today, when the story is unfolding. Just before his scheduled release from prison, Shadow Moon is told that his wife has been killed in a car accident, and he is released early to attend the funeral. An unfortunate series of events delays his trip home, during which time he meets the mysterious Mr. Wednesday. This character repeatedly offers Shadow a job, which he refuses until Wednesday reveals that the job waiting for him at home no longer exists. Shadow accepts the offer to become Wednesday's driver, assistant and bodyguard. Shadow finds out that the characters encountered belong to a hidden world where magic is real, and where the Old Gods fear irrelevance amid the growing power of the New Gods, including Technology and Media. Imagining a masterplan to combat the menace, Mr. Wednesday attempts to convene the Old Gods in order to preserve their existence and reconstruct the influence they have lost upon humanity. In the meantime, Shadow struggles to accept the new world and the place he has in it.

Being an interfusion of cultures and peoples, America is infused with mythological gods brought by immigrants from all over the world. The so-called immortal gods can be killed and are often powerless because they derive their power from the belief, worship and sacrifices of their human followers. In the novel, the old

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gods are failing because their followers have forgotten them and, in their place, are emerging a new pantheon of contemporary gods such as Road, Computer, Media, Town, Car etc. In view of all this, we may say that both categories of gods, generated by the human mind, are human creation (through faith, action and worship) and, in this sense, are consubstantial to/with humanity.

Perceiving gods as not stemming from a transcendental realm of existence, but from a plane of experiential immanence equals understanding that gods are not literally true but that they derive their reality from ours. They are metaphors in terms of making comparisons or being substitutes of human intrinsic energies such as fear of wildness/death/punishment/authority/unknown or joy of marriage/love/natural contemplation. In this sense, the novel's author argues that:

> Religions are, by definition, metaphors, after all God is a dream, a hope a woman, an ironist (sic), a father, a city, a house of many rooms, a watchmaker who left his prize chronometer in the desert, someone who loves you -even, perhaps, against all evidence, a celestial being whose only interest it to make sure your football team, army, business or marriage thrives, prospers and triumphs over all the opposition. Religions are places to stand and look and act, vantage points from which to view the world. (Gaiman 397)

The world is conceptualized as carrying ecological, mythological, technological/scientific and cultural meanings. Gaiman sees plurality and change as the central characteristics of America; he suggests that one part of America is constant and undoubtedly sacred: the land itself. The land is the concrete and spiritual foundation of all that America is, as its resources anchor the country and make all of its advancement and achievement possible. While the gods are emphatic presences in American life and human individuals are also worshipped like gods, the land often goes unnoticed. Shadow perceives the land being infused with spirituality—this spiritual force may be the source of reality itself. Here, the "backstage" metaphor (Gaiman 271, 272, 280, 352, 418) functions as a reminder of the fact that every real text has its counter-text, a spatial con-, sub-, extra-, inner- or metatextual reality in which con artists symbolically enter this world for manipulating it.

The true power of America is not easily seen amid all the flash and production of (post)modern American life, and the land is perhaps even more powerful because it is perceived as invisible. Apparently, the land is dissociated from the gods' invisible work upon ordinary people; nevertheless, the telluric and divine energies are intertwined. The invisibility of the land is related to human-cultural use as voiceless means of production, consumption and wastes. From a cultural perspective, nature is silent and ought to be animated only by the technological sound of progress (new gods) or by the transcendental sound of mythical powers (old gods).

Although many characters do not acknowledge the Land's power, one can see several forceful hints about the sanctity and importance of the land. Whiskey

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Jack tells Shadow that the land is older than people and wiser than people, and he further points out that Native American peoples felt no need to build churches because the land is their church:

> This is not a good country for gods. My people figured that out early on. There are creator spirits who found the earth or made it or shit it out … But we never built churches. We didn't need to. The land was the church. The land was the religion. The land was older and wiser than the people who walked on it. (Gaiman 400)

The refusal to create new gods seems wise, considering that the land actually provides tangible resources for people, while the gods tend to take power from people without giving anything in return. This underlines the divine legitimacy of the land, and undercuts the gods' claims to sacredness. In this respect, as in many religious systems, we can see that Nature is the primordial universal force, which/who precedes both humans and gods. Encompassing these beliefs within the larger array of pre-Columbian and European-Greek mythologies, we may, indeed, argue that Land precedes godlike worship. The divine entity Gaia-Mother Earth is the cosmological source for Uranus-The Sky, the pre-Olympian titans and, eventually, the Olympian gods, who resembled humans.

Furthermore, the myriad of gods in America does not take energy from the land in an irreversible manner, because the land itself represents the actant which has allowed gods to stay and manifest in America. The land is both the source for divinity and for technological human advance. The Buffalo Man, the manifestation of the land itself that speaks in Shadow's dreams, says

> "[The Gods] never understood that they were here—and the people who worshiped them were here—because it suits us [the land] that they are here. But we can change our minds …"
> "Are you a god?" asked Shadow.
> The buffalo-headed man shook his head. Shadow thought, for a moment, that the creature was amused. "I am the land," he said. (Gaiman 430)

Another metaphoric signifier for the perceived voiceless Land/Nature is Easter, a novelistic character who carries two main symbolic meanings. The first meaning is cultural and it might be related to the new gods, because Easter represents the Western paradigm of a well-established and developed mercantile market of products and services. The twentieth and twenty-first centuries have brought a new meaning to civilization, in general. People's wishes and beliefs are objectified into concrete and purchasable products and, thus, the cultural objects have been commodified, including Easter. On the other hand, this holiday/character has carried multiple religious, theological and mythological meanings.

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Concerning Easter, the Germanic goddess of earth, the religious manifestations imply a large array of worship traditions and myths, all related to the sacred land, spring, resurrection, fertility and harvest. Every natural cycle implies a life, a death and a resurrection, in order to afford a new beginning: "Easter walked through the meadow, and spring flowers blossomed where she had passed." (Gaiman 402). Easter, Ostara or Ēostre represents the goddess who incarnates spring, the season of changes and resurrection of Nature. Again, the natural realm, which displays metaphoric human features, begins to blossom, which makes the basic rhythms of reality be heard. The feminine and telluric principle of fertility makes the constructed silence of the land be reenchanted.

Concerning the Judeo-Christian tradition, Easter represents both a physical and a spiritual Passover, from a prior state of slavery to higher state of freedom. It also represents an act of Resurrection, in which the theandric Son of God, through his hypostatic union, sublimates the binarization of divinity and humanity, human-natural, supranatural-natural. In this sense, the apophatic and unvoiced divinity becomes articulated through a human voice, the godlike new human overflows his agentive energy into the perceived non-agentive nature, and the transcendent darkness of the unseen becomes an immanent and lucent voice to be heard.

When arguing that there is an energetic transfer of meaning, agency and volition from divinity to nature through a godlike humanity, we may also infer that there is a (quasi)metaphoric transfer of meaning among different realms of knowledge – divine, human and natural. From an ecocritical perspective, the term eco-anthropomorphism (Osoianu 232), semantically situated between ecomorphism and anthropomorphism, might be appropriate for describing the complex and hybrid act of transferring both natural features to human beings, because humanity is a product of nature, and human features to gods, through metaphoric understanding of natural phenomena as being transcendent and personal. Nevertheless, this aesthetics is, somehow, counter-anthropomorphic, because, on the one hand, the supposedly voiceless nature is the epistemic center, and, on the other hand, the human being is a product of nature, not the other way round. This process of transfer is pervasive throughout the novel.

Although Nature itself is comprehended through the agency of the Human, its silence reflects the power of agency and even has a proto-personal voice of manifestation. Nature carries a voice and a sound to be heard because it represents the material source of human evolution, the mythological source of religion and the productive source of the cultural-technological civilization. The cultural sound of humanity is active due to its oikos or its ecological spatial counterpart. A comprehensive view on the relationship between gods and humankind may be related to the term *material ecotheology* (Osoianu 232), semantically situated

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between a Christian-panentheistic vision and a Hindu/Buddhist pantheistic vision[1]. Thus, in *American Gods*, the divine presence is contextually negotiated. In some cases, divinity is understood as both transcendent, residing in higher levels of existence, and immanent, through the divine logoi residing within Creation/Nature (when various characters have visions of divine beings and, at the same time, those beings belong to the real world). In other cases, divinity is consubstantial to nature; thus, nature has got Gaian features and is sacred (the land itself is a god). All realities, divine, human or natural, are embedded within immanence, at least, on the level of perception. This pervasive materiality provides a better understanding of the way by which different ecological voices are or can be compatible.

2. A Material Ecocritical Perspective

The theory of Material Ecocriticism, an offspring of ecocritical theory, relates to the ecological philosophy of subjectivity; it is intimately connected to New Materialism and to the poststructuralist movement of the Cultural Turn. According to material ecocriticism, the reality in which we live is symbolically constructed through language, because the object of human thought is considered to be dependent on the human mind or the thinking subject. Nonetheless, this paradigmatic dependence ought to be corroborated with the idea that the object also exerts an influence upon the subject. In other words, that there is a reflexive continuity of substance between the subject and the object of thinking (Osoianu 40)[2].

On the one hand, we can construct reality through language; in *American Gods*, religion represents a cultural and linguistic body of beliefs, hopes and fears, through the agency of which the human psyche constructs new realities. Furthermore, the gods' features of subjectivity are borrowed both from Nature and from the Human. In this sense, the ecological space is voiced through the human/cultural sound. On the other hand, the technological sound of civilization, the mythological sound of religion and the articulated-evolutionary sound of the human

[1] The Eastern Systematic Theology distinguishes between the homogeneous divine energies (which are consubstantial to divinity, although different from essence/*ousia*) and heterogeneous energies (which are extrinsic manifestations of divinity and, at the same time, are intrinsic to Creation/Nature). Nevertheless, the heterogeneous divine energies or logoi are not consubstantial to Nature, but represents its transcendent logos/reason to exist. Whereas, the Hindu/Buddhist divine energies are immanent and intrinsic to Nature (pantheistic, meaning that God is Nature)), the Christian divine energies are both transcendent and intrinsic to Nature (panentheistic, meaning that God is in Nature). Material Ecotheology (Material Ecocriticism and Theology) represents a term that I coined during my doctoral research, which reveals the paradoxical situation in which transcendence is embedded within immanence.

[2] There is a Cartesian dualist opposition (subject-object, body-mind, inside-outside, human-nature) in which the former term of this binary opposition is culturally considered to be superior to the latter (which needs to be tamed). However, the object/nature is not inert, but animated by the same material substance as the subject/the human. In this sense, the influence is reflexive because the human mind has a response on behalf of the objective Nature.

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voice would not have been possible without the primordial sound of ecological silence.

From a material ecocritical perspective, this natural-cultural continuum of voices makes Nature be imagined as Matter, in its larger sense of existence and subsistence. The material Nature exists, so it is eternal, and subsists, so it is experienced through various ontological perspectives or levels of comprehension as transcendental (unknown for the regular human beholder), immanent (full of pantheist energies and mythological constructed subjectivities), cultural (the ecological space seen as a transformed/humanized locus of existence), synthetic (the material nature is redefined in order to technologically recreate it). All this is perceived and experienced in a material manner, meaning that the origin stems from and remains in nature or, simply put, the origin and its cultural and technological effects are natural.

> This world … is far from being a "pure exterior," … It is filled instead with intermingling agencies and forces that persist and change over eons, producing new forms, bodies, and natures. It is through all these natures, agencies, and bodies that "the world we inhabit," with all its stories, is "alive." The conceptual argument of Material Ecocriticism is simple in its outlines: the world's material phenomena are knots in a vast network of agencies, which can be "read" and interpreted as forming narratives, stories. (Iovino, Oppermann, Material Ecocriticism 1)

Space, conceived as a binary opposition of interior and exterior loci, represents a cultural construct. As argued before, the production of space ought not to be solely the prerogative of the human-cultural realm, but also the prerogative of Nature, understood as a material continuity of all natures[3]. In *American Gods*, one way of underlining the lack of exterior boundaries is through the word "country" (Gaiman 3), which, at the beginning, is related to a larger geographical space. Country does not represent just a finite political and institutional construct, but an open space between Aurora Borealis and the rising sun. Every culturally constructed interior space has got a larger exterior space; in reality, the binarization interior-exterior is broken. In chapter three, the word "country" (44) carries negative meanings and is associated with suffering, silence and hell (4). This time, silence does not directly relate to Nature, but to Society.

Slowly, "country" becomes "countryside" and, in the novel, this fluctuation is shown through the city of Chicago, which "happened slowly, like a migraine. First, they were driving through countryside, then, imperceptibly, the occasional town became a low suburban sprawl, and the sprawl became the city" (Gaiman 58). The

[3] Nature, as a generic substance, consists of all culturally perceived natures (human, religious, non-human etc.). In reality, all natures are homogeneous/consubstantial.

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production of urban space implies that the sound of civilizing urbanites stems from the constructed/perceived unsounded voice of Nature, from which the human beings have taken the raw materials for building and dwelling. In this sense, a "metabolic circulation"[4] between apparently heterogeneous spaces occurs, wherein the material sound is negotiated according to the way by which the agentive voice is understood and perceived. The eclectic and symbolic circulation of voices is realized through the circulation on connecting roads; the novel is full of such references. The road may represent an opportunity for discovering new spatial meanings and functions as a rite of passage to different layers and levels of reality, geographical, emotional, moral, mythological etc.

Within the multi-layered mesh of reality, time is another dimension of space and, in this sense, one could talk about spacetime, a manifold-dimensional and post-Euclidian space. From a psychological perspective, time may be understood as a spatial perception of duration. In the novel, gods circulated from European countries to the American land; moreover, they circulated throughout different epochs and eons: "We come over here together, long time ago" (Gaiman 61). The agentic communication between the heterogeneous portions of spacetime is achieved by gods through the agency of their divine powers. Nevertheless, it shall not be forgotten that the voice of this authority represents just the effect of the agentive voice of the humans' belief; in other words, the circulation of different agencies is pervasive within the whole ecological system. From a sub-microscopic level, time may be understood as an indefinite interplay between subatomic particles, waves and radiation. Time has a similar status as space; the former is not just a subjective-psychological or objective-cosmic realization of the latter, but a consubstantial part of it: "Time is certainly of the essence" (Gaiman 17)

The connectedness of spaces and times also relates to the circulation between different realms or dimensional spaces. Non-locality represents a fundamental feature of spacetime and, along with the principle of improbability, it relates to the quality of space (spatial particles) to transcend the perceived reality towards a mythical/extra-dimensional one, wherein the oppositions of subject and object, mind and exterior, real and unreal are overcome. This complex quantum reality makes the static cultural constructs of reality be shattered by the acknowledgement of the fact that heterogeneous post-binary particles and spaces can be con-joined or entangled:

> This complex entanglement is "called 'quantum contextualism,' where correlated nonlocal connections exist between apparently separate particles." In this regard, quantum physics undeniably shatters "the stark Cartesian division between mind and world" […] when referring to the individual electron acting like a wave when we know it is a particle, which discloses a

[4] The concept of "metabolic circulation" comes from Heynen et al., who apply Justus von Liebig's notion of metabolism to social-urban processes.

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> state of uncertainty and undecidability. Does not this humorous metaphor habitually make the convoluted nature of the wave-particle dichotomy the subject of literary imagination? […] In other words, it is through the interactions of humanistic and physics discourses that we can meet the universe halfway in configuring narrative codes about the entanglements of matter and meaning, and in decoding the elusive principles of reality based on an intrinsically "crazy" quantum logic. ("Quantum Physics and Literature: How They Meet the Universe Halfway" 95-97)

In the novel, the wave-particle dichotomy relates to the uncertainty of the perceived reality, which is, in many cases, deceptive. When discussing the wave principle of reality, we may focus on the leitmotif of light, which can be artificial (when related to the new gods or civilization), natural (when related to the sun), or symbolic for passing to another level of reality. The main character, Shadow Moon, is sometimes surrounded by light (Gaiman 66); he is a semi-god and, without even knowing, mediates between the worlds of old gods, new gods and ordinary people. His name suggests the symbolic marriage between the ecological spaces of Human and God, between the ignorance of everyday life and the extraordinary opportunities of divine knowledge. As suggested, the narrative is intricate and, apparently, there is no unifying plot, much like (metaphorically) the instability of knowledge concerning quantum relationship between the observer and the observed:

> light is a wave and a particle, that there's a cat in a box somewhere who's alive and dead at the same time (although if they don't ever open the box to feed it it'll eventually just be two different kinds of dead), and that there are stars in the universe billions of years older than the universe itself. (Gaiman 307-308)

Corroborating the previous ideas related to the reality of spacetime with the narrative belief that there is a material connection between the real perceived space and the fictional unreal space, one may argue that time-places glide within themselves and occupy the same real-unreal fictional place. Binaries oppositions such as cause-effect, time-space, subject-object and quanta-wave are sublimated towards a quantic-material reality, in which the human merges with the nonhuman. In the production of space, the interplay between presence and absence and between interior and exterior relates to an inter-agentive inter-textuality, wherein the texture of the seen reality resonates with the unseen one. Light (Gaiman 100-102) is the material means of communication between worlds and needs to be understood through diffractive lenses, because the heterogeneous loci are both distorted and connected. The quantum entanglement of the cultural self and the mythological other shows a consubstantial continuity between them, even though they are different (Osoianu 164-166).

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Concerning this entanglement of opposite ecological spaces, the "carousel" (Gaiman 96-103, 110) conveys the idea of connecting the realm of humanity with the mythological backstage, wherein the gods manifest themselves as true powerful entities. The carousel is a spinning wheel, full of light, color and the sound of music; it represents a gate towards a hidden reality of yet unheard voices. The shape of the wheel suggests that reality is non-linear, meaning there is no horizontal continuity of logical cause and effect. The wheel is like Dharmachakra[5] or the Wheel of Dharma (in the novel, there is a character named Mama-Ji or the Hindu goddess of destruction and time). It symbolizes the passing of time which connects the individual mind (in this case, Shadow Moon) to the universal mind, atman to brahman. In order to obtain the state of Nirvana, the present time needs to be transcended to an aeonic perpetual time, an immanent ideal order, which encompasses all temporal lines.

Indeed, Shadow does not know whether that space is imagined/fictionalized or real; instead, he sees and hears the voices of gods, from different spaces, times and cultures. In the carousel, the quantum improbability is tested in terms of experiencing antithetical states of consciousness. The interpretation of those voices/sounds is difficult because Shadow's cultural "sounds" cannot decode immediately an unknown mythological language. Nevertheless, as inferred before, there is a co-emergent flow of meanings/sounds and a material circulation of agencies between the human identity and the mythological alterity, between the real and the unreal, and between the ecological/palpable self and the fictional other: Gradually, the unknown sound of that reality becomes perceivable and coherent to the human ear.

> There are also geological, biological, and cosmic stories that compel us to envision the physical world as storied matter teeming with countless narrative agencies that infiltrate every imaginable space and make the world intelligible […] By conflating our interpretive practices with the horizons of numerous narrative agencies, material ecocriticism seeks to analyze their meanings disseminated across this storied world, across the stories of material flows, substances and forces that form a web of entangled relations with the human reality. This fusion of horizons has a liberating effect of moving the human vision from the language of otherness to that of differential co-emergence. (Oppermann, "Material Ecocriticism and the Creativity of Storied Matter" 57, 67)

The carousel, as a symbol for interconnectedness, resembles the "world tree" (Gaiman 54, 351, 363, 385) or Yggdrasil, in Norse cosmology, which connects the nine worlds. There is an ecological continuity from its root to its branches, in order to unite heaven and hell, the spiritual realm and humanity. The All-Father – Odin is

[5] Dharmachakra is a pervasive Hindu/Buddhist symbol for enlightenment and universal order.

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the keeper of the tree; being the supreme god of wisdom and knowledge, he shares the universal logos with the ones who have the ability to understand the inner meanings of reality:

> All-Father hung from the world-tree, his side pierced and dripping from the spear-point's wound, and he sang them all the things the All-Father had learned in his agony: nine names, and nine runes, and twice-nine charms. (Gaiman 54)

Yggdrasil is like a generic ecological body, connecting oppositional spaces, linking the subject who tries to understand the sound of logos[6] and the "logical" object of understanding. In the novel, Shadow identifies himself with the tree, underlining his narrative symbol for interconnectedness: "In his delirium, Shadow became the tree. Its roots went deep into the loam of the earth, deep down into time, into the hidden springs" (Gaiman 363).

The increasing attention paid to nature as matter and to concrete existence actually means that there is an awareness and a focus on the generic body and on the non-binary subject – object category. In American Gods, the plot gravitates around ordinary people, with ordinary material lives. Magical realism is added in order to deconstruct aesthetically the perceived objectivity and the magical subjectivity of the human mind. The human subject is no longer in a radical/binary opposition to the material/natural object of perception, nor does the perceived world represent just a cultural construct. The subject and the object are connected because they are made from/of the same material substance; the material object has agency.

The agency of matter ought to be viewed as an interplay between the human realm and the nonhuman one, within a discursive-material dynamics, producing its own "logoi" and being capable to tell its own story (Osoianu 42). It unfolds in two ways (Oppermann, "Material Ecocriticism: Materiality, Agency, and Models of Narrativity" 79). First, it is described in the narrative text as it is perceived by the human environment. Second, it enters the human discourse with agentive meanings, significations and ideas. The material discourse implies a dialogue between the human and the non-human. The latter, consisting of objectified human dreams (gods) and embodied natural elements (gods' power or traits as Nature's manifestations), has a story to tell within a larger material narrative.

Having a narrative power by itself, the "storied matter" (Oppermann, "Material Ecocriticism: Materiality, Agency, and Models of Narrativity" 83) can implement or embody narrative texts and ideas into the realm of the human agency. In this way, the generic text carries a twofold texture. The first is the human text, which has material origins and is socially and culturally constructed. The second is the text of the non-human domain, which may consist in electricity, atoms, cells,

[6] In Hinduism and Buddhism, the logos of creation is associated with the sound of matter.

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toxins, waste, virtually every 'natural' object or 'thing'. The non-human text exerts influence over the human text, in that it has agency: Mr. Wednesday (Odin) extracts agentic power from his followers (the human text), Mr. World (Loki) mediates between the old gods and the new ones through the pervasive agency of the material world, Media is the goddess who sublimates the natural medium into a more powerful artificial medium (at the same time, material and natural), Technical Boy represents the becoming Nature which is continuously tamed and transformed according (apparently) to human wishes.

In America (and not only there), the space is agentive because the material reality consists of various eclectic texts, which interact and transform themselves. Not only does the human psyche construct realities, but also the human reality is constructed by material alterities. The magical world of the old gods and the technological world of the new gods, although human creation, exert agentive influence over humanity and its development. These rhizomatic assemblages form an intertextual discourse, full of intra-active agencies and generative powers. This new born discourse is part of us and of our material selves, in this manner, the corporeal dimensions, human or not, being linked to the material world in an existential playing of knowing and being, of perceiving and being localized in an "agentive" space (Osoianu 42).

Thus, Culture and Nature are co-actants of the same material discourse, sharing the same existential substance. The environment becomes natural-cultural-material and the human being lives in an (in)organic flux of material forces or subjectivities. The corporeal selves and the material bodies reveal an ontic symbiosis in which all organisms, ecosystems and substances coexist. The so-called "trans-corporeality," as a movement across natural and human bodies, represents the main premise for the interconnected agencies of nature (Oppermann, "Material Ecocriticism: Materiality, Agency, and Models of Narrativity" 85). Not only the humans have bodies, but also the mythological and technological entities; in this sense, subjectivity takes shape across and through multiple corporealities. In a symbolic manner, the human Shadow Moon becomes the non-human Baldur, the god of light, joy and beauty, in a perfect harmony with Nature and Humans (in accordance to Norse mythology). He is the metaphorical mediator between the old and the new gods, the human and nature, the thinking subject and the perceived object. In *American Gods*, the ontological discourse includes both the human and natural agencies. Nature is pervasive and material, it has a voice to be heard and a story to be told.

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