Arnos Vale Cemetery and the lively materialities of trees in place.

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Abstract

This paper tells a story of the Victorian cemetery movement and one particular and controversial example – Arnos Vale Cemetery in Bristol, South-west England. The narrative shows how places such as this are distinct spaces, but also fluxes of process where all manner of flows of materialities, politics, culture and economy come together to spatilise the place into being. This being is, however, unstable and given to change as variations in unfolding presences and agencies occur. Attention is first given to the emergence of the new cemeteries in the 19th century and the influential cemetery design of JC Loudon and the tree planting he advocated. Trees were central to Loudon's 'cemetery style' and he drew on the vastly expanded palette of available trees species being collected from around the world, and on tree cultures/spaces from ancient times and exotic places, to develop his exacting specifications. Then attention turns to Arnos Vale itself and its markedly mixed and changing fortunes and formations over the last 170 years. This history is cross-cut it with current interests in the agency of non-humans and theorisations of places as dynamic processes with all manner of things coming together (intentionally and otherwise) over time. Trees bring their own lively materialities and temporalities to these places which inevitably transform them, despite best laid plans, and reconfigure them in the shifting material space of the city and in the complex cultural contexts (local to global) which surround them.

'Trees are [ ] at the heart of things. How could it be otherwise?' (Tudge: 2005, 404)

Introduction

Designed landscapes, and places such as gardens, arboreta and cemeteries, seem to offer us quintessentially cultural landscapes. They are socially constructed in terms of meaning *and* materiality (Castree, 2005). 'Nature' is harnessed and manipulated.

Meaning, power, ideologies of nature and landscape, and more (such as nationhood), are articulated through material arrangements which can be read as 'texts', not least through iconography (Cosgrove and Daniels, 1988). The places formed seem first and foremost relatively static, bounded spaces which the social has created, readable as topographical and cultural in spaces in terms of politics, power and economy, and through which the social moves.

Such views of nature, place and landscape are important in the way they challenge the 'naturalness' and giveness' of landscape and open up questions of culture, power and economy. Yet they are also being challenged by approaches which deny the sharp divide between the social (active) and the natural (passive) and the over privileging of the social over the natural in terms of agency (Whatmore, 2002). Non-human and relational agency is to the fore in these new approaches, places and landscapes are seen as processes as well as spaces, and the spaces themselves in more topological mappings of flows and connections.

In this paper I tell the story of Arnos Vale Cemetery (AVC) from these perspectives, treating it as a place in process. Trees are treated as key non-human agents, whose lively presences and actions have to be accounted for in gaining an understanding of how the cemetery, as a spatialised process, has changed over time. These theoretical orientations are first expanded upon in relation to trees and place, then the interwoven story of the 19th century cemetery movement and AVC itself is told with a narrative thread which focuses as far as is possible on the trees of this remarkable landscape.

Trees and places in motion

Trees are unruly things. Along with the atmospheric, landscape and habitat 'services' they provide, they grow, spread branches, sprout leaves, flowers and fruit, send out suckers, spread roots, produce and broadcast seeds, drop leaves (in one form or another) and limbs, block light and lines of sight, make a noise, move, harbor visitors, and die. They can live for hundreds of years and grow to a great size. Thus they can be formidable presences, individually and collectively, in the places where they are sited (Harrison, 1991). They can mark and make places (Jones and Cloke, 2002). As Bail (1998) has it, 'it is trees which compose a landscape' (16).

Thus trees have forms of agency. But it is important to realize that their agency, as with the agency of other non-humans (Latour, 2004), operates in very different ways to human agency (Jones and Cloke, 2008). Their creative capacities take different forms to those of other actors (and vary *within* the tree community). One important difference is that they generally operate at very different velocities and rhythms to those of human action. The growth of trees is slow, even invisible by the standards of human movement. Longer terms perspectives, over decades and longer, are needed to see their agency at work. The hydraulic force of tree growth can be formidable. Trees can topple large blocks of masonry (Fig 1).

Figure 1. Tombs broken by tree growth. Arnos Vale Cemetery, Bristol , 1999.

Places such as cemeteries, arboreta and gardens *are* spaces in an Euclidean sense. It is often easy to map them in terms of location, fixed boundaries (legal and material), and topographical features. AVC is a 45 acre site near the centre of Bristol (fig 2) surrounded on two sides by dense inner-city housing. It comprises a labyrinth of older and new paths and mosaic of areas used for burial and remembrance. There is a flat 'top plateau', and a curling flank of steep slope which in part wraps around a further flat area by the main gate. Here are sited two chapels and a crematorium. (Fig 3).

Figure 2. Arnos Vale Cemetery: location in Bristol.

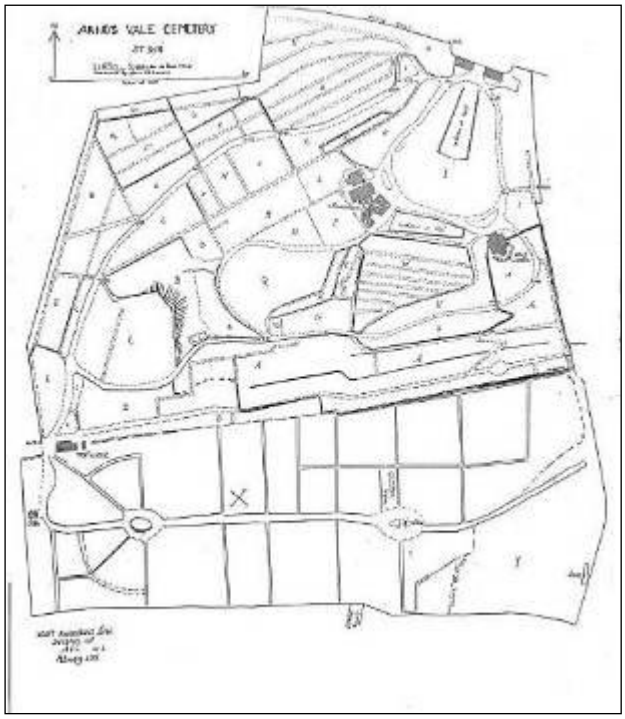

Figure 3. Map of Arnos Vale Cemetery, showing paths and areas used for burial.

AVC, and all other places, as well as being read as fixed space need to seen through three other related prisms. The first is that, as Massey (2005) suggests, they are fully 'wired' into the wider world in terms of flows and connections, even though they seem to have a separate and unique form and identity. These flows are material,

social, cultural and economic. No neat distinction or privilege can be made between the social (human) and the physical (non-human). The second, related view is that these flows fluctuate and change, combine and recombine moment by moment, day by day, year by year, decade by decade and so on.

Places (such as AVC) are then *processes unfolding through time* (Ingold, 1993; Harvey, 1996; Thrift, 1999) They are outcome of many things (including people, ideas, economies, organisms, artefacts) coming and going, combining and recombining. Things brought together, thrown together, forced apart. There is an unruly chemistry to these combinings. There is contingency and unpredictability about how differing things turn up and interact.

The third prism follows from this. Within this unruly chemistry of place things play a creative (even if destructive) part. Non-human agency has to be given 'its due' (Thrift, 1996). As Actor Network Theory (Callon, 1986, 1991; Callon and Law, 1995; Latour, 1993; Law, 1994) insists, to attribute agency to the social world alone is a profoundly disabling misreading of the nature of everyday life. Clearly human agency has distinctive qualities but that does not mean that nature and the materiality of the world is rendered 'inert'. As Latour (2004: 226) puts it:

> there might exist many metaphysical shades between full causality and sheer non-existence [in terms of agency]: things might authorise, allow, afford, encourage, permit, suggest, influence, block, render possible, forbid and so on. [ ] No *science of the social can even begin if the question of who and what participates in action is not first opened up, even though it might mean letting elements enter, that, for lack of a better term, we call nonhumans*. (emphasis added)

In this view, places are spatialised processes with a rich flux of throughput in which human and non-human actors are busy. The latter 'thing-power materialism' (Bennett, 2004: 347) is an expression of 'the vitality, wilfulness, and recalcitrance possessed by nonhuman entities and forces' (ibid). One way this 'actency soup' can be read is in how places go though waves of apparent order and disorder as combinations of materials, actors and agencies recombine. Places are the products of planning,

ordering and construction (by human and non-humans) but can also be deconstructed, re/disordered by unruly, other agencies (human and non-human). They can be defended, and carefully managed and maintained, but this takes effort. They can be terminated in a material sense, yet still live on as memories, maps, old photos, ghosts, and feint and material traces (Pile, 2005).

As Amin and Thrift (2002: 30) summarise;

> Places [ ] are best thought of not so much as enduring sites but as moments of encounter, not so much as 'presents', fixed in space and time, but as variable events; twists and fluxes of interrelation. Even when the intent is to hold places stiff and motionless, caught in a cat's cradle of networks that are out to quell unpredictability, success is rare, and then only for a while. Grand porticos and columns framing imperial triumphs become theme parks. Areas of wealth and influence become slums.

Given their formidable materiality and energies, trees can be particularly powerful reconfigurers of place, albeit caught up in a whole web of relational interactions with other agents. Their (literal) rootedness in place has implications, but they also need to be seen as mobile forces. Though self-seeding and plant collection and commercialisation, trees species have been long on the move on local, regional and global scales and can turn up in a place like AVC. They are also on the move culturally and politically as landscape and ecological sensibilities change around them. Once in place they can become fulcrums and all kinds of shifting management, cultural, political and emotional discourses/practices as well as active material beings - growing, reproducing, moving, sounding, and going through their daily and seasonal routines.

I want narrate how AVC has morphed over time, transforming from one kind of space to another and then another, in contingent, unpredictable ways. I want to try to chart just some of the cultural and political 'events', often from far afield, but sometimes more local in scale, which have flowed into AVC and settled out into particular form. I also want to think how there has been a waxing a waning of order, a movement from chaos (elsewhere) to precise order, and then to disorder, and then on again to new

futures and new orders. I want to show; how the trees have been key agents of change, but also in some senses, agents of continuity; how the material presences of trees are extensions of political, symbolic and even ethical imaginations; and yet how the trees always exceed the roles prescribed for them. This is so even for the highly ordered and influential designs of J. C. Loudon – the key figure in the development of Victorian cemeteries and other horticultural and arboreal spaces.

Grave disorder and the Victorian cemetery movement

One challenge of thinking about places in this way is to determine meaningful beginnings and meaningful moments of influence. All histories and places have a pre-history and all moments of beginning can be deferred. And many streams of action feed into the moments when processes combine and recombine to spatialise and respatialise a place into being and into change. However, at least part of the immediate genesis of AVC was the conditions in early 19th century cities which gave rise to the new cemetery movement.

The inception of the cemeteries was bound up with a range of political, cultural and economic trajectories. This was an era of economic boom and developing 19 century entrepreneurship and capitalism after the Napoleonic wars, when British wealth and power was booming (Drummond, 2005). The industrial revolution and related urbanisation had caused town and cities to outgrow their fragile service infrastructures. This was not least in terms of burial grounds which became overwhelmed by the new populations and the urban poor, as Dickens describes in *Bleak House,* as Lady Deadlock seeks the grave of her lost, destitute lover, Nemo.

> 'He was put there', says Jo, holding to the bars and looking in.
>
> 'Where? O, what a scene of horror!'
>
> 'There!' said Jo pointing. 'Over yinder. Among them piles of bones, and close to that kitchen wider! They put him very nigh the top. They was obliged to stamp on it to git it in. I could unkiver it for you with my broom if the gates was open. That's why they locks it, I s'pose', giving it a shake. 'It's always locked. Look at the rat!' cries Jo, excited. 'Hi, look! There he goes! Ho! Into the ground!"

‘Is this place of abomination, consecrated ground?’ (Dickens, 1996: 262)

Dickens did not exaggerate the shocking conditions of the urban graveyards of London, and he was careful to hint at unhealthy transfers, pointing out the kitchen window and the rat.

Dr John Simon, in the 1849 *City Medical Reports*, wrote of the problems of the old burial grounds in London.

> Nor can I refrain from adding [ ] that, in the performance of intramural interment, there constantly occur disgusting incidents dependent on overcrowdedness of the burial ground; incidents which convert the extremest solemnity of religion into an occasion for sickness or horror; perhaps mingling with the ritual of the Church some clamour of grave-diggers who have miscalculated their space; perhaps diffusing among the mourners some nauseous evidence and conviction, that a prior tenant of the tomb has been prematurely displaced, or that the spade has impatiently anticipated the slower dismembering of decay. Cases of this nature are fresh in the memory of the public; cases of extreme nuisance and brutal desecration in place of decent and solemn interment. (Simon, 1849: web page).

In the light of the horrors of the graveyards which were the inevitable resting places of the poor, many wealthy citizens chose interment in vaults under churches. But this practice posed other problems. The sealed lead lined coffins were in danger of explosion if not ‘tapped by the sexton in charge’ (ibid) to relieve the build up of gases from decomposition. The wooden casings of the coffins eventually rotted and the lead coffin liners collapsed and split. Thus, as Dr Simon put it, the interned corpse ‘spreads the products of its decomposition through the air as freely as if no shell had encased it’ (ibid), and was not preserved and mummified as was the common belief. He graphically concluded;

> It is a very serious matter for consideration, that close beneath the feet of those who attend the services of their church, there often lies an almost solid pile of decomposing human remains, co-extensive with the area of the building, heaped

> as high as the vaulting will permit, and generally but very partially confined. (ibid).

Such circumstances, given the prevailing understanding of the spread of infectious diseases through malignant miasmas, were argued by civic reformers to be a major health risk.

> The atmosphere in which epidemic and infectious diseases most readily diffuse their poison and multiply their victims is one in which organic matters are undergoing decomposition (ibid).

The old geographies of burial. small parish church graveyards and church vaults, clearly could not cope with the growing populations of the newly industrialised cities. An ambition to impose a new material/spatial order on the disposal of the dead emerged amongst reformers and landscape planners. This was given added impetus by emerging non-conformist worship which took the body after death (and bodily resurrection) more seriously and thus required a more ordered internment. These momentums, combined with the new economic energy and the emerging Victorian 'cult of death', set the scene for the creation of new urban cemeteries across the UK. Today these remain some of the most remarkable landscapes in our cities.

Kensal Green in London was the first 'new cemetery' to be opened in 1833. This was the first of 'the magnificent seven' built in a ring around what was then the edge of the metropolis. Leeds, Liverpool and many other growing cites soon had their own cemeteries.

AVC was first laid out as an Arcadian landscape between 1836 and 1840 by Bristol nurserymen James Garraway and Martin Mayes (English Nature, 2007: 24). Like the other new cemeteries it was established by a private Act of Parliament, in this case an act of 1837, and financed by the sale of shares. The Bristol General Cemetery Company (the owners of AVC) was founded in May 1836 with a capital of £15,000 in £20 shares. The Act listed the names of 140 shareholders (Drummond, 2005), mostly local investors from the city.

Loudon's orders

J. C. Loudon was one of those amazingly inventive and prolifically energetic figures who populated 19th Britain. He was a key figure in the development of modern gardening, pioneered popular garden magazines, wrote a huge *Encyclopaedia of Gardening* (1822) and *Arboretum et Fruiticetum Britannicum* (1838). He drew up a plan for London in *Hints on Breathing Places for the Metropolis, and for Country Towns and Villages, on fixed Principles* (1829), which sought to impose a new spatial order on the unruly city which was 'the most visionary landscape plan ever produced for a British city, despite a few eccentricities' (Turner, 2007: 1).

Although his plan of concentric rings of city zoning was never activated, the idea of a ring of cemeteries around the edge of London had formed, along with Loudon's ideas for cemetery as 'botanic gardens', which drew reference from overseas examples. As he put in a letter of 1830,

> allow me to suggest that there should be several burial grounds, all, as far as practicable, equi-distant from each other, and from what may be considered the centre of the metropolis; that they be regularly laid out and planted with every sort of hardy trees and shrubs; and that in interring the ground be used on a plan similar to that adopted in the burial-ground of Munich, and not left to chance like Pere la Chaise. These and every other burial-ground in the country, might be made, at no expense whatever, botanic gardens. (Loudon, 1830, http://www.victorianlondon.org/death/burialgrounds.htm)

Loudon was also of the mind that larger cemeteries could double as arboreta, an idea which had been proposed by one P. Masey Junior in 1831 and published by Loudon in his Gardener's Magazine in 1936 (Penny, 1974).

Something of his vision was emerging in the new cemeteries in London and which were to open elsewhere. But Loudon had his eye on the emerging design of the new cemeteries and became critical of the form they were taking. Bringing together articles previously published in his Gardener's Magazine, he published *On the Laying Out Planting, and Management of Cemeteries* in 1843 (Loudon; 1981) some 10 years

after the opening of Kensal Green. This was to have ‘enormous and lasting influence’ (Curl, 1983: 155) on how cemeteries were subsequently laid out and planted.

The early cemeteries were ‘usually laid out informally in the picturesque style’ (English Heritage and Natural England, 2007: 8). Loudon was critical of the spatial logic employed in the new cemeteries particularly of the type of trees and other planting and the layout they were planted in (see Curl 1983 for detailed account). As he put it, ‘the planting of all the cemeteries is, in our opinion, highly objectionable’ (69).

Loudon’s concerns, and alternative proposals, are best illustrated by considering two drawings published in the book. The first shows the South Metropolitan Cemetery (designed by William Tite) as it was set out in the ‘pleasure ground style’ (Loudon’s term for the picturesque style), and the same cemetery planted in what Loudon called ‘the cemetery style’ (Fig 4).

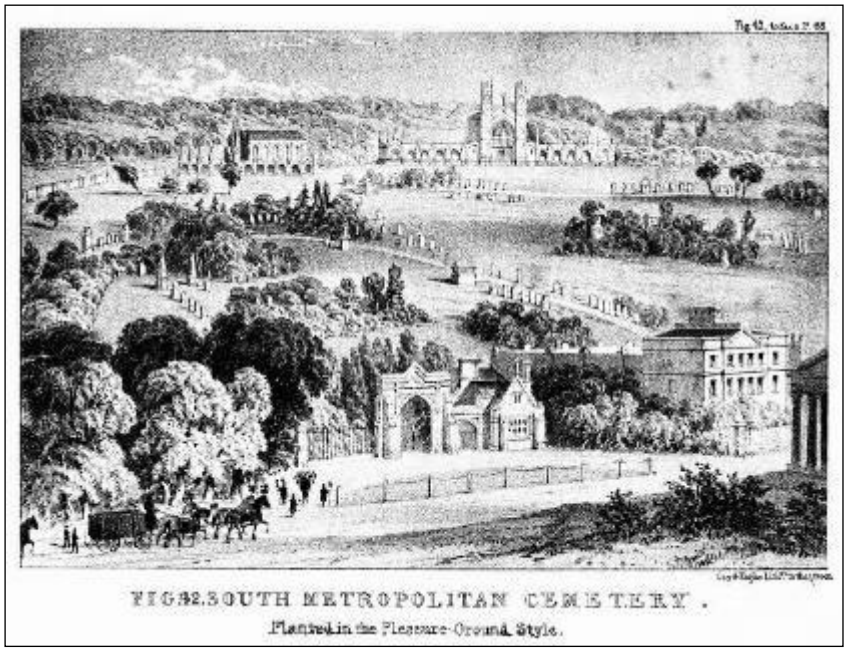

FIG 32. SOUTH METROPOLITAN CEMETERY.
Planted in the Pleasure-Ground Style.

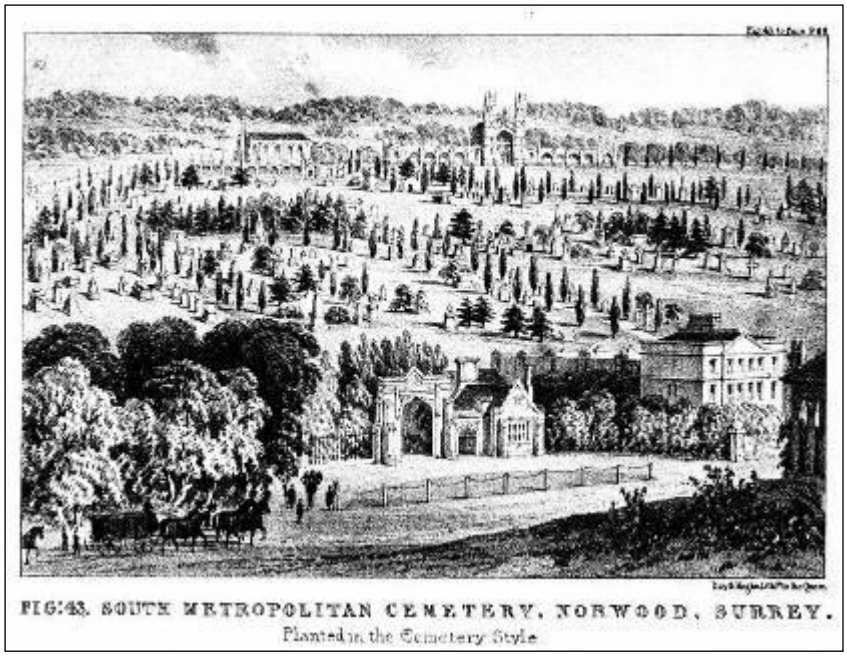

Figure 4. Two illustrations of the South Metropolitan Cemetery, showing the actual planting and Loudon's proposed cemetery style. (Loudon, 1843).

As can be seen, in the first drawing the trees within the cemetery are planted in a form akin to the informal, picturesque style emulating the influential landscapes of Repton (English Heritage and Natural England, 2007: 8), with stands and copses of trees in otherwise open grassed spaces. Grave monuments line the main paths. The trees are mostly deciduous and native species.

In the second drawing, showing the proposed 'cemetery style', the trees are mostly evergreen and planted singly, in a more open and even pattern around the same set of building and roadways. The cemetery is respatialised with a new order, deploying trees species brought in from around the world and chosen for particular characteristics (see below).

Loudon's precise spatial logic can be most clearly seen from yet a further drawing which shows 'an ideal layout on hilly ground' (fig 5). This shows a network of major paths in sweeping curves which form a one-way flow of traffic from gate to chapel and back again. Between the main paths are regular, parallel, smaller paths, between which graves would be laid out. Tree types such a cypresses line the main paths and others larger conifers mark the key junctions. Smaller trees are shown planted

decorously alongside already established graves. A double row of a more varied selection of trees follow the perimeter, showing how the suggestion that larger cemeteries could also serve as arboreta could be realised in practice.

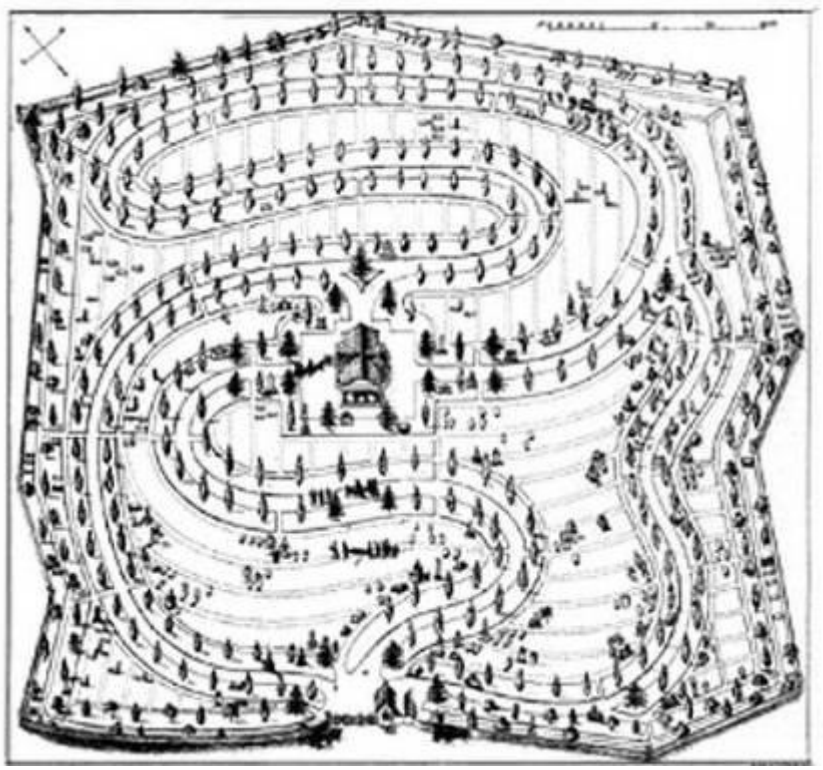

Figure 5. An ‘ideal cemetery layout on hilly ground’ (Loudon, 1843).

Loudon’s concerns with the existing planting schemes can be summarised as follows. Deciduous trees got too big, dropped huge amounts of leaf litter, had large and disruptive root systems, looked stark and bare in the winter; blocked light and lines of sight in the summer, created damp and shady conditions below their canopies, and, importantly, given the fear of ‘foul miasmas’, prevented a healthy flow of air, particularly when planted in stands.

In contrast, the coniferous trees he advocated were generally smaller, more prim and sober in form and colour (matching emerging Victorian tastes), evergreen (thus not looking bare in the winter), had less vigorous root systems, and generated less leaf litter. Equally importantly, the evergreens had ancient associations with burial grounds across the world, notably the cypress and other evergreen trees which Loudon showed to be present in cemeteries in Persia and China in a series of illustrations in his book.

It is worthy of note in terms of the purity of place, particularly when considering the emotionally and religiously laden ideas of places of burial and remembrance, that here there was an openness to 'alien species' from very different landscapes, cultures and religions. Loudon was proposing a new configuration of symbolic/material tree presences in the formation of these new places of burial.

To realise this new cosmopolitan arboreal order Loudon drew upon his vast knowledge of gardening and the emerging plant nurseries and collections which were gathering tree species from all around the world. Through the work of explorers such as David Douglas many new tree species from around the world were becoming available to form a vastly expanded palette for landscape designers. For example, Loudon (1981: 96) lists Douglas's Spruce Fir in the 5th group of trees specified for cemeteries.

Loudon listed 44 trees species which he considered to be 'cemetery trees par excellence' (1981: 95). A further 127 species were suggested to add variation in larger cemeteries, thus further fleshing out the cemetery as arboretum idea. The cemeteries could thus be places of burial, remembrance, improvement and expressions of colonial power.

The 44 primary species Loudon advocated were broken down into 9 groups, by shape, size, and branch configuration. These specifications therefore represent a very exact ordering of nature/trees in an attempt to control and precisely articulate the material relations and the produced spaces of the cemeteries.

the first group of 6 are 'evergreen trees, with needle leaves, and the branches fastigiate and vertical', (The Italian Cypress being 'the best of all trees for a cemetery') (95).

the second group of 6 - 'evergreen trees with needle leaves, of narrow conical forms, the branches horizontal'. (95).

The last group of 4 is described as ‘evergreen trees with needle leaves and pendant branches, peculiarly well adapted for being used in cemeteries so as they droop over monuments’. (97).

Graves, paths, drains and levels were all to be precisely detailed to ensure material and thus symbolic order, and the trees integrated into the design very exactly (fig 6 and 7).

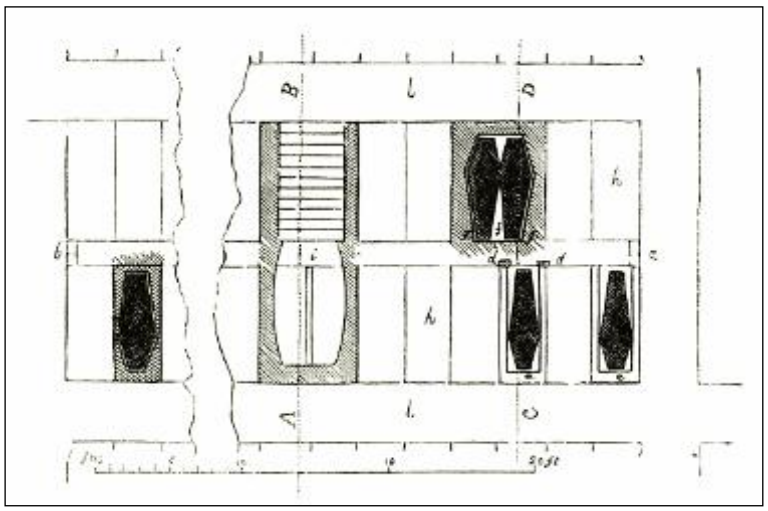

Figure 6. A precise order to counter the chaos of the urban burial grounds

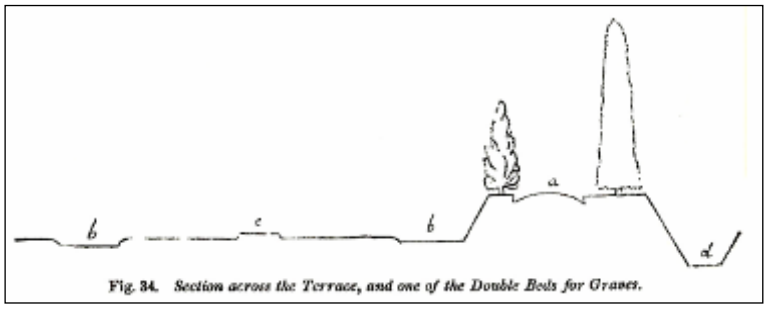

Figure 7. Trees precisely fitted to an ordered design.

Looking at the very exact ordering of tree bodies in relational arrangements (fig 7), where the trees, in ideal form, stand in static extension of the planned levels, one can see an attempt to fix time, life and landscape to a static form, to impose an order. These plans show a concerted effort not only to order new places of burial but to order the wider city as well. The unruly materiality of expanding numbers of people, bodies, diseases and decomposition was to be corralled and controlled in the new cemeteries.

Natural actants, most obviously in the form of trees, were enrolled to bring specific functions to the new spatialised assemblages of the cemeteries. The trees were enrolled for symbolic purposes and also for their particular material characteristics such as shape and size and root configuration. Thus a tightly controlled flow of materiality in terms of tree species and of symbolism, and material arrangements from around the world was being attempted. As the very precise drawings show, the trees were being used almost as inert matter. They were expected to take their place and stand quiet while the business of the cemeteries unfolded around them.

Arnos Vale Cemetery in the 19th Century

It is not clear if Loudon visited Arnos Vale or had any direct influence on its design. He did however apply his design for a cemetery on hilly ground depicted above (fig 5) in the layout of Abbey Cemetery in Bath (opened 1844) only some 15 miles east of AVC. And Masey Junior's designs for a cemetery which were published by Loudon in 1936 were for a proposed cemetery in Bristol which were never realised (Penny, 1974:194). However the ideas, designs and tree specifications Loudon advocated seem to have been applied in the unfolding design and planting of AVC as they were elsewhere.

AVC was originally 24 acres formed out of 'a pleasant country house, set in completely rural surroundings, the estate extending to 40 odd acres' (C.R.H 1940: 11). This switch of land use becomes significant in the future of Arnos Vale because some mature deciduous trees were inherited into the new layout of the cemetery, and, also, almost 150 years later, some of the biodiversity of the once rural landscape became significant factor in the cemetery as it returned to wilderness and became a green space in the city. Many of the 19th century cemeteries are of interest in terms of biodiversity because they are fragments of once rural land which have not been fertilised and reseeded. Once management recedes, wild flowers, habitat and related fauna recover (English Heritage and Natural England, 2007: 5) and bring important areas of natural history to the cities (Mabey, 1999). This is testament to the endurance of nature within/through human orderings.

According to Drummond (2005) ‘one of the hardest thing to imagine today is what Arnos looked like in the early days’ (p. 11). She suggests early depictions are somewhat contradictory. But the one on the cover of her history and one of the earliest depictions of AVC (fig 8) show very similar depictions of the new buildings and a scattering of new monuments and trees. Drummond suggests that the large deciduous are ‘probably original oaks’. The inherited large deciduous trees were material continuities from the previous land use which were also to have implications in the future. In the short term they lent themselves to the initial picturesque style of planting so frowned upon by Loudon and the early depictions (fig 8). In the longer term they were powerful actors in the cemetery as it fortunes and formations changed.

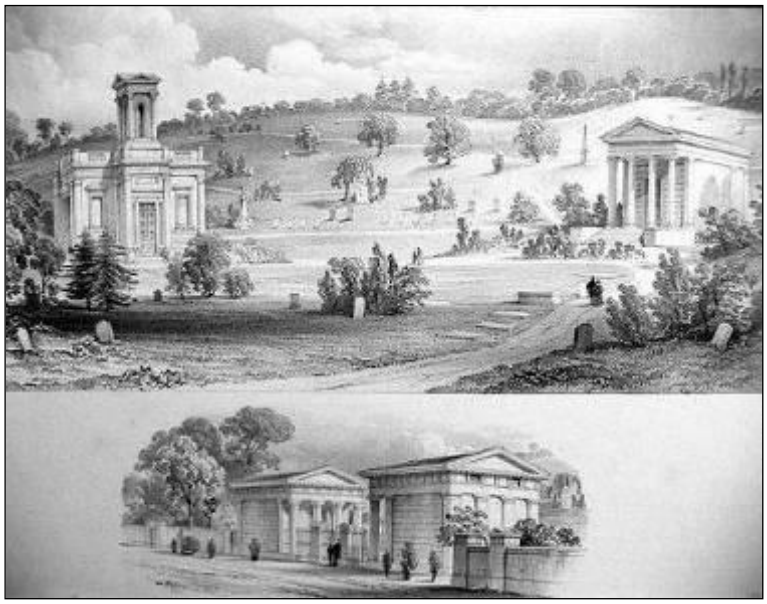

Figure 8. One of the earliest depictions of AVC Circa 1845.

Reports in local newspapers and the earliest early photographs show that Arnos Vale soon took up the cemetery style advocated by Loudon. The *Bristol Mirror* (29th March, 1845) tells how a Bristol nursery (Garraways) had been engaged to plant trees and extend and improve the path network and that;

> the directors have ordered various walks, paths and terraces to be immediately formed, and nearly 2000 trees and shrubs viz cyprus, red cedar, juniper, yew, laurestinus, laurel, common and variegated hollies, Austrian pines, arbutus etc. are to be planted this season (cited in Owen, undated).

All these are evergreen trees and listed in Loudon's book. So it seems that there was a large influx of Loudonesque trees species, some recently collected from around the world, supplied by a local nursery and financed by local investors, to make a new order in the cemetery. Drummond (2005: 11) suggests that the monkey puzzle trees in the cemetery must have bee ''early arrivals' in England as they were not introduced in the 1840s. Some of these trees and the sweeping paths typical of Loudon's cemetery on hilly ground design can be seen in the earliest photo of AVC (1866) (fig 9).

Figure 9. Arnos Vale Cemetery, 1866. This picture shows the sweeping paths and coniferous planting characteristic of Loudon's 'cemetery style'.

Golden era of order at AVC

The latter decades of the 19th century were 'the golden years of AVC' as Les Owen (undated) a local historian who did extensive (unpaid) work on Arnos Vale put it. The burial grounds within the city of Bristol (as in other cities), with a few exceptions, were ordered to be closed in January 1854 under the Health in Towns Act. This boosted the 'trade' of the new cemetery considerably, and for the next fifty years or so Arnos Vale was the city's principal place of burial. The monuments in the older parts of the cemetery were witness to the growing political and industrial importance of Bristol. Press reports of the time told how the cemetery was 'a beautiful spot, very

carefully conserved and admirably managed.' (Owen: undated). Old photographs and illustrations show dramatic funeral processions of carriages, be-plumed black horses and following mourners leaving the city en-route to the cemetery.

So by this time and incredibly dense set of flows had arrived into AVC settling out into a new spatialisation of the burgeoning cemetery space. The social pressures which spurred the cemetery movement, the ideas and designs of Loudon, legislation and Acts of Parliament, the money of private investors, the bodies, graves and monuments of those buried there, the tooing and froing of funeral cortèges and mourners, the management and staff and the tools of their trade for producing new graves and maintaining this 'carefully managed' space. Also there were the trees, now representing some of arboreal wealth of the world. A picture of 1887 gives some impression of the place at this time with growing areas of graves and a mix of mature and younger trees (see it at http://images.francisfrith.com/c10/high/01/bristol_20139.jpg).

Decline and growth in the 20th Century

The 20th century was a story of accelerating decline in AVC's fortunes as a business and ordered place of remembrance, but also growth in terms of a city green space. By 1906 there had been some 90,000 interments (Owen, undated) and although not all these were represented by individual graves there were increasingly large areas with closely pack graves which presented considerable demands in terms of management and maintenance. The logic of the new cemeteries, and Loudon's order, was becoming a victim of its own success in AVC and elsewhere.

As well as increasing pressures of management, the cemetery now face local rivals for its business. 7 rival cemeteries were opened in the city between 1883 and 1923 (Bristol City Council, 2007). All these remain open and are run as municipal cemeteries having been taken over by the council after being started by private companies or Church Trusts. The city opened a further purpose built modern cemetery in 1974. By 1926 the cemetery had grown to its full, 45 acre size (having been expanded for a third time) to deal with the pressures it was under, but it could

expand no more. The city has grown around it, and far beyond. The densely packed terraced streets of inner city Totterdown back onto two sides of the cemetery.

Latterly Arnos Vale became, to some, a rather gloomy, forbidding, decaying Victorian mess and the more orderly, airy municipal cemeteries were preferred as places of rest. Burial for profit became more frowned upon. The decline of AVC was common to many other of the privately financed cemeteries of the same era.

> Many of the private cemeteries were under-capitalised from the outset, and had not allowed for rising costs in their start-up calculations. Their once-elegant assets became fearful liabilities, as costs mounted and revenues from burials dwindled. By the 1960s, crisis point was being reached. Some companies locked the gates and simply walked away for good: Highgate Cemetery and Nunhead Cemetery were effectively abandoned until local groups decided to find a way out of the impasse. (English Heritage and Natural England, 2007: 10)

Unlike many others, however, AVC remained open until 1998 and in private ownership until 2003. This proved to be high controversial.

Arboreal life

All the while, of course, the trees in the cemetery were active, growing and seeding and doing all the things trees do, taking advantage of the roll-back of management to grow beyond their allotted spaces and roles, and finding places to germinate and grow. Graves, and the joints in grave masonry, offer good nurseries for young trees to get established - safe from mowers, strimmers, wild animals or others bent on their destruction. In some areas, each grave seems to have a companion wild tree growing close alongside or even from within the stonework itself. In some instances the movement of the tree growth is eloquently expressed by displaced masonry (fig 11).

Figure 10. wild tree seeded in a grave bed and slowly displacing masonry.

The planted evergreens also spread and grew too big for their once carefully selected positions, and in some cases enveloped significant monuments in dense foliage (fig 11). Saplings took root in quite corners which were no longer tidied managed by cemetery staff (fig 13).

Figure 11. cutting back growth which had enveloped a monument.

Other trees acted as rather strange agents of wonderful form (Haraway, 1988). There are at least three weeping ashes in AVC. These are rather extraordinary looking trees with extravagantly twisting branches which reach down to the ground. Their rather dramatic appearance lends them to planting in cemeteries. Weeping ashes cannot be grown from seed but are produced by grafting cuttings onto common ash rootstock. Although they look so remarkable and very different from ordinary ash trees, the seeds they produce are of ordinary of ash trees. Ash trees are very effective colonisers of open ground producing prodigious amounts of ash keys (seeds) which are distributed by the wind, and growing quickly (in tree terms). It is likely that it is the weeping ashes, carefully produced and planted for their ornate appearance, which have spread thousands of common ash saplings throughout the cemetery. There are also a few venerable and large sycamore trees in the cemetery and these also have generated new generations of young trees competing with the ash.

There was a period of renewed management effort in early 1980s when community work programmes were brought in to help clear the spreading wild wood and brambles (fig 13). These works cleared paths and restored steps on the steeper slopes but they were short lived. In effect they did little more than coppice much of the wild ash and sycamore and conveniently clear away competing bramble. Less than a decade later parts of the cemetery were a forest of straight, young ash and sycamore saplings (fig 14). By now many graves where being toppled or split open.

Figure 12 Clearing tree growth in the early 1980s.

Figure 13. In previously cleared areas a forest of coppiced ash and sycamore soon grew up. (picture 1999).

The tree cover in some older areas became so established and continuous that large parts of the cemetery were effectively becoming urban woodland (fig 15).

Figure 14 AVC, 1999, showing extent of tree cover.

Resistance and enrollment, order and disorder

Ownership changed hands in 1987 in rather strange circumstances when the cemetery was taken as payment for an unpaid bill. It now seems clear that the new owner saw the site as a possibly lucrative development prospect. This was the era of Thatcherite urban development and other cemeteries had been controversially sold for knock-down prices and cleared for development (Hansard, 1998). It was announced in the *Investor's Chronicle* in 1994 that a company 'had been retained to advise on seeking permission to develop up to 30 acres of the cemetery with 400 houses'. In a

newsletter the owner advised that those with relatives buried in the areas targeted for redevelopment should consider ‘exhuming the remains for re-burial’ (Hansard, 1998). This was a thus a critical moment when the cemetery as a material place could have been cleared or greatly diminished. The trees were complexly woven into this period of uncertainty for the cemetery’s future.

The growing presence of the trees was contributing to the cemetery’s decline as a place of burial, remembrance and historical and architectural heritage. The owner was accused of ‘letting the trees do his dirty work’, reducing the condition and historical interest of the cemetery to such an extant that plans for redevelopment would face dwindling opposition. Access to many graves, and whole areas was difficult and dangerous in many places, and just about impossible in others. Many monuments were already beyond repair. In addition to this reduction of cultural heritage, the spreading wild trees were also reducing the valued biodiversity of the cemetery by spreading over areas of rough grass land which were rich in flower species and insects.

But the trees also were becoming of landscape and urban green space interest, and part of the efforts to conserve the cemetery. Countervailing forms of monitoring and surveillance enrolled the trees in protest and resistance (Cloke and Jones: 2004).

An extraordinarily detailed tree survey was carried out by a local amateur botanist, mapping and listing some 1350 trees on the site in the mid 1980s (fig 16). This information was later used in the drawing up a draft management plan, submitted to and initially ignored by the owner and the city council. The survey itself, as can photographs of the cemetery at this time, can be seen as attempts to freeze time, for a decade or so later the tree survey detail would be lost in the burgeoning growth of the unmanaged trees.

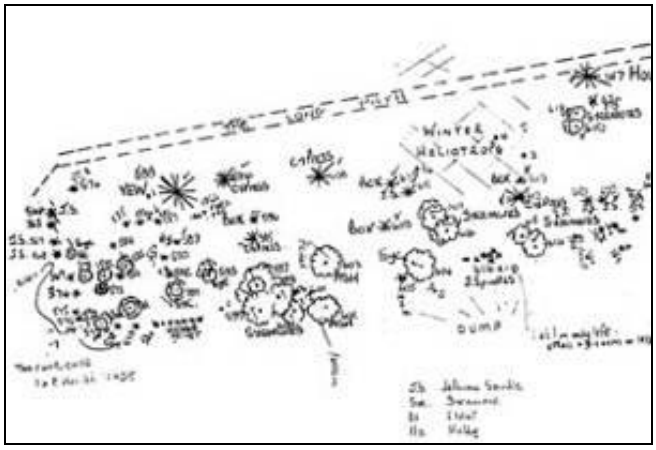

Figure 15. Detail of the Tree Survey by Peter Brain.

The history of the site ensured a rich arboreal presence in the cemetery (as in others). Tree Gazing walks (fig 17) were conducted in the cemetery to celebrate its arboreal treasures by Mr Tony Titchen who drew up the following unique list of tree species (40 in all).

Figure 16. Tree Gazing with Mr Tony Titchen.

• female monkey puzzle • Lawson cypress •golden form of Lawson cypress • yellow form of Lawson cypress • south European cypress • Sawara cypress • Nookta cypress • black Austrian pine • western red cedar • cherry laurel • yew • Irish yew • holm oak • purple cherry plum • double Japanese flowering cherry • holly • Field maple • English elm • Japanese spindle • sycamore • false acacia • English hawthorn • horse

chestnut • double midland hawthorn • Himalayan cedar • English oak • laburnum • cherry • rowan • weeping ash • common ash • lilac• Aucuba laurel • variegated English holly • Lebanon cedar • elder • European larch • bird cherry • Norway spruce •apple

The trees collectively had become a dominating material presence at AVC. The 1997 Local Bristol Plan noted that AVC was a significant open space and its – 'prominent green hillsides' were listed in the 'Principal Landscape Features' of the city. The newly wooded cemetery became caught up in all the environmental discourses which gathered around trees in the contexts of global environmental concern, nature conservation, global and national deforestation, the national tree protests of the 1990s, and the greening the cities and trees as panaceas for urban regeneration (Jones and Cloke, 2002). Trees were understood as bringers of improved well-being and cleaners of the environment. Any threat to what in effect was a large wood in inner-city Bristol was bound to attract adverse attention.

Protests and resistance had steadily grown about the state of the cemetery and this accelerated as the threat of development emerged. The Association for the Preservation of Arnos Vale (APAC) later becoming Friends of Arnos Vale Cemetery (FAVC) was formed in 1987 and a series of very heated public meetings was held where the owner and, on occasions, the council faced much anger. For the following 16 years APAC/FAVC and others campaigned for the cemetery's protection. They raised funds and published newsletters which incorporated stories of key monuments and their links to local, national and world history and stories of ecological interest. There was some tension between these two wings of interest in FAVC. Some who valued it for its ecological richness and 'wildness' were wary of the extent to which those who valued it primarily as a place of remembrance were campaigning for the cemetery, or many parts of it, to revert to a much more tidy, managed environment. Those concerned with clear access to graves and a dignified space of remembrance were suspicious of the desire to 'let nature flourish'. But in the face of the threats to the cemetery, these 'factions' worked together to lobby the owner and the council for action. The draft management plan was backed by FAVC which identified areas to be

restored and others to be left ‘wild’. The local Bristol newspaper became heavily involved in the campaign to save AVC and it was, on occasion, headline news.

Loudon’s order was now just about completely undone with the wild trees and the planted trees, having slipped the leash of management and design, turning the site into woodland. In some places small pockets of order could still be found, carved out of the surrounding wilderness. Some of these were graves still cared for by family members. Families who owned plots had the right to clear it and access to it (but do no other work on the instruction of the owner). This clearing work often involved cutting back saplings growing around and through grave masonry (fig 18). Other pockets of order were the war graves in the cemetery which the War Grave Commission have a duty to keep up.

Figure 17. Cutting back young tree growth from within grave masonry.

A protest march was held ending up as a noisy occupation of the public gallery of the City Council chamber. The pressure group and local newspaper continued to be very critical of the council’s position, but the council claimed that as AVC was privately owned there was little they could do in the short term to coerce the owner to maintain the cemetery. The owner refused to cooperate with either the FAVC and their proposed management plan, or the city council, who had listed the site as Landscape Conservation Area and some of the key buildings and monuments as listed buildings. The council did eventually act to protect the buildings. The effort of doing so in terms

of killing root systems of established ash and sycamore, indicated the size of the challenge facing any large attempt to remove the tree population (fig 19).

Figure 18. Efforts to kill stumps and root systems of wild trees near the main buildings.

AVC now contained an astonishing mix of monuments, ecology and history. Along with the war graves were those of whose stories were bound up with city, nation, empire, for example a doctor who have given their lives fighting cholera outbreaks in the city, engineers in Brunel's great railway project who have reliefs of steam trains carved on their headstone. One very striking monument is the tomb of Raja Ramous Roy who died on a visit to Bristol in 1833. He is noted for his contributions in developing modernism and humanism in India and particularly a campaign to end the custom of 'Sati'. His tomb is a place of Hindu pilgrimage and a ceremony is held there each year.

Towards respatialisation and a new order

As a business AVC was increasingly unsustainable. There were approximately 14 burials in 1998, and by then turnover and profits before tax dwindled to very low levels then to loss (Niall Phillips Architects, 1999). Those few still being buried there were relying on previously paid for burial plots. The viability of the business was dealt a final blow when the crematorium which had been opened in the 1950s (there had been cremations since 1928 in a converted chapel), was closed in 1998 under the Environmental Protection Act of 1990. The owner then finally closed entire the cemetery (31 March 1998). But the legal position was complex. Many owned future burial rights and plot leases until 2050. Those with family graves in the cemetery still retained the right to maintain access to, and the immediate area around family graves,

but still the owner refused permission for any other work to be done at all. Volunteers did try to carry out remedial work on some of the significant monuments but were threatened with court action.

Closure in fact meant the gates of the cemetery were left open and unattended. It was feared this would lead to an increase in vandalism and theft from the cemetery. The 'Arnos Vale Army', an unofficial group, was formed, andorganised volunteers to 'man' the gates everyday and then lock the gates each night. The owner tried to have them evicted but was not supported in court.

The Council finally decided to act, and put pressure on the owner by serving notices in regard to the listed buildings which were now in poor condition. When cooperation was still not forthcoming, they began a process of compulsory purchase and established a Trust to which ownership would be transferred. Regeneration studies were conducted by local architects which referred back to the earlier plans drawn up by APAC. Lottery Heritage funding applications were prepared. Ownership was finally transferred to the Trust in 2004.

By 1998 there were over 40, 000 graves containing over 500,000 deceased (Towner, 1998 in Nail Phillips Architects, 1999 : un-paginated appendices).This is an amazing coming together in itself. Add the living presences, knowledges and practices (human and non-human) the ecological, the monuments with their stories and iconographies, and the richness of place grows exponentially. The place is now on the move towards a new spatialisation in which the trees are again central. The very latest (at time of writing) FAVC 'News Letter' reports that:

> This year the site has been a hive of activity with tree works [ ] as part of the woodland management programme. [ ] This involves removing self-seeded sycamore and ash trees back two graves widths from the principle paths around the wooded area. [] The work will allow more light into the areas and encourage original species of plants to re-establish and historic trees to survive (Friends of Arnos Vale Cemetery, 2006/07)

This new round of 'twists and fluxes of interrelation' (Amin and Thrift, 2002) is driven not least by the £4. 8 million lottery heritage fund finally granted to the Trust, but also a host of other actors like the staff and the equipment that will follow. Many of the wild trees will be removed and this will change, quite literally, the nature of the place in terms of space, and 'the historic trees' which have managed to survive from one period of management to the next will provide material links back to previous orders and spatialisations of the cemetery. Something of the historic material landscape, but in a new form and in new political, cultural, and ecological contexts will form.

Conclusions

Places are 'where spatial narratives meet up or form configurations, conjunctions of trajectories which have their own temporalities' as Massey (2005: 139) has it In the narrative of place in process which I have sketched out above, decades of history are jumped by in a flash. In those decades many people will have come and gone in AVC, as internees, visitors, rememberers, mourners, workers and researchers. At any given moment, the place seems solid and fixed. But over longer time frames the place is clearly on the move. This is partly due to the unruliness of the relational flux that turns up in the place and also non-human agents such as the trees. Their lively material presences have acted as unruly threads working at their own speeds and in their own ways, bridging between land uses, bridging between eras of politics and economics, helping to scramble order into disorder and then new order.

Of course their agency is not reflexive as human agency, but it can be seen as creative and meaningful. For to account of the history and present condition of the place without their active presences would be impossible. Due to the very rich mix of material, imaginary and emotional threads, AVC has been, and remains, many things to many people. A place of burial, a place of remembrance, a quasi wood and even an informal arboretum, a place of urban ecology, a place of economic decline and development opportunity, a place of problematic civic politics. It is only by taking a fluid, relational, hybrid, process view, can we do justice to such entangled narratives and such entangled material relations. Other places and other landscapes, other places of trees will have similarly fluid stories.

Buell (1995: 256) in his discussion of place, points out that Least Heat-Moon's book *PrairyErth* is 'the most ambitious literary reconstruction of a small portion of America'. But despite running to roughly two hundred thousand words, it only scratched the surface of the seemingly simple place represented. As Least Heat-Moon admits, "ninety-nine-point-nine to the ninth decimal of what has ever happened here isn't in the book' (Least Heat-Moon, 1991, cited by Buell, 1995: 256). The full richness of places can never be represented. They are not merely processes and narratives but whole *ecologies of interrelating trajectories* which settle into temporary local material forms but which also have threads which weave out though local, national and world space. No doubt places where trees are present can be found that have been much more stable over time, but this will be through dint of management and effort, - agency to countervail agency. And even then, no places, no landscapes are just (fixed) spaces they are all in process and in motion.

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