



**CP Reader's Union at Housmans Bookshop  
Developing and Contact – *Paris* by Michael Schwab**



**‘... the truly philosophical element in every work, be it called literature, art or science (or whatever) is its capacity to be developed. This capacity in a work arises precisely when a reader steps in and, as it were, picks something up to take it further.’**

**Copy Press invites you to join  
Anya Lewin  
Neal White  
and Taslim Martin  
developing *Paris***

**Friday, 4 December  
6.30 – 8.00pm  
Housmans Bookshop  
5 Caledonian Rd, London N1 9DX**

**RSVP@copypress.co.uk essential as numbers are limited.**

***Paris* by Michael Schwab: isbn 978-0-9553792-4-6  
Housmans Bookshop: radical booksellers since 1945. [www.housmans.com](http://www.housmans.com)**

**CP Reader's Union seeks common spaces for readers and writers to delve into the possibilities and limitations of 'coming together' in our contemporary society. [www.copypress.co.uk](http://www.copypress.co.uk)**

## Notes

Anya Lewin

4-12-2015

1.

Michel De Certeau 'Poaching as Reading' (walking as reading)

'to read is to wander through an imposed system'

'the reader . . . invents in texts something different from what [the author] intended'

'readers are travellers; they move across lands belonging to someone else, like nomads poaching their way across fields they did not write'

*The Practice of Everyday Life*

2. Making up rules (being directed through public space)

3. Performance/Exposure (duration)

4. Document (drawings as documents of performance)

5. Site of Fiction (no photography/see cryptography)

6. Men, valorised, in a city (as they appear):

Roger Priou-Valjean

Joseph Belmont

Christophe Grunenwald

Henri Cadiou

Baron Haussman

Adolphe Alphand

Francois Arago (*one of 72 names of scientists on the Eiffel Tower – all 72 are men*)

King Henry IV

King Louis 13

## 7. Some notes on the sex of trees

- With dioecious species, one tree will be male, and another will be female.
- Some trees have both sexes on the same tree (such as a pine tree) and this is called monoecious.
- Any tree of a dioecious species that produces fruit or seed or seed pods is a female tree.

'It is important to note that male trees produce allergenic pollen, and female trees do not produce any pollen.'

## 8. Cryptography *deciphering the code*

Place Roger Prijou – Valjean – a search reveals this as a parallel square discovered/invented by Michael Schwab (when searching Google for Place Roger Prijou – Valjean more than 50 links appear all connected to Michael Schwab). If searching for Place Roger Prijou – Valjean on a map, it is spelled Place Roger Priou –Valjean.

## 9. The Capital A (A tool to begin Writing)

*imagine A somersaulting from tree to tree*

## **Words about trees, cities and (perhaps) Paris**

*Copy Press unplugged*

4-12-2015

Catronia Andrews

Barbara Campbell-Lange

Peter le Couteur

Cordelia Mayfield

Amélie\_Mourgue d'Algue

Isobel Wohl

Susan Butler



## **Urban Trees**

Catronia Andrews

4-12-2015

### **Trees in an urban landscape:**

Root, trunk, branch, leaf. Long lived markers in a landscape.

### **Some tree facts:**

A mature oak (*Quercus robur*) can support over 500 of species: invertebrates, birds, mammals, fungi, mosses, lichens, and woodland flowers below the open canopy.

Ancient yews (*Taxus baccata*) exist in Britain that have lived for over 5,000 years. These are often found in churchyards, themselves the sites of earlier pagan practices.

A beech tree (*Fagus sylvatica*) does not produce flowers and seeds until it is at least 40 years old. Good mast years are very dependent on weather conditions.

### **Some tree functions in landscape design:**

Structure, screening, framing, physical barrier, defining direction or boundary, enclosure, ornament.

### **Urban Trees:**

Old: Remnants of an ancient forest. Escaping relentless human activity and development, deserving of reverence. Symbols of strength, continuity, rebellion. In 1993 a sweet chestnut on George Green, Wanstead was the site of a protest over the building of a tunnel link to the M11.

Parks: Ornamental, planned, aesthetic, defining character, style and place. Providing shade, filtering noise, reducing wind speed, absorbing storm water. Structures to climb, play and to engage with nature. In 2008 the Oxford Junior Dictionary axed a number of words including catkin,

acorn, conker, holly, ash, beech, willow. A similar number of words were added including blog, voice mail, broadband, chatroom, celebrity, BlackBerry.

Street trees: Problematic. Expensive to maintain, causing subsidence and damage to cars with leaf and fruit drop. Current selected species often small and upright in habit to reduce damage to vehicles and developments. In 2001 Norwich City Council threatened to fell horse chestnut trees on Bluebell Road due to health and safety issues. Conkers were thought to pose a danger to pedestrians who could slip on the mulch they produced, conkers could crash onto passing cars, sticks thrown by children to dislodge conkers could cause serious head injuries and children gathering conkers could be at risk from vehicles.

## Climbing Trees for Michael Schwab

Barbara Campbell-Lange

4-12-2015

Michael's book talks of trees, walking between trees in *Paris*.

When I think of walking between trees in Paris I think of *Palais Royal* where the heavily pollarded trees are like columns and where, at the corners of the court, stiff trees become stone columns and the columns dissolve the corners of the palace into the city. Insides become outsides, outsides become insides until there are no sides. Dissolving corners is something I am interested in.

When I think of trees it is not so much walking between them as the childhood memory of climbing them. There is something about climbing trees, putting oneself in danger, being uncertain of support and suspension, that is important, something that continues in our projects now. Putting ideas in danger is something I believe in deeply, something necessary.

So this evening at Copy Press in Housman's Bookshop I want to talk about climbing trees and also of a kind of falling, which in some ways links Michael's book to Kristen [Krieider] and James'[O'Leary]. I have invited a guest, Robert Frost, to contribute a few lines from one of his poems that, to my mind, talk about climbing and falling gently, with and in trees, with and in ideas.

*I'd like to get away from earth awhile and then come back to it and begin over... I'd like to go by climbing a birch tree, and climb black branches up a snow-white trunk toward heaven, till the tree could bear no more, but dipped its top and set me down again. That would be good both going and coming back.*

I'd like to get away from earth awhile  
and then come back to it and begin over.

I'd like to go by climbing a birch tree  
And climb black branches up a snow-white  
trunk

towards heaven, till the tree could  
bear no more; but dipped its top  
and set me down again.

That would be good both going and  
coming back.

③ my <sup>invited</sup> guest is Robert Frost - short extract from his poem <sup>one to</sup> ~~poem~~ <sup>poem</sup> ~~poem~~  
'Kerstine + Jane's

Michael  
② no so much walking but climbing, <sup>being in</sup> <sup>downer</sup> a kind of falling

① walking through trees. → climbing trees <sup>what you're not supposed to</sup>  
Tree + treeness - taking you somewhere + do  
climbing trees as a bright you back. <sup>look at white</sup>  
child. <sup>thing</sup> <sup>things</sup> out w/o damage

Robert Frost ③ extract from 'Birch' a poem by Robert Frost

perhaps this kind of climbing trees is  
a way of negotiating our projects

## Series and Limits

Peter le Couteur

4-12-2015

We're here to talk about *Paris*. In *Paris* there is the network, and there is the hard line. There is the tree in the city, and also the tree in the mind. From the seed, a slow explosion, a blossoming out. With limits.

We're here to talk about *Paris*, and when we say 'Paris', two years on, there is a slow explosion. Paris is another seed. There is the tree in the mind. There is the network, and there is the hard line.

What is new? Two years, or two weeks later, here at Housman's, we're at the end of a series of events. We're always at the end of a series. Again and again.

Back in Paris, sixty years before *Paris*, Beckett is writing *The Unnameable*:

'... you must say words, as long as there are any, until they find me, until they say me, strange pain, strange sin, you must go on, perhaps it's done already, perhaps they have said me already [...] it will be I, it will be the silence, where I am, I don't know, I'll never know, in the silence you don't know, you must go on, I can't go on, I'll go on ...'

We're here to talk about *Paris*. In Paris, as everywhere, there is the network, and there is the hard line. The limit. This is the hard line, passed. *This* is the limit. The limit, the absolute limit. Passed. Again.

Stone boxes. Trees planted inside them. If the stone box is broken, the root ball is revealed. Revealed as a network limited by hard lines; limited by a geometric simplicity, simple, clear and pleasing. A clean, hard line.

Bounding the chaotic mass of living, ungraspable, unnameable, branching and branching, again and again, stopped. Suddenly, it stops. I'm trying my best to say a few words about Paris.

There is the network, and there is the hard line. In the network, there are a series of exchanges. Responses to the context, trajectories of growth towards and away. Reciprocal cycles. An explosion, blossoming from the seed by negotiation, slowly.

In Paris, there are streets filled with flowers.

In *Paris*, trees don't simply grow, but are planted.

A tree in the forest of the mind, planted. Between the trees are other more subtle networks. The brain is a network, limited by the bounding skull. And bounding the skull are the hips, the pelvic girdle. This is a network of exchanges, negotiations of the limit.

An underground network nurtures the hard liners, we learn, helps them move, nourishes them. Exchange and negotiation. Travel and growth. Resources, favours and opportunities. And then, suddenly, an explosion of trajectories. A collection of curves, carefully orchestrated and controlled, conspiring to produce the hard, straight lines. Stone boxes.

What is new? Two weeks on, or two years, or two thousand years and more. There is another book. (There is always another book.) There is another book I have in mind. The author is unnameable; it was written under a pseudonym. *Koheleth*, in Hebrew. It means 'Gatherer', though it is more usually translated Teacher: Ecclesiastes.

It is a book about limits, and the ends of endless series. A working through of the perennial question: what is new? Working through a series of translations, some time ago, I tried to find music in it. I haven't quite finished. I'll sing you the beginning.

*Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.  
What profit has a man from all his work under the sun?  
A generation passes, a generation comes, with the Earth still turning.*

*The sun also rises, and the sun goes down;  
To its end it hurries, there to rise again.  
The wind turns to the north, turns back to the south;  
Whirling round, it turns around, it turns about continually.*

*All the streams flow to the sea, the sea never overflows;  
Back to where they came from, there the rivers go.  
Everything is toil; words cannot express.  
The eye is never satisfied, the ear is never filled.*

*That which has been is that which will be  
And that which was done is that which will be done.  
There is nothing entirely new under the sun.*

*Can we say of anything: see, this is new!  
It has already been in the times that came before us.  
There are no memories left of ages past,  
And there will be none of this, in the ages that come after.*

*I, a teacher, I have been a king.  
I have given all my heart to learning everything.  
It is a sore occupation God has given us, to occupy all our time with.*

*I have seen all of the works that are done under the sun,  
And yes, all is vanity, vexation of the spirit.  
That which is crooked cannot be made straight  
And that which is lacking, it cannot be counted.*

*I said to myself, I said: I am the wisest!  
I gave my heart to wisdom. To madness, and folly.  
With much wisdom comes much grief;  
He that increases his knowledge,  
He just increases his sorrows.*

*Vanity of vanities, all is vanity  
What profit has a man from all his work under the sun?  
A generation passes, a generation comes, with the Earth still turning.  
Koheleth*

What is new? Again and again. The network and the hard line. The limits,  
passed.



## **Spelling**

Cordelia Mayfield

4-12-2015

Paris spelled backwards is SIRAP. Sirap. I R is incorrect grammatically. You cannot say I are. It should be I am. So get rid of the R. And I have no place here. What you are left with is SAP.

Sap as in the trees of Paris.

## **Trees, Cities, Paris**

Amélie Mourgue d'Algue

4-12-2015

Reading Michael's *Paris* took me on a meditative walk through a peaceful Paris. I first responded by giving voice to a tree. But I had to find another response after my daughter told me there was too much pathos in that voice. I have been at loss for words over the past couple of weeks.

I will say a few words on the practice of walking and on trees. The narrator's quite Don Quichotesque figure looks for tree plantations in squares of Paris. 'A tree in a city does not grow; it is planted' I was reminded. Michael's Paris is populated with planted trees and his narrator 'felt like a floating tree in the vortex of the square'.

Walking is a privileged way of discovering and appropriating space. It is a practice with which I begin to feel at home somewhere, the way I usually make a place my own. Michel de Certeau writes in his *Practice of Everyday Life* that 'spatial practices in fact secretly structure the determining conditions of social life'. The way one walks a space is the manifestation of the conditions of social life in a given place. The 'state of emergency' proclaimed as a response to the terrorist attacks have drastically changed the conditions of social life in Paris, taking away from people their freedom to demonstrate and gather. Floating trees in floating plantations, people in Paris resist by continuing to walk and gather.

To think with the figures of the planted and floating trees is to think about roots. It is to think about uprooting and implantation. It is to think about the process of naturalisation, both biological and political. Michael's proposal for walking in the city is a proposal to think about belonging not as the result of an assignation of identity such as a nationality but as the result of feeling at home, cared for and taking care of others.

The floating tree is a tree with aerial roots. It is cultivated above ground, without ground, not attached to the ground.

Barbara Cassin writes: 'When is one at home? When one is welcome, his family and close relatives and his language(s).'

## Points, Lines

Isobel Wohl

4-12-2015

As I walk, I am constantly thinking about the figure as it emerges in my mind. I look at the next distances to measure and try to bring all measurements into coherence.<sup>1</sup>

I shut *Paris* and turn its last sentence over in my mind. I try to find the type of coherence into which its measurements can be brought.

It is obvious to me that the coherence I ascribe to glue has no place here: coherence as cohesion. Sticky coherence collapses distances. *Paris* is a distanced book, a group of plotted points with space set between them. Its coherence must reflect this, must have distance at its heart. Anything else risks the destruction of *Paris* as I know it.

Points: Photography, Method (points: rules), the name of a location in Paris, historical information about this location, a drawing made according to the aforementioned rules (points: the trees at each site, the dots in the drawings), the experience of making the drawing, these last four points varied in their repetition according to Method, then Glossary (points: Ambition, Art, Choice, Complexity, Development, etc). As I read I travel the lines between these points.

I was somewhere under London—between Moorgate and Barbican, I think—when I flicked open my copy of *Paris* to find, just under the front cover, the note on font:

Paris is typeset in Meridien, one of the first typefaces designed by Adrian Frutiger, who was inspired to create an alphabet without any completely

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<sup>1</sup> *Paris*, p. 93

straight strokes. He hoped the reader of a text set in Meridien would feel  
'as if they were wandering through a forest'.<sup>2</sup>

This forest is the site of a labile movement between reading, walking, planning, drawing, writing. These activities are also points of correspondence with lines drawn between them.

Michael Schwab, too, is a point of correspondence. I, too, am a point of correspondence.

Reading *Paris*, I experienced a quiet joy in its particularity. This joy reminded me of the pleasure I felt when, as a child, I measured short distances by putting one foot in front of the other. There could be no space between the toe of one shoe and the heel of the other. It was, at times, awkward to be so meticulous, but this kind of pleasure is heightened by its own awkwardness or, to be specific, by the awkwardness provoked by the activity that generates it. The tool used to measure distances in *Paris* is not the right height. Still, opening it brings pleasant focus, and it is nice to close the tool at the end of the day, to fold the two sides of the A-frame to a point.<sup>3</sup>

I, too, must not be sticky on my way to coherence.

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<sup>2</sup> *ibid*, p. 1

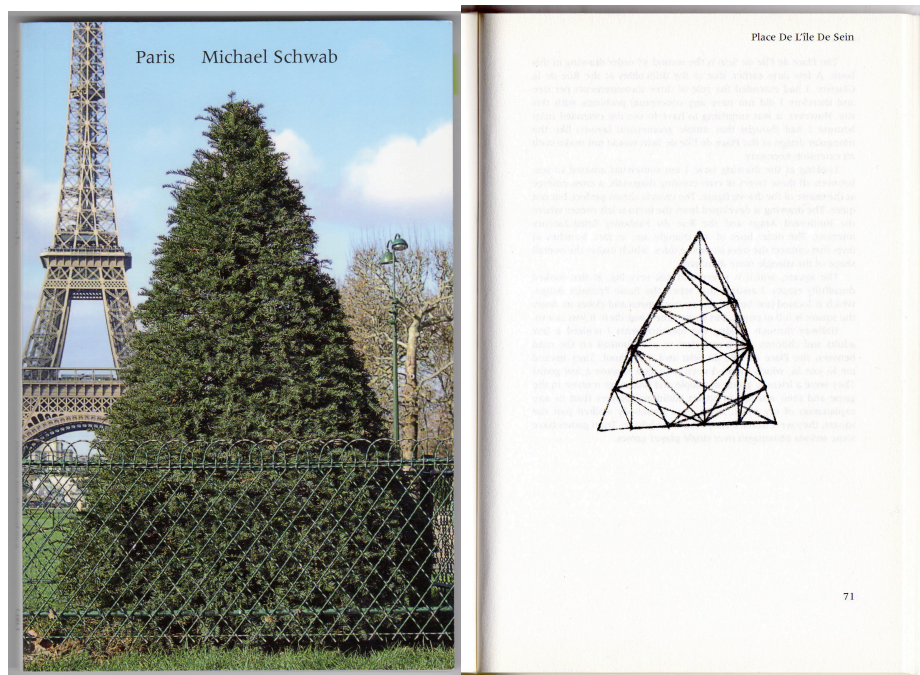
<sup>3</sup> *ibid*, p. 91

## **Paris+Paris** A play of geometries and a geometry of play

Susan Butler

4-12-2015

This is what I see if I look first at the cover photograph of *Paris* and then at the drawing on page 71, Place de l'Île de Sein:



Re-echoing forms of triangles and cones, partly interchangeable, partly opposed. On the flat surface of the cover photograph I read the three dimensional form of a tree, in the shape of a cone. And I can imagine the triangle traced on page 71 as an abstract drawing of the tree on the cover, as if strung with tinsel, shown in the crisscrossing lines. This triangle (more or less isosceles) is even at the heart of the photographed tree, as a plane form

bisecting its cone. Spun round, the plane form of the triangle would create the tree's volume again.

This correspondence somewhat depends on holding *Paris* vertically. Laid horizontally, the drawing on page 71 now looks more horizontal - a mapping, or itinerary. But a somewhat eccentric one, where the point of departure is not necessarily clear, so open to reinvention. As in many of the other drawings there seems to be something curiously erratic and systematic going on at once – a wayward geometry, often irregular, asymmetric, capable of being played and re-played differently.

How different, the controlling geometry that is the order to which the conical tree belongs. If again I took the triangle bisecting the tree's cone, reproduced it several times, and arranged these triangles flat with their points centered, but not touching, the radiating lines between would make a *ronde point*, a feature that is one of the hallmarks of the plan of Paris, that most geometrical of cities.

### **Conical / Iconical**

The cone-shaped tree, not uncommon in Paris, is the perfect, pluperfect, illustration of Michael Schwab's remark, 'A tree in the city does not grow; it is planted.' Trees in this form are not only artificial implantations; their forms are clearly artificial as well, achieved through expensive, labour-intensive work, often performed by some Authority, whether State, Municipal, or Royal. Still in London, in the Dutch Garden at Hampton Court, created by the transplanted monarchs William and Mary in 1689, one finds such trees. Pruned relentlessly, until all impulse to upward growth is vanquished, the trees instead grow inwards, ever more dense, forming an arboreal architecture.

This vegetable architecture is an icon of monarchic power, its Signifier, one in a chain of signifiers allied with systems of geometric rules, based on symmetry, that shaped Royal gardens across Europe. Spectacular open-air pleasure palaces, these gardens also carried another message: *if we can control nature, we can control you.*

Greatest of all was Versailles, designed by Andre Le Nôtre in the 1660's for Louis XIV. Here rows of conical trees patrol the space like silent sentinels. Yves Abrioux comments: 'As geometrical forms realised in vegetation, topiary work of this sort was used by Le Nôtre to graduate the movement from building (geometry + stone) to the woods in the background (non-geometry + vegetation) and out beyond the garden.'

As geometry + vegetation, topiary plays a distinct role in the grand formal plan of Versailles, with the majestic vista of its great central axis culminating in a *rond point*. Visitors to this garden did not stroll at leisure; rather they would be guided via an itinerary stipulated by the king. At specified points, you would be instructed to look back towards the palace, where the gleaming glass of the windows would reflect back the sun, like the gaze of the Sun King himself. \*

Royal Paris, Official Paris, the Paris of the Right Bank, is based on a plan similar to Versailles, originating in Le Nôtre's redesign of the Gardens of the Tuileries around the same time.\*\* Again Le Nôtre provided his king with a magnificent vista, installing a central axis that extended through and beyond the gardens, culminating in a *rond point* halfway up today's Champs Elysées. By 1670, Louis wants more; Le Nôtre obliges. He extends the trajectory in an elegant promenade flanked with elms up to the crossroads where Haussmann will later create the famous *rond point* of the Place de l'Etoile (1850's) with Napoleon's Arc de Triomphe at its centre.



Hausmann's design for twelve radial avenues incorporates the Champs Elysées below and the Avenue de la Grande Armée directly across, transforming these two aligned avenues into the grandest of his new *grands boulevards*. Continued ever westward by successive rulers, the *Grand Axe historique* traverses Paris all the way through the modern conurbation of La Défense, ending in the jetty overlooking the city's western suburbs.\*\*\*

### **Reinventing / Rediscovering Space**

And this is where our artist can be found one Sunday in the freezing cold – at the extreme point of the historic geometrical line begun more than three centuries earlier, surveying the bleak panorama of the distant *banlieues*. But his intended destination lies elsewhere – retracing his steps, he descends into the gardens below.

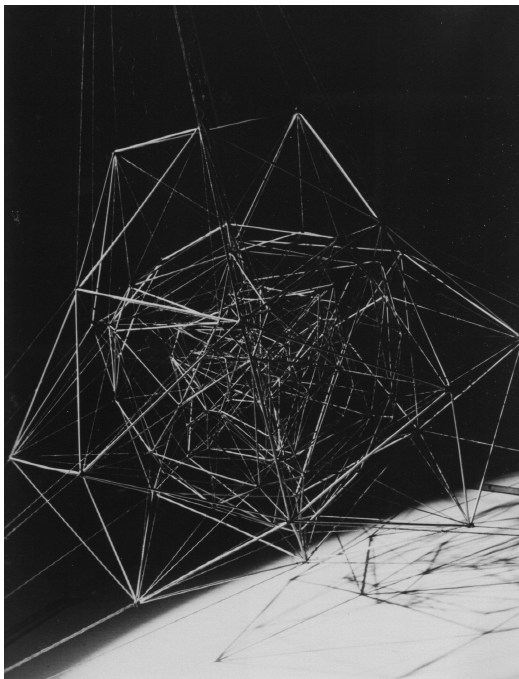
He is taking a line for a walk, but a walk along certain lines, according to the slightly unruly rules of the counter-geometry he has devised for *Paris*. Pacing out connecting lines amongst the trees, he uses his hand made 'A' frame to measure the distances, flipping it back and forth as he goes. He follows a rule of three, making 'A set of three measurements to the three trees standing closest to the first.' And so on, from the tree next closest to the first. Should these rules go awry, all the better:

*Rules have to become absurd; this is when they are at their best.*

Besides, for an artist, absurdity more reliably produces unpredictability. Having tested his rules by now in several of the green spaces dotted about Paris, he can be confident they *will* go somewhat awry now and then. And he discovers, in more freely planted spaces, often with a range of different

trees, that his rule of three can produce forms with a wonderful dynamic of asymmetry.

The resulting drawings resist categorization. Geometric forms emerging in the crossing lines recede into illusory depths, making perspectives that lift the forms into volumetric space. The drawings dance between, across dimensions, as if by their own will, teasing the viewer's eyes. At moments one could envisage them as a cat's cradle, or like one of the models of Poincaré's mathematical formulas photographed by Man Ray. Or they could be aerial – designs for kites that could waft above the various squares haunted by the artist.



The lines might trace edges of tiny crystals, or describe lineaments of a grand public monument – the protean forms scale themselves according to the imagination of each reader. Yet at any moment they may collapse back into plane space, and though we know the drawings trace trajectories

amongst the trees, they appear maze-like, since it can be difficult to find where the itinerary begins or ends.

They display the wonderfully undecidable quality of drawing, a potentiality that resists being pinned down to any definite dimensions of space or scale, or indeed of time. Like the model, drawing may record or propose. Prospective / retrospective, it enfolds this potentiality as the special pleasure of its form, complete yet indeterminate.

These drawings of trees and the book that contains them (its paper a transformation of trees) offer more than sufficient reason for the project of *Paris*. Nevertheless, some puzzling aspects persist.

How does the artist choose the first tree? He confesses this is subjective – but why trees in the first place? This is never explained. Do the trees merely serve to make the drawings, or are the drawings for the trees? Are the drawings in fact an excuse to tarry amongst the trees, armed with the alibi of his trusty ‘A’ frame? Every now and again buried in the wry prose of *Paris* there lies a hint that, quite simply, this artist is in love with trees. He even thinks he is one – at one point describing himself as ‘a floating tree’. And since they cannot come to him, he will go to them.

Once within the urban groves that give respite from the mineral city, he senses something profound that he struggles to name – a ‘gravity’ or ‘force field’. Might I then interpret the drawings as tracings of vectors within force fields generated by the trees themselves? Though transplanted, they rediscover their ancient power – a magnetism that draws us, and the artist, to seek out their companionship.

To conclude, let us listen to John Berger. Perhaps no one has described this relation to trees more eloquently:

‘The company they offer is spatial, and it is a way of measuring, of counting. Long before any numerals or mathematics, when human language was first naming the world, trees offered their measures – of distance, of height, of diameter, of space. They were taller than anything else alive, their roots went deeper than any creature; they grazed the sky and sounded the underworld. From them was born the idea of the pillar, the column. Trees offered man the measure of his upright space, and in this offer – mysteriously still present today ... there is the discreetest assurance in the world, that we have never been utterly alone.’

*And Our Faces, My Heart, Brief as Photos*

\* The information here is via email correspondence, December 2015

\*\* The Tuileries was in fact Le Nôtre’s birthplace, and where he would spend his last days. His grandfather Pierre had designed its earlier smaller gardens for Catherine de Médicis. (Cf. the site <http://andrelenotre.com> and within it, ‘andre-le-notre-vu-par-philippe-sollers’.)

\*\*\* Only after 1871, when the Tuileries Palace was burned down during the Paris Commune, was the view along the historic axis opened eastward toward the Louvre, although the Louvre’s central line is at an angle, making a bend in the *Grand Axe*.

