

# Nineteenth-Century French Studies

Volume 39, Number 1 & 2, Fall-Winter 2010-2011

E-ISSN: 1536-0172 Print ISSN: 0146-7891

*Reviewed by*

Wendelin Guentner

*The University of Iowa*

**Delacroix, Eugène. *Journal, Nouvelle édition intégrale établie par Michèle Hannoosh. 2 vol. Paris: José Corti, 2009, Pp. 2519. ISBN 9782-7143-09999-0***

It is a rare scholarly event indeed that inspires words such as “revolutionary” and “historic,” but Michèle Hannoosh’s long-awaited edition of Eugène Delacroix’s *Journal* amply merit them both and many more. Although in tracing the publication history of Delacroix’s intimate writings in her Introduction Hannoosh is gracious to both past and future editors of Delacroix’s *Journal*, her own edition is clearly a game changer, and this, very likely, for generations. Anything previously published on the *Journal* and, indeed, on Delacroix’s pictorial oeuvre, must be revisited and almost certainly revised in light of the new information and masterful contextualization that Hannoosh provides. Reference libraries will be deficient without it, as will the personal libraries of any serious student of nineteenth-century French art or of its cultural life in general. The last edition of this work was brought out by the Librairie Plon in 1996. A republication of the André Joubin edition that Plon originally published in 1931–32, it is a substantial book of 942 pages. However, with its 2,519 pages the Corti edition more than doubles this. The “Supplément,” which runs 100 pages in the Plon addition, reaches more than 450 pages in the Corti. These statistics provide a graphic – though superficial—image of the ambitious project Hannoosh courageously embraced and successfully brought to fruition.

Of the new material added to the repertory of Delacroix’s writings much comes from private collections, notably that of Achille Piron, the artist’s residuary legatee, and that of the writer, art critic and art historian, Claude Roger-Marx. In the introductions to these materials, Hannoosh describes how she tracked down the textual fragments which she used to reconstitute some of Delacroix’s notes and notebooks. Notable among these is the “Cahier autobiographique,” which covers about seven years beginning in 1853 and which is from the Piron collection, and Delacroix’s “Cahier de lectures” for 1843–44 taken from the collection of Roger-Marx. These introductions sometimes read like detective stories whose action takes place in both public and private collections over two continents.

Earlier editions of Delacroix's *Journal* revealed an artist with a highly developed intellect who through his intimate writing engaged in constant dialogue with the superior minds in the Western tradition from both the **[End Page 191]** past and present. We might expect Delacroix to show sustained interest in the vision and work of other plastic artists and Michelangelo, Raphaël, Correggio, Titian, Veronese, Rubens, Rembrandt, J.-L. David, Géricault and Ingres all figure prominently in his *Journal*. However, he was likewise captivated by the æsthetic dimension of musical compositions by Mozart, Beethoven, Chopin, Rossini and Berlioz. The authors in the French literary tradition who are most often cited range from Montaigne, Corneille, Molière, Racine, Pascal and Voltaire from earlier centuries, to his contemporaries, including Chateaubriand, Stendhal, Balzac, Gautier, Hugo, Baudelaire, Sand and Alexandre Dumas père. Among the foreign authors whose works captured his imagination we find Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, Goethe and Byron. The Corti edition publishes for the first time many passages which Delacroix copied from their works, as well his reflections on them, one example being notes the artist took after reading Stendhal's *L'Histoire de la peinture en Italie* which were found in the Roger-Marx collection. As an example, it is in part because of these many additions that the conclusions I reached in my 1998 article, "*Pratiques de la citation chez Delacroix: les auteurs contemporains*"—including which authors and categories of texts the artist quoted and how often, the contents of the quotations, their forms and modes of insertion into the *Journal*, and their discursive and autobiographical functions—all have to be re-examined. Other supplementary material is not from Delacroix's pen. For example, the new edition publishes for the first time 1852 journal notes by his student and collaborator, Pierre Andrieu. In them Andrieu traces the progression of a decorative series Delacroix prepared for the Hôtel de Ville, later destroyed during the Commune, signaling remarks Delacroix himself made with the preface, "*Observation du maître à ce sujet.*" The editor indicates some of the corrections she made for parts of Andrieu's journal that had already been published, substituting "*Paul Moreelèze*" for "*Puis nombreux*," "*un palais classique*" for "*un palais au fond règne*" and "*faciles*" for "*fouillés*" (2: 1826, note 9).

On occasion past editors suppressed information that scholars now value for providing precious windows into Delacroix's intellect and creative processes, as well as into the functioning of the French art world, and, indeed, of French society as a whole during the first half of the nineteenth-century. No doubt these choices can be explained by

conventions that were operative in the past, such as the customary practice of shielding an artist's private life from public view or of eliminating details which to their mind were too trivial to merit publication. For February 27, 1861 the material not included ranges from train times that Delacroix jotted down to a fragment by Voltaire on ridiculous decisions taken by the Parliament to a list of lithographs of Delacroix's art works that had been lent to the Musée du Luxembourg. Each one of these details is of potential interest to contemporary scholars of Delacroix's life, profession and times. The motivations for other omissions are less easy to understand. Thus, the Plon edition's August 1, 1860 entry includes transcriptions of three passages from Voltaire's *Mélanges de littérature*, two extracts regarding J.-B. Rousseau and one on Hamlet. For the same August 1<sup>st</sup> entry the Corti edition includes one passage by Voltaire on Rousseau and then several paragraphs that Voltaire dedicated to Pope; here the second passage on Rousseau and the one on Hamlet are identified as being from August 2<sup>nd</sup>. One wonders what was the motivation for Joubin's decision to exclude Voltaire's comments on Pope. Hannoosh revised other texts in order to correct the faulty transcriptions of previous editors which may have resulted from a lack of familiarity with Delacroix's **[End Page 192]** hand, with the painter himself—both his life and work—or with French society of his day. Picking passages at random, here are just two examples of the changed meanings that Hannoosh's new transcription of Delacroix's manuscripts gives us. We find this sentence in the Plon edition in the March 24, 1855 entry. I have crossed out words that the Corti version eliminates and placed in brackets those that the Corti version adds:

"Très chagrin du peu d'affection que je trouve chez les gens de cette exposition pour m'être utile[s], j'ai du plaisir à être utile-[me replier sur moi-même], ~~quand même~~-et -ne pouvant tirer grand profit de l'affection des autres, je me nourris du souvenir de mes propres sentiments."

By its repetition the Plon version falsely suggests that Delacroix was preoccupied with utility, all the while missing the fact that Delacroix took pleasure in introspection which is made clear in the Corti version. A final example: the Plon edition presents a text for October 16, 1850, of which the last two sentences the Corti edition attributes to October 14<sup>th</sup> of the same year. While the text remains identical, the change in chronological order in the new edition invites reexamination of Delacroix's processes of thought and leads the reader to possible new interpretations and understandings.

The ample critical apparatus demonstrates the editor's erudition,

thoroughness and insight. Hannoosh introduces the expanded *Voyage au Maghreb et en Andalousie* with a 20 page contextualizing "Notice" which stresses Delacroix's ethnographic sensibilities. An extensive (285) and detailed "Répertoire biographique" is found at the end of volume 2 which will be useful to all scholars interested in nineteenth-century France, including those not working on Delacroix per se. They include identifications of people, art works, biographical and historical events and quotations. The notes are clearly by one who has not only frequented archives, but also knows Delacroix—his biography, art, æsthetic beliefs, and professional trajectory—intimately. They often elucidate the importance of apparent ephemera by cross-referencing Delacroix's comments made in one text with others found in his many "*livres*," "*cahiers*," "*calepins*," "*carnets*" and "*feuilles volantes*." The notes also reveal a literary critic who has reflected not only on the rhetoric and poetics of the journal genre, but also on Delacroix's particular conception of the discipline of journal writing. Hannoosh states in her Introduction that she began studying Delacroix's *Journal* in 1991; we know her excellent *Painting and the Journal of Eugène Delacroix* (Princeton 1995). It is hard to think of anyone who would have been more qualified than she to undertake a new edition of the *Journal*. During its long preparation this project must have sometimes appeared as a maze in which one wanders without ever finding an exit. To her great credit, Hannoosh transformed the experience into a labyrinth, from which, after no doubt following many, unexpected paths, she emerged with a scholarly treasure.

Finally, in these days of short monographs, the scholarly community worldwide owes a large debt of gratitude to the Librairie José Corti for having undertaken the publication of Michèle Hannoosh's monumental *tour-de-force*. **[End Page 193]**