The Art Critic as Graphologist. Handwriting, Typography and the Painterly Touch in the Era of Impressionism

by Matthias Krüger

During the nineteenth century, "touch" (*touche*) became one of the most esteemed qualities in a painting. The article argues that the new importance attached to brushwork can be linked to the advent of graphology.

I. *«Die Handschrift des Malers»*

In 1957 Vojtěch Volavka published his «Die Handschrift des Malers»[1], comprising a systematic as well as historical account of the brush-stroke. His history ends in the eighteenth century. The notion of the brush-stroke as the «handwriting» of the painter emerged, however, first in the second half of the nineteenth century. Only then did art critics begin to speak of brush-work as the painters' *écriture.*

As Meyer Schapiro has pointed out, the new interest in the painterly touch, which culminated in the works of the Impressionists, coincided with the advent of graphology[2]. This essay will take on Schapiro's thesis and assumes a close link between both phenomena. Focusing on the French art criticism of the time, it will be argued that critics applied the same criteria to the interpretation of the painter's *touche* as graphologists did to the analysis of a handwriting specimen. It will be shown that the interest in the artist's hand became so overwhelming that even paintings where all traces of the brush-work had been carefully eliminated were often subjected to a graphological reading.

II. *Jean-Hippolyte Michon's System of Graphology*

In the second half of the nineteenth century *touche*, a technical term referring to the traces the artist's tool had left on the surface of the painting, was widely esteemed. The writer-painter Eugène Fromentin ranked among the strongest advocates of *touche*. In *Les maîtres d'autrefois*, his book on Flemish and Dutch painting, he extolled the vigorous brush-stroke of Peter Paul Rubens. For Fromentin, Rubens's *touche* exemplified a general rule:

Si l'on examine les exécutants sûrs d'eux mêmes, on verra combien la main est obéissante, prompte à bien dire sous la dictée de l'esprit, et quelles nuances de sensibilité, d'ardeur, de finesse, d'esprit, de profondeur, passent par le bout de leurs doigts, que ces doigts soient armés de l'ébauchoir, du pinceau ou du burin. Chaque artiste a donc sa manière de peindre comme il a sa taille et son coup pouce [...][3].

Fromentin believed *touche* to be as individual as a finger print -the personal imprint *par excellence*. By 1876, when *Les maîtres d'autrefois* was published,fingerprints were a relatively new means of identification, not used by criminologists until as late as 1880[4]. Fromentin's insistence on the individuality of *touche*, was equally of its time. Only one year before, in 1875, the priest, novelist and graphology's self-proclaimed founding father Jean-Hippolyte Michon had published his pioneering *Système de graphologie. L'art de connaître les hommes d'après leur écriture*.

Michon's book was based on the conviction that: «Toute écriture, comme tout langage, est l'immédiate manifestation de l'être intime intellectuel et morale»[5]. Such a pretension was not new[6], yet Michon was the first to develop a method for the psychological analysis of handwriting. In his treatise he devised an elaborate syntax of graphic features related to the personality of the scribe. Michon based his theory on the premise that every character trait had a corresponding sign in handwriting: accordingly each graphic feature in handwriting was attributed to a certain trait of character in his system. Thus the size and width, the dots and dashes, the slants and slopes, loops and bars, the strokes and flourishes of the hand furnished the graphologist with clues about the different facets of the writer's moral and intellectual being. Sprawling handwriting, for example, indicated a ostentatious person

(fig. 1)[7]. Similarly, there were certain specific signs for frankness, for prudence or for arrogance *etc.* Once the graphologist had deciphered all elements of a handwriting specimen, he gained full knowledge of the writer's personality.

Michon claimed his method of interpreting handwriting to be universally valid, applicable to all kinds of handwritings, independent of the scribe's culture, as well as of the material and the utensils he employed. This notwithstanding, in his book, he solely investigated handwriting executed with an ink pen.

Michon was firmly convinced that a graphological examination rendered handwriting fully transparent, allowing the graphologist to draw an accurate picture of the scribe's intellectual and moral personality. Thus, he claimed that if only three or four words of Caesar's, Cato's, Alexander the Great's or Virgil's handwriting were to have been preserved, they would allow the graphologist to gain a far more precise impression of their personality than any of the surviving statues of these men[8]. Michon even compared the exactitude of his graphological method to that of photography:

La splendide découverte de la photographie nous donne une comparaison d'une bien grande justesse. C'est n'est pas l'artiste photographe qui vous peint ; il a bien sa part d'habileté dans la pose qu'il vous fait prendre : c'est là la mise en scène ; mais, dans l'opération elle-même, ce n'est pas lui qui est l'agent ; c'est vous. Si vous faites un sourire, ce sourire est rendu sur la plaque sensible ; si un sentiment triste vous traverse le cerveau, votre front se rembrunit ou se crispe, vos lèvres n'ont plus d'épanouissement, ce je ne sais quoi qui dit la joie ou la paix intérieure ne se montre plus dans votre photographie. [...] Il en est ainsi dans cette autre photographie de vous-même que vous produisez en mettant votre âme en exercice par le langage de la plume. Il y a bien la forme que produit la plume ; mais nous avons vu que ce trait physique n'est plus rien, qu'il disparaît dans la spontanéité de l'œuvre intellectuelle, que c'est intelligence elle-même qui vient se photographier avec tout un ensemble merveilleux de facultés, d'instincts, d'aptitudes, etc. ; qui la composent. Avare ou prodigue, franche ou rusée, calme ou exaltée, faible ou forte, de volonté douce, ou anguleuse de caractère, débordant de puissance d'art et de poésie, ou étrangère à tout sentiment de la forme, ardente et ambitieuse ou mélancolique et découragée, les mille manifestations de l'être intime viendront se produire malgré vous, vous étant dans une complète inconscience et ne pouvant pas soupçonner que vous vous êtes peint là avec une exactitude rigoureuse[9].

Both photography and handwriting are described by Michon as being reliable recording systems. Like many of his contemporaries, Michon reduces the function of the photographer to that of a mere operator. His understanding of graphology is just as mechanical: the trace of the pencil on paper was capable of recording the intimate character of the writer just as light made an impression on the sensitive plate[10]. Michon imagines this process as happening subconsciously, for only then could the writer expose his inner self entirely. The moment the writer attends to the process of writing itself, his handwriting is made indecipherable to the graphologist. Thus, a piece of calligraphy is incapable of imparting information about the writer's personality: «[...] il m'est impossible de rien déduire d'une page écrite selon les règles d'une calligraphie parfaite. Le graphologiste est muet devant un tel travail, pour y découvrir la personnalité humaine, comme il le serait devant une page imprimée»[11].

The reference to printing is interesting in this context. The impossibility of subjecting the printed page to a graphological reading is evident: while handwritten letters can be seen as a direct trace of the writer's hand, there is no such immediate relation between printed letters and the manual work of the typographer. The same can be said about a page written on a typewriter, which instrument revolutionized writing habits at the very moment Michon was "founding" graphology. Indeed, the new interest in handwriting, which gave birth to graphology, has often been interpreted as a reaction to the implementation of machines such as this. The commercial launch of typewriters capable of mass production – in 1865 by Rasmus Malling Hansen in Denmark (fig. 2) and in 1868 by Christopher Latham Sholes in the United States – led to a radical re-evaluation of handwriting. With the advent of the typewriter, writing was no longer «the ink or pencil trace of a body whose optical and acoustic signals were irretrievably lost, only to reappear (in reader's minds) in the surrogate sensuality of handwriting»[12]. More so, in reaction to the standardization put into effect by the typewriter, handwriting «came to be viewed as revealing something unique about the person whose hand inscribed the page»[13]. The more the machine replaced the hand, the more handwriting came to be esteemed as a vehicle of self-expression.

But not all handwriting could be seen as equally self-expressive. Michon also expressly ruled out any handwriting executed in a mannered and contrived style. A graphological reading was only possible if the writer's mind was fully absorbed by the message and not aware of the act of writing itself, or – to quote the rule formulated by Michon – «Si cette écriture est bien celle de la personne, non déguisée, non appliquée, mais spontanée et habituelle, elle nous dit, etc.»[14]. In this way, he insisted upon the same qualities demanded of a painter's *touche* by art critics of the time.

III. *Conventional and Natural Signs. Charles Blanc's Conception of* Touche

Michon had little to say about the painter's *touche*. According to Michon, the handwriting of poets and painters possessed natural grace. It was well composed and symmetrical, yet never took on the «affectation of calligraphy» (fig. 3)[15]. The *écriture* of writers and painters was – so to say – beautiful by nature. What contemporary art critics looked for in the *touche* of a painter, however, was not beauty, but rather *sincérité* (sincerity) or *franchise* (frankness)[16]. Indeed, prompted by the invention of photography, the painterly touch underwent a re-appraisal similar to the re-evaluation of handwriting caused by the invention of the typewriter. While the photographer was regarded as a mere operator of a machine, the authorship of the painter was never called into question: unlike the photographer, the painter was believed to inscribe himself physically into his work. Both, the French word *touche* and the English "touch" accentuate this physical relationship between painter and work suggesting a corporeal bond, but also neglecting the intermediate role of the tool at the same time in much the same way that Michon did. The painterly touch thus became

increasingly viewed as the immediate manifestation of the artist's individuality. For the *touche* to be read as an indicator of the painter's character, the painting had to comply with the same precondition that Michon had demanded of the graphological specimen to be subjected to an analysis of the handwriting: it had to be carried out spontaneously. Only where this prerequisite was met could *touche* be seen as the sincere expression of the artist's personality.

But not all critics were fond of *touche*. Rejecting any kind of subjectivity, conservatives mistrusted the growing importance of brush-work in modern painting. While they did not ban *touche* altogether, they at least tried to control it by establishing rules – a tendency perhaps best exemplified in the chapter dedicated to *touche* in Charles Blanc's *Grammaire des Arts du dessin*. Though regarding *touche* as the least important means of expression at the artist's disposal, Blanc disapproved of the radical suppression of *touche* in *fini* paintings.

He opens the chapter with a comparison between handwriting and the painterly touch, only to simultaneously distance himself from what was in his eyes an exaggeration:

La touche est en peinture à peu prés ce qu'est dans l'écriture la calligraphie. Certains observateurs délicats ont cru possible de découvrir la physionomie morale d'une personne d'après la physionomie de son écriture, et en cela ils sont allés sans doute beaucoup trop loin [...][17].

Comparisons between *touche* and *écriture* were common among art critics of the time. Blanc eventually takes over the comparison, but only after having subjected it to a decisive modification. Although admitting a secret relationship between the hand that guides the quill and the mind that guides the hand, Blanc prefers to compare *touche* not to handwriting but to typography: «Ouvrez un livre: il semble tout d'abord que rien d'humain ne va transpirer sous la forme de ces lettres qu'une machine a frappées, qu'une machine a imprimées.» Indeed, this comparison between brush-work and a page's typeface denies *touche* the status of a vehicle of self-expression. This is not to say, that the printer has no influence on the character of the book, as Blanc hastens to add, but his job is restricted to the choice of the printing letters. This choice is based, however, on an intentional decision and lacks the spontaneity Michon regarded as necessary if writing is to be interpreted as a manifestation of one's inner self. Consequently, Blanc redefines the function of *touche*: no longer serving as a vehicle of authorial self-expression, *touche* is assigned the task of communicating a work's character: «[...] ce qu'elle [la touche] doit nous révèler, ce n'est pas tant le caractère du maître que le caractère de son œuvre»[18]. In Blanc's "system" the painter had to select a certain *touche* in accordance with the painting's style and genre, just as the printer had to opt for a certain block of type:

Tel ouvrage d'une haute sagesse s'imprimait en *philosophie*. Pour tel autre, on avait choisi le mot *saint-augustin*, qui éveillait des souvenirs austères et semblait se rapporter au jansénisme des pensées. Le *cicéro* désignait un type grave qui s'allongeait avec élégance dans les livres de poésie, la *gaillarde* était une lettre légère qui, de nom et de fait, convenait à merveille aux pages d'une littérature cursive ...[19].

Here, *touche* is seen as a set of purely conventional signs rather than as a set of natural symptoms, as the graphic elements of a handwriting had been for Michon. Blanc mentions several of the conventions of the painterly touch (*convenances de la touche*). One of the rules a painter had to observe said that the brushstroke should be adopted to the size of the canvas, another rule demanded that, in still life or genre paintings, *touche* should be used to imitate the material surface of the objects depicted. Finally *touche* was to be adapted in accordance with the aerial perspective: the marks of the brush should be larger in the foreground of the painting than in the background[20]. After having established and explained the rules to be observed by the painter when putting brush to canvas, Blanc suddenly arrives at another criterion by which to judge the quality of the *touche*. This stands in blatant opposition to all that has come before:

Mais en dehors de ces convenances [...] la touche du peintre sera toujours bonne si elle est naturelle, c'est-à-dire si elle est selon son cœur. Un orateur qui chercherait à imiter la voix d'un autre ne serait pas plus ridicule que le peintre affectant une manière qui n'est pas sienne[21].

The comparison of touch and voice must come as somewhat of a surprise, as it openly contradicts the idea of the *touche* as type. Printing blocks with raised letters are conventional signs and the composition of the printed page is a calculated act. Contrary to this the voice is something innate and "natural". Blanc explicitly condemns any kind of manipulation of the voice as an act of affectation. The same holds true for the *touche*: As long as it is "natural", *touche* is not only tolerated but also seen as benefitting a painting – it becomes a severe flaw where, by imitating the brush-work of another painter, the artist does not "speak" in his own idiom by imitating the brushwork of another painter.

Blanc illustrates this observation with a number of examples of famous painters, headed up by Ribera whose *touche* is described as *brutale* (raw, brutal), «mais sa brutalité ne déplaît point parce qu'elle est sincére»[22]. Thus, even a seemingly disagreeable and ugly *touche* is judged positively when it corresponds to the individuality of the artist. Despite having insisted on the conventionality of *touche*, in the last paragraph of the chapter Blanc goes on to advocate sincerity as the most important virtue of brush-work.

For Michon there were as many styles of handwriting as there were individuals[23] – an assertion that draws on Cicero's famous dictum that there are as many ways of speaking as there are orators. According to Blanc the same holds true for the *touche*:

Il y a donc cent manières de bien peindre, mais il n'en est pas moins vrai que la pratique du pinceau ne doit jamais tomber dans la fade et froide mignardise d'un Mignard, ni dans le faire insipide et *blaireauté* d'un Carlo Dolci et d'un Van der Werff, ni dans le poli vitreux d'un Girodet, nie dans la manière minutieuse, léchée et stérile d'un Denner[24].

The here-mentioned artists were faulted for having concealed their true nature by erasing all the vestiges of the brush from their paintings. Hiding their natural brush-stroke in the perfect finish of their paintings, they shrouded their true identity. It is in the elimination of *touche* that they betray their insincerity. Remarkably, by the end of his chapter on *touche* Blanc arrives at the very conception of *touche* which he had dismissed at the beginning of the same chapter. His interpretation of *fini* painting was widely shared, however, by art critics of his time.

IV. *The Representational Transparency and Graphological Opacity of the Academic* Fini

Academic lore despised the hand, therefore *touche* had to be avoided. *Touche* was regarded as the visible residue of the painter's handiwork, belonging to his métier and thus to the manual aspect of his art. Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, one of the strongest defenders of academic art theory, considered *touche* as a misuse of execution: «Au lieu de l'object représenté, elle [la touche] fait voir le procédé; au lieu de la pensée elle dénonce la main»[25]. *Touche* was rejected for it directed the viewer's attention away from the subject and towards the manual skill of the painter, or – to adopt the language of modern media theory – *touche* was dismissed as interfering with painting's "transparency". In order to achieve the highest degree of transparency possible, academic painters eliminated all traces of the brush, achieving thus the *fini* (finish), as the perfectly smoothed picture surface was called.

The concept of transparency in painting derived from Italian art theory. In his treatise *De Pictura*, written in 1435, Leon Battista Alberti compared the painting to a window, allowing the viewer to look through the surface onto the depicted scene[26]. In the second half of the nineteenth century, however, *fini* was rarely likened to a window pane; instead, critics interpreted it as a means to emulate the clarity of the photographic image. Thus, Jean-Léon Gérôme's *Death of Caesar* (fig. 4) prompted the poet Théophile Gautier to exclaim enthusiastically: «Si la photographie eût été connue au temps de César, on pourrait croire le tableau fait d'après une épreuve obtenue sur place, au moment même de la catastrophe»[27]. Other critics were, however, less passionate about the photographic verisimilitude of Gérôme's *fini* paintings. A work of art – they maintained – had to be more than a mere photograph. In their opinion Gérôme's paintings lacked something that was also deemed absent in the photographic image: the "imprint" (*empreinte personel*) of the artist's individuality – a word which could be both understood metaphorically and literally as referring to *touche* as the imprint left by artist's brush on the canvas.

Fini renders the subject matter of the paintings transparent, but the personality of the artist opaque[28]. It did not permit the beholder to "look through" and see the "man". In this respect it was a blind window or a blank face, obstructing any introspecting gazes. A similar metaphor is used by Georges Lafenestre in describing the *fini* of William Bouguereau's *Virgin of Consolation* (fig. 5) exhibited at the Salon of 1877:

Dans cet ouvrage [...] tout est correct, fini, léché, pourléché. Pas de plus petit défaut où mordre [...]. Cependant, toute cette perfection est glaciale comme celle d'un homme parfaitement élevé, d'une égalité d'humeur invincible et d'une politesse imperturbable, sans qualités attirantes comme sans défauts blessants. La peinture de M. Bouguereau est le modèle de la peinture bien élevée jusqu'à écœurement [...][29].

Here, the words *fini*, *léché* and *poli*, as employed by Lafenestre, have both a literal and a metaphorical meaning. Literally, they refer to the smooth surface of the picture surface. On a metaphorical level, however, they are used to describe a person's perfectly correct conduct – often regarded as emotionally cold. *Fini* was not only a technical term used in painting but also referred to the finish in the public appearance of a person. Contemporary art critics frequently interpreted the painterly *fini* as serving a similar end: that is to say the rendering of the painting presentable to public viewing[30]. Lafenestre's use of the adjective *léché* is no less ambivalent: On the one hand, *léché* was used disapprovingly for a picture surface the shiny gloss of which seemed the result of intensive licking. In ordinary speech, on the other, the word often describes a person's inauthentic and unnatural attitude – a metaphor which derives from Greek rhetoric. Similarly, the French word *poli* can denominate both the literal polish of a surface and "polite" or "polished" behaviour on a metaphorical level.

The comparison of Bouguereau's painting to a perfectly-educated gentleman is irony laden, given that the painting's subject is the *Virgin of Consolation*. This picture does not offer the compassion promised by the title. Instead the immaculate, though merciless, finish of the picture confronts the spectator with the cold indifference of a perfectly-educated gentleman.

The same emotional coldness was diagnosed in Gérôme's paintings as well. Thus his *Idylle* (fig. 6), shown at the Salon of 1853, prompted Henri Delaborde to the comment: «[...] on peut reprocher à ses œuvres leur froideur intime et en quelque sorte leur

perfection»[31]. The oxymoron «intimate frigidity» alludes to the contrast between the sentimental subject matter – a naked couple with a deer resting at a fountain – and the flawless finish of the painting. In a Gérôme painting, the perfection is such that according to the critic: «on ne trouvera à y relever ni des fautes ni même les inégalités d'exécutions; on n'y trouvera pas non plus des intentions fort neuves, l'empreinte d'un sentiment franc et individuel»[32]. Those idiosyncrasies forming the very basis of any graphological diagnosis were thus totally absent. For this very reason Marius Chaumelin compared Gérôme's paintings to calligraphy: «Aussi, ses tableaux ont-ils, dans leur sage précision, la monotonie, la froideur d'une page de calligraphie»[33]. It follows that *fini* remained as impenetrable (or "opaque") to the art critic as a page of calligraphy to the graphologist. Neither *fini* nor calligraphy allowed any insight into the psyche of its author.

V. *Gérômes Scientific Touch*

Not all critics, however, agreed on this point. Emile Galichon, who celebrated Gérôme as a *peintre-ethnographe* in an article published in the *Gazette des Beaux Arts* of 1868, was firmly convinced that the laws of graphology could also be applied to the *touche* of a painter:

On veut que l'écriture fasse connaître la physionomie morale de l'individu ; et personne ne contestera, en effet, que les lettres tracées par la main d'un homme emporté, énergique ou volontaire, ne soient plus rapides, plus fermes que celles d'un homme irrésolu ou timide. Mais si cela est vrai de l'écriture, combien l'est-ce encore plus de la touche, qui est un des moyens les plus expressifs dont le peintre dispose pour traduire ses sentiments ![34].

After illustrating this rule with some examples from the history of art, Galichon finally arrives at the conclusion that the *touche* of the great masters had always been in perfect harmony with their temperament. Consequently the rule should hold true for Gérôme:

Si, à l'aide de cette loi, on voulait déterminer la nature du talent de M. Gérôme, on acquerrait bien vite la certitude que ses procédés trahissent un peintre anecdotique, un conteur agréable et instruit, plutôt qu'un historien profond, un poète rêveur ou lyrique. Son exécution petite, lisse et émaillée, d'une netteté et d'un exactitude qui excluent tout subterfuge et toute réticence, dénonce un caractère droit, ferme et consciencieux, une intelligence merveilleusement dotée de toutes les qualités qui font les historiographes fidèles[35].

This reading is not entirely favourable. By qualifying Gérôme as a painter of anecdotes instead of a profound historian, Galichon echoes a critique often levelled at the painter: Gérôme was criticized for having debased the grand tradition of history painting. Not only was he accused on the basis of his penchant for frivolous subjects but also because of the attention he paid to minute details. Charles Blanc shared these objections. In his review of the paintings shown at the Parisian World Exhibition of 1867 he severely criticized Gérôme for both the obscenity of his *Phryné before the Areopagus* and abundance of details in the *Death of Caesar*, rendering the event as an eye-witness would have done, paying attention to the incidental, instead of representing it from a historical perspective and focussing only on the essence[36].

Yet the scrupulous recording of details that disqualified Gérôme from being a history painter, constituted the very basis for Gérôme's reputation as a painter ethnographer (fig. 7). The precision with which he reproduced detail was regarded as evidence of the artist's scientific conscientiousness. The same could be said of his elimination of brush-work and imparting of an almost photographic transparency on the painting. Gérôme, as Linda Nochlin has put it, «tries to make us forget that his art is really art, both by concealing the evidence of his touch, and, at the same time, by insisting on a plethora of authenticating details»[37]. This pseudo-photographic rendering of archeological and ethnographic details was criticised by many an art critic of the time. For some the artist had already deserted the realm of painting in favour of an archaeological or ethnographic mission[38]. The same qualities that formed the basis of Gérôme's reputation as an excellent archaeologist and ethnographer were regarded as detrimental to his art: this critical reception evidences the growing chasm between the production of artistic and scientific pictures, then often seen as two antagonistic enterprises. While *touche* was of growing importance for painting, scientific illustrations usually went without any reference to their producers. In a scientific study any imprint of the scientist's personality would have been judged as a manipulation of truth. Inversely, the "absence of the hand" could be seen as a proof of objectivity. As has often been pointed out, the *fini* of Gérôme's paintings served a similar end: «His paintings could claim - and indeed came to depend upon - similar degrees of 'objectivity' [as photography], hence 'scientific' accuracy and truth»[39]. Such an interpretation is confirmed by Galichon's graphological reading of Gérôme's *touche*. As for Galichon, Gérôme's invisible brush-stroke was conceived as the graphological sign of his virtue as a good ethnographer: his unerring precision, faithfulness and intelligence. The very idea of going against its grain and reading academic *fini* in a graphological manner testifies to the dominance the graphological paradigm had attained in contemporary art criticism[40].

CAPTIONS

1. Handwriting specimen of an ostentatious person (Louis XIV), from Michon, *Système de Graphologie*

2. Rasmus Malling Hansen, Writing ball, 1867

3. Handwriting specimen of a painter (Raphael), from Michon, *Système de Graphologie*

4. Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Death of Caesar*, 1859, oil on canvas, 85,5 x 145,5 cm, Baltimore, The Walters Arts Museum

5. William Bouguereau, *Virgin of Consolation*, 1877, oil on canvas, 204 x 148 cm, Musée de la ville de Strasbourg

6. Jean-Léon Gérôme, *The Idylle* (also known as *Daphnis and Chloe*), 1852, oil on canvas, 212 x 156 cm, Tarpes, Musée Massy

7. Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Whirling Dervishes*, 1899, oil on canvas, 73 x 95 cm, private collection

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[1]V. Volavka, *Die Handschrift des Malers*, Prag 1953.

[2]M. Schapiro, *Impressionism. Reflections and Perceptions*, New York 1997, p. 61.

[3]E. Fromentin, *Les maîtres d'autrefois. Belgique, Hollande*, Paris 1876, p. 324.

[4]C. Ginzburg, *Spie. Radici di un paradigma indiziario*, in Id*., Miti, emblemi, spie*, Torino 1986, pp. 158-209, 189-190.

[5]J.-H. Michon, *Système de graphologie. L'art de connaître les hommes d'après leur écriture*, Paris 1875, p. 46.

[6]Michon himself refers to Lavater (ibidem). The topos of style being an immediate expression of the soul of the painter has an equally long prehistory; cfr. Ph. Junod: *Transparence et opacité. Essai sur les fondements théoriques de l'art moderne*, (1976), Nîmes 2004, pp. 148-151.

[7]Michon, *Système de graphologie*, cit., p. 49.

[8]Ivi, p. 91

[9]Ivi, pp. 46-47.

[10]Cfr. P. Geimer, *Linien des hellen Wahnsinns. Das Zittern des Graphologen*, in W. Busch et all. (edd.), *Randgänge der Zeichnung*, München2007, p. 55-71, p. 60, note 15.

[11]Michon, *Système de graphologie*, cit., p. 41.

[12]F. Kittler, *Grammophon, Film, Typewriter*, (1986), Stanford 1999, p. 13.

[13]J.A. Walker, *Expressionism and modernism in the American theatre. Bodies, voices, words*, Cambrigde et all., p. 225. A similar «humanistic» impulse contributed to the re-evaluation of the painterly touche as the hallmark of individuality; cfr. A. Ducci : *«Leur chair chante des Marseillaises».». La main dans les écrits sur l'art en France, repères pour un parcours*, in: M. Gadebusch Bondio (ed.), *Die Hand. Elemente einer Medizin- und Kulturgeschichte*, Berlin 2010, pp. 239-264, p. 259.

[14]Michon, *Système de graphologie*, cit. p. 61.

[15]Ivi, p. 281 («Toute forme graphique gracieuse, ordonnée, symétrique, sans affectation de calligraphie, dit de suite le sentiment de la forme, les sens du beau, les aptitudes de l'art»).

[16]On the notion of sincerity, see Krüger, *Relief der Farbe*, cit., 87-93.

[17]Ch. Blanc, *Grammaire des arts du dessin. Architecture, sculpture, peinture*, Paris 1867, p. 611.

[18]Ivi, p. 612.

[19]Ivi, pp. 611-612.

[20]Ivi, pp. 612-615.

[21]Ivi, p. 615.

[22]Ibidem.

[23]Michon, *Système de graphologie*, cit., p. 37.

[24]Blanc, *Grammaire des art du dessin*, cit., p. 615.

[25]Quoted in H. Delaborde, *Ingres. Sa vie, ses travaux, sa doctrine*, Paris 1870, p. 150.

[26]Cfr. Ch. Rosen, H. Zerner, 'The ideology of the licked surface. Official Art', in *Romanticism and Realism. The Mythology of Nineteenth-Century Art*, London-Boston 1984, pp. 203-232, p. 224.

[27]Th. Gautier, *A travers les ateliers*, in «Artiste», 3, 1858, pp. 17-20, p. 18.

[28]Cfr. Junod, *Transparence et opacité*, cit., pp. 296-297.

[29]G. Lafenestre, in «Moniteur Universel», 1877, quoted in *Salon Composite*, in «Artiste», 1877, vol. 2, pp. 3-31, p. 6.

[30]Critics often linked the *fini*in painting to the finish of the artist's public appearance; see, for example, the description of Gérôme's

conduct in J. Claretie, *Peintre et Sculpteur contemporains*, Paris 1873, p. 12.

[31]H. Delaborde, *Salon de 1853*, in «Revue des deux mondes», 4, 1853, pp. 1134-1158, p. 1146.

[32]Ibidem. The remark refers to Gérôme's painting *Frieze for a commemorative vase*, shown next to *The Idylle* at the Salon of 1853.

[33]M. Chaumelin, *L'art contemporain*, Paris 1873, p. 118. Note the pieces of "Arabic" calligraphy Gérôme depicted in several of his oriental paintings. Though undoubtedly inserted to add some "true" local colour, these are mostly amalgamations of several sources, which render them unreadable. See M. Roberts, *Gérôme in Istabanbul*, in S. Allan, M. Morton (edd.), *Reconsidering Gérôme*, pp. 119-134, p. 132, note 14.

[34]E. Galichon, *M. Gérôme. Peintre ethnographe*, in «Gazette des Beaux Arts», 24 (1868), pp. 147-151, p. 148.

[35]Ivi, pp. 148-149.

[36]Ch. Blanc, *Les artistes de mon temps*, Paris 1876, p. 435.

[37]L. Nochlin, *The Imaginary Orient*, (1983), in Ead., *The Politics of Vision. Essays on Nineteenth Century Art and Society*, New York 1989, pp. 37-38.

[38]See e.g. P. Mantz, *Salon de 1859*, in «Gazette des Beaux Arts», 1859, pp. 193-208, p. 196: «Il [Gérôme] déserte peu à peu l'arène de l'art pour celle de l'archéologie.»

[39]R. Leppert, *Art and the Commited Eye. The Culture Function of Imagery*, Boulder (Color.) 1996, p. 238.

[40]Cfr. A. Zimmermann, *Hände – Künstler, Wissenschaftler und Medien in der zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts*, in *Vorträge aus dem Warburg-Haus*, 8, ed. U. Fleckner et all., Berlin 2004, pp. 135-166.