# Volitional consumption. Repetitive vase scenes in a psychophysiological context[*]

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## Introduction: Repetition in fifth-century black figure

Pottery making was a copying industry in Archaic and Classical Athens. Sizes, shapes, details of shapes, feet, handles and mouths, decorative ornaments and figural scenes were all customarily repeated from one pot to another. Iconographic repetition, as one of the elements that affected the repetitive visual impact of Attic pots, did not result from a drive toward efficiency in production but rather, as shown by Ann Steiner in her seminal study of repetitive vase scenes, painters manipulated repetition to convey information to the vase user about either the type of pottery or about the narrative of the figural scene.[1] Some repetitive images, not unlike modern logos, therefore, labelled specific wares, such as horse-head amphorae, *komast*-dancer cups and *glaux-skyphoi*.[2] Vase painters, including Exekias and other great masters, nonetheless, purposely repeated a figural scene in part or in its entirety on one pot and across pots to communicate ideas about the action, sequence of events and meaning of the scenes.

Following on from Steiner's emphasis on painters' and vase users' cognitive processing of repetitive images, in this paper I investigate iconographic repetition on black-figured ceramics of the early fifth century BCE. During this period, the vast majority of black-figured pots bear repetitive scenes that were painted in an unrefined manner. Painters' low labour input is evident from the broad brush strokes and the inconsistent thickness of the clay slip for the black glaze, the avoidance of incising – especially of short incisions for details of clothing and anatomy – and the imprecise application, if any, of accessory white and purple (Figures 6.1–5). Such vase scenes, because of painters' carelessness, could qualify as 'bad art'. The apparent degeneration of art and technique in these hastily executed paintings has posed typological and interpretational challenges to modern scholars. It is commonly difficult, using the methodology of connoisseurship, to single out an idiosyncratic drawing style and attribute these pots to a painter with certainty.[3] Iconographic methodologies also fail. The scenes are, in general, pictorially ambiguous, as there can be multiple identifications of the depicted figures and varied interpretations of the subject matter.[4] A key consequence of 'bad art' was that it also presented a visual challenge to ancient vase viewers.

Unsurprisingly then, negative value judgements have been prevalent in traditional scholarship about the low aesthetic quality and questionable communicative potential of fifth-century black-figured paintings.[5] These pots presumably served the lower end of the market,

[1] Steiner, *Reading Greek Vases*, 2007.

[2] Ibid., 40–51.

[3] Robertson, 'Beazley and Attic Vase Painting', 1985, 25.

[4] Volioti, 'Visual Ambiguity in the *oeuvre* of the Gela Painter: A New Lekythos from Thessaly', 2007, 91–101.

[5] Hatzivassiliou, *Athenian Black Figure Iconography between 510 and 475 B.C.*, 2010, 1.

such as the poor or middle class in Athens and abroad.[6] In this context, iconographic repetition has been considered symptomatic of uninterested and unskilful painters who did not care about producing high art forms but instead repeated figures within the scene to fill up space and copied endlessly scenes across vases.[7] Yet did ancient artisans, traders and vase users see these hurriedly and repetitively painted pots primarily in economic terms; that is, purely as cheap versions of either finely painted pots of earlier times in black figure or contemporary ones in red figure that qualified as *objets d'art*? By drawing from cognitive psychology, I shall argue in this paper that repetitive 'bad art' may have been liked in its own right. Iconographic repetition may have contributed greatly in making fifth-century black-figured paintings likeable in ancient times. Repetition would have facilitated the conscious and unconscious processing of images. Vase buyers' preferences, in turn, had an economic impact by shaping demands for large-scale and continued production, as implied by the long-lasting appeal of black-figured pottery down to approximately 450 BCE and its legacy thereafter.

## Bodily entanglement with Haimonian pots

In particular, I shall discuss pots from the Haimon Group, a large stylistic workshop of many potters and painters near the fictional Haimon Painter.[8] I shall refer to pots that I have studied closely, and particularly to a cup skyphos found in a grave at Mieza, western Macedonia,[9] and to three lekythoi recovered from graves at Pherai (Velestino) and Nea Ionia (Volos), Pagasetic Thessaly (Figures 6.1–5).[10] Artisans of the Haimon Group specialised in the production of cup skyphoi and lekythoi.[11] The Haimon Group is indicative of fifth-century black figure for the following main reasons. First, the extent of sketchiness in the paintings is such that the stylistic boundaries between painters of the Haimon Group and those in other workshops are blurred, justifying John Beazley's and other scholars' use of the term 'Haimonian'.[12] Second, although a quantitative assessment is missing, there is scholarly consensus that the degree of iconographic repetition is considerable. Rare depictions, such as that of Poseidon, are the exception.[13] The majority of Haimonian pots bear repetitive scenes, mostly chariot processions (for example Figures 6.1–3). Third, ancient people were repeatedly exposed to Haimonian pottery so that over time these exposures amplified the effect of iconographic repetition. Judging from thousands of extant Haimonian pots, their wide Mediterranean distribution and their prolific occurrence in archaeological contexts, the operations of this workshop, even if there were potteries in multiple locations, entailed economies of scale in production, trade and consumption.[14] The longevity of Haimonian production from 500-490 to 460-450 BCE and its influence on related wares, including

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[6] Boardman, *Athenian Black Figure Vases. A Handbook*, 1974, 146.

[7] Haspels, *Attic Black-figured Lekythoi*, 1936, 139; Robertson, *The Art of Vase-Painting in Classical Athens*, 1992, 130.

[8] Haspels, *ABL*, 130.

[9] Archaeological Museum of Veroia, Π 1627; Katerina Romiopoulou and Giannis Touratsoglou, *Μίεζα. Νεκροταφείο Υστεροαρχαϊκών – Πρώιμων Ελληνιστικών Χρόνων*, 2002, 76 grave no. 51, pl. 4.

[10] Archaeological Museum of Volos, BE 11591, Nea Ionia, grave no. 309; Volioti, 'Dimensional standardization', 149, fig. 1; K3322.89, Pherai, grave no. 11, Vassiliki Adrimi-Sismani et al., *Αγώνες και Αθλήματα στην Αρχαία Θεσσαλία*, 2004, 120, no. 21; K3323.001, Pherai, grave no. 12, unpublished.

[11] Hatzivassiliou, *Athenian Black Figure Iconography*, 6–7.

[12] *Para*. 281.

[13] Athens, 3rd Ephorate, A 15539; Baziotopoulou-Valavani, 'From Tomb 1099', 2001, 305, no. 306.

[14] See, for example, Shefton, 'The Lancut Group: Silhouette Technique and Coral Red. Some Attic Vth Century Export Material in pan-Mediterranean Sight', 1999; Jubier-Galinier, 'L'atelier des peintres de Diosphos et de Haimon', 2003. Volioti, 'Dimensional Standardization and the Use of Haimonian Lekythoi', 2014.

Boeotian imitations, which continued after 450 BCE,[15] moreover, are suggestive of sustained social preferences for, and hence positive attitudes towards, 'bad art'.

People's positive attitudes in antiquity, as now, probably involved thoughts as well as feelings and bodily responses. Indeed, social theories of phenomenology,[16] materiality and entanglement,[17] which address people-object interactions, have emphasised the inseparability of mind, body and matter, supporting the notion of distributed cognition. Moreover, psychophysiology, the experimental study of mind-body interactions, has shown that people's responses to stimuli that they encounter repeatedly include alternations not only in brain waves but also in body temperature, blood pressure and muscle movements, such as frowning and smiling.[18] Clearly, repeated exposure to the same or similar images has an impact on a range of physiological and psychological responses.

A bodily appreciation of vase scenes is also relevant since these are three-dimensional surfaces of superimposed layers of clay slips and incisions on three-dimensional and functional shapes that were touched and held during production, transport and use. Effectively, any appreciation of repetitive 'bad art' in antiquity entailed both the viewing and the handling of pots.[19] Preferences for Haimonian images implicated both vase users' behaviour and painters' and/or traders' marketing efforts. Thus, in the next section I outline the theory of processing fluency and subsequently I discuss the putative value of iconographic repetition in the cross-selling of pottery and in prompting buyers' volitional reconsumption.

**Processing Fluency: Liking Repetitive Scenes**

The theory of processing fluency, which is based on insights from cognitive psychology, has, amongst other fields, been successfully applied to explain people's aesthetic responses.[20] Within an interactionist people-object framework,[21] fluency refers to the cognitive ease and speed with which an individual processes stimuli, such as pictures, words and everyday objects. The more fluently somebody can process a stimulus, the more positive their aesthetic response will be, that is, the more likable they will find the stimulus. Although the ways people experience processing fluency and judge an item positively or negatively can be complex, involving multiple parameters and depending on context and on a person's

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[15] See *ABV* 574–83; Sabetai, 'Female Protomes from Chaeroneia (Boeotia)', 2015.

[16] See, for example, Langer, *Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology of Perception. A Guide and Commentary*, 1989, 33, 89; Merleau-Ponty, *The World of Perception*, 2004, 61; Fischer, 'Four Genealogies for a Recombinant Anthropology of Science and Technology', 2007, 551; Fielding, 'Cultivating Perception: Phenomenological Encounters with Artworks', 2015, 281.

[17] See, for example, Miller, 'Materiality', 2005, 2–4; Knappett, 'Beyond Skin: Layering and Networking in Art and Archaeology', 2006, 240, 249; Normark, 'Involutions of Materiality: Operationalizing a Neo-materialist Perspective through the Causeways at Ichmul and Yo'okop', 2010, 138, with references; Hodder, *Entangled. An Archaeology of the Relationships between Humans and Things*, 2012.

[18] See, for example, Morris Stern et al., *Psychophysiological Recording*, 2001, 3; Blascovich et al., *Social Psychophysiology for Social and Personality Psychology*, 2011, 5, with references; Potter and Bolls, *Psychophysiological Measurement and Meaning. Cognitive and Emotional Processing of Media*, 2012, 31.

[19] See, for example, Volioti, 'The Materiality of Graffiti: Socialising a Lekythos in Pherai', 2011, 144–5. For the embodied understanding of vision in Greek thought, see Stansbury-O'Donnell, *Looking at Greek Art*, 2011, 173.

[20] See Reber et al., 'Processing Fluency and Aesthetic Pleasure: Is Beauty in the Perceiver's Processing Experience?', 2004, with references; Graf and Landwehr, 'A Dual-Process Perspective on Fluency-Based Aesthetics: The Pleasure-Interest Model of Aesthetic Liking', 2015, with references. For critique, see Silvia, 'Human Emotions and Aesthetic Experience. An Overview of Empirical Aesthetics', 2012, 259.

[21] Reber et al., 'Processing Fluency', 365; Reber, 'Processing fluency, Aesthetic Pleasure, and Culturally Shared Taste', 2012, 226.

background, motivation[22] and psychological state,[23] some generalisations about people's likes and dislikes hold true.

Fluency can operate at both basic and advanced levels, entailing automatic and analytical processing respectively. A person recognises the features of a stimulus at a basic level of processing and interprets them at an advanced level. The two levels, nonetheless, can be interdependent, since basic-level processing can trigger closer and more detailed engagement with the stimulus at an advanced level.[24] Fluent or disfluent processing arises from the perceived aesthetic qualities of the stimulus and these include balance and proportion, symmetry, informational content and complexity, contrast and clarity,[25] and, most importantly for the purpose of this study, familiarity.[26]

Any experience of familiarity implicates a person's memory, as the individual recalls whether or not they have encountered the stimulus previously.[27] In addition to objective familiarity, arising from the frequency of a person's prior exposure to a stimulus, an individual may also develop a subjective feeling that the stimulus seems familiar and may find the stimulus attractive for that reason.[28] People tend to process familiar stimuli easily. Thus, repeated exposure to a stimulus enhances both objective and subjective familiarity, contributing to processing fluency and positive affect. Familiarity through repetition becomes especially relevant for our vase scenes. Fluent processing of familiar stimuli, moreover, makes people feel good about themselves and their ability to process stimuli at either a basic or a basic and an advanced level.[29] People tend to attribute the positive feelings arising from familiarity and their processing capabilities to the stimulus itself.[30] As a consequence, the stimulus is liked. An evaluation of a Haimonian painting in antiquity, therefore, may not only have resulted from an objective judgement of its visual and technical merits, or failings, but also from how the scene as a familiar entity made painters, vase users and traders feel. Let us envisage people's putative positive feelings at a basic and advanced level of processing in ancient times.

Basic processing may have taken place when people glanced briefly at a Haimonian scene, saw a pot from a distance or registered a group of pots at a time. Haimonian pots, similarly to other Attic figured wares,[31] were commonly decorated, traded and used in groups.[32] A burial assemblage at Akraiphia, Boeotia, for example, contained ten Haimonian cup skyphoi that seem to be of the same potter and painter.[33] Assuming that people had been exposed to Haimonian pottery before, which was highly likely in Athens and numerous places across the Mediterranean, they would have responded to the familiarity of the scene(s)

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[22] See Hekkert et al., '"Most Advanced, yet Acceptable": Typicality and Novelty as Joint Predictors of Aesthetic Preference in Industrial Design', 2003, 122.

[23] See de Vries et al., 'Happiness Cools the Warm Glow of Familiarity: Psychophysiological Evidence That Mood Modulates the Familiarity-Affect Link', 2010.

[24] Graf and Landwehr, 'A Dual-Process Perspective', 4.

[25] Reber et al., 'Processing Fluency', 364, with references.

[26] Ibid. 370, with references.

[27] For implicit vs. explicit memory, see Whittlesea and Price, 'Implicit/explicit Memory versus Analytic/nonanalytic Processing: Re-thinking the Mere Exposure Effect', 2001, 243–4. For the archival view of memory, see Robins, 'Memory Traces, Memory Errors, and the Possibility of Neural Lie Detection', 2014, 176–7.

[28] Halberstadt, 'The Generality and Ultimate Origins of the Attractiveness of Prototypes', 2006, 174–5.

[29] See Landwehr et al., 'Product Design for the Long Run: Consumer Responses to Typical and Atypical Designs at Different Stages of Exposure', 2013, 93–4, with references.

[30] See Reber, 'Processing fluency', 228, 258.

[31] Langridge-Noti, '"To Market, To Market": Pottery, The Individual, and Trade in Athens', 2015, 179.

[32] See Volioti, 'Dimensional Standardization', 160–2.

[33] See Sabetai, 'Boeotian Red-figure Vases: Observations on their Contexts and Settings', 2012, 92–3, fig. 13.

in terms of drawing style, subject matter and/or particular pictorial elements. Because of familiarity, people processed the scene(s) easily, felt good about their processing capabilities and found the pot(s) likeable and pleasant.

The mere exposure phenomenon, which is best explained by the theory of processing fluency,[34] also accounts for the attractiveness of familiar stimuli.[35] According to this phenomenon, the mere repeated exposure of a certain stimulus increases the stimulus' appeal.[36] For example, experiments in psychophysiology with people looking at familiar and novel pictures revealed favourable emotional responses towards the former.[37] In addition, it has been found that repeated stimuli are even preferred, and actually more so, when people are unaware of the exposure.[38] Given the abundance of Haimonian pots in various locations, people may have been subliminally exposed to the repeated images on these pots. Preferences may also have been induced unconsciously, since the neurological mechanisms that influence cognition and affect are distinct.[39] A recent (2015) theoretical model of aesthetic preferences that elaborates on processing fluency argues for an affective, rather than cognitive, source of liking at a basic level of processing.[40] According to this model, people in antiquity may have liked a Haimonian scene without needing to recognise it accurately.[41] Yet, what they may have recognised was its familiarity as effectuated by iconographic repetition. Assuming that recognising was more automatic and effortless than remembering,[42] Haimonian iconography resembled countless similar vase scenes by being repetitive and by using cues from earlier black figure.[43] It is likely then that the scene on the cup skyphos from Mieza, notwithstanding its sketchiness, was appreciated easily as a familiar depiction of a chariot procession.

Familiarity, moreover, may have compensated for the visual failings, and thus disfluency, of 'bad art'. On the cup skyphos, crude painting and incising meant blurred boundaries between the humans, the chariot box and the horses (Figures 6.1–2). In places, such as at the horses' heads on one side of the skyphos, the thinly applied slip for the black glaze contracted and gave brown-orange and not black upon firing. Although, judging from the number of legs, there are three horses, incision renders the outline of just one horse. Without iconographic repetition on both sides of the skyphos and on numerous Haimonian and other *comparanda*, it would have been difficult to identify the subject matter. Whether ancient people, especially those living away from Athens, appreciated these badly painted images as familiar also depended on repeated exposure to Attic pots through trade.[44] Indeed, for multiple locations, including Mieza and Pagasetic Thessaly, the volume of Attic pottery increases in ca. 500 BCE and is dominated by fifth-century black figure. Thus, even when

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[34] Reber et al., 'Processing Fluency', 370; Silvia, 'Human Emotions', 259.

[35] Zajonc, 'Mere Exposure: A Gateway to the Subliminal' 2001, with earlier references; Fang et al. 'An Examination of Different Explanations for the Mere Exposure Effect', 2007, 97, with references.

[36] Zajonc, 'Mere Exposure', 225.

[37] See, for example, Harmon-Jones and Allen, 'The Role of Affect in the Mere Exposure Effect: Evidence from Psychophysiological and Individual Differences Approaches', 2001, 896.

[38] Zajonc, 'Mere Exposure', 224–6.

[39] Ibid., 226–7.

[40] See Obermiller, 'Varieties of Mere Exposure: The Effects of Processing Style and Repetition on Affective Response', 1985, 17, with references; Graf and Landwehr, 'A Dual-Process Perspective', 5–6, with references.

[41] See Whittlesea and Price, 'Implicit/explicit memory', 234, with references.

[42] See Robins, 'Memory Traces', 176–7.

[43] For iconographic similarities with late sixth-century neck amphorae, see Kunze-Götte, *Der Kleophrades-Maler under Malern schwarzfiguriger Amphoren. Eine Werkstattstudie,* 1992, 109.

[44] On how repetition helped in the understanding of iconography in distant places, see Stansbury-O'Donnell, *A History of Greek Art*, 2015, 233.

assuming that 'bad art' at first elicited unfavourable responses, over time repeated exposure enhanced people's ability to understand the imagery, and thus find it familiar and likeable.[45]

Advanced processing, by contrast to basic processing, presupposes people's active and close engagement with a stimulus for a long period of time, as well as considerable cognitive efforts in interpreting the stimulus.[46] Evidently, advanced processing could have occurred when people chose to interact closely with a Haimonian scene, involving hand, head and neck movements in inspecting the pot and focusing their eyesight on the scene's details. When buying pottery, for instance, vase users may have looked carefully at the figural decoration, attempting to understand its content and meaning by recalling similar images on Haimonian and/or other Attic pots. Ancient viewers may have interpreted the chariot procession on the cup skyphos from Mieza either as a divine epiphany or as the aftermath of an aristocratic chariot race linking it to a mythological or a real-life event respectively. Either interpretation would have depended on which pots the viewers were familiar with and to which ones they compared the cup skyphos. Clearly, an individual's knowledge and memory of related scenes affected their ease of interpretation. To a greater extent than at basic-level processing, fluency at an advanced level did not only relate to a pot's characteristics but also to the viewer's own cognitive capabilities.[47] Iconographic repetition, nonetheless, facilitated these cognitive operations, encouraging a comparative understanding of figural scenes and shaping a sense of familiarity, and perhaps also of presumed knowledge, for the vase viewer. Once again, it became possible to like the repetitive scene, even more so if repetition made interpretation easy.

The inherent pictorial ambiguity of Haimonian and other fifth-century black-figured scenes may also have called for advanced processing.[48] The lack of detail in the drawing and the unclear identity of the figures in the scene could give rise to conflicting interpretations. On one lekythos from Pherai, for example, the seated musician carrying a lyre or a kithara in the middle, who is presumably male because there is no evidence of added white on the face and exposed limbs, could represent either Apollo or a generic musician (Figure 6.4). The heavily draped figures seated on either side appear to be female, judging from traces of added white. Depending on the identity of the lyre player, the females could be Artemis and Leto,[49] the muses,[50] or two unidentified goddesses.[51] Similar seated females, moreover, appeared commonly in other scenes, such as a chariot procession and a symposion on the other two Haimonian lekythoi from Thessaly (Figures 6.3 and 6.5). As spectators, and regardless of their identity, these females by facing in functioned to direct the vase viewer's attention to the action in the centre of the scene.[52] Thus, even a comparative approach to interpreting the scene with the lyre player, as prompted by repetition of the seated females across many lekythoi decorated in the same drawing style, did not necessarily lead to a definitive understanding. Although ancient people living in the same region, as for example at Volos and Pherai, may have been accustomed to iconographic repetition, they could still be intrigued by various plausible interpretations.

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[45] Compare to how consumers began to like atypical car designs in spending more time with the cars. See Landwehr et al. 'Product Design'.

[46] Graf and Landwehr, 'A Dual-Process Perspective', 5–6, with references. For ancient viewers' undetailed vs. detailed assessments of vase scenes, see Stansbury-O'Donnell, *Looking at Greek Art*, 101–2.

[47] Graf and Landwehr, 'A Dual-Process Perspective', 6.

[48] Compare to modern artists' intentional disfluency. See Reber, 'Processing Fluency', 237.

[49] See *LIMC* II.I, s.v., *Apollon*.

[50] See Bundrick, *Music and Image in Classical Athens*, 2005, 52, 149.

[51] Compare to *LIMC* II.I, s.v., *Apollon*, no. 633a.

[52] Stansbury-O'Donnell, *Vase Painting, Gender, and Social Identity in Archaic Athens*, 2006.

The meaning of Haimonian scenes posed a cognitive challenge to the ancient viewer, who had to think hard about possible understandings and perhaps discuss possibilities with others. Indeed, shared cultural experiences assisted vase users in the interpretation of art.[53] At an advanced level of processing, the viewer(s) ascribed their positive feelings to their successful interpretative efforts rather than to the object's characteristics.[54] Consequently, viewers could have found a puzzling image, such as that of the seated musician (Figure 6.4), interesting and not just pleasant, as in the case of basic-level processing. Alternatively, if the viewer failed to interpret the stimulus or if the meaning was too easy and no cognitive investment was required, the ensuing frustration could lead to feelings of confusion and boredom.[55] In this case, the prospective vase buyer who inspected figural scenes probably decided against a purchase.

During advanced processing, furthermore, viewers may have observed the slight variations in repeated scenes or pictorial elements thereof. As Robin Osborne has perceptively posited, there exist similar but no identical scenes on two sides of an Attic pot.[56] Since processing fluency is not dependent on exact repetition,[57] close observation did not diminish vase viewers' ability to understand the scene. The chariot processions on the cup skyphos are different, for example, in terms of incisions for the charioteer's garments and for the chariot wheel (Figures 6.1–2). On the lekythoi, the repeated seated females gesticulate differently within and across the scenes (Figures 6.3–5). On the pot showing the lyre player, for example, one woman appears to raise her garmented right hand towards her mouth but the other woman does not (Figure 6.4). As different gestures had different meanings,[58] these slight variations presented yet another challenge to interpretation. Variations in repetitive imagery, whether arising from a painter's intentions, as indicated by drawings of gesticulation, or accidentally, such as misfired areas of brown-orange, prompted further a viewer's close engagement with the iconography and hence its cognitive processing.

In addition, the perception of variations may have prompted a cognitive interplay between re-awakening old associations and triggering new experiences, countering the possibility of boredom. Hence, an advanced processing of Haimonian imagery did not depend exclusively on memory but also involved attention to and interpretation of novel features. Over the course of repeated exposure, as purported by psychophysiological evidence, a person's initial excitement towards a stimulus, that is, sensitization, may be superseded by loss of interest, reduction in neural activity[59] and diminishing cognitive processing, and hence habituation.[60] Although this may hold true for ancient people's engagement with repetitive imagery, it is also possible that scenes bearing slightly different details may have intensified

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[53] See Stansbury-O'Donnell, *A History of Greek Art*, 211.

[54] Graf and Landwehr, 'A Dual-Process Perspective', 9.

[55] Ibid. 10.

[56] Osborne, 'Polysemy and its Limits: Controlling the Interpretation of Greek Vases in Changing Cultural Contexts', 2012, 179, 182–3.

[57] Reber, 'Processing Fluency', 225.

[58] See Stansbury-O'Donnell, *Vase Painting, Gender, and Social Identity*, 190, fig. 61.

[59] Biederman and Vessel, 'Perceptual Pleasure and the Brain: A Novel Theory Explains Why the Brain Craves Information and Seeks it through the Senses', 2006, 250.

[60] See Groves and Thompson, 'Habituation: a Dual-process Theory', 1970, esp. 419–21, 441–2; Stern et al., *Psychophysiological Recording*, 55–6, with references; Janiszewski and Meyvis, 'Effects of Brand Logo Complexity, Repetition, and Spacing on Processing Fluency and Judgment', 2001, 21; Potter and Bolls, *Psychophysiological Measurement*, 60–61; Cohen, *The Neuropsychology of Attention*, 2014, 147. For habituation in Greek art, see Berlyne, *Aesthetics and Psychobiology*, 1971, 168, *passim*.

sensitization. Recent consumer research, moreover, has shown that repeated exposure may direct people's focus to details of the visual image.[61]

The dual nature of processing fluency, which encompasses both a basic and advanced level and implicates affective and cognitive sources of liking respectively, suggests that preferences for Haimonian imagery entered ancient people's bodies and minds. By being easily noticeable and encouraging a comparative understanding of figural scenes, iconographic repetition stood at the crux of triggering people's feelings, thoughts and memories that generated positive responses. In all likelihood, vase users communicated their preferences to one another so that pottery merchants were aware of saleable pots locally, such as at the level of households, villages or regions, and fed information back to artisans at potteries in Athens and other places. I now turn my attention to how iconographic repetition could have served painters' and traders' successful marketing of Haimonian wares.

**Cross-selling pots**

It is pertinent to address issues of marketing since vase painters produced iconography with a market in mind[62] and the Mediterranean distribution of Attic pots was not random but the result of buyers' conscious choices in different places.[63] For Haimonian wares, feedback loops have been postulated between artisans in Athens and buyers in Etruria for mastoids, the only shape that has been studied from a deposit of a centre of Haimonian production in Athens.[64] Iconography must have played a role in the selling of Haimonian pots as the shapes and sizes of Haimonian lekythoi and cup skyphoi, for example, are distinct from those of non-Haimonian counterparts in black glaze.[65] Yet, iconography not only contributed to the Haimonian brand by making the pot recognisable in terms of material attributes, economic value and intended function – such as holding liquids, display purposes and votive or funerary offerings – but also elicited vase users' favourable responses, through repetition. Presumably, painters were aware of these responses and persisted with producing repetitive imagery not for art's sake but for appealing to consumers and making a profit. The question that arises is whether painters used iconographic repetition also for advertising and cross-selling their pots.

In the modern world, advertisers manipulate buying habits by positively influencing consumers' mood.[66] Advertisements are, by their nature, repetitive so that they get imprinted in people's hearts and minds. The mere exposure phenomenon is applicable to advertising by enhancing buyers' attitudes towards a product.[67] In a similar fashion, repetitive 'bad art' may have served painters to promote their pots by playing on vase viewers' feelings of familiarity, comfort and reassurance. The emotional effect of iconographic repetition became particularly strong since, as I mentioned above, the sale and use of Haimonian and other Attic pottery customarily entailed groups of pots by the same painter and potter. Similarity in the drawing style, as well as in the shapes and sizes produced by a particular potter, caught and guided viewers' attention, prompting a fluent processing of the iconography across pots. The number of pots in a consignment amplified the experience of repeated exposure and hence of positive

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[61] Shi Jia et al., 'The Product-Agnosia Effect: How More Visual Impressions Affect Product Distinctiveness in Comparative Choice', 2014, 343.
[62] See, for example, Langridge-Noti, 'To Market, To Market', *passim*.
[63] Walsh, *Consumerism in the Ancient World. Imports and Identity Construction*, 2014, 171–2.
[64] Malagardis, '"Attic vases, Etruscan stories" – Les échanges et les hommes. Origine, vie brève et mort d'une forme de vase attique archaïque', 1997.
[65] See Knigge, *Der Südhügel. Kerameikos. Ergebnisse der Ausgrabungen 9*, 1976, 33–7, pl. 77; Lynch, 'Drinking Cups and the Symposium at Athens in the Archaic and Classical Periods', 2015, 248.
[66] See, for example, Fahmy et al., *Visual Communication Theory and Research* 2014, 123, with references.
[67] See Bornstein, 'Exposure and Affect: Overview and Meta-Analysis of Research, 1968-1987', 1989, 283; Fang et al., 'An Examination', 102.

feelings and evaluations. Regardless of whether or not the same scene appeared on numerous pots or pictorial elements – such as spectators – were repeated across scenes, what is of interest here is that one pot pointed to another.

The seated female, for example, acquired different meaning(s) within a sympotic, chariot and music scene on the three Thessalian lekythoi respectively (Figures 6.3–5). Moreover, as a repetitive pictorial element that prompted experiences of processing fluency, the seated female may have led a viewer to interconnect the three lekythoi. Iconographic repetition had the potential to link unrelated images visually, cognitively and emotionally. These linkages advertised pots to be cross-sold as a group and shaped future demand for more pots bearing similar scenes. As an advertising medium that could maximise sales, therefore, iconographic repetition must have also contributed to the large-scale and long-lasting production of Haimonian wares. Evidently, Haimonian painters were successful marketers, understanding, through close relationships with both vase users and traders, how to affect buyers' thoughts and emotions.

In addition, by playing on the psychophysiological effect of the familiar, the marketing of repetitive scenes was a particularly intelligent practice as it allowed for divergences between painters' and buyers' interpretations. On Haimonian and other fifth-century black-figured lekythoi, for example, painters repeat significantly a female mounting a chariot (Figure 6.3).[68] Considering the customary burial use of lekythoi, the female could be Semele, Dionysos' mother, or Ariadne, Dionysos' bride, both associated with Dionysos' descent to Hades in Greek mythology, and so these repetitive scenes could represent a journey to the underworld and reiterate a message about death.[69] The wide and cross-cultural use of lekythoi showing female charioteers, however, may contest the notion of buyers' uniform interpretation of pictorial content. Depending on their circumstances – age, gender, physique, social standing, knowledge of Attic pots, location, sailing or growing season – buyers may have identified the charioteer as yet another mythological personality, such as Athena, Artemis or Aphrodite, or as a generic female not least because fifth-century vase scenes show an increasing emphasis on women's lives. Apparently, pictorial ambiguity enabled vase painters and traders to meet the diverse preferences of different consumer segments.

Any idiosyncratic interpretation, regardless of whether or not it coincided with painters' intentions, prompted vase viewers' experience of processing fluency. Re-encountering, or expecting to re-encounter, more lekythoi showing female charioteers entailed viewers' anticipated re-experience of familiarity and comfort. Seemingly, one pot advertised more pots by pointing to the pleasant experiential appeal of the repetitive scene. Indeed, volitional reconsumption in the modern world pertains to people's desire to re-live positive emotional outcomes.[70] Thus, iconographic repetition did not only reiterate information about the possible story and symbolism of a scene. Instead, repetition conveyed a message about the scene's potential to make viewers feel good and, in this way, advertised more pottery from the Haimonian workshop.

**Conclusions**

In this paper I have drawn on the theory of processing fluency to argue that ancient people may have appreciated positively repetitive and hurriedly painted vase scenes. I have focused on fifth-century BCE black-figured wares of the Haimon Group, which exhibit considerable iconographic repetition and crudeness. My main contention is that people liked

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[68] *ABV* 539–42.

[69] Tuukkanen, 'A Goddess Mouthing a Chariot on Black-figured Lekythoi', 2001, 140.

[70] Russell and Levy, 'The Temporal and Focal Dynamics of Volitional Reconsumption: A Phenomenological Investigation of Repeated Hedonic Experiences', 2012, 354.

Haimonian imagery, as repetition facilitated its fluent cognitive processing by evoking feelings of familiarity and by assisting in the interpretation of pictorially ambiguous scenes. Vase users felt good about themselves due to their ability to recognise and interpret a repetitive yet interesting scene through memories of and comparisons with other pots. Repetitive iconography impacted on viewers' psychophysiology, prompting pleasurable responses and thoughtfulness. Positive feelings and evaluations, in turn, would have shaped vase users' preferences and demands for Haimonian pottery, leading to a volitional reconsumption of 'bad art'. Painters and traders, on their part, used iconographic repetition to manipulate buyers' thoughts and emotions, advertising and maximising the sale of their pots. Iconographic repetition appears to have contributed to the social and commercial success of fifth-century black figure, and contrary to traditional scholarship is not indicative of painters who lacked drawing skill or ability to engage with their customers. It would appear, therefore, that economies of scale in production and distribution emerged from painters' response to as well as generation of demand.

Within a framework of people-object and people-people interactions, Haimonian paintings, notwithstanding their sketchiness and technical failings, acquired their own aesthetic appeal as *objets d'art*. This appeal pertained to viewers' psychophysiological experiences of familiarity and of feeling challenged, rather than to the mere objective evaluation of Haimonian pots' artistic qualities.[71] In viewers' hearts and minds, Haimonian scenes could be placed in a continuum with non-Haimonian scenes, including those on fine figured pottery, thus blurring the boundaries between high and low art forms and cheap and expensive wares. All such scenes could provide a social context for comparing, understanding, interpreting and, most importantly, familiarising oneself with repetition in vase iconography.

**Figures**

Figure 6.1     Side A of Haimonian cup skyphos from Mieza, western Macedonia; Veroia, Π 1627.
*Source*: Katerina Volioti. Published with permission of the 17th Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities, Greece.

Figure 6.2     Side B of Haimonian cup skyphos from Mieza, western Macedonia; Veroia, Π 1627.
 *Source*: Katerina Volioti. Published with permission of the 17th Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities, Greece.

Figure 6.3     Haimonian lekythos from Pherai, eastern Thessaly; Volos, K3323.001.
*Source*: Katerina Volioti. Published with permission of the 13th Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities, Greece.

Figure 6.4     Haimonian lekythos from Pherai, eastern Thessaly; Volos, K3322.89.
*Source*: Katerina Volioti. Published with permission of the 13th Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities, Greece.

Figure 6.5     Haimonian lekythos from Nea Ionia, eastern Thessaly; Volos, BE 11591.
*Source*: Katerina Volioti. Published with permission of the 13th Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities, Greece.

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[71] See Reber et al., 'Processing Fluency', 365.

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