

CULTURAL MEMORY AND RECOLLECTIONS IN ATHENIAN VASE PAINTINGS

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RESUMO: *Neste artigo, trato da divisão tradicional entre mito e realidade aplicada aos vasos atenienses antigos. Investigo o que ocorreu na Atenas do fim do séc. VI a.C. que fez os arqueólogos clássicos pensar que os pintores de vaso e os clientes deles tivessem começado a interessar-se pela realidade. Não há dúvida que, cerca de 500 a.C., a iconografia dos vasos atenienses sofreu uma mudança radical, mas o que pretendo mostrar é que essa transformação foi mal interpretada. Houve, sim, uma revolução na narrativa, mas as histórias inteiramente novas com que os pintores de vaso começaram a divertir seus patronos não eram cenas de assuntos cotidianos, como alguns chamam as cenas de realidade.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *iconografia; vasos atenienses; mito e realidade.*

In 2003, the article of Gloria Ferrari was published, in which she returned to the traditional divide between myth and reality on ancient Athenian vases. Writes Ferrari:

Even scholars who believe that figural scenes represent not reality but the concepts that underlie social reality, subscribe in some measure to this classification. In other words, even for those who hold that visual imagery is as complex and conventional a form of communication as language, determining what the content of an image might be remains a fairly simple matter (Ferrari, 2003, p. 38),

the concept of scenes of reality is a phantom, which haunts the research on Athenian vases already for two centuries. There is not a single Athenian vase painting about which we may positively say that it was created to portray Athenian

reality. On the contrary, there are numerous so called scenes of reality, which were convincingly argued to be something altogether different - scenes of myth, evocations of distant past, social fantasies, political propaganda etc. Nevertheless, the conviction that the 6th century BC Athenians started to paint what they saw around them is holding astonishingly well.

There's no smoke without fire and in this paper, I will ask what happened in the late 6th century BC Athens that made classical archaeologists think that vase painters and their customers started to be interested in reality. There is no doubt that in the century or so around 500 BC iconography of Athenian vase underwent a radical change, but my point will be that this makeover was misinterpreted. There was a revolution in storytelling, but the entirely new stories with which Athenian vase painters started to amuse their patrons were not genre scenes or depictions of everyday subjects, as scenes of reality are sometimes called.

Let us turn to concrete examples. The tondo of the famous cup of the Brygos painter features a vomiting youth (**fig. 1**: Martin von Wagner Museum, 479; cf. Boardman, 1975, fig. 254). This vase painting of about 490 BC is clearly connected with a drinking party. This indicate crowns of ivy leaves on heads of the youth and the girl who accompanies him as well as revellers depicted on the exterior of the cup, so called *komos* (Murray, 1990). The youth has already lost control over his body and there was danger that he will stain himself. In the last minute, the girl rushed to him and turned his head away. The fact that she allowed her own feet to be stained indicates her social inferiority, to which alludes also her shortly cut hair. The meaning of this painting was no doubt enriched by its placement in the bottom of the cup - it was only by emptying the cup that the reveller discovered the scene depicting vividly what can happen to immoderate drinkers.



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What was actually meant by this depiction? Why it was painted? Youth's hangover aside, there will be no consequences of this event and he and his companion will soon forget it. What happened in this depiction is in no way

important. What this young man achieved could not contribute to his social prestige. He is not represented in state in which he could help his friends and cause harm to his enemies (Adkins, 1976). In short, the Brygos Painter did not depict something which the Athenians of that time neither had to do nor had (or ought) to know.

In this painting, there is no trace of those important messages, which were characteristic for pre-classical art. Fighting soldiers, training athletes, men and women performing religious rites, and all other depictions of human activities on 6th century BC vases no doubt motivated the citizens of Athens. These depictions set up models to be followed or to be avoided. The vomiting youth, on the other hand, was not painted to prevent immoderate drinking of Athenian youths and similar scenes, which appear around 500 BC, were painted neither to prevent something nor to advance something. These paintings do not criticise anything and they do not offer advice on how to change or improve things. It seems that they do not contain any message.

The Brygos Painter seems to be indifferent to what Athenians would think about his vomiting youth. In depictions like this, he and his colleagues in the Athenian Potters quarter ceased to care about reputation of the men and women they were painting on vases. They started not only to represent prostitutes and

their clients, but they also presented both partners in an unflattering way. The cup from from the end of the 6th century decorated by Phintias Painter represent a youth served by an old prostitute with



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flaccid cheek, two kins, a sagging breasts and tires of fat (fig. 2 a-b: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 80, AE 31; cf. Frel, 1984). On a cup of Onesimos from the first decade of the 5th century



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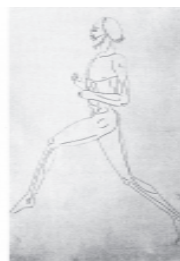


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BC we find a bald man visiting a prostitute (fig. 3: British Museum, E 44, ARV 329, 139; cf. Boardman, 1975, fig. 222). Nevertheless, these representations are in no way caricatures, an 18th century pictorial genre deriving its name from the Italian word “caricare”, which means “to overload”, “to exaggerate”. Athenian vase painters do not exaggerate, they do not ridicule prostitutes or their clients, but simply register that there are old prostitutes and unattractive clients.

Let us return to baldness. On the cup of Onesimos we see a fairly accurate representation of the most common form of baldness, the so called *male pattern baldness*, in which the hair recedes from the lateral sides of the forehead, known as “receding brow”. Additionally, a bald patch can develop on top, which is also sometimes represented on 5th century BC Athenian vases. The emotional impact on persons experiencing hair loss varies widely and it is culturally determined. Some cultures perceive hair loss as a devastating event signalling loss of youth. They assume that baldness will make man unattractive and try to mask it with wigs. Other cultures take a more accepting approach to hair loss. Today, for instance, we perceive baldness as nature taking its course and men do not attempt to hide the hair loss, they may even shave off the rest of their hair. This was not the case in the 5th century BC Athens, there is no evidence of Athenian men shaving their heads, on the contrary, baldness characterised satyrs, and other creatures which were expected to raise a laugh.

Nevertheless, bald men appear quite often on 5th century BC Athenian vases and this contrasts sharply with preceding and following centuries in which men are systematically idealised as concern their hair. On a Panathenaic amphora from the workshop of the Berlin Painter from around 470 BC we see, for instance running athletes with a bald man on the fourth position (fig. 4). Beazley has drawn this man, because, as he wrote: “on the whole he is the best preserved of the four, and because his bald forehead is



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rather touching. The race is dolichodromos and not a sprint: let us hope that this is not the finish, but only the end of a lap.” (Beazley, 1929, p. 13; cf. Voutiras, 2001, p. 30). What was the purpose of these depictions? One may say that those who did not loose their hair could find them amusing, but these painting were hardly meant to raise laughter. Someone may laugh at them, but someone else could find representations of bald men touching and depictions of vomiting youths appalling.

Let us take another example. On a cup of the Hegesiboulos Painter of the late 6th century BC. we see a weary old man with grey beard and prominent nose, perhaps indicating his Jewish origin (fig. 5: NY, MM 07.286.47, Rogers Fund; cf. Boardman, 1975, fig. 126). Is it a funny depiction (Voutiras, 2001, p. 30: “Solche Charakterköpfe sollten wahrscheinlich durch ihre komische Wirkung den Betrachter belustigen”)? Is it a caricature of foreigner? Perhaps, but someone could be filled with sadness and loneliness for the dog who accompanies his



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master, which is as proud, but also as gray, humped and ugly. Time wrecked man and dog together and misfortunes fused them into one. Hegesiboulos' foreigner and his dog aged together, the hetaira of the Phintias painter become run-down and burned-out, Athenian men has lost their hair. Is it a reason to lough, to cry, or to set alarm bells ringing?

The Athenian vase paintings quoted so far are deliberately ambiguous and this makes them different from vase paintings of the Archaic era. The clearly formulated standpoint is an integral part of an experience which is handed down within a society from fathers to sons. The fighting soldiers or training athletes decorating Athenian vases of the preceding period were firmly rooted in tradition. These paintings evoked traditional attitudes endowed with a message and a purpose. They called for some action, the depicted fight appealed for real fight the depicted athletic training encouraged Athenian men to leave their comfortable couches and visit palaistra.

The vomiting youth of the Brygos Painter was not a pictorial theme, which passed on from generation to generation, this depiction has neither predecessors, nor successors. In this representation, there is no appeal and we do not find it in

many other Athenian vase paintings, which appeared around 500 BC. Let us take for instance the pelike in Louvre made around the middle of the 5th century BC, which depicts a man selling vases (fig. 6: CA 1852). We may take this representation as an appeal to go to Kerameikos and to buy a painted vase, but from this appeal only a tiny fraction of Athenian population would profit. It was not in the interest of the entire society to buy painted vases.

Paintings like that on the pelike in Louvre neither instruct nor criticize. They neither contribute to public good nor relate to a public nuisance. They are turned inward: they regard the surrounding world with ostentatious indifference. These painters depicted something, which happened or might have happened, that is true, but here the similarity with the realist movement in European 19th century art ends. This is important because it was exactly between the years 1840 and 1880, in which this movement dominated in European art and thought, that the concept of “scenes of reality” on Athenian vases was formulated. In 1843, Theodor Panofka’s book “Bilder antiken Lebens” was published and in 1865, one of the main theoreticians of French realists, Jules Champfleury, published his *Histoire de la caricature antique*.

The aim of 19th century realists was “to give truthful, objective and impartial representation of the real world, based on meticulous observation of contemporary life” (Nochlin, 1971, p. 13). On Athenian vases around 500 BC, we find meticulous



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observation, but nothing else. In the same category as the vomiting youth of Brygos painter belongs a woman and girl on a skyphos of the sixtieth of the 5th century BC. Woman walks and surreptitiously drinks from the skyphos she is supposed to bring to her husband’s table, while a slave girl with a full wine skin on her head looks on (fig. 7). On a pyxis of about 490 BC, we find a sleeping weaver the laziness of who contrasts sharply with industriousness of her companions (fig. 8: Athens, 1584, cf. Keuls, 1983, p. 221). In this endless series of peccadilloes belongs an ithyphallic boy on Euphronios’ vase from the second half of twenties of the 6th century BC (fig. 9). His transgression is not clearly defined, but the boy evidently attempts to avoid the



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punishment. The men with a sandal in his hand had to rise from his chair, but probably his strike will miss boy's rear.

Do we find on ancient Athenian vases “truthful, objective and impartial representation of the real world”? On her way from cellar, one Athenian maid sipped her master's wine from a skyphos. Another Athenian woman stopped weaving and took a snap, while one Athenian boy had an erection in company of men. What is the meaning of these events? In all probability, they have no meaning at all; these events were not registered because everybody should know about them. Do we find on ancient Athenian vases “contemporary life”? Youths vomit, women age and men are loosing their hair from the beginning of the world. Painters of Athenian “scenes of reality” do not care whether that what they depict is typical for their time. They do not care of past, they have no ambition to instruct present generations and they do not want to leave record for future generations.

It is time to proceed from the negative definition of Athenian depictions of everyday subjects to a positive one. We may start by stressing that, as a rule, these themes appear only once. On a pelike of the Priam painter in Villa Giulia in Rome of the late 6th century BC, we see for instance a unique representation of bathing women (fig. 10; cf. Hurwit, 1991). On the other side of this vase, there are satyrs harvesting wine grapes and their



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number correspond to the number of bathing women, but there is no other indication that these women are nymphs. The women evidently enjoy their bath;

they speak to each other, jump into water or swim. The painter also enjoyed this painting and rendered faithfully three phases of combing out women's hair, the style of swimming, and the natural setting of this scene.

Why the Priam Painter thought it necessary to give evidence that one sunny day a group of women took a nice bath? The choice of this theme was in no way obvious. In Athens of that time, wishes of women subordinated to needs of their husbands and children, which cannot be in any way connected with the bathing party depicted by the Priamos Painter. What these representations have in common is not only their triviality and singularity, but also subjectivity and casual indifference to social conventions.

In what will follow, I will try to argue that Athenian depictions of everyday subjects indicate a shift from collective to individual memory, from myths to personal recollections.

Personal recollections are always subjective, accidental, nonbinding and unique. In contradistinction to art based on cultural memory, which is conservative, the art based on recollections is continuously changing. In order to be transmitted from generation to generation, cultural memory tends towards clearly defined messages and highly polished form, but recollections can never be fixed, they come back to us only to be lost again, because it is part of their essence that they vanish into thin air.

The basic difference between memory and recollection is that only the first can be learned (Jünger, 1957). You cannot learn recollections and this observation was used in Dicks story "Blade runner" which was made famous by the movie of the same name. In this story the run away artificial men and women were easily identified because they differed from human beings by absence of recollections. Greek art before the middle of the 6th century BC was based on cultural memory and for this artistic tradition is typical continuity and stability, while the art of recollections is basically discontinuous.

The art of recollections differs fundamentally from the artistic tradition based on myths, but it is not polarity of collective and individual, because recollections are also collective phenomenon. Its source is, of course, a personal experience, say a drinking party. However, our attitude to this personal experience is always influenced by attitudes of all who took part in this drinking party. The more time lapsed, the more are we influenced by that what we have heard about events, which took part during this party. The art and recollection and the art inspired by myth draw from collective memory. Nevertheless, the collective memory

is not a compact block and we may divide it into two basic parts, communicative and cultural memory.

The former is informal, because it is created by everyday contact (that is why it is called communicative) and its growth has no limits. The later is always in this or another way codified and its formalisation may proceed to a point, when no part of it can be altered. Sacred texts or icons represent this extreme case, in them, nothing can be omitted and nothing can be added (Assmann, Assmann, 1988). It is important to stress, however, that the art of recollections is not a negation of the art memory based on myths. The vomiting reveller on the cup of the Brygos Painter can easily coexist with Homeric heroes and paintings celebrating traditional aristocratic ethics, because it draws from a different dimension of the collective memory. This point is important, because it stresses the difference between the art of recollection and nineteenth century realism.

It is true that when you paint what you have seen with your own's eyes, your personal recollection replaces tradition. It would be wrong, however, to limit recollection to what one has seen. You may recall something, which really happened, but you may recall also a dream, you may recall what you have heard, in short, you may recall anything, even things, which never existed. When you recall something, you have seen with your own eyes, you can never be sure that your recollection was not enriched by entirely imaginary traits.

People see only what they expect to see and they remember only what they are expected to remember. That is why recollections are always collective phenomenon, they are culturally determined. Without being aware of it, we modify our recollections and add to them traits which collective memory preserved from the remote past. We do not remember everything what we have seen because in collective memory, which controls our recollections, there are countless taboos. Moreover, we cannot depict any recollection because in every society there are countless representational taboos. It follows from these restrictions that the Brygos painter could not represent everything what he saw around him.

The collective memory yields to visual art only censored recollections. In the case of the painting of the Brygos Painter the theme, that is komos, protagonists, and many other things were predetermined. Inside this strictly delineated frame, however, the painter was allowed to modify the traditional iconographic theme and add to it his personal recollections. This is extremely important because in preceding generations, Athenian vase painters were not allowed to represent any live recollections. Consequently, what happened in Athenian art around 500 BC was

real revolution. Never before painters were allowed to draw their inspiration from something which exists in only one specimen, namely personal recollection in artist's head.

It is important to stress that the duality of organic and collective memory is a phenomenon, which we observe in every society. As Ethnologist Jan Vansina has demonstrated, non-written recollections can be divided into two groups - there are either experiences belonging to personal biographies or events pertaining to absolute past (Vansina, 1961). Historic consciousness of any society without written culture knows only these two levels and between the recent past and the era of origin there is a gap, which gets wider as the given society moves away from its absolute past. The given society must not be aware of this inserted no-time, from which no recollections (or only isolated ones) are preserved,

As genealogies demonstrate, the existence of this gap between two historic times is not important. In these societies, two levels of historic consciousness follow one after another, in spite of the fact that they may be divided by centuries. Genealogies of ancient Greek aristocratic families have also this typical structure, at the beginning is some famous mythical hero and at the end there are three or four generations before the present time. The gap between mythical past and recent past is filled with invented names in order that the whole genealogy has sufficiently impressive length, namely between ten and fifteen members (Schachermayer, 1984).

In the historical perspective, however, these gaps loom prominently and historians know them as so called Dark ages. This term roots in ancient Greece where the first historian, Herodotos, returned backward only hundred years or so. His narrative begins three or four generations before his time, which is the maximum which oral memory can retain. The first book of history begins ninety years or so before Herodotos' time and before it, there was "the Dark age", which separated ancient Greeks from their mythical ancestors. This mythical past begun with the creation of world and ended in the generation of Greeks fighting at Troy.

Even today, the space of living memory does not surpass 80 to 100 years. Our family traditions do not stretch backward beyond grandparents and as times goes by; the oldest generation is erased and replaced by more recent past. The important threshold is forty years ago, ancient Roman *saeculum*, when the last eye witnesses of some important event die out (Niethammer, 1980). The next four years or so are filled with information by hearsay and than living memory ends. The communicative memory of our society differs from that of illiterate societies in that it does not continues backward with myths but with chronicles and historical treatises.

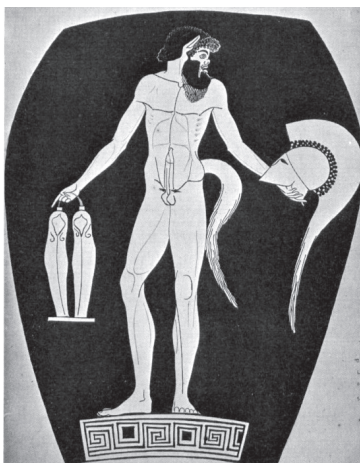
The art, which draws its inspiration from recollections, depicts everyday reality and it was also destined for personal consumption at home. Cultural memory differs from the communicative one by its link to ceremonies, cults and myths, that is why in societies in which art has exclusively religious and ceremonial function there is no place for the art of recollection. On the contrary, in societies like our's own, where majority of artists produce art for personal consumption, the art of recollection clearly dominates.

Communicative and cultural memories differ from each other as working day and a feast, or as spoken and written word. It is about two different codes, which go together with different occasions and settings. Communicative memory does not know any specialists, there are no teachers and pupils, because such an asymmetry would stop the bidirectional flow of communication - this explains, by the way, why one cannot learn recollections. In everyday communication, we are all equally competent and its prerequisite is coequality, including the right to different opinion, in this environment, the plurality of attitudes is automatically expected. Cultural memory, on the other hand, tends to unification and its refinement serves as a proof that the message got through the selection process and, after several generations attained absolute perfection.

In every society, cultural and communicative memories coexist and, as is to be expected, art forms inspired by these different modes of memory coexist too. Art inspired by recollections may be identified by its informality, because its aim is the minimal distance between experience and its fixation. The authenticity is guaranteed by naturalness and spontaneity, that is why it systematically avoids established schemes, orthodoxy and uniformity. Nevertheless, in the Athenian artistic production around 500 BC there is no dichotomy of art of recollections and art of cultural memory, these two concepts are rather two poles. In between them lies a wide spectrum of representations in which both cultural and communicative memories are present, but in different degrees.

The polarity of art of recollections and art of cultural memory in no way replaces the traditional dichotomy of scenes of reality and scenes of myth on Athenian vases because it runs across it (Bazant, 1981; id., 1985). Before the mid sixth century BC, Athenian art did not represent historic events, but the absolute past, from which Athenians derived their origin. This is not to say, however, that present could not enter in these depictions, what was important, however, was that it entered it exclusively as a commentary on this myth of origin.

Let us take an example. On an amphora of Kleophrades Painter of the early 6th century BC, there is a representation of ithyphalic satyr who holds knemides in



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one hand and a helmet in another (fig. 11: Harrow School, 55; cf. Boardman, 1975, fig. 140). This depiction belongs to a group of similar variations on the theme of hoplite warrior (Lissarrague, 1990, p. 151-189). The myth of hoplith was deadly serious matter, because the power and well-being of Athenian state was based on it. Nevertheless, Athenian society permitted permutations of this myth, in which the quintessential Athenian man was replaced by its very opposite - satyr, Amazon, youngster, negro or other foreigner. In Athenian art around 500 BC, these inversions of relationship between the world of warriors and the world of Dionysos, men and youths,

men and women, Athenians and foreigners were never formalised. There was no fully developed myth of satyr hoplites, which would match the myth of Athenian hoplites. These amusing inversions remained in the realm of communicative memory and did not enter cultural memory. Scenes with satyrs playing hoplites commented on actual political situation in Athens and this temporality distinguishes them from scenes of myth.

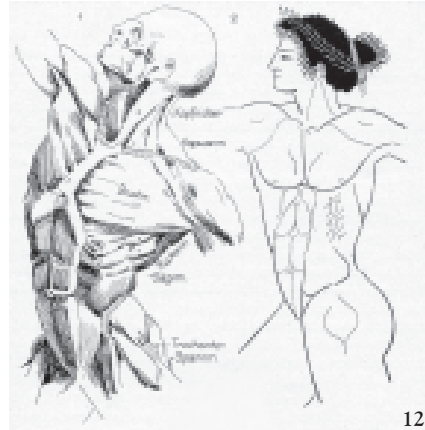
The main quality of myth is its continuous actuality. Jan Assman, whose book *Culture and memory* inspired this paper, wrote that “myth is past, which was condensed in founding history” (Assmann, 1999). That, which happened, fixed not only the present, but also future, that is why myth can easily penetrate the present and its validity is not endangered by the fact, that myth and present irreconcilably contradict each other. It follows from this, that art of recollection can appear only in society in which myth lost its sacred status and precisely this happened in Greece around 500 BC.

It was the time Xenophanes wrote that “the gods have not revealed all things to men from the beginning; but by seeking men find out better in time” (Diels, Kranz, 1951, v. I, p. 133, n. 18). While before all innovations were conceived as gifts from the god, now experimenting humans came the fore.

Art based on recollections presupposes a patrons which tolerate or even demand artistic experiments and the 5th century BC artists were well aware of their entirely new position. Once they left the safe realm of cultural memory, they entered the never-ending spiral of innovations in which they can rely only on

their skill and personal experience. Organic memory starts to prevail in search of new themes and new forms alike. At the turn of 6th and 5th centuries, we witness in Athenian painting and sculpture a stream of innovations in representation of human beings the source of which was exclusively in the individual memory of artists (fig. 12: Reichhold, 1919, pl. 20).

Artists were well aware of this revolution. At the end of this century, the painter Parhasias boasts himself that he has reached the limits of art: “I say that already, the clear limits of this art have been revealed, by my hand. A boundary not to be surpassed has been fixed; but there is nothing which is completely flawless among mortal men” (Athenaios, 12, 543E; cf. Pollitt, 1965, p. 160). However, already at the beginning of the 5th century BC, Aischylos said that the works of the old times were simple, but expressed better the idea of divinity than new art, even though it is much better composed (Porphyrius, *De abstinentia* 2,18e). Classical Greece created not only Parhassias but also the sculptor Apollodoros, who was destroying his own statues: “Apollodoros [...] was among all artists the most meticulous in his art and also harsh critic of himself, frequently smashing his finished statues, as long as he was unable, owing to his zeal for his art, to be satisfied; and who therefore was given the surname the Madman” (Plinius, *Historia naturalis*, XXXIV 81; cf. Pollitt, 1965, p. 138).



The invasion of living memory to ancient Greek art was, however, limited in time. Already around the middle of the 5th century BC, recollections started to disappear and cultural memory regained its monopoly. This reversal was not caused by some external factors, but by this artistic revolution itself. This revolution differed from that at the beginning of the 20th century that was not directed against cultural memory as such. In ancient Greece, the aim was to overthrow the Archaic artistic canon and the activation of organic memory was limited to this process. Once the new canon was established, the experimentation with forms and content of pictorial narration lost its *raison d'être*.

At the end of her article Ferrari stressed that:

The current definitions of myth and reality simply are not useful categories in reference to Greek archaic culture. The two are meaningful only to the modern mind, which postulates a gulf between them as wide as that between fantasy and fact. We have known for some time now that the distinction was not made in the same way in Greek thought, where history extends seamlessly into the heroic past (Ferrari, 2003, p. 51).

She was correct in that we cannot interpret ancient Athenian vases unless we understand the role of memory in Athenian culture. There is no doubt that concept of memory underwent a profound change in Athens of the 6th and 5th centuries and I believe research in this direction will open up a real way towards understanding imagery of Athenian vases.

Writes Ferrari:

Leaving the issue of its “reality” aside, scholars have looked more profitably for the meaning of an image through the analysis of the several discursive contexts in which it appears. But this assumption, to which I subscribe, that the images represent the social imaginary does not do away with the question of what each particular image represents. In other words, the fact that the pictures on vases are cultural constructs does not mean that their content lacks specificity. They thus may give us symposia that are imagined as taking place in the “mythical past”, for example, as well as symposia that are imagined as taking place at some other time (including the present) or some other place. And there are as well symposia that are the inversion of the norm and offer the viewer the vision of an upside-down world that is nowhere (id., *ibid.*).

I agree, but in Ferrari’s argumentation there appears a concept which is, according to me, potentially as questionable as that of scenes of reality, namely that of “cultural construct”. Very often, it seems to be conceived as something consciously fabricated, but this does not correspond at all with that what we know about painted vases in ancient Athens. They were of little value and mass produced. Consequently, it is difficult to imagine vase painter knowingly constructing an imaginary scene on a tiny worthless vase. That is why I propose to replace the concept of “cultural constructs” by that of “recollections”. These are, of course, also cultural constructs, but without a developed intention or plan.

In a way of conclusion, I would like to raise three interconnected questions. Is it correct to say that before the mid 6th century BC Greek art draw its inspiration

exclusively from cultural memory? Are we entitled to postulate that in the century around 500 BC Athenian created the first artistic culture, which was based not only on cultural, but also on organic memory? Is it not time to discard forever the misleading concept of reality or scenes of reality in ancient Athenian vase painting and replace it by some other terms?

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ABSTRACT: *In this paper, I deal with the traditional division between myth and reality on ancient Athenian vases. I ask what happened in the late 6th century BC Athens that made classical archaeologists think that vase painters and their customers started to be interested in reality. There is no doubt that in the century or so around 500 BC iconography of Athenian vase underwent a radical change, but my point is that this makeover was misinterpreted. There was a revolution in storytelling, but the entirely new stories with which Athenian vase painters started to amuse their patrons were not genre scenes or depictions of everyday subjects, as scenes of reality are sometimes called.*

KEYWORDS: *iconography; Athenian vases; myth and reality.*