Convenient misunderstandings: Winckelmann's History of Art and the reception of meteorocultural models in Britain

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One of the most controversial aspects of Johann Joachim Winckelmann's contribution to art history remains his use of climate theory to explain cultural phenomena, a motif that, for reasons explained in this essay, was particularly emphasised in eighteenth-century Britain. In the context of what has been viewed as his disfigured (and unsavoury) or, in turn, ecstatic and admiring reception in Britain, the study of meteorological evaluations of culture in Winckelmann's work hits at the soft underbelly of his influence in Britain.[1] On the one hand, climate catalysed views on Winckelmann's art historical model as a whole. On the other, the study of its reception reveals the broad range of social, professional and national interests involved in the formation of critical opinion about this specific natural-historical aspect of his work. These competing motivations produce a mixed and cracked picture that affected drastically understandings both of Winckelmann's meteocultural model and his art historical contribution, more broadly. While this picture is full of jarring divisions, misunderstandings and distortions, it also reveals openings and original insights – frequently *by way of* and not despite such biases – that underline once more the dynamism and importance of Winckelmann's historical angle on climate.

In his *History of the Art of Antiquity*, Winckelmann was explicit about the special place of his chapter on the influence of climate within his book's core historical concerns: he thus aimed to promote as he put it 'the discussion of art among particular peoples' and 'the reasons why art differs among the countries that practice it'.[2] Contemporaries, especially in Britain, understood the originality of

[1] That admiration was sometimes seen as internally divided and ambivalent. A much later reviewer for *The Times* newspaper characteristically described the English praise for his work as 'of the most formal' and 'more than platonic' kind but very neglectful: 'we have praised him', he added, 'in the abstract but we have neglected to read him'; see 'Winckelmann', *The Times*, 8 June 1881, 5. Katherine Harloe has reviewed the British reception of Winckelmann's work from the eighteenth century to the present, correcting swift and biased evaluations of his influence in this country; see Katherine Harloe, 'Winckelmann's Reception in Great Britain' in Ortwin Dally, Maria Gazzetti and Arnold Nesselrath, eds, *Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-1768): Ein Europäisches Rezeptionsphänomen*, Petersberg: Michael Imhof, 2020, 143-56.

[2] Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *The History of Ancient Art*, trans. Giles Henry Lodge, vol. 1, London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, and Rivington, 1881, 2 vols, 1.123; first published in 4 vols (London, 1849–72, rev. in 2 vols, 1881), English translation of Winckelmann's *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums* (enl. posthumous German ed., rev. in 2 vols, Vienna, 2/1776) (hereafter Winckelmann, *History*, Lodge, 2nd edition).

Winckelmann's book – 'his last, but also his most capital performance' – and attributed its value to two well-spotted and still relevant aspects. First, commentators emphasised that Winckelmann 'reasons only from what he has seen' in contrast to other writers who acquired their knowledge from books.[3] Contemporary reviewers in Britain were particularly sensitive to this sensationist-cum-empirical side of his work, which dealt with that aspect of 'the human mind which is so constituted as to be capable of receiving from certain external forms sentiments or feelings that baffle analysis and spurn definition'.[4] Critics thus praised the presence of the sensuous aspect in his work but equally castigated its absence in those sections, where Winckelmann resorted to more 'cloudy', i.e. theoretical discussions of art.[5]

The sensuous charge of Winckelmann's empirical approach is a particularly interesting topic with a long history, recently rediscovered again as a major innovation of Winckelmann's art history[6] as well as featuring in the process as a major point of contention between scholars.[7] It is true that this emphasis on extensive first-hand familiarity with the material, technical and visual aspects of artworks propagated Winckelmann's own self-image as an original art scholar and owed its success to the fact that he did not miss an opportunity to reinforce it in his many letters and publications.[8] To be sure, the primacy of empirical observation in Winckelmann's art historical innovations is a self-stylized topos and, accordingly, generations of scholars have treated it as part of a hard antinomy of book knowledge versus sensory experience, of reading versus seeing, which, as recently shown, 'only partially corresponds with his actual working method and artistic experience'.[9] Still more fascinatingly, recent 'deconstructions' of this antinomy have revalidated not only the 'prominent role' of 'direct visual contact' in Winckelmann's Italian phase but also the historical importance of sensory perception both for his

[3] 'Histoire de l' Art chez les Anciens', *Monthly Review*, vol. 35, 1766, 556.
[4] 'Lettres Familières de M. Winkelmann', *Monthly Review*, vol. 66, 1782, 527.
[5] See footnotes 112 and 113.
[6] Alex Potts, 'Introduction' in *Johann Joachim Winckelmann, History of the Art of Antiquity*, trans. Harry Francis Mallgrave, Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2006, 36-37, the latest English translation of the first edition of Winckelmann's *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums* (Dresden, 1764) (hereafter Winckelmann, *History*); and Alex Potts, *Flesh and the Ideal: Winckelmann and the Origins of Art History*, London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994, 238-53, esp. 250.
[7] Revalidating an unnecessarily dualist scheme of appreciating Winckelmann's contribution criticised below, Alice A. Donohue has severely opposed the scholarly focus on Winckelmann's habits of fresh empirical observation insisting instead that his thinking was 'essentially literary in conception and approach', even down to his descriptions and analyses of monuments, which, for Donohue, derive their edge from literature and written sources rather than the evidence of the senses; A. A. Donohue, 'Winckelmann's History of Art and Polykleitos' in *Polykleitos, Doryphoros, and Tradition*, ed. Warren G. Moon, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995, 333, 341-44.
[8] Elizabeth Décultot, 'Reading versus Seeing? Winckelmann's Excerpting Practice and Genealogy of Art History', *Ber. Wissenschaftsgesch.* 43 (2020): 239-61, esp. 242-44.
[9] Décultot, 'Reading versus Seeing?', 246.

reading practices (book copying, excerpting and quoting) as well as his meticulous empirical observation of material monuments.[10] Such perspectives have unearthed many other material and embodied continuities facilitated by this shift to sensation that are important to the present essay: these include dynamic passages across self and the physical act of writing, text and biography, art and life, climate and art.[11] Indeed, the gambits of the sensationist and medical revolutions of the era that shaped both Winckelmann's life and the expectations of his reviewers cut deep into his writing and the traditions it drew on, necessitating folds and adjustments in his work practices that proved historic.[12]

This brings me to the second aspect of Winckelmann's originality according to his reviewers, namely to the fact that the sensory immediacy of his knowledge of antiquity was effectively channelled into inventing art history – into writing a 'history of arts'.[13] Critics knew that Winckelmann wrote 'a systematical treatise of the arts themselves, […] treated in a historical manner', and not 'a biographical history of artists or a mere chronological narrative of the revolutions' undergone by art.[14] Commentators took exception to the use of the word 'History', as Winckelmann himself had underlined, 'in its most extensive signification in Greek' to facilitate the historian's purpose of giving 'a general system of art'.[15] The term 'history' was also used in 'the more strict sense of the word', as 'the history of [art's] fate and revolutions', or, otherwise put, of 'its revolutions and the effects of external circumstances on it'.[16] Commentators then reviewed the plan – the many parts and divisions – of his work adding more flesh to these observations. In the process, they

[10] In Winckelmann's case, 'excerpting is closely related to observing' … as a 'selective' visual inspection of parts of an artwork and, by the same token, 'handwritten excerpts' are 'the textual variant of a general activity of selective observation in which the organ of sight plays a central role'; see Décultot, 'Reading versus Seeing?', 255.

[11] Décultot, 'Reading versus Seeing?', 252-54, 255-56. Décultot has perceptively spotted how in the case of Winckelmann 'only through the physical act of copying could the excerptor take possession of what he read', 252. She has also shown the close connections between Winckelmann's attempts at autobiography and his collections of notes and extracts in his extensive notebooks; for Winckelmann, 'excerpting other works was a form of writing about himself', 254.

[12] My forthcoming book, *Sublime Real: Art, Medicine and Sensory Politics in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, places Winckelmann's sensuous urgency within its contemporary context of medical philosophy, sensory physiology and sensorial politics.

[13] Perpetuating dualisms of the verbal versus the visual, of text versus sight noted above, Donohue underlined her disagreement: 'Potts also argues that Winckelmann's conclusions drawn empirically from visual evidence were central to the formulation of his historical structure. The reverse however would seem to be the case'. See Donohue, 'Winckelmann's History of Art', 334.

[14] 'Histoire de l' Art de l' Antiquité, &c. The History of the Fine Arts among the Ancients', *Monthly Review*, vol. 66, 1782, 376.

[15] 'Histoire de l' Art chez les Anciens', 556. The passages cited are rare specimens of early translations – from the French – of Winckelmann's works in Britain. For Winckelmann's original approach to history, see also 'Histoire de l' Art de l' Antiquité' (1st part), *Critical Review*, vol. 55, June 1783, 480.

[16] 'Histoire de l' Art de l' Antiquité', 484.

grasped accurately that the book's notion of history was divided in two related ambitions: first, to capture the state of art in each nation separately as a means of explaining the logic and extent of art's present plurality in space, and, second, to describe its transformations and progress in time.[17] Winckelmann's comprehensive plan of history was indeed bifocal, exploring the distribution of difference in space (local diversity) and of difference in time (change).

Climate featured prominently in the first part of this scheme, tracing local difference to the diversity of local 'air' and 'heat'. The definition Winckelmann gave for his notion of climate is broad in scope, plural and flexible: 'by 'the influence of climate', we mean', he explained, 'the way in which differing localities, their particular weather patterns and foods, affected their inhabitants' appearance no less than their way of thinking'.[18] Right from the start, the context in which climate is placed – next to ways of thinking – linked it to many other interrelated factors, both physical and cultural. As I argue in this essay, such an inclusive definition is in full accord with the term's extended applications, then and now: climate provided a framing device which encompassed various concrete realities within which the specificity of art phenomena could be anchored, thus closely resembling present-day notions of 'context' or 'milieu'.

Despite the serious understanding of Winckelmann's plan and its various originalities shown by commentators, very few contemporaries seem to have grasped the crucial place of climate within his venture. If in Germany such novel aspects were, as Harloe has showed, largely ignored, in Britain the animosity against them reached unprecedented levels.[19] This calls for some serious historical interpretation. All the more so, since such negative attitudes continue to endure within the academic community. Until very recently such discourses were routinely dismissed as little more than 'period curiosities and prejudices', or, even worse, as 'deterministic',[20] thus propagating, as Jan Golinski has noted, the negative view of the Enlightenment favoured by the Romantics.[21] Such established reflexes in present-day analyses curiously repeat, as this essay demonstrates, hostile responses to climate theory that form an inextricable part of the historical context in which such theories appeared, namely, of the Enlightenment and the manifold splits it generated. Mike Hulme has recently discovered yet another more interesting genealogy of these negative stances, i.e. the complex ideological wars that broke out after the Second World War. For Hulme, the academic suspicion towards the physical connections of history has been the product of a virulent kind of 'climate

[17] 'Histoire de l' Art chez les Anciens', 557; 'Histoire de l' Art de l' Antiquité', 480 and 483-84.
[18] Winckelmann, *History of the Art of Antiquity*, 1st edition, Mallgrave, 117-18.
[19] Harloe has explained how the book's early reception in Germany dwelled on relatively predictable aspects regarding Winckelmann's ideas on connoisseurship and antiquarianism. See Katherine Harloe, *Winckelmann and the Invention of Antiquity: History and Aesthetics in the Age of Altertumswissenschaft*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, 127-30.
[20] Potts, 'Introduction' in Winckelmann, *History of the Art of Antiquity*, Mallgrave, 1st edition, 5 and 40, note 12.
[21] Jan Golinski, *British Weather and the Climate of Enlightenment*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.

indeterminism', which after the 1950s replaced the equally rampant 'climate determinism' of the first half of the twentieth century.[22]

We are at a slightly different point in the cycle today, which makes the retrieval of climate histories both urgent and inescapable. Culture and the geophysical envelope cannot continue to be treated as two separate domains or, worse, to be reduced to one or the other. Rather, they are understood to move together and the realisation that this had been the case over time and across cultures only deepens this understanding.[23] It is surprising that Winckelmann's meteoro-cultural model and the fierce debates it engendered remain ignored by science historians, who have otherwise thoroughly delved into the history of climate in the eighteenth century. This is particularly perplexing as, starting with Winckelmann, art history prominently provided a singular space for the formulation of climate-related vocabularies and debates about the nature and scope of climate's agency in cultural experience. Nor have art historians been keen to bring such intimacies between art, the human senses, and the physical world into the serious intellectual traditions and socio-historical contexts to which they belong. In consequence, it is still largely forgotten that climate models imported into art history from natural history and medicine exerted a formative impact on the process of reorganising the discipline as a historical field. Meteoro-cultural models such as Winckelmann's provoked, especially in Britain, fierce yet highly nuanced rivalries between opponents with their own vested interests, but such subtleties remain hidden in related scholarship, beneath the dominant theme of the model's imputed 'determinism'.

Climate art history in Winckelmann

There is very little in Winckelmann's approach to climate's agency to support the misconception of determinism. Winckelmann had indeed inserted the physical 'influence of climate' within a broad but unified realm of forces. He constructed a continuum between environmental factors and a whole range of cultural, political

[22] Mike Hulme, 'Reducing the Future to Climate: A Story of Climate Determinism and Reductionism', *Osiris* (Klima), 26, 2011, 245-66. Robert Brain has also made some important remarks about the history of such knee-jerk reactions to scientific languages in the humanities. His original history of physiological modernisms defied facile characterisations of 'the transfer of scientific practices and materialities' to art as 'deterministic'. He demonstrates instead that this transfer 'always involved a large role for creative agency in adapting apparatus, skills and concepts to each new discipline or artistic medium'; see Robert Michael Brain, *The Pulse of Modernism: Physiological Aesthetics in Fin-de-Siècle Europe*, Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2015, 120.

[23] An increasing number of scholars are now turning to the study of the cultural and historical implications of climate, weather and environment, see James Rodger Fleming and Vladimir Jankovic, 'Revisiting Klima', *Osiris* (Klima), 26, 2011, 1-15; Vladimir Jankovic, *Confronting the Climate: British Airs and the Making of Environmental Medicine*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010; Jan Golinski, *British Weather and the Climate of Enlightenment*; and Jessica Barnes and Michael R. Dove, eds, *Climate Cultures: Anthropological Perspectives on Climate Change*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2015.

and social institutions, which he called 'external circumstances'. More crucially, this continuity between natural and man-made environments was meant to stress the notion that they 'co-operate' with each other in the production of art and culture as much as in the appearance of the body:

> ...the influence of climate on the mode of thought of a people – with which external circumstances, especially education, the form of government, and the manner of administering it, co-operate – is just as perceptible and conceivable as the influence of the same cause on the conformation....[24]

Winckelmann clearly took great care to qualify what might have otherwise been misperceived as a brash kind of climactic determinism. The following piece clinches the point. 'In judging of the natural capacity of nations' for art, Winckelmann urged readers to

> ...take into account not merely the influence of climate but also education and government. For external circumstances affect us no less than the air that surrounds us, and custom has so much power over us that it even shapes the body and senses instilled in us by nature in a particular way….[25]

In this interesting disclaimer, Winckelmann used climate and air as a means of arguing the concreteness and hence the importance of social and cultural phenomena, and not as entities antagonistic to them.[26] Climate and air are aspects of the surrounding material world and as such they belong to the realm of 'external circumstances' on which Winckelmann built his historical interpretations. This is a deliberate and much resisted innovation: in contrast to established attempts to dissociate climate from 'external circumstances', that is, from the domain that 'more properly deserves the title of a History',[27] climate here enters the hard core of history. This innovation – an interdisciplinary innovation at that, imported, as shown below, from medicine and natural history – launched art history as a discipline of the broadest possible historical scope. In other words, Winckelmann's thought on climate is interlaced with a broad understanding of the surrounding world as a field for the combined physical and cultural study of man in historical perspective.

[24] Winckelmann, *History*, Lodge, 2nd edition, vol. 1, 162. The nineteenth century translator chose the word 'to co-operate' – a term also used by one of Winckelmann's most perceptive reviewers, Edmund Burke – rather than the more recent rendering 'to contribute' (1st edition, 120). See below, note 96.
[25] Winckelmann, *History*, 121.
[26] Winckelmann, *History*, 120 and 121.
[27] 'Histoire de l' Art de l' Antiquité' (1st part), *Critical Review*, 480. The *Critical Review* was typical of this attempt to keep the two domains separate: when it praised Winckelmann's third volume for being an 'account of the effects of external circumstances on art' and thus deserving the 'strict' name of history, it implied a significant contrast with the more 'extensive' and hence diluted history of the other parts of the book, where climate featured prominently.

To be sure, attempts to relate artistic sensibilities to the influence of air had been central to such examples of critical writing on the arts as Jean-Baptiste Dubos' *Critical Reflections on Poetry, Painting and Music* published in 1719.[28] Unlike Dubos, however, Winckelmann deployed climate models in the context of a larger project than a survey of national character, namely one that aimed to create a temporal account of the progress of art while also promoting a historical interpretation of its different manifestations within geo-cultural totalities: people and their ecosystems. Such tectonic shifts in historical thinking are intimately connected to parallel developments in the period's natural history and philosophy. The links between the 'experimental approach' in the natural sciences and the rise of modern forms of (philosophical) history in the eighteenth century have already been made, although vital aspects of this connection remain to be fleshed out.[29] The role of the earth sciences including climate studies was prominent in this interface that saw a dramatic rise in the value of physical causes in historical analysis.[30] The same historicist commitment of a naturalist, who traces 'the actual historical succession of the ecosystem in particular localities', is present in Winckelmann.[31] Roy Porter has explained how time became a central force in eighteenth-century natural science and its pursuit of origins, processes, extinctions and successions of life forms.[32] By extrapolating from naturalist disciplines where historical models found a concrete ground of cultivation, Winckelmann revealed an environmental susceptibility or better a broad geo-cultural view that allowed him to frame the delicate progress of art within the history of its immediate material surroundings.

The same non-reductive, pluralist and expansive approach to the surrounding world is present already in Winckelmann's first book, his *Reflections on the Imitation of the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks*. The book's first two paragraphs – where the exceptionalism of Greek climate and air is discussed – attest to the extra-ordinary significance of climate in the study of Greek art.[33] But again

[28] Based on the recurrence of entries from Dubos' book, Elisabeth Décultot has perhaps overblown the dependence of Winckelmann's model on that of Dubos. See Èlisabeth Décultot, *Johann Joachim Winckelmann: Enquête sur la Genèse de l' Histoire de l' Art*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2000, 159-62. More recently, other scholars have underlined the importance of the influence of Montesquieu, even Hume, in this area; see Harloe, *Winckelmann and the Invention of Antiquity*, 112 and 114-15.

[29] Dario Perinetti, 'Philosophical Reflection on History' in Knud Haakonssen, ed., *Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, 1107-40, esp. 1117.

[30] Even the philosopher and historian David Hume, otherwise very sceptical regarding the jurisdiction of the physical causes in history, accepted that the qualities of the air and climate 'are supposed to work insensibly on the temper': David Hume, 'Of National Characters' in David Hume, *Essays, Moral, Political and Literary*, ed. Eugene Miller, Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1987, 198.

[31] Roy Porter, 'The Terraqueous Globe' in G. S. Rousseau and Roy Porter, eds, *The Ferment of Knowledge*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, 322-23.

[32] Porter, 'The Terraqueous Globe', 322-23.

[33] Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Reflections on the Imitation of the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks*, trans. Henri Fuseli, London: A. Millar, 1765, 1-2.

Winckelmann's appeals to climate (from geography to 'temperature', 'sky', 'air' and 'soil') are masterfully interwoven with his examination of cultural habits relevant to artistic distinction. From gymnasia to beauty contests, dressing codes, mating practices, diet or religious beliefs and political liberty, even 'liberty' of manners and 'public economy', the lines that divide statements about cultural ways of life from statements regarding physical practices are perpetually blurred.[34]

The most extensive survey of these parameters occurs, however, in the neglected two appendices to the book where Winckelmann staged a bitingly ironic choreography of self-composed objections to his work and long answers to them.[35] Curiously, Winckelmann launches on his answer regarding the particular issue of climate and its influence without any specific objections having been raised by his imaginary opponent.[36] Regardless, he thought it necessary to make clear that his mention of 'The perfect nature of the Greeks' in the first section of his *Reflections* referred to the perfection of the surroundings in which they lived *and* the perfection of their bodies – external and internal perfection alike. The mechanism of climate relates to a broad range of cultural and artistic advantages, which, nevertheless, Winckelmann was determined to keep under a tight rein, in a characteristically non-deterministic way that anticipates his cautionary approach in the *History*. 'These advantages of the Greeks were, perhaps, less founded on their nature and the influences of the climate, than on their education' but, as he adds in the immediately succeeding sentence, 'this happy situation of their country was, however, the basis of all'.[37] Such oscillations occur regularly in Winckelmann's work. They mark a distinct trope in his mode of thinking over these issues and relate to neither an irreducible heterogeneity nor a theoretical weakness in his writings but rather to a specifically Enlightenment type of heuristic and probabilistic exploration that aims to open things up just as much as 'heterogeneities' apparently do.[38]

[34] Winckelmann, *Reflections*, 1-22.

[35] I am referring to the sections of the *Reflections* entitled 'A Letter containing objections against the foregoing reflections' (65-126) and 'An Answer to the foregoing letter and a further Explication of the subject' (145-247).

[36] This asymmetry in the chain of questions and answers has its own significance: it indicates a certain rhetorical supplement that points less to a broad consensus over the issue of climate as the absence of objections might conceivably imply, and more to a weakness of the argument that calls for urgent supplementation.

[37] 'An Answer to the foregoing letter', *Reflections*, 149. Winckelmann's reductive comment that the radical differences in appearance between the Athenians and their neighbours beyond the mountains were due 'to the difference of air and nourishment', may more advantageously be viewed as another provisional step in his trope of causal possibilising, 149-50.

[38] I refer here to typical deconstructive explanations of similar fissures; see Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, London: Routledge, 1994, 39-45. For a historically specific explanation of such heterogeneities in Winckelmann's work, see David Bates, 'The Epistemology of Error in Late Enlightenment France', *Eighteenth Century Studies*, 29:3, 1996, 307-27. Similar discrepancies seem to be integral in the history of climate theory, being present in such otherwise 'moderate' doctrines of climate as that of Montesquieu. Montesquieu's anxiety to show that societies are the product of an equal yet infinite 'assembly of causes', where a

In the paragraph that followed this observation Winckelmann set off to reinforce his point about the basic role of climate by highlighting how 'the manners and persons of the new-settled inhabitants, as well as the natives of every country, have never failed of being influenced by [the] different natures' that surround them.[39] Despite the ancient sources Winckelmann quoted, it is clear that such comments reflect the colonial history of climate-related explanations of culture: the eighteenth century saw an explosion of related publications as a result of contemporary anxieties about the medical effects of unwholesome climates upon new settlers during the imperial conquests in progress. Not ignorant of parallel anthropological debates feeding on the same colonial conjuncture, Winckelmann took the side of the monogenist camp for which cultural continuity or change were very much the flexible results of contingent environmental factors. In opposition to the emphasis that polygenists placed on fixed and static views of mankind based on race and heredity, monogenism favoured a kind of racial plasticity which promoted the importance of climate and environmental conditions.[40] And if, as Winckelmann noted, modern Greeks continue to 'preserve many of the prerogatives of their ancestors',[41] this is because their basic climate remained the same despite the many cultural and physical devastations they and the 'nature of the country itself' suffered.[42] By contrast, in resettling from their original cradle of natural perfection, Greek colonists 'underwent the same fate' of degeneration as that suffered by other colonial races of the past and the present: 'their bodies degenerated as much from those of their ancestors, as their manners'.[43] Constructing a virtual thermometer of

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sense of 'the concomitance of moral and physical causes' was preserved, did not, however, prevent him from interjecting various deterministic statements about the paramount importance of climate. See 'Climate and Causes: Towards a Doctrine' in Robert Shackleton, *Montesquieu: A Critical Biography*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961, 302-19, esp. 312 and 313-19. Hume's seminal essay on the topic, 'Of National Characters' is a prime example of the same fissures and indecisions regarding the role and scope of physical causes in cultural affairs. See Hume, *Essays*, 197-215.

[39] Winckelmann, 'An Answer to the foregoing letter', 150.

[40] For the dissemination of polygenist positions among philosopher historians, see Robin Middleton, 'Introduction', Julien-David Le Roy, *The Ruins of the Most Beautiful Monuments of Greece,* Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2004, 122-24. For a fuller coverage of the debate between monogenists and polygenists and its repercussions in art, see Aris Sarafianos, 'B. R. Haydon and Racial Science: The Politics of the Human Figure in the Early Nineteenth Century', *Visual Culture in Britain*, 7:1, 2006, 79-106.

[41] The climate as such ensured that the Greeks, 'especially the females, are, by the unanimous account of travelers, the most beautiful of the human race'; Winckelmann, 'An Answer to the foregoing letter', 162-63.

[42] Winckelmann, 'An Answer to the foregoing letter', 163. Indeed, a series of catastrophes had determined the modern image of an 'unhappy country… changed into a wilderness' and 'hideous deserts' – devoid of the elements of science, manners, education and liberty but also scarred by the 'forlorn prospect of the soil', 'the free passage of the winds, stopped by the inextricable windings of the entangled shores, and the want of almost all other commodities'. Note how Winckelmann's formulation merged again cultural factors with natural ones in one tight and untroubled whole.

[43] Winckelmann, 'An Answer to the foregoing letter', 161.

culture, Winckelmann stressed that 'the remoter the colonies' of Greece from the temperate centre of Athens's micro-climate and its variable products, 'the greater the difference', namely, the divergence from perfection.[44]

In the context of developing his thoughts on the cultural influence of the environment, Winckelmann progressively manifested the important tendency to root this impact deeper and deeper into the fabric of the body. Indeed, he may have started his exploration by establishing the relation between climate and what he repeatedly called beauty of form, but, as his commentary progressed, the exact same physical mechanisms impacted on every other organic sphere, structure and inclination pertaining to the production of superior art. In fact, organs, the sensorium, nerves and the physical apparatuses of art production emerge as far more susceptible to climate influence than the external body or the beauty of form. Winckelmann thus wondered 'how quick, how refined must the organs have been' under the influence of the genial climate of Greece, stressing the symmetries between nature and culture prevailing in his scheme.[45] This balanced climate ensured in turn 'bodies most nicely balanced between' the extremes of 'leanness and corpulency' but also a fine inner frame of 'nerves and muscles most sensibly elastic, and promoting the flexibility of the body'.[46] Hence that 'easiness, that pliant facility, accompanied with mirth and vigour, which animated all their actions', not least, among these actions, such practices as relate to the 'cultivation of the arts'.[47]

In highlighting such continuities between body, mind and climate, Winckelmann seems to be in dialogue with contemporary medical thinking on the nervous system. In Britain, the earliest proponent of this kind of physiological aesthetics was Richard Brocklesby, who had already expatiated on the environmental premises that underlay Winckelmann's approach: 'if the grosser parts of the body in process of time are so changed by the climate, no wonder if the extremely subtle vessels of the brain should suffer greater alterations'.[48] British reviewers, however, tended to miss the broader sensationist point in Winckelmann's thought, focusing instead on the role of climate in forging the simple analogy between beauty of form and beauty of representations. The appendix to the *Reflections* marked instead the beginning of Winckelmann's transformation of this empirical argument, popular since antiquity, into a medical-cum-neurological model of articulating the physical interactions between a reactive body-and-mind unity and the material surroundings.

[44] Winckelmann, 'An Answer to the foregoing letter', 160. The excess heat and the glowing sky of Asia had thus turned Ionian Greeks into wanton voluptuaries in sound of language as much as in art, manners and body, 162.
[45] Winckelmann, 'An Answer to the foregoing letter', 156.
[46] Winckelmann, 'An Answer to the foregoing letter', 157.
[47] Winckelmann, 'An Answer to the foregoing letter', 157 and 158-59.
[48] The extract continues as follows 'thought itself seems in us very much to depend on the organisation of the brain, and the motion of its contents; so that the genius of every nation must receive a bias some way or other from the temperature of the climate'; Richard Brocklesby, *Reflections on Antient and Modern Musick with the Application to the Care of Disease*, London: M. Cooper, 1749, 53-54.

The fact that Hippocrates, and especially his famous 'Of Airs, Waters and Places', the manifesto of modern climate theory and of contemporary trends of Neo-Hippocratic medicine, crops up in the appendix to the *Reflections* is not accidental nor surprising. Winckelmann was actually engaged with medicine since his early studies at the University of Halle, the centre of medical pietism in Germany, where he first pursued his studies of theology.[49] His subsequent move to Jena to study 'physics, medicine and anatomy with great application' further testifies to the seriousness of his involvement with medicine.[50] His notebooks in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris corroborate his careful study of medical literature, including the writings of Hippocrates as well as works by leading figures in Neo-Hippocraticism and medical pietism.[51] The dynamic appearance of Hippocrates in Winckelmann's first essay makes evident deep connections of his interpretative model of external circumstances with the influential medical discussion about the six non-naturals – namely, the six non-constitutional, i.e. *external* factors of health in which climate featured prominently alongside other equally important factors in his work such as air, diet and water, rest and exercise, sleep and the passions.[52]

Following his ancient mentor, Winckelmann observed: 'Such a sky, says Hippocrates, produces not only the most beautiful of men, but harmony between their inclinations and shape'.[53] His statement later in the same letter – at a point where he again invoked Hippocrates' climate essay – that the 'the beauty of a nation was in proportion to the cultivation of the arts' was again meant in an obviously physical sense:[54] 'Attica enjoyed a pure and serene sky, which refined the senses, and of course shaped their bodies in proportion to that refinement; and Athens was the seat of arts'.[55] Inversely, nearby Thebes, 'wrapped up in a misty sky, produced a

[49] Johanna Eyer-Kordesch, 'Georg Ernst Stahl's Radical Pietist Medicine and its Influence on the German Enlightenment', in Andrew Cunningham and Roger French, eds, *The Medical Enlightenment of the Eighteenth Century*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, 67-87, esp. 67-68.

[50] Wolfgang Leppmann, *Winckelmann*, London: Victor Gollancz, 1971, 47-49.

[51] See André Tibal, *Inventaire des Manuscrits de Winckelmann*, Paris: Hachette, 1911, 104-107, 114-21, 149.

[52] Winckelmann's continuous and plastic approach to the environment's impact on human history and culture, was connected, both thematically and methodologically, to classical medicine. The theory of the six non-naturals was thoroughly familiar to Winckelmann and its importation into art history had many far-reaching implications that will have to be developed in another opportunity. See Genevieve Miller, "Airs, Waters and Places' in History", *Journal of the History of Medicine*, 17:2, January 1962, 129-40; see also Décultot, *Johann Joachim Winckelmann*, 207.

[53] Winckelmann, 'An Answer to the foregoing letter', 152. In Winckelmann's work the terms air and climate – frequently together with diet – are systematically placed in a continuum and are treated as equivalent. The same is true about his word 'sky', which is a literal translation from the German, and means climate.

[54] Winckelmann, 'An Answer to the foregoing letter', 158-59.

[55] Winckelmann, 'An Answer to the foregoing letter', 159. The advantages the Greeks reaped from 'the happy situation of their country' and the influences of climate and air, relate to the prevalence of the 'most temperate seasons', namely, to 'a sky so temperate, nay balanced between heat and cold', 151.

sturdy uncouth race, according to Hippocrates' observation on fenny, watery soils; and its sterility in producing men of genius… is an old reproach'.[56] Indeed, as another 'harmony' shows, 'Nature' – especially proportionate nature, well-poised between heat and cold – always 'keeps proportion' in the body's internal and external make-up.[57]

Ancient theories of climate undersigned these harmonies or, to be more precise, reflections. In the echo room of Winckelmann's history, the cultural mirrors the physical at every step of the way: expectedly, in such conditions of indefinite reflectivity, the 'inhabitants cannot fail of being influenced by both'.[58] By a kind of 'physical coercion', 'in such climates man is naturally temperate', to cite Thomas de Quincey, another much later supporter of the 'genial climates of the south'.[59] This physical coercion was not, however, an issue of loose analogy anymore; it took the form of a full-blown medico-physiological economy of vital activity and the senses, which would become more pronounced in his *History* written during Winckelmann's residence in Italy.[60] This may seem a paradox, since, according to Décultot's analysis of Winckelmann's habits of excerpting, it is clear that during his Italian phase medical and scientific extracts in his notebooks seem to dwindle.[61] Nevertheless, his remarkable new tendency to blend nicely in the same notebooks his reading notes with notes on artworks, on the climate, food and landscape in Italy, points to a different direction.[62] Namely, it suggests a firmly established capability and an already developed epistemic model of moving across the separate realms not only of reading and seeing or text and cosmos, but also of cultural practices and physical processes, of art and science. In Winckelmann's case, this model was, remarkably, crossed with the logic of imitation and an inbuilt flow of reflections. The study of the resulting chains of similitude through which this discourse evolved throws light on the period's episteme as much as on Winckelmann's method in particular.

[56] Winckelmann, 'An Answer to the foregoing letter', 159.
[57] Winckelmann, 'An Answer to the foregoing letter', 157.
[58] Winckelmann, 'An Answer to the foregoing letter', 151-52.
[59] Thomas de Quincey, 'Temperance Movement', in *Narrative and Miscellaneous Papers*, vol. 2, Boston: Ticknor, Reed, and Fields, 1853, 188.
[60] Following Brocklesby's path, Winckelmann's *History* would repeat and develop this sensorial approach that emphasized the role of the surrounding world in shaping the 'intellectual organization' and 'acuteness' of perception as well as the disposition and sensibility of nations and individuals alike; Winckelmann, *History*, Lodge, 2nd edition, 159-60, 156-57. Moreover, Winckelmann underlined that the superiority of the Greeks lay in the way in which their climate refined their 'senses', preparing them to 'act through quick and sensitive nerves on a fine-woven brain'. It was this physical synergy between climate, sensibility and the nervous system that enabled Greeks to 'discover instantly the various characteristics of a subject', 'reflect on that subject's beauty' and recreate it in art; Winckelmann, *History*, 121. Note that Lodge translated this reference to the 'fine-woven brain' as 'a brain of delicate structure'; Winckelmann, *History*, Lodge, 2nd edition, 163.
[61] Décultot, 'Reading versus Seeing?', 249.
[62] Décultot, 'Reading versus Seeing?', 255.

Climate in history's chain of imitations

Climate descriptions progressively acquire in Winckelmann's writing an extraordinary sensory immediacy as well as an unusual analytical authority that may encourage confusion over its determining value. Once we take another peek into the matter, it becomes clear that climate is yet one more ring in a cumulative chain of homological circumstances, acquiring whichever significance it can claim from the tightness of this chain. Imitation offered the best cohesive between the various rings of this chain.

First, Winckelmann's 'balanced' weather under which his art ideal was set to rise, imitated the properties of a location that was equally balanced between geographical extremes. The best environments for art were found in *geographical locations*, where 'nature gradually draws nigher to her centre'.[63] In this geographical middle, temperatures were equally balanced in the 'intermediate between warm and cold'.[64] By contrast, 'the nigher [nature] approximates her extremes, and the more she has to contend either with excessive heat or cold', the more 'excess and prematureness' were evident in the growth and shape of every form, whether human or artistic.[65]

Second, Winckelmann's identification of the natural habitats of art with the median climate zones of the Mediterranean mirrored his balanced economy of 'quiet grandeur', which he considered as the most necessary state of body and mind for the arrival of ideal beauty in art. Winckelmann perceived ideal beauty as a physical state of quietness for which there was no better revalidation than the conviction that it 'is more readily found in countries that enjoy a temperate climate'.[66] In other words, Winckelmann's optimal climate for the production of his quietist ideal was itself quiet: climatic mildness becomes in his writings the environmental equivalent of sensory quietness in art. Winckelmann's identification of mild climates with middle temperatures and both with the middle regions of the globe indicates the importance of yet another reflection in operation: mildness echoes the logic of middleness, moderation mirrors intermediateness, and equanimity, an essential property of the *beau idéal* and the ideal viewer, mirrors equilibrium.

The political sphere also formed part of Winckelmann's chain of imitations: the artistic superiority of classical Greeks stemmed from the fact that they 'lived in a more moderate climate' but also 'under a moderate government'. Winckelmann's famous promotion of 'peace' and 'tranquillity' (social unity, harmony and liberty) as well as national security (the avoidance of civil 'unrest' or the 'disturbance' of war) as the most favourable states for the evolution of perfection in art likewise imitates the theme of environmental moderation in the field of social and political practices. Unsurprisingly, this dance of mild and middle imitations was epitomized in the

[63] Winckelmann, *History*, Lodge, 2nd edition, 307.
[64] Winckelmann, *History*, Lodge, 2nd edition, 160.
[65] Winckelmann, *History*, Lodge, 2nd edition, 307. The same point is made in the first edition, see Winckelmann, *History*, 186-87.
[66] Winckelmann, *History*, 119.

external form of the ideal classical body which was also defined by Winckelmann as the closest approximation to an 'intermediate state', or a state of ambiguity between a whole range of opposites, not least between action and inactivity, man and woman.

The logic of this chain is evidently imitative. Every possible register relevant to art – nations, bodies, viewers, artworks, climates, modes of government and modes of life, the state of society and international order – enters here into an inescapable sequence of imitations. Such realities of art are not simply contiguous to each other but also co-constitute each other on the grounds of their mimetic bondage. As Vladimir Jankovic and James Rodger Fleming have noted, in the kind of classical episteme in which Winckelmann partly operated, 'proximity of objects to each other' in a given geophysical context 'becomes similitude and similitude becomes a causal connection'.[67] It was this model of imitations that gave Winckelmann the ability to slip so swiftly from one set of material variables to the other, and to see them all as homogeneous parts of the same geo-cultural ecosystem of 'external circumstances'. Climate completed the construction of this bio-spatial frame of historical analysis, which marked the origins of art history as a discipline at the same time as it made signs towards current concepts of 'context' or 'milieu'. Today these concepts mark out a field of heterogeneities and interferences – of difference – that relate to a more inclusive study of the disparate in social, discursive and historical formations;[68] Winckelmann's history shows how these concepts started their career in smooth reflections and quiet passages, that is, in similitude. In this context, climate seems to cooperate with the other material spheres in modulating cultural phenomena, but it is only capable of so doing to the extent that it is caught up in a feedback loop of semantic equivalences, where the different spheres of analysis imitate each other.

Obviously, this methodological arrangement does not make climate a cause, even less so a determining one; nor does it make Winckelmann's interpretations any less material, socially productive or centralised. In fact, everything in these chains mirrors a higher ideal which underwrites and organises them, namely physiology. The main vocabularies through which Winckelmann's descriptions are formulated reflect the period's physiological ideals of median sensations. It is around them that Winckelmann's inter-reflecting sequences of balance and intermediateness, measure and moderation, or mildness and middleness erupt. Such pleasures, which contemporaries naturally called 'midway gratifications' or 'mean pleasures between the extremes', had been canonical polite ideals with an already established pedigree in Britain long before Winckelmann arrived.[69]

[67] Fleming and Jankovic, 'Revisiting Klima', 5.
[68] Current usages of context – in social histories and other radical tendencies in 'new art history' – indeed underline irregularities, contradictions, conflicts and divisions as a higher means of 'putting ourselves there where the disparate holds together'; the aim being to reach a more inclusive understanding of cultural phenomena; Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 34-35.
[69] Robert Morris, *An Essay upon Harmony as it relates chiefly to situation and building*. London: T. Cooper, 1739, 25-26.

Physiology provided the bio-political field par excellence for the most important conflicts of the period including those aesthetic and cultural ones surveyed here. The presence in art history of this particular version of a civil economy of median sensations, which also came under the characteristic name of 'irenical' (peace-loving), reconfirms physiology as an expansive mode of thinking. It was this quietist social and political ideal of 'midway raptures'[70] that metastasised and prevailed across the various significant registers of Winckelmann's history, ultimately overtaking views on climate, air and geography in his work. This civil ideal had already determined the natural historical view of the entire terraqueous globe, its own history and the history of the human world in it. The prevailing view in the eighteenth century saw the progress of the world's history revalidated in the history of the earth: both were moved from uninhabitable chaos to temperate habitat, from rudeness to refinement; both were subject to the same civilizing process and the progress of civilization. Such a physiological vision of the earth found its culmination in the belief that the current age was simultaneously the age of terrestrial *tranquillity* and the age of man; of quietness and temperance.[71] As Porter has rightly noted, this is a distinct kind of 'aristocratic naturalism' with a long past; imported, as it were, in art history it would also have a long future.[72] In this view of the natural and civilized worlds, the North and its various 'maladies' had not yet been rehabilitated.

The English 'Malady'

The present analysis does not intend to deny the fact that Winckelmann's books are sprinkled with heterogeneous signs of reductive usages of climate. For example, Winckelmann's notorious indictment of the artistic abilities of nations north of the Alps is a characteristic example of environmental determinism that included not only England but also Germany, Winckelmann's own country, and France.[73] The English, nevertheless, enjoyed a particular place of dishonour. Climate-based attacks on the inferior capacity of the English for art had an already established pedigree with no less a figure than Dubos at its summit. British reviewers were very much alert to this aspect of Winckelmann's work, sifting through Winckelmann's writings and private correspondence for further incriminating evidence on the topic. In his *History*, Winckelmann had tied the bent for art with a particularly embodied notion of the faculty of the imagination – for him, the ability to think with images as well as the ability of image-making – and he was adamant that, among the 'pensive

[70] Morris, *Essay upon Harmony*, 22.
[71] Porter, 'Terraqueous Globe', 299.
[72] Porter, 'Terraqueous Globe', 305 and 311-12.
[73] Winckelmann, *History*, 122-23. Interestingly, early German reviewers felt uneasy with Winckelmann's appeals to climate for the same patriotic reasons that irritated English commentators; Harloe, *Winckelmann and the Invention of Antiquity*, 128. Also notable in the same respect is Winckelmann's departure from the patriotism of Dubos' climate determinism which placed his French compatriots under a more favorable light than other nations.

British', this aptitude, which thrives in warmer climates, was suspended by the coldness of the surroundings. The implications were grave as much for painting as for English poetry, which many commentators considered as Britain's last hope of defence against increasing denunciations of local genius in the arts. Winckelmann targeted this argument and dismissed the relevance of English poetry for discussions about the standing of the visual arts in Britain by insisting that the images it produced were typically 'unsuited to painting'.[74] The problem again was the faculty of the imagination – of image-making – as a whole and this drove English inferiority with regards to the arts deeper into the fabric of the brain where the imagination was increasingly being located by contemporary medical authors, critics and philosophers.[75]

Winckelmann's remarks about Turnbull's book on ancient painting were also suspicious. Winckelmann had decried the book's blandness as a typical symptom of the fact that, in the realm of art, 'Nature works no greater miracles in England than among us', the Germans. Turnbull inspired Winckelmann's most infamous statement on the question: 'the English will never be true connoisseurs in art', and 'the arts' will never be seen to 'forsake Italy to settle in Great Britain, as some Englishmen flatter themselves'. The 'physical causes' of this, Winckelmann assured his addressee, had been identified 'in my "History of Art"'.[76]

Winckelmann's writings show intermittent signs of regression to crude usages of climate. To focus analysis exclusively on this element, however, is to obscure the fact that such statements were far exceeded by antithetical ones in his work, where the balance between climate, national dispositions, and cultural productions was restored. For example, Winckelmann cited various explicit cases from ancient history, where a more irregular and complicated view of relations between nations, culture, and climate was developed.[77] He also resorted to various telling yet neglected provisos to the same effect: 'when I speak of the natural capacity of this nation for art [the Italians], I do not thereby deny that this capacity might be found among a few or many other peoples, for experience teaches otherwise'.[78]

[74] Even Milton was constitutionally incapable of presenting in his poems properly 'painterly' images suitable for the visual arts: Winckelmann, *History*, Lodge, 2nd edition, 122.
[75] Pioneering in this respect had been Georges Rousseau's article 'Science and the Discovery of the Imagination in Enlightened England', *Eighteenth-Century Studies,* 3:1, Autumn, 1969, 108-135.
[76] 'Extracts from the Epistolary Correspondence of the celebrated Abbé Wincklemann', *Universal Magazine*, 77, September 1785, 121-24, esp. 124.
[77] In the *History*'s first edition, for example, the Greeks of Asia Minor enjoyed 'a still more favorable climate than the other Greeks', but 'the arts and sciences' would not thrive in their cities because they had been 'unable to constitute themselves as powerful free states, as the Athenians did'; see Winckelmann, *History*, 121, and also 118-19. A similar discrepancy between climate and civilization was detected in the case of the inhabitants of Arcadia, who were forced to cultivate the arts precisely because of the savagery of their surroundings, namely, as an antidote to them, 122.
[78] Winckelmann, *History*, 122. See also Winckelmann, *History*, Lodge, 2nd edition, vol. 1, 162.

Still more significantly, the merit of Winckelmann's biases against certain nations and their climate were subject to disparate evaluations by contemporary critics. Some early reviewers in Britain seemed capable of recognising the complexity or rather volatility of Winckelmann's stance on the topic, being ready to accept, under specific circumstances, ameliorating factors. They acknowledged, for example, the role of their compatriots in provoking the 'slighting terms in which [Winckelmann] describes some of the English nobility', and concluded that they 'probably deserved them'.[79] The *Monthly Review* gave particular emphasis on the matter, interspersing the review of the second enlarged French edition of the *Histoire de l' Art de l' Antiquité* (1781) with extracts from Winckelmann's correspondence.[80] The bits the reviewer chose from Winckelmann's descriptions of high-ranking English travellers related to images of total insensitivity to beauty and taste, of fatigue, ennui, low spirits, and waning vitality, where 'motionless' aristocrats were, almost constitutionally incapable of exhibiting the least symptom of life.[81] His language conjured up a symptomatology unmistakably associated with the nervous disorder contemporaries had characteristically branded the 'English Malady'. The condition was curiously popularised by an Englishman, George Cheyne – a medical writer with whom Winckelmann was very familiar – in a book also appropriately titled *The English Malady*. Cheyne explained:

> The Title I have chosen for this Treatise, is a Reproach universally thrown on this Island by Foreigners, and all our Neighbours on the Continent, by whom Nervous Distempers, Spleen, Vapours, and Lowness of Spirits, are, in Derision, call'd the ENGLISH MALADY. And I wish there were not so good grounds for this Reflection. The Moisture of our Air, the Variableness of our Weather, (from our Situation amidst the Ocean) the Rankness and Fertility of our Soil, the Richness and Heaviness of our Food, the Wealth and Abundance of the Inhabitants (from their universal Trade), the Inactivity and sedentary Occupations of the better Sort (among whom this Evil mostly rages) and the Humour of living in great, populous, and consequently unhealthy Towns, have brought forth a Class and Set of Distempers, with atrocious and frightful Symptoms, scarce known to our Ancestors, and never rising to such fatal Heights, nor afflicting such Numbers in any other known Nation.[82]

What this highly influential treatise made clear was the widespread medical and popular consensus in England over the problematic influence of the national climate on the nervous system and nervous sensibility, alongside the harmful influence of the other six non-naturals. It also put the upper class and its immoderate lifestyles on the spot. Like Cheyne, the *Monthly Review* did not seem

[79] 'Winkelmann's Histoire de l'Art de l'Antiquité' (1st part), *Critical Review*, 478.
[80] 'Histoire de l' Art de l' Antiquité, &c.', 377.
[81] 'Histoire de l' Art de l' Antiquité, &c.', 377-78.
[82] George Cheyne, *The English Malady, or a Treatise of All Nervous Diseases*, London: G. Strahan and J. Leake, 1733, i-ii.

averse to accepting the same argument of climate and class in explaining phenomena of art and sensibility, showing, in effect, sympathy with the premises underlying Winckelmann's attacks on the English inferiority in art. Sharing the same scientific background, the periodical did not see Winckelmann's positions as the product of unfair preconceptions. In contrast, it proclaimed that 'the Abbé was not influenced by any prejudices which he might entertain against the English in particular', and, to prove the point, it chose to make public various extracts from Winckelmann's letters where the historian was actually shown to entertain the 'greatest esteem' for English travellers in Italy.[83] In the meantime, climate continued to be, in the eyes of English critics, a valid modifier of judgment. The case of Sir Lord Stormont and his own 'English malady' was characteristic: in those bits chosen by the review, the English Ambassador in Vienna was praised by Winckelmann no less for his extraordinary taste and learning than for being cured from his 'national' melancholy by having 'the dark vapours which clouded his mind … dissipated in this happy climate' – the climate of Italy.[84]

It is indeed intriguing how critics highlighted the messy picture drawn from Winckelmann's tangled inconsistencies about the English in order to acquit the art historian, and even praise him rather than, as one would expect, to incriminate him. His inconsistencies were systematically explained away as the effect of an explosive – rather artistic – mixture of frankness, liveliness, spontaneity and unbridled expressiveness.[85] Such descriptions tally perfectly with early representations of Winckelmann's persona in Britain which tended to present him as an almost romantic enthusiast: 'naturally an enthusiast' of a 'warm constitution', as some preferred; or as 'a wild plant' in Winckelmann's own carefully crafted version of himself as a maverick 'without any restraint'.[86] Critics seemed to agree that, sparked by 'fire and enthusiasm', Winckelmann was naturally drawn into curious extremes and dissonances, otherwise unforgivable but in his case almost fascinating.[87]

This kind of liberal license supplied by literary men was not on offer outside the limited realm of aristocratic gentlemen and their 'fashionable diseases'.[88] In the

[83] The reviewer emphasized that 'Our Abbé is in general a greater admirer of the English than of any other nation' and in a footnote stressed Winckelmann's view that the English were 'the only nation that are wise and solid: what dismal and sorry personages are our German noblemen who travel, when compared with the English'; see 'Lettres Familières de M. Winkelmann', 523.

[84] 'Histoire de l' Art de l' Antiquité', 378.

[85] 'Lettres Familières de M. Winkelmann', 524.

[86] 'Histoire de l' Art de l' Antiquité', 479.

[87] 'Winkelmann's Histoire de l' Art de l'Antiquité', (2nd part), *Critical Review*, vol. 55, August 1783, 139-140.

[88] Medical historians have noted how the eighteenth-century cult of sensibility related to the rise of a romanticised model of nervous disorders that treated them as signs of superiority. This led to the emergence of a whole range of fashionable diseases very close to what Porter has also branded 'diseases of civilization'. Among them, the English Malady had perhaps been the archetypal one. For a recent take on the subject, see David E. Shuttleton, 'The Fashioning of Fashionable Diseases in the Eighteenth Century', *Literature and Medicine*, theme issue, 35:2, Fall 2017, 270-91 and Jonathan Andrews, James Kennaway, 'Experiencing,

context of discussing applications of climate in other cultural and social spheres, this license was evidently withdrawn as the century wore on, leading to the spectral Winckelmann of later years. Climate as inflected by class, nation, and profession played a prominent role in this transformation. A specific realignment of these factors as the discussion shifted into the art world led to the hostile evaluations that marred Winckelmann's reputation for decades to come. Upwardly mobile mavericks and aspiring 'professional artists' including later the artists of the Royal Academy, played a leading role in this change… of climate.

The British reception of Winckelmann's art meteorology

Reduced tolerance to Winckelmann's climatic 'transgressions' was present even in early reviews of Winckelmann's works, before the consequences of his writings were fully revealed to the still rising class of art professionals in Britain. Writing from a solidly English naturalist perspective with clear Hogarthian overtones, the *Critical Review*'s coverage of Winckelmann's *Reflections* revolted against the tendency to confine art within the constricted limits of Winckelmann's neoclassical theory. He particularly singled out the limits of a remote age, namely antiquity, the confines of a peculiar country and climate, in this case Greece, and a narrow version of an artistic ideal incident in that country, that is, ideal beauty.[89] Dismissive of the first section of Winckelmann's *Reflections*, his flagship piece on climate, the reviewer, presumably Tobias Smollett himself, tried to simply waive it aside as a mere 'digression'. But his shock at someone who 'tells us in no very polite terms that painting and sculpture were despised in the northern zones' could not have been repressed for long.[90] Such a species of criticism was, he proceeded, clearly 'illiberal and unjust', teeming with the 'arbitrary' and 'dogmatic' hyperboles of Winckelmann, the controversialist. This controversialist was but another transformation of Winckelmann's enthusiastic persona in Britain.[91] The criticism brims over with moral indignation and impromptu empirical evidence that, as far as climate is concerned, did not dwell on the scientific aspects of the argument.[92] It is

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Exploiting, and Evacuating Bile: Framing Fashionable Biliousness from the Sufferer's Perspective', *Literature and Medicine*, theme issue, 35:2, Fall 2017, 292-333.

[89] 'Reflections on the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks', *Critical Review*, vol. 19, 1765, 445-47 clearly echoes the old 'quarrel of the ancients and the moderns', with the reviewer upholding the rights of the moderns.

[90] 'Reflections on the Painting', 443.

[91] 'Reflections on the Painting', 449.

[92] Similar is the case of the *Monthly Review*'s critical appraisal of the French translation of the *History*'s first edition. In this rarely perceptive piece of critical analysis of the *History*'s originality and methodology, the reviewer experiences, when he comes to the topic of climate, a sudden collapse of his critical faculties. He regresses, that is, to so-called facts – home truths and casual comparisons between the beauty of women in Italy and that of women in other countries 'much inferior in point of climate' but 'much superior' to the Italians 'in point of beauty' – to dismiss Winckelmann's model as a wrong 'hypothesis' and the author as a mere 'antiquarian'; see 'Histoire de l' Art chez les Anciens', *Monthly Review*, 1766, 558. As in the essay of the *Critical Review* in hand, England – 'our own island' and the

characteristic of the toxic climate and tone of intolerance that would soon prevail as the discussion continued to move into the artistic realm and the 'general capacity of the English for Arts'.[93]

Such a stance was, however, neither unavoidable nor unanimous. Another review of the *Reflections*, the first of its kind in Britain, showed an understanding of Winckelmann's approach to climate as rare as it is early. After citing at length Winckelmann's descriptions of the unique 'influence of the mildest and purest sky' of Greece on the formation of ancient beauty, the commentator of the *Monthly Review* underlined the multi-factorial context in which Winckelmann's ideas on climate operated: 'according to this writer also, not only nature was favourable to the Greeks in the beautiful formation of their persons; but their manners and political institutions equally contributed to give them those advantages, which were necessary to the perfection of the arts'.[94] If the reviewer ultimately remained unconvinced by Winckelmann's 'attempt to persuade us that nature itself had attained in Greece a peculiar degree of perfection, superior to its state in other nations', this was not exactly directed against climate theory in general but against monopolist approaches to it that treated Greece as the exclusive legatee of the artistic benefits of weather.[95] Lurking in the background of this rather defensive objection to Winckelmann's climatology was the more assertive wish for a model, not yet existent, that would proclaim at last the artistic superiority of the English climate. This wish was fulfilled by James Barry. In the meantime, the originality of another early review, published in Edmund Burke's *Annual Register*, resided precisely in grasping the nettle: it put Winckelmann's chapter on the 'influence of the different climates upon the polite arts' under a microscope for all the valuable contributions it had to make regarding method and analysis, staying, at the same time, clear of nationalist disaffections.

Burke: a rare exception

Burke's choice of this small chapter from Winckelmann's *History* as the centrepiece of his book review, highlighted his perspicacity as a scholar: Burke clearly understood the chapter's strategic significance in the author's overall historical project.[96] Moreover, his review remained for decades the only fair and perceptive representation of Winckelmann's environmentalism in Britain. I will consider briefly

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reputation of 'our fair country women' and 'handsome men' – looms large in these objections to Winckelmann's approach ('Reflections on the Painting', 446).

[93] 'Histoire de l'Art chez les Anciens', *Monthly Review*, 559.

[94] 'Reflections on the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks', *Monthly Review*, 32, 1764, 459.

[95] 'Reflections on the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks', 457.

[96] [Edmund Burke], 'Observations on the influence of the different climates upon the polite arts; taken from A History of the fine arts, by the abbé Winckleman, librarian of the Vatican, and antiquary to the Pope', *Annual Register for the year 1765*, London: R. and J. Dodsley, 1766, 250-52.

two original aspects of Burke's piece and refer the reader to a more detailed exploration elsewhere.[97]

Firstly, Burke delighted in the emphatic way in which Winckelmann extended the study of the artistic influences of climate to encompass the formation of the human senses, the brain and the imagination. He thus underscored that the influence of climate could not be 'confined to the external form' of men, as moral philosophers insisted, celebrating instead the way in which it 'reaches undoubtedly even to the mind', the precious and final resort of idealists. The term 'mind' used by Burke did not correctly render Winckelmann's emphasis on the brain and nerves, but Burke restored the corporeal drift of Winckelmann's text when he stressed that the climate 'particularly' affects 'the faculty of *imagination*, which seems to stand in the nearest connection with our bodily frame'.[98] It is fascinating that although this argument about the 'imagination' had, as noticed above, grave implications for the ability of the 'pensive English' to conceive of images 'susceptible of being thrown upon the canvas',[99] Burke focused on the forward-looking and dynamic aspects of Winckelmann's analysis and not on the national implications of his largely deterministic argument about the English. This, in a masterfully misleading spin, he suppressed as insignificant and largely reversible.[100]

Burke was able to make this crucial move because his interest in Winckelmann's work was firmly placed within the ambitious remit of his own aesthetic program. Winckelmann's views regarding the power of external sensations over mental processes reaffirmed Burke's treatment of primary and secondary sensations (including the imagination) as corporeal realities relatively independent from the control of the understanding.[101] Moreover, Burke seems to have been particularly sensitive to the specific model of causal explanation adopted by Winckelmann, especially the precise balance he struck between physical and cultural variables. Burke's review is, in fact, one of the earliest instances where Winckelmann's frequent disclaimers against the dangers of deterministic applications of climate models to cultural commentary were carefully singled out.

[97] See Aris Sarafianos, 'Hyperborean Meteorologies of Culture: Vital Sensations and Medical Environmentalism in Arbuthnot, Burke and Barry', in Koen Vermeir and Michael Deckard, eds, *The Science of Sensibility: Reading Burke's Philosophical Enquiry*, London: Springer Publications, 2012, 69-91.

[98] Burke understood how Winckelmann tended to depart from an empirical and largely analogical argument popular since antiquity into a medical model of articulating the physical interactions between body, mind and material surroundings; [Burke], 'Observations', 251-52.

[99] [Burke], 'Observations', 252.

[100] [Burke], 'Observations', 252-53.

[101] Winckelmann explicitly promoted the idea that ideal beauty was an involuntary and immediate experience with little relation to rational understanding; Winckelmann, *History*, 191ff. For the medical sensationism of Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry of the Origins of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757/9), see Aris Sarafianos, 'Pain, Labour, and the Sublime: Medical Gymnastics and Burke's Aesthetics', *Representations*, 91, Summer 2005, 58-83 and 'The Contractility of Burke's Sublime and Heterodoxies in Medicine and Art', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 69:1, January 2008, 23-48.

Winckelmann's phrase 'We must not attribute too much to the influence of climate' recurs in Burke's review. More significantly, Burke concluded from Winckelmann's analysis that the influence of climate on art 'may frequently be modified, diversified, and even counteracted by a variety of accidental circumstances', by which Burke referred to what Winckelmann had called 'external circumstances'.[102] In other words, Burke accurately identified in Winckelmann's analysis a model of cultural causality, which was plastic and inclusive rather than reductive and determinist.[103] Better still, he seems to have seized on Winckelmann's climate paradigm as a new and much needed alternative to the models of crude determinism favoured by the likes of Dubos; Burke understood that the latter were more likely to hurt rather than promote the cause of material analysis of art to which he subscribed.[104] In contrast to other British critics who would soon come to monopolize the discussion by exclusive focus on the weakest parts of Winckelmann's positions, Burke was determined to stick with what he deemed as radical in Winckelmann's meteoro-cultural model; namely, the material continuum he established between mental and material processes, physical and cultural causes in the study of art and its history.

After Burke: climate denial and climate migrations

Burke's review appears to have left no lasting legacy in Britain. One has to wait until the Royal Academy lectures of Winckelmann's friend and translator, Henri Fuseli, for another sober evaluation of the multi-factorial usage of climate in art history.[105] In the meantime, two examples of negative reception stand out as emblematic of two correspondingly influential strategies of climate rejection that proved significant for the future of criticism in Britain. The first strategy is well represented by the early review of the *History's* first French edition in the *Monthly Review* and the coverage of the second edition of the book, again in France, by the *Critical Review;* the second strategy is explained in the next section.[106] The two reviews reveal a cycle of disavowal of and fixation with the main object of anxiety, namely the 'purity of…' someone else's 'climate'. This attitude became typical among British reviewers, but it was especially the *Critical Review's* fifteen-pages

[102] [Burke], 'Observations', 250 and 252.
[103] For Winckelmann's mode of historical thinking, especially its continuous oscillation between the opposites of universal a priori and naturalist specificity, see Harloe, *Winckelmann and the Invention of Antiquity*, 115.
[104] George Turnbull's rigorous attacks on climate enthusiasts in his *Treatise on Ancient Painting*, London: A. Millar, 1740, had already revealed the fatal weaknesses in mainstream climate models before the arrival of Burke and Winckelmann.
[105] Ralph N. Wornum, ed., *Lectures on Painting by the Royal Academicians. Barry, Opie, Fuseli*, London: Henry G. Bohn, 1848, 248-49, 469, 498.
[106] See *Histoire*'s reviews in the *Monthly Review* of 1782 and the *Critical Review* of 1783 (Part I and II) earlier quoted. Curiously but not inexplicably, both pieces are the same reviews that, as shown above, produced some perceptive remarks on the originality of Winckelmann's history.

coverage, spread in two instalments, that lent the process of repression a literary depth that places climate under a new, rather extraordinary light.

This long review brings up the issue of climate only twice as a sudden break to the analysis, incurring in both cases quick, impulsive but meaningful denunciations. In the first instance, the reviewer denounced the hypothesis that 'taste is connected with climate' as 'a fanciful system of many authors' that, for him, had rightly been 'long neglected'. He then sided with a more universal and liberal theory of taste as the 'growth of every soil, and cherished by every degree of temperature, if other circumstances contribute to its increase'. Among them, the critic favoured the 'repeated view of monuments' and the 'frequent examination of nature', that is, habit and education.[107] These precise two factors – together with religion, temperament and emulation – had been foremost to the polite tradition of Enlightenment anthropology in Britain and its sociology of taste,[108] and they formed the core of the critics' counter-model to Winckelmann's climate-based historical explanation.

The reviewer also saw surfeit and redundancy where, in fact, Winckelmann had proposed a plural and inclusive model of historical explanation which involved sensitive interdependencies between factors. The case of ancient Greeks is characteristic. Shocked by the way Winckelmann had expatiated 'on every circumstance which relates to their art, without reflecting on the remoteness of the connection', the critic divided Winckelmann's various formative factors into plausible and implausible kinds. Beauty of persons and related contests, public monuments and encouragement of the arts, or religion belonged to the former; among the latter strain, the reviewer ranked 'moral character', 'affection', or love of 'liberty'. Climate enjoyed the privilege of special condemnation as it 'had a much more remote' connection to the history of art in Greece and 'scarcely deserves… the attention of a moment'.[109] In this pick-and-choose approach to historical factoring and interpretation, climate designated a surplus force par excellence; in contrast, custom, religion and civil practices indicated a necessary adjunct to every sane interpretation of art. After completing his analysis of the defects of Egyptian art, making no reference to Winckelmann's account of the climate of Egypt, the commentator had only one rude denial to add in place of conclusion: 'the heat and cold, the moisture or dryness of the climate, had little share in the defects of the Egyptian artists'.[110]

Despite the rejection, heat and cold persisted in a displaced form. Fascinatingly, the critic may have rejected Winckelmann's thermo-aesthetic thinking of taking the temperature of cultures, but temperature remained at the centre of the review's concerns. Only this time Winckelmann's thermometer was snatched away from him to reappear, in the reviewer's hand, as a critical device for judging the literary merits of the art historian's writing style. It was indeed a different kind of

[107] 'Histoire de l' Art de l'Antiquité', 481.
[108] Andrew Hemingway, 'The 'Sociology' of Taste in the Scottish Enlightenment', *Oxford Art Journal*, 12: 2, 1989, 3-35.
[109] 'Histoire de l' Art de l' Antiquite', 138.
[110] 'Histoire de l' Art de l' Antiquite', 137.

warmth the reviewer was seeking, the warmth of Winckelmann's language as his book jumped from chapter to chapter, and from one theme to another. The commentator was, for example, quick to detect the rise in temperature as Winckelmann abandoned the dull subject of Egyptian art to enter the history of the Grecian Art: the cold Winckelmann of the chapter on Egypt now re-emerges 'with all the fire and enthusiasm which a favourite subject can inspire'. But the critic was to be chilled again: in the next paragraph he entered a frigid zone – the 'cloudy' zone of technical theory and philosophical 'jargon', according to another reviewer.[111] Here Winckelmann, the fired up enthusiast of sensible form, resumed talk with the 'coldness of a connoisseur' steeped in 'abstracted ideas'.[112] But all was not lost, it seems: not only did the commentator find a lot that was 'accurate and entertaining' (others thought Winckelmann got 'Platonically tipsy' with this 'metaphysical and solemn… liquor' of theory),[113] but he was quick to celebrate the wonderful restoration in the next section of 'the warm enthusiasm of Winckelmann's language'.[114] The ekphrastic excess, rapture and effusion of this section, that is, the 'delightful extasy' of Winckelmann's comments on the 'state of perpetual youth' and 'unchangeable life' in ancient representations of deities, were the unmistakable markers of rising affective heat upon which the commentator seized right away.

Alas the sensitive thermometer of the reviewer would soon detect another sudden drop of heat. He anxiously detected interfering 'strains, so ambiguous' as to render Winckelmann's 'rapture' a 'merely intellectual' phenomenon and hence much cooler. In Winckelmann's description of the *Medici Venus*, 'his fire' became 'still more equivocal'. But notwithstanding the cooling introduced by such ambiguities, the discerning critic found another significant modulation of temperature: this 'lambent fire that seizes the heart' is, he stressed, still 'far-far distant from the cold correctness of De Piles' and others previous critics.[115] The observation of this ambiguous, trembling fire in Winckelmann's style of writing is remarkable in that it invokes the popular discussion about the flicker and flickering effects (papillotage) in Rococo art theory, already translated in Britain by Hogarth's 'flaming forms'.[116] By doing so, the critic also spotted something crucial about the vitalist physiology of ambiguity in Winckelmann's theory of ideal beauty that I explore elsewhere.[117] Evidently, taking the temperature of the text proved a subtle critical exercise that allowed the reviewer to make some very original distinctions that relate directly to the fluctuating intensities of the text, while, at the same time, drawing from them important critical points.

[111] 'Lettres Familières de M. Winkelmann', *Monthly Review*, 527.
[112] 'Histoire de l' Art de l' Antiquite', 138. The critic, in fact, ventures some interesting suggestions to restore the heat of the text: Winckelmann, he advised, should have stuck to an object-based, inductive mode of analysis of the beauties he found interesting, moving as he had elsewhere done with much originality and facility 'from the sensible form to the abstracted idea' and not vice versa as he did in this section (138-9).
[113] 'Lettres Familières de M. Winkelmann', *Monthly Review*, 527-28.
[114] 'Histoire de l' Art de l' Antiquite', 139.
[115] 'Histoire de l' Art de l' Antiquite', 139.
[116] William Hogarth, *The Analysis of Beauty*, London: J. Reeves, 1753, v-vii.
[117] See footnote 12.

The same oscillation is, according to the review at hand, discernible in Winckelmann's ability to shift away from beauty to 'impress terror with equal success'.[118] The result is a kind of writing that, in another displacement of Winckelmann's environmental theory into his literary style, the critic compares to a landscape or rather a 'pleasing spot' and a 'delightful prospect'. Here the eye and the mind are 'never at rest, on account of the continual recurrence of equal or superior beauty'.[119] Arguably, a better grasp on the vital quietism of Winckelmann's eco-physiological treatment of beauty – and the beauty of the south, to boot – would scarce be found in contemporary criticism.[120] Moreover, the same sensitivity towards the text's heat fluctuations allowed the critic to catch another telling yet still neglected characteristic of Winckelmann's definition of beauty, specifically, its nature as a distinct state of descending intensity. Evidently, the critic experienced the change from 'descriptions, dictated by the warmest enthusiasm', to the section where Winckelmann expatiated on his quietist notion of beauty as a sudden, and indeed 'unsuitable', break in the flow and temperature of the text. The 'air of calmness and repose' specific to Winckelmann's ideal beauty is accurately felt as a temperature dip, a descent from the intense warmth of earlier chapters to a much breezier and cooler climate.[121]

Despite the denunciation, therefore, climate had always been at the forefront of the critic's mind, its importance being barely hidden as it was woven with the essay's scene of writing and its very progression as a piece of literary criticism. In his deferred concerns with heat, the writer found a unique tool for the detection of otherwise undetectable dramas in Winckelmann's writing, of new textures, fissures, errors and important intensity modulations. Taken away violently from Winckelmann's theory of art history to be driven deeply into his literary style, climate helped inaugurate a new realm where criticism could be effectively redeployed. Through all these dramas of hot and cold, Winckelmann may be denounced as a cultural meteorologist but he is spectacularly reinstated not only as modern and highly original historian but also as a remarkable writer and a stylist, almost a dramatist in art history: in line with his romantic persona in Britain, he 'always wrote as he felt; but he did not feel always in the same manner'.[122]

[118] 'Histoire de l' Art de l'Antiquite', 140.
[119] 'Histoire de l' Art de l'Antiquite', 140.
[120] Potts highlighted this 'fleshy' and 'sensuous', 'vital and concrete' element in Winckelmann's approach to the ideal and saw it as 'strikingly at odds with eighteenth-century norms'. Similar reviews by contemporaries give a different measure by which such intensities in Winckelmann's notion of the ideal ought to be understood, placing them considerably lower in the scale of affective heat than the 'passionate intensity' experienced by Potts; Potts, 'Introduction', in Winckelmann, *History*, 36-37.
[121] 'Histoire de l' Art de l'Antiquite', 140.
[122] 'Lettres Familières de M. Winkelmann', *Monthly Review*, 523. In a still better description of Winckelmann's spontaneity, the reviewer underscored how 'everything that came into his head and imagination fell into his pen', 524.

Barry's caricatures of determinism and the rise of cultural history

What then went so terribly wrong and how did Winckelmann become refashioned as the favourite *bête noire* of British art history and criticism? To understand this, let us now turn to a landmark publication on climate in art history, which has nevertheless been very little researched in regard of its main subject, climate. James Barry's *Inquiry into the Real and Imaginary Obstructions to the Acquisition of the Arts in England*, was published in 1775 and remained, for decades to come, an admired source of reference for anybody who participated in this debate.

This book is important for several reasons. Barry's polemics marks a stark point of coarsening of this epistemic discussion: not only did he denounce every form of climate theory, but he also jumbled together approaches very different from, if not antagonistic towards each other. The unholy trinity of 'Abbé du Bos, president Montesquieu, and Abbé Wincleman (sic)' – much reviled for decades – was of Barry's making.[123] Secondly, with Barry, the hostile vocabulary of determinism made its first grand appearance, translating Winckelmann's or Montesquieu's pluralist method into a caricature of hard determinism. Crudely enough, Barry castigated the 'national prejudices' of foreigners who insisted that 'the order of nature and the situation of the climate had pre-determined' the cultural inferiority of the English.[124] Not only had these scholars 'followed one another in assigning limits to the genius of the English',[125] but they declared it 'eternally incapacitated' – 'naturally and constitutionally' so – 'by the clouds that hang over our heads, the nervous system of our bodies, our soil, our food'.[126]

Thirdly, Barry's treatise denied any agency to physical causes in cultural matters, explaining the history of artistic change through a scheme that proclaimed the absolute rule of 'moral causes, as contradistinguished to natural' ones.[127] Indeed, Barry inaugurated a tendency to organize historical analysis through a conceptual dichotomy between the physical and the cultural spheres, which he treated as mutually exclusive. An amplified notion of culture as an independent category of historical analysis thus emerged from Barry's assault on climate, a notion intended to replace his enemies' physical determinism with a new advanced kind of cultural determinism, which is as far removed from moral philosophical understandings of cultural history as it is close to present-day manifestations of it.[128] One of the most striking contributions of Barry's book was the way it treated 'moral causes' as cultural causes, and both as a volatile 'mass of materials' and 'combinations' of

[123] James Barry, *An Inquiry into the Real and Imaginary Obstructions to the Acquisition of the Arts in England*, London: T. Becket, 1775, 4.
[124] Barry, *An Inquiry*, 3.
[125] Barry, *An Inquiry*, 4.
[126] Barry, *An Inquiry*, 5.
[127] Barry, *An Inquiry*, 221.
[128] Barry's 'moral causes' are not George Turnbull's didactic and semi-theological entities that gave his term 'moral' its fundamentally moralizing character, but rather something very close to what is understood today as 'cultural'.

'fortunate' or 'accidental circumstances' in constant modification.[129] The extraordinary variation of the arts over time was the product of the sensitive interdependence, 'concurrence or non-concurrence', of these variables in specific historical situations. It was the 'histories of those countries and of those arts', concerned each time, rather than any other physical factor that should explain the 'different tastes of the several ages of art in the same country'.[130] Barry's book is, therefore, among the first attempts to bring out the enhanced complexity of the cultural realm as the site *par excellence* of resolving the problems of art history.

Despite its various original aspects, this separation of the cultural from the physical realm marks the beginning of a native tendency in cultural history, which, as Hans-Christian Hönes has shown, diverged significantly from its continental variants.[131] The denial of cultural theorists to place nature into history or show history's sway over nature can be safely traced to this moment as its genealogical point of origin. 'External circumstances' in Winckelmann, translated by Burke as 'accidental', are now reframed by Barry as 'fortunate circumstances'. In the process, what Barry did was to extract from these circumstances all those equally 'external', 'particular', and physical aspects that Winckelmann's angle had placed in a continuum with other moral and cultural forces to construct an inclusive view of material history. This was a significant interdisciplinary notion of history, in the building of which Winckelmann's capacious understanding of Neo-Hippocratic medicine and the ancient six non-naturals had played a significant role. Barry dismantled the interdisciplinary chain of external circumstances on which this version of history was based; and the *Critical Review* applauded.[132]

Northern exposures: a patriotic campaign against the South

Barry's violent suppression of climate did not come without its own fissures and displacements. One spectacular contradiction in Barry's book showed again the fundamental volatility of the British rejection of climate theory in art. Towards the end of his book, Barry performed a sudden volt-face by which the painter eventually endorsed the kind of climatic explanation of culture he had set out to disprove. This began in chapter 13, which was eloquently titled 'Temperate climates the peculiar theatre of moral influence'. Here Barry accepted that physical causes indeed prevail in extreme scales of latitude, determining the poor state of culture in the frigid and torrid zones of the earth. More crucially, he also highlighted the fact that as 'we remove from those extremes', climate becomes increasingly less dominant, until 'we approach the mediate or temperate climates' where the cultural

[129] Barry, *An Inquiry*, 162-65 and 221.
[130] Barry, *An Inquiry*, 221-22.
[131] See Hans-Christian Hönes, 'Untranslatable: Gottfried Kinkel, 'Kulturgeschichte', and British Art Historiography', *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 84.2, 2021, 248-68, and 'Seductive Foreignness. Gottfried Kinkel at UCL', in Maria Teresa Costa and Hans Christian Hönes, eds, *Migrating Histories of Art. Self-Translations of a Discipline*. Berlin/Boston: de Gruyter, 2019, 149-64; 218-22.
[132] See footnote 27.

causes are set in full motion at the expense of the physical ones. In other words, the priority of culture over climate was climate-related. That his notion of the cultural at its most powerful seems to be the corollary of the environment at its most temperate is a paradox that Barry chose not to see.

Or perhaps it was not a paradox after all, but rather a historically specific manoeuvre fully consistent with highest aims. Barry's project was not so much to deny wholesale the existence of climatic maps of art but rather to redraw them to the benefit of English painters. Indeed, in chapter 20, the concluding chapter of the book, Barry included a lengthy praise to the national climate, England now featuring as the model of a new temperate climate, which if 'fairly examined it would be found to have as few natural disadvantages as any under heaven; even fewer than Italy itself'.[133] In comparison to England, even Italy, once the undisputed cradle of mildness and moderation, now appeared excessively soft and feeble in the summer, the site of 'intense heats' and a sirocco wind which only produces 'lassitude, sleep and idleness'.[134] But Italy's winters were also disproportionately cold, the Apennines giving places like Bologna or Parma a weather profile 'far north of our islands' and far less tolerable than 'our winter, moderated by the warm sea air'.[135] Barry's climatology thrust the rising power of the North – England – from the margins to the centre of meteoro-cultural maps: 'there is then no country in which labour of mind or body is less interrupted… by the extremes of heat and cold' than England and no better place for the cultivation of the arts, too.[136]

Before this redrawing of art's geographies could succeed, the aesthetic sensorium upon which meteoro-cultural models were based ought to be re-engineered as well. To put it differently, this new centre had nothing to do with the quietist parameters of Winckelmann's physiology of relaxation and sensory moderation earlier explained. Rather, England became the perfect location for art because it offered a distinct kind of bracing climate, 'formed for action'.[137] Behind Barry's promotion of English climate is the peculiar yet very modern idea that superior taste is dependent on 'vigorous, continued and successional exertions of mental and bodily labour'.[138] Such extreme economies of sensation and the shift away from the classical meteorology of culture related to them were closely aligned with the rise of Britain as the powerhouse of industrial labour and commercial competition as well as with the new energy politics of (hyper-)stimulation characteristic of modernity.

Barry was the first to argue that the English climate could be ideal for the ultra-sensitive sphere of art. This disturbed long-standing arrangements in an area such as polite taste which, for the English upper crust, remained the ultimate sphere

[133] Barry, *An Inquiry*, 225.
[134] Barry, *An Inquiry*, 225.
[135] Barry, *An Inquiry*, 226.
[136] Barry, *An Inquiry*, 226-27.
[137] Barry, *An Inquiry*, 226.
[138] Barry, *An Inquiry*, 227. As I have elsewhere shown, Barry picked up this powerful new ideal of artistic economy from Burke's physiology of labor and pain as explicated in his *Philosophical Enquiry* of the sublime. See Sarafianos, 'Hyperborean Meteorologies'.

of its self-affirmation, a development further aggravated by Barry's promotion of English climate at the expense of Italy and the south. His negative representations of Italy run counter to the cosmopolitan investments of the English upper class in the Grand Tour, complicating further the kinds of ambivalences that Richard Wrigley has unearthed.[139] Barry's own fraught Italian experience and his exposure to this colossal encounter of different nations and classes seems to have contributed to his distortions of Winckelmann's work. In this cosmopolitan environment, national urgencies erupted in unexpected ways; in Barry's case, such urgencies were fuelled by class and profession.

Climate wars: nation, market and profession

The fact that Barry's *Inquiry* was conceived during his Italian Grand Tour was not a coincidence at all. In his correspondence from Italy with his patrons, the Burkes, Barry gave ample hints that his decision to launch on his polemical book was part of a wish to act as a guardian of national honour against the insults of foreigners. The following rant is one among many similar outbursts in his many letters from Italy to the Burkes, in which he lashed out against anti-English usages of climate by foreigners: 'I am persuaded that the writings of Du Bos, Winkleman (sic), and others, have given the world such an unfavourable idea of our people; nothing can save us from the imputation of barbarians, but our producing a set of [noble] artists…'. 'This is only', Barry concluded, 'what can bring the nation into notice with foreigners'.[140]

The press reception of Barry's book magnified the distinctly nationalist character of this debate.[141] All three major publications of the time highlighted with various degrees of venom against foreigners the patriotic mission that Barry's book accomplished. The *London Review* underlined the vital role of Barry's inquiry in combating popular misrepresentations of Britain, which had proved 'so injurious to our country' and its 'reputation' abroad. Behind such negative perceptions were, of course, 'mostly foreigners' with vested interests in the 'natural depression of English genius'.[142] The nationalist tone reached its climax in the *Monthly Review* which damned 'the ignorant and impertinent observations of foreigners',[143] viewing Barry, along with the *Critical Review*, as a true guardian of 'national honour', who

[139] Richard Wrigley, *Roman Fever: Influence, Infection and the Image of Rome*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013, 47-52, 57-58 and 169-214.
[140] Letter from Barry to Burke [February 1770], *The Works of James Barry, Esq., Historical Painter*, vol. 1. London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1809, 177.
[141] For critical essays in the press on Barry's book, see 'Art. VIII. An Inquiry into the Real and Imaginary Obstructions…', *London Review of English and Foreign Literature*, 1, January 1775, 47-49; 'Art. III. An Inquiry into the Real and Imaginary Obstructions…', *Monthly Review or Literary Journal*, 52, April 1775, 300-307 and 'Art. II. An Inquiry into the Real and Imaginary Obstructions…', *Critical Review: or Annals of Literature*, 39, February 1775, 91-96.
[142] 'Art. VIII. An Inquiry into the Real and Imaginary Obstructions…', 47.
[143] 'Art. III. An Inquiry into the Real and Imaginary Obstructions…', 307.

'vindicated the genius of the British nation for the polite arts' against 'prejudiced foreign writers'.[144]

In this campaign against the injustices of foreigners, it is difficult to extract the nationalist signal from the noise induced by other mainly professional aspirations. Taking sides in the ongoing battle for cultural capital between artists and connoisseurs – and Winckelmann was considered in this country as the archetypal connoisseur – the press accepted Barry's self-serving argument that an artist was the best qualified person to write about art and its history.[145] It seems Barry's project of professional aggrandizement for artists succeeded: riding the wave of national excitement proved a vital force for the increase of cultural caché among artists; climate, as it happened, offered the perfect vehicle for this ride.

Finally, the press coverage of Barry's book reaffirms that, apart from the vile foreigners, there was also another set of local agents – enemies within – through which climate stereotypes gained traction in Britain. Barry had already written to the Burkes in 1767 that the climatic doctrines of Winckelmann and others with which 'we have been harassed eternally about the *no* genius of the ultra-montanes for the fine arts' was not something he had not heard before. In fact, he assured his friends, 'I first heard something of this doctrine in England'. At the time, Barry had thought that such a doctrine could 'only come from a baffled artist, who might intend it as an apology for his own bad success'.[146] He would later extend his notion to include a far broader conjuration of English climate adversaries than this limited group of colleagues.

Barry would thus forge ample connections between the importation of foreign art in Britain and the denigration of national art; or worse, between 'our picture dealers' and art patrons, that is, 'men of rank and fortune', 'travelling gentlemen' and the 'rich Inglesi' in Italy.[147] Likewise, press reviewers of Barry's book complained that climate stereotypes had, in fact, 'infected' British 'public opinion on matters of science and the arts' to, in the words of one critic, 'a degree of delirium'.[148] The same writer especially singled out 'the rage of speculation among the modern philosophizing critics' in England and other 'subaltern dealers in French sophistry and refinement'.[149] The financial metaphors used here are significant, since a little further in the same review the critic stressed the negative role of the English art market in the progress of the country's art. Repeating Barry's own assault on the art market, the same commentator drew attention to all those un-patriotic picture dealers and merchants who 'emptied into this country' all the 'refuse and filth of

[144] 'Art. II. An Inquiry into the Real and Imaginary Obstructions…', 96.
[145] 'Art. II. An Inquiry into the Real and Imaginary Obstructions…', 96.
[146] 'Mr. Barry to the Burkes', 13 February 1767 in *Works of James Barry*, 77-82, especially, 81.
[147] Barry, *An Inquiry into the Real and Imaginary*, 75. The cosmopolitan nature of this network was underlined by Barry's repetitive use of the phrase 'artful men, at home and abroad' to describe it; see also 74.
[148] 'Art. III. An Inquiry into the Real and Imaginary Obstructions…', 302.
[149] 'Art. III. An Inquiry into the Real and Imaginary Obstructions…', 301-02.

Europe'.[150] It seems there is an implicit recognition of a close connection between the use of climate to deny the English 'the bare possibility of producing a painter' and the undertakings of a rampant marketplace in England, bent on supplying the supposed deficiency with aggressive importations of pictures from Europe.[151] William Hogarth had already spotted some of the ruling actors and vested interests in the art market who stood to gain from climate stereotypes. A coalition of gentry, early connoisseurs and 'picture-jobbers from abroad' were, indeed,

> ...always ready to raise a great cry in the prints, whenever they think their craft is in danger; and indeed it is in their own interest to depreciate every English work as hurtful to their trade of continually importing ship loads of dead Christs, Holy Families etc.[152]

Climate offered a uniquely effective instrument for the reinforcement of this vicious circle of interest and depreciation.

Three decades later, the same climate debates were restaged again in the inflamed nationalism of the Napoleonic wars. Worse still, the Royal Academy, as the self-professed cradle of 'a national school of art' took over the torch from mavericks like Barry or Hogarth.[153] In 1809, the painter and Royal Academician John Opie returned to the same connections in a lecture which attacked 'all those writers who consider the hyperborean fogs of England as completely inimical and impervious to taste', thus dealing a blow to 'national honour'.[154] The nationalist urgency was very present again. So was the corrosive marketplace, the same coalition of 'ignorant connoisseurs', patrons of art, and 'interested dealers', whose 'business' is to obstruct 'every national attempt at excellence' in the arts. Opie hoped, however, that 'their property and markets will inevitably be lost', when the public stops falling prey to easy stereotypes, including, one must assume, climate reductivism.[155] Nation and the art profession seem to stand firm on one side of this battle, the workings of the art market and its fictive climates, on the other: fictions playing here their all-too-familiar viral role in influencing perceptions.

[150] 'Art. III. An Inquiry into the Real and Imaginary Obstructions…', 305. See also Barry, *An Inquiry into the Real and Imaginary*, 77-78; see also 71-72 and 73-78.
[151] Since Jonathan Richardson and his own objections to the use of climate, the contorted workings of the art market in England had been a chronic concern for indigenous artists; Carol Gibson-Wood, *Jonathan Richardson: Art Theorist of the Enlightenment*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000, 9-20, 144-49, 230-33.
[152] The extract comes from a letter Hogarth published in the *London Magazine* of 1737 under the name of 'Britophil'; see *Hogarth Illustrated from his own Manuscripts; compiled and arranged from the originals by John Ireland*, vol. I, London: Boydell and Co., 1812, 49-53, especially, 51.
[153] See, for a relatively recent example, Matthew Craske, 'Reviving the 'School of Phidias': the Invention of a National 'School of Sculpture' in Britain (1780-1830)' *Visual Culture in Britain* 7: 2, Spring 2006, 25-45.
[154] John Opie, *Lectures on Painting Delivered at the Royal Academy of Arts*, London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, 1809, 91-92.
[155] Opie, *Lectures on Painting*, 95.

A few years earlier, in 1806, the Royal Academician Prince Hoare and his own inquiry into the state of the arts in England had already given the debate the aggravated nationalist tone proper to the period's imperial conflicts.[156] Here Hoare devoted a whole chapter to the revision of what he bitterly described as a 'theme of triumph in the mouths of other nations',[157] namely the theme that denies 'to the climate of England the bare possibility of the birth of a painter'.[158] Adopting Barry's determinist caricature of Winckelmann, Hoare specifically targeted the art historian's so-called 'physical criticism'.[159] Moreover, Hoare was determined to convince that such stereotypes regarding 'organic perfectibility' for the arts 'in our cloud-encompassed island' were as wrong as similar pronouncements on the supposed inferiority of the 'national warlike energies'.[160] Others also capitalized on the same repertoire, establishing virulent yet telling continuities between art and war.[161] Throughout this period, artists were busy tying up their professional advancement to the same patriotic project of prevailing over rivals 'in art as in arms'.[162] The war acted as a catalyst on many fronts and war language became endemic in the whole debate about the 'English climate' and 'the arts in England', but this is not the place to open this significant chapter of climate history in art.

It was in this precise context, where national, imperial, professional, and cultural exigencies intersected, that the climate debates reviewed here burst out. Taking sides in this conflict was not an internal matter of theory or academic consensus but rather a matter of competing forces and interests that split and folded the field in a plethora of disparate and unpredictable ways. This is the constellation of extreme conditions in which Winckelmann's meteoro-cultural art history was caught up. Winckelmann's British detractors could never forgive him the attacks on Northern weather until, at least, a new meteoro-cultural model might anchor the cultural and imperial aspirations of the newly enterprising and industrial nation. Barry was the first to step up to the plate and his imaginary Winckelmann was the dark force that made this meteoro-cultural shift to the North possible. By the 1840s, the new climate model was consolidated, complete with invocations to the superior vitality and perpetual spur of English weather.[163]

[156] For Prince Hoare, see *An Inquiry into the Requisite Cultivation and Present State of the Arts of Design in England,* London: Richard Phillips, 1806, 190-210.
[157] Hoare, *An Inquiry*, 155.
[158] Hoare, *An Inquiry*, 190.
[159] Hoare, *An Inquiry*, 156.
[160] Hoare, *An Inquiry*, 205.
[161] See, for example, 'Prospectus', *The Reflector*, 1:1, 1810, iii-ix, especially, vii-viii.
[162] For the broad diffusion of similar equivalences between art and war and their decisive role in regulating all kinds of artistic practices, projects and languages in this period, see the analysis of a high-profile case study, the British reception of the Parthenon Sculptures during this period of fierce cultural competition between France and Britain, in Aris Sarafianos, 'Compassion and Disgust, Rescue and Destruction: The Mutilated Parthenon Sculptures and their British Asylum, circa 1816', in Efi Kyprianidou, ed., *The Art of Compassion*, Athens: Nissos Publications, 2019, 135-53, especially 136-37.
[163] The free and lucid Greek sky would not, nevertheless, go away so easily, mutating in a wide variety of readjustments deserving their own separate analysis.

By the second part of the nineteenth century, climate would have 'killed' its most fervent proponent in other less malign but no less eloquent ways. Reviewing the conditions of Winckelmann's assassination by Francesco Arcangeli, commentators had long mourned and regretted the tragic and luckless circumstances that led to his 'untimely death' in Trieste; if only he hadn't decided so insanely to interrupt his journey to the North, yielding to his 'violent impulse' to return to Italy.[164] Eighteenth-century reviewers described Winckelmann's fright of mountain heights – the Alps – and his disgust for vernacular architecture as the main causes for the 'dark vapours' (the depression) that 'clouded his mind' and forced him to cut his journey short. Interestingly, by the end of the nineteenth century, the circumstances that led to his death were attributed to another cause, namely the real clouds of Germany that had 'clouded his mind'.[165] As a writer for the *Times* and an admiring critic of Winckelmann's work explained: 'No sooner had he reached German soil than Winckelmann wished to return. German weather and German architecture filled with horror one accustomed to Italian skies and classic temples'.[166]

In contrast to his British detractors, the 'Father of Art History' was indeed 'no patriot in the ordinary sense', the *Times* concluded.[167] Nor was he an ordinary thinker in art history, as his climate proclivities proved. His susceptibility to climate, in particular his cosmopolitan and patrician preferment of the climate of the south, followed him to the end. In the eyes of friends and foes alike, he died by climate just as he had lived by it.

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[164] For a fully dramatized account of Winckelmann's mental and 'corporeal derangement' that led to his return to Italy, see 'Histoire de l'Art de l'Antiquité, &c.', 379-80.
[165] 'Histoire de l' Art de l' Antiquité', 378.
[166] 'Winckelmann', *The Times*, 8 June 1881, 5.
[167] 'Winckelmann', 5.