

Understanding a Changing Approach to Gender in Studies on Roman Baths

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Résumé :

Cet article examine comment des questions de recherche concernant le genre ont été incluses dans des études sur les bains grecs et romains. Et en outre, comment l'implication de ces questions a-t-elle influencé la perception des bains antiques ? Les premières études « antiquaires » prêtaient peu d'attention aux baigneurs, hommes ou femmes, se focalisant d'abord sur l'architecture, la technologie et la décoration de ces édifices. C'est seulement à partir de la seconde moitié du 20^e siècle, poussés par des changements épistémologiques dans le domaine des sciences humaines, que les spécialistes ont commencé à inclure les femmes dans leurs discours. Trois questions ont souvent été réitérées depuis : les femmes allaient-elles aux bains publics ? Les femmes se baignaient-elles avec les hommes ? Et que portaient-elles dans les bains ? Dans la dernière décennie du siècle dernier et la première du nouveau, les études sur les bains antiques commencent progressivement à inclure des questions sur d'autres groupes de genre. Cependant, ces nouveaux discours ne sont que lentement intégrés dans les reconstructions virtuelles, qui semblent toujours très influencées par les traditionnels dessins architecturaux.

Mots-clés : bains romains et grecs, études des bains, genre

Abstract :

This article examines how research on gender was included in the studies on Greek and Roman baths. Furthermore, how the engagement with gender-related questions subsequently influenced the perception of ancient baths. Early 'antiquarian' studies paid little attention to the bathers in general, focusing more on architecture, technology and decoration. It was only during the second half of the 20th century, fuelled by epistemological shifts in the humanities in general that scholars started paying attention to women at the baths. Three questions have returned ever since: did women go to public baths; did they bathe with men and what did they wear? In the last decade of the last century and the first decade of the new century, studies on antique baths gradually started to include the question of other gender categories. New virtual reconstructions, however, are slow to integrate these new narratives and still seem heavily influenced by the traditional architectural drawings.

Keywords : Roman and Greek baths, bath studies, gender

1. Introduction

Bathing in a communal bathhouse with family or friends, whether in a public bath or in a private one at home, was a quintessential part of everyday life in the Roman world. More than just washing the body, it was above all a social activity.¹ The evolution of western bathing habits in the Early Modern and Modern Times, characterized by a growing individualisation of bodily hygiene and prudishness towards nakedness, alienated the West from the communal bathing practices of their Roman ancestors.² By the time of the first historical and archaeological studies into Roman bathing, the idea of bathing together naked or half-naked, especially when men and women bathed together, was perceived as something of debauchery, even predicting the fall of the Roman Empire.³ This article will investigate how the approach of gender (or the lack thereof) in modern research on Roman baths influenced our perception of Roman bathing habits, how different research traditions in America, the U.K. and the European continent had different approaches and incorporated new ideas at a different pace and how new trends in archaeology are now slowly changing this image⁴.

2. Early Research in the Late 19th and Early 20th Century

The first studies on Roman bathhouses focussed on their architecture and, to a lesser degree, their technology. Little attention was paid to the actual bathers. Ernst Pfromm was the first to categorize Roman baths according to the succession of their rooms. However, the users of the baths do not feature in his discussion.⁵ Johannes Zellinger studied baths and bathing habits in the early Christian community.⁶ He included a chapter on balnea mixta, or mixed bathing of men and women, based on the literary evidence. He concluded that the early Church was, at least in some cases, rather tolerant towards bathing.⁷ In his very influential 300+ pages- book on the Kaiserthermen in Trier, Daniel Krencker only spends two and a half pages on 'life in the baths'.⁸ This minimal account comes down to translations of fragments of Lucian and Seneca, without investigating other evidence.⁹ However, Krencker does include human figures in his reconstruction drawings of several baths. These figures are often small, almost asexual silhouettes that seem to serve more as scale bars to give a sense of the buildings' volumes (Figure 1). Similar figures can be seen in the impressive reconstruction by Edmond Paulin of the Baths of Caracalla in Rome (1890), in which the men are depicted nude, wearing a loin cloth or a toga, while the few women in the scene are depicted as by-standing respectable matronae in full dress (Figure 2).¹⁰

The silhouette-like figures in the architectural reconstruction drawings and the absence of the actual bathers in most of these early scientific publications on Roman baths stand in sharp contrast to the depiction of Roman baths in artworks of the same period. Sir Lawrence Alma Tadema (1836-1912) was inspired by classical antiquity and painted several scenes set in Roman baths, including *A Bath (An antique Custom)* (1876), *Balneatrix* (1876), *Strigils and Sponges* (1879), *In the Tepidarium* (1881), *The Apodyterium* (1886), *The Frigidarium* (1890), *The Bath of Caracalla* (1899) and perhaps most famously *A favourite custom* (1909) (Figure 3). Similarly, the nude female figure is obviously central to *In the tepidarium* (1913) by John William Godward. The figures in the paintings are almost exclusively women, wearing transparent tunics or nothing at all. The bathhouses, obviously inspired by the Pompeian examples but pictured with a fair amount of artistic liberty, evoked an erotic environment to which the spectators were invited as voyeurs. This setting is reminiscent of the Orientalising paintings depicting Turkish baths by Ingres (e.g. *Le bain turc*, 1862) (Figure 4) or Gérôme (e.g. *Le bain*, 1885), revealing a western fascination for what went on in hammams and harems.¹¹ The bathhouse itself or the act of bathing is hardly visible in most of these works. In art, women were very much present in the setting of (public) baths, yet with a distinct erotic and voyeuristic undertone.

3. Middle of the 20th Century

By the middle of the last century, bath studies slowly detached from an all-architectural approach. Whereas books such as Guglielmo De Angelis d'Ossat's *Tecnica costruttiva e impianti delle terme* (1943) or Fritz Kretschmer's influential article *Hypokausten* (1953) still focussed on the architectural and technological evolution of Roman baths, scholars published more encompassing studies on baths at the start of the 1960s.¹² The doctoral dissertation by Heinrich Meusel (1960) about the administration and financing of Roman public baths during the High Empire, included a chapter about bath personnel and mixed bathing.¹³ The magnum opus by René Ginouvès on Greek baths (*Balaneutikè*, 1962) remains a seminal work today and included a section on women in public baths.¹⁴ In this passage, Ginouvès formulated three central questions that often reappear in bath studies addressing women: did women visit public baths? Did women bathe together with men? Did women bathe naked?¹⁵ Ginouvès approached these questions by combining literary, epigraphic, papyrological, archaeological and art historical data and found evidence for separate male and female wings in Greek-Hellenistic baths. He also dedicated subchapters on women in private baths, baths and childbirth, baths and wedding ceremonies and statues of female divinities bathing.¹⁶ During the 1950s and especially the 1960s, many new bathhouses around the Mediterranean were excavated, and some important baths were studied in detail for the first time. The publication of the architectural study of the Stabian Baths in Pompeii by Hans Eschebach in 1979 made a profound impact on Roman bath studies.¹⁷ This bathhouse evolved from a Greek-style bath with separate bathtubs into a Roman-style bath with communal pools and a gradation of heated rooms.¹⁸ Even if the Stabian Baths had a male and a female wing, the publication did not expand on gender-related aspects of the Roman bathing habits. The book did ignite a vivid debate among scholars in the decades to come, especially regarding the influence of Greek-style baths on their Roman successors and the role of Campania as a forerunner in bath architecture.¹⁹

4. The Last Decades of the 20th Century

The 1980s saw an impressive rise in the number of studies devoted entirely to Roman baths. Several

seminal works still referred to today were written in this decade. The much-quoted *Die Römische Thermen und das antike Badewesen* (1983) by Erika Brödner does not treat the question of gender in any detail, but makes the important remark that we must at least consider the difference between different groups of women.²⁰ Werner Heinz also combined archaeological and written evidence to approach Roman bathing as a complex social phenomenon, involving the evidence of women at the baths in several passages throughout his book.²¹ He devotes special attention to the question of mixed bathing, and considers the evidence of children, slaves and bath personnel.²² Still in the same year, Elke Merten devoted an entire chapter of her monograph *Bäder und Badegepflogenheiten in der Darstellung der Historia Augusta* to the question of *balnea mixta*.²³ Starting from Ginouvès' observations on separated male and female bathing in the Greek-Hellenistic period, Merten relies mainly on written sources to propose a widespread continuation of this tradition during the Roman period, even if in some places in time and space, mixed bathing did undoubtedly occur. Furthermore, just as did Ginouvès, she also addresses the question of possible bathing apparel.²⁴ Her focus on the late antique work *Historia Augusta* (written probably in the 4th century AD) forced her to examine the impact of Christianity on bathing, in particular regarding nude bathing and the presence of women at the baths. This topic is also addressed by Albrecht Berger in his book on Byzantine baths, relying mainly on written evidence and only occasionally involving archaeological remains.²⁵ He also considers the written evidence for prostitutes, actresses and ascetics at the baths.²⁶ By the end of the decade, the exhibition catalogue *Terme romane e vita quotidiana* (1987), edited by Marinella Pasquinucci, presented different aspects of Roman baths in several short chapters.²⁷ The illustrations of life inside the baths, drawn by Alberto Fremura, have often been reproduced. They show both men and women occupied while bathing, playing sports or having a massage (Figure 5). In contrast to the inanimate silhouettes in the architectural drawings of baths, the figures drawn by the artist Fremura are vivid characters that use the baths, changing the perception of Roman baths from simple majestic buildings to dazzling social hubs for both men and women.

During the 1990s, the robust architectural-technological approach and the more holistic approach aimed at reconstructing the social history of bathing continued to co-exist. The conference proceedings of a round table held at the *École française de Rome* in 1988 were still clearly focussed on baths as a building type.²⁸ The conference on Roman baths held in Bath (England) in 1992, however, did include several contributions focussing on the social aspect of baths and bathing.²⁹ In her seminal book *Thermae et balnea* (1990) Inge Nielsen deals with aspects of gender throughout the different chapters, especially in the chapter titled 'The bathing institution'. However, Nielsen did not dedicate a separate (sub) chapter on the topic.³⁰ Similarly, in *Baths and Bathing in Classical Antiquity* (1992) architect Fikret Yegül addresses the question of gender in a general chapter about the social aspect of bathing.³¹ In contrast to this more architectural study, Marga Weber wrote a cultural history about classical bathing habits, reserving the entire chapter XII to 'Die Frau im Bad'.³² The titles of the subchapters make clear how women were considered 'secondary' customers in antiquity: unequal entrance fees (XII.1), unequal room sizes (XII.2), different opening hours for men and women (XII.3) and judgements on women in public baths in ancient literature (XII.4).³³ Such an explicit attention to how women in classical antiquity must have experienced a visit to the baths and how they actually lived classical bathing habits, had hitherto been absent in general works on Roman baths and bathing habits. The text-oriented books by Stephan Busch and Garrett G. Fagan at the end of the '90s include separate (sub) chapters on differences in male and female baths and bathing habits, as well as paragraphs on sex at the baths and often neglected groups such as enslaved peoples, bathing staff or prostitutes.³⁴

However, several studies on women in baths were published in the same decade. In 1992, Roy Bowen Ward examined the archaeological and literary evidence of women in Roman bathhouses, from the Republic to Late Antiquity.³⁵ In the same year, Béatrice Meyer published an article about women in public baths in Greek, Roman and Byzantine Egypt, scrutinizing the evidence from papyri.³⁶ C. Sebastian Sommer searched for the possible reason why women paid more than men to make use of the baths, coming to the conclusion that, when they bathed in the morning hours, they may have bathed in clearer and warmer pools than the men who came in during the afternoon.³⁷ The higher price may actually have ensured a better bathing experience.³⁸ Several authors also focussed on the impact of Christianity on bath visits of women.³⁹ Georg Schöllgen remarked how advice to bathe with modesty and warnings against mixed bathing were already voiced by pre-Christian authors.⁴⁰ The position of the local church was often very nuanced.⁴¹ This is also what Eva Synek concluded in her paper on Christian bathing culture, pointing to the importance of social status rather than gender when dealing with ancient nudity.⁴² Michael Satlow looked at the cultural construction of both male and female nudity in late antique Judaism, also paying attention to religious rules concerning bathing.⁴³ The many references to prostitutes and brothels in late antique literature about the Holy Land were studied by Claudine Dauphin.⁴⁴ Public bathhouses were often mentioned as a setting for carnal lust and sin. The written sources obviously did not give a voice to these women, but the archaeological evidence of prostitution in baths, including the gruesome discovery of skeletal remains of newborns in the sewage channel of a bath in Ashqelon, provides some insight into their living conditions.⁴⁵ Luciana Jacobelli published in the same year the erotic frescos that were found in the dressing room (apodyterium) of the Suburban Baths in Pompeii and that have sometimes been linked to prostitution in this complex.⁴⁶ Jacobelli also discusses the role of prostitution and of bathhouses in the social life of Romans.⁴⁷ John Clarke saw these erotic paintings more as humorous art forms to make the bathers laugh.⁴⁸

5. The Early Decades of the 21st Century

With such a high number of general works on Roman baths published in the 1990s, the last two decades saw more publications focussing on specific aspects of baths, such as the technology or the decoration, or on baths in specific regions or provinces of the Empire.⁴⁹ Michel Blonski made an essential contribution to the social impact of bathing by looking at the act of washing in general, with a special focus on the impact of a neat appearance on self-representation of different gender groups.⁵⁰ Fikret Yegül published a reworked version of this 1992 monograph in 2010, in which he paid more attention to the cultural history of bathing.⁵¹ He also included a subchapter on 'Sex, nudity, men and women'.⁵² Women, slaves and the larger household are also examined in Nathalie de Haan's book on Roman private baths (2010), with a separate subchapter on mixed bathing.⁵³ The presence of women, *balnea mixta*, and the impact of Christianity were also examined in monographs on late antique baths and bathing habits. Michal Zytka, mainly relying on written sources, dedicated subchapters to nudity and sexual attitudes, as well as on mixed bathing.⁵⁴ Sadi Maréchal investigated both the written and archaeological evidence of women in late antique baths.⁵⁵ It was also in the first decade of the 21st century that Asa Eger published a number of papers on queer space in Roman bathhouses, taking the debate beyond the presence of women in baths and having a look at other gender groups.⁵⁶ He argues that the erotic imagery in the bathhouse (mosaics, wall paintings, statues, oil lamps) was not merely apotropaic, as has often been argued, but did have an arousing and eroticizing effect, perhaps as a reminder of what behaviour was allowed inside a specific bathhouse.⁵⁷ Recently Ville Hakanen examined the decoration in the male dressing room in the Forum Baths in Pompeii, arguing that the homoerotic themes (statues

and stuccos of nude male figures) reminded the bathers of their own physicality and gender, and of the norms thereof.⁵⁸

The specific attention to gender in Roman baths can also be detected in journal articles and conference contributions. Specific conferences on baths had often been focussed on the bath as a building, acting in many places as an ideal forum for presenting newly excavated baths to colleagues.⁵⁹ By the end of the 2000s, conferences included presentations on social and cultural aspects of bathing. Furthermore, there was a positive evolution of widening the chronological scope of bath studies, placing Roman-style baths in the long tradition of Mediterranean bathing habits, which also includes Ancient Near Eastern, Greek-Hellenistic and Medieval and Islamic bathing habits.⁶⁰ In the conference proceedings of the symposium by the Frontinus Gesellschaft in Aachen in 2009, Monika Trümper published an article about gender-differentiation in Greek baths, revisiting the evidence presented by Ginouvès half a century earlier.⁶¹ In the edited volume on Greek baths published in 2013, Adrian Stähli re-examined the depiction of bathing women on Greek vases.⁶² He proposed that certain scenes were not at all taken from daily life, but merely displayed female attractiveness, in the voyeuristic interest of men.⁶³ Molly Pasco-Pranger challenged the modern idea of the respectable matrona in the baths, as depicted by Paulin, by asserting that these elite women did in fact attract attention to themselves by bathing nude.⁶⁴

In the last decade of research, some scholars have incorporated archaeological material into their investigations of gender visibility in Roman baths. Alissa Whitmore looked at artefact assemblages from primary contexts in Roman baths (i.e. during their phase of use).⁶⁵ In well-documented sites with sealed contexts that can be linked to the bath phase (e.g. sewers), she found evidence of gender segregation inside the baths.⁶⁶ In addition to finds such as hairpins, beads, pendants, earrings and other objects linked to female attire, the presence of loom weights, needles and spindle whorls seems to suggest that in some baths, cloth working may have been carried out by women in some of the rooms.⁶⁷ New promising applications of hard sciences to gender-related questions have also been published in the proceedings of the Balnéorient conference in Damascus in 2009. The chemical analysis of the residue in ceramics and glass bottles can reveal evidence of ointments and make-up.⁶⁸ This archaeological evidence could potentially confirm the presence of women in a specific bathhouse, even if we should be well aware that such cosmetic products were certainly also used by men. Yet some of these products seem to have been primarily used by women (known through ancient literature and for example burial contexts).

The depiction of baths also entered the digital age. In addition to the high-quality reconstruction drawings that are still being made, computer-animated virtual reconstructions are created to present to the general public.⁶⁹ Benefitting from the rapid evolution of the gaming industry, several animated, even interactive, reconstructions of baths have been produced. However, it is remarkable that most of these virtual reconstructions are still heavily influenced by traditional architectural drawings. In some cases, the bathers are still absent or are merely (clothed) inanimate silhouettes.⁷⁰ The evidence of very bustling, sometimes dirty, and messy buildings filled with nude bathers, children, enslaved people, personnel, vendors of all kinds, and sometimes even prostitutes, presented by the scientific literature has not found its way yet to the virtual reconstructions. The scientific seriousness, the target audience (all ages) and the media through which these virtual reconstructions are distributed (including well-known video platforms) are important incentives to opt for such neat evocations. Unsurprisingly, television productions, novels or comic books had fewer problems with these realities.⁷¹

6. Gender in Context: The Evolution of Scientific Thought

The evolution of how gender-related questions slowly permeated bath studies cannot be detached from the general evolution of historical and archaeological theory. Furthermore, this evolution of scientific agendas must be connected to broader societal transformations over the past century. For example, the rise of the feminist movement profoundly impacted the human sciences. An overview of gender in classical studies would lead us too far in the context of this article and has been presented in specialized publications.⁷² Below, the different focuses of bath studies that have been discussed above will be linked to more general trends in classical studies.

As the concept of gender refers to social conventions, roles, activities or behaviours that a particular culture links to biological sex class, gender studies include the study of men, women and any other gender construct.⁷³ But early 20th-century studies on Roman buildings such as baths, paid little attention to the people that used them, whether these were male or female. The exclusively (white) male scholars focussed on understanding the architecture and the technology that made these impressive buildings made by their (white) male forefathers possible. This 'antiquarian' approach of Antiquity very much relied on written sources that were considered objective snapshots of historical reality.⁷⁴ It was from the 1960s onwards that the so-called second-wave feminism started to affect the historical and archaeological disciplines, asking basic questions such as the role of women in ancient societies.⁷⁵ Not surprisingly, this is also the time when we see the first specific (sub) chapters on women appearing in bath studies, such as in Ginouvès' *Balaneutikè*. The fact that female scholars such as Erika Brödner, a student of Daniel Krencker, recently stepped forward as an eminent bath expert also points to changes in the academic world. During the 1960s and 1970s, the so-called processual archaeology or 'new archaeology', inspired by anthropological theory, broke with the 'antiquarian' approach of the past. Archaeology was no longer considered as a subdiscipline of history. It was deemed a science that should focus not on reconstructing snapshots of the past but on the fluid process that was culture.⁷⁶ By the 1980s, feminist movements had confronted the human sciences with its androcentric approach and was formulating new research questions about the participation of women and 'others' in ancient societies.⁷⁷ At the same time and partially inspired by feminist movements, processual archaeology was also criticized for paying too little attention to human agency, i.e. the importance of the individual decisions of the people that made and used objects and constructed societies. The post-processual archaeology included research questions about gender, but also on identity and self-representation.⁷⁸ Classical studies have been relatively 'slow' in adopting new theoretical frameworks and ideas, in contrast to prehistorians or archaeologists working on the New World. The gender-related research in the 1980s was, therefore, often still limited to 'inserting women' into the long-going debates, a method that has sometimes been called 'add women and stir', rather than rethinking the way to look at Antiquity.⁷⁹

After the more conservative Anglo-American politics of the 1980s, the 1990s saw a new surge of feminist movements, sometimes called the third feminist wave, that started to question the aims and the accomplishments of the second wave.⁸⁰ It was only in the 1990s that classical studies finally caught up and started asking questions about 'complex social, sexual and gendered relationships as evidenced in art and material culture'.⁸¹ This is also reflected in the increased number of publications about women at Roman baths, and research questions pertaining to sexuality. However, we had to wait until the early 21st century to see the first papers dealing with other forms of gender in Roman baths. Classical archaeology, especially in the Anglo-American world, is finally catching

up with gender-related research.

7. Conclusions

Gender-related research questions appeared relatively late in studies on Roman baths. At first glance, this might appear strange. Bathing was not only a widespread and prevalent pastime for both men and women in the Roman period, public bathhouses were locations where people would undress and be confronted with their own bodies and those of others. They would also be reminded of the behaviour that supposedly suited their social class and gender. However, classical studies first approached baths as mere buildings, focusing on their architecture, technology, and decoration without giving too much thought to the people that built, operated and used them. Subsequently, reconstruction drawings of Roman baths often did not feature bathers, and if they did, these were reduced to inanimate figures. It was only after the 1960s that the actual people in the baths gained more scientific attention in the general works. However, gender-related questions were limited to examining the presence and habits of women. The same fundamental question (if, with whom and how women bathed) was still being addressed in the increasing number of general works on classical bathing in the 1980s. By the 1990s, these questions were often considered in more detail, sometimes in separate chapters or subchapters, and articles dedicated exclusively to women in baths started to appear. Even ‘marginal’ categories, such as prostitutes or enslaved people, were examined. However, the more inclusive feminist movements and post-processual archaeological paradigm of the 1990s did not result in the inclusion of other gender groups in the research, nor did it entail a new narrative. It was, for example, not until the later years of the 2000s and in the 2010s that baths were studied as queer or homoerotic spaces. This holistic picture of the Roman bathing habit that has emerged through academic research has yet to find a way into most reconstructions and visualizations of Roman baths. The legacy of traditional architectural reconstruction drawings and academic caution when reaching the larger public impede more realistic scenes of everyday life at the baths. Such scenes are, however, eagerly visualized by the ‘new’ art forms, film, media, comics, and video games.

Table of Figures

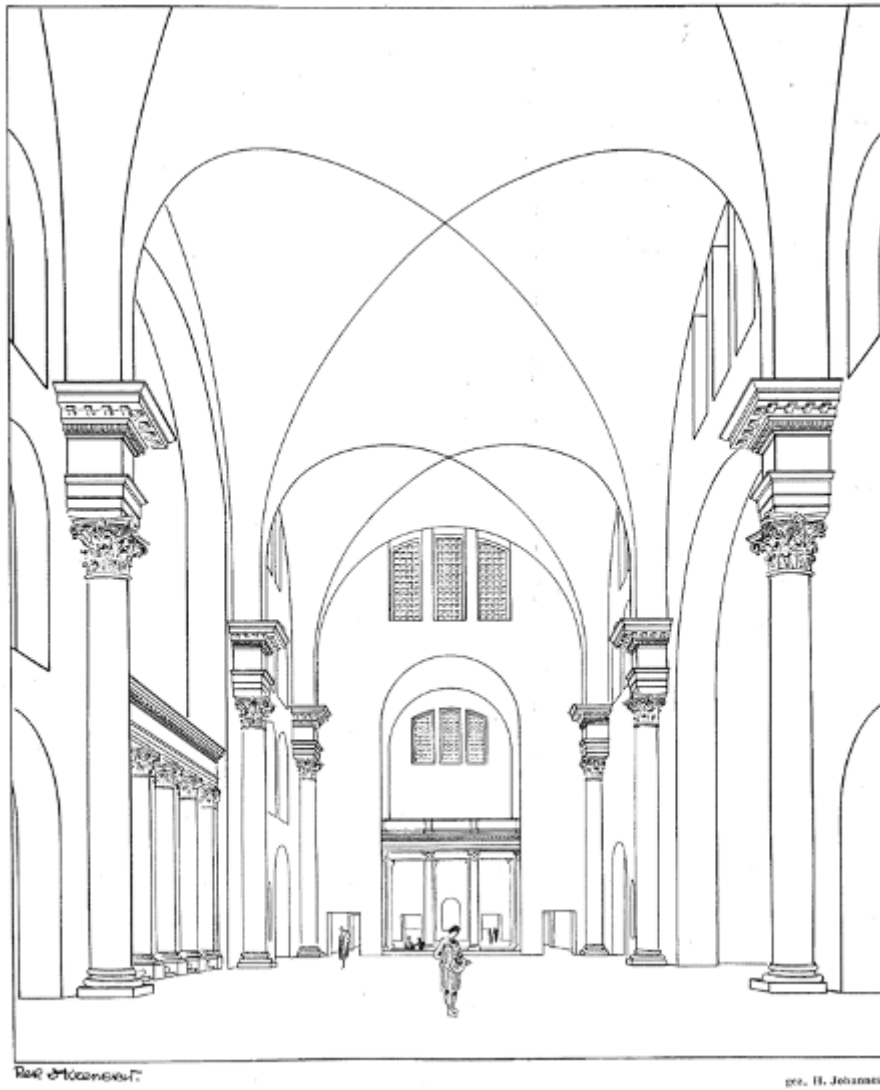


Figure 1. Reconstruction of the frigidarium in the Kaiserthermen in Trier (in D. KRENCKER, op. cit., p. 89, fig. 99)



Figure 2. Reconstruction drawing of the Baths of Diocletian in Rome by E. Paulin (1890) (top) and a detail of women figures (bottom) (after E. PAULIN, op. cit., pl. 24-25)



Figure 3. A Favourite Custom (1909), Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, Tate Gallery London (Public Domain via Wikimedia Commons)



Figure 4. Le bain turc (1862), Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, Le Louvre (Paris)(Public Domain via Wikimedia Commons)



Figure 5. Illustration of a scene in the exercise yard of the Stabian Baths in Pompeii by Alberto Fremura (in M. PASQUINUCCI, op. cit., p. 37, fig. 24; with permission)

Notes

¹ The literature on Roman baths and bathing habits is vast. See the bibliographies of H. MANDERSCHIED, *Bibliographie zum römischen Badewesen : unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der öffentlichen Thermen*, Munich/Berlin, Selbstverlag Wasmuth, 1988; *id.*, *Ancient baths and bathing: a bibliography for the years 1988 - 2001*, Portsmouth (R.I.), *Journal of Roman Archaeology (JRA)*, 2004 (JRA Suppl. 55).

² For a recent state-of-the-art, see D. ROGERS, *Taking the Plunge: A Twenty-First-Century Look at Roman Bathing Culture*, in *People and Institutions in the Roman Empire. Essays in Memory of Garrett G. Fagan*, eds. A. GATZKE, L. BRICE and M. TRUNDLE, Leiden/Boston, Brill, 2020, p. 125-159.

³ See for example the quote by late 19th-century Belgian archaeologists Joseph Kaisin: ‘*Les bains utiles comme mesure hygiénique, devinrent une cause de démoralisation pour le peuple romain.*’ in J. KAISIN, *Villa belgo-romaine d’Aiseau. Rapport de la fouille*, in *Documents et Rapports de la Société Paléontologique et Archéologique de Charleroi*, n° 9, 1878, p. 145-243.

⁴ This article was written during a postdoctoral research project on Roman baths, funded by the Research Foundation – Flanders (FWO, 12I9619N). The author would like to thank dr Kelsey Madden (University of Sheffield) for commenting and proofreading an earlier draft of this text.

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⁷⁰ The virtual reconstruction of a Roman bathhouse on an interactive touch table in the Archaeological Museum of Bologna (Italy), is a case in point. The high-definition virtual reconstruction of the Baths of Diocletian in Rome by the Italian Ministry of Culture and Tourism (MiBACT), inspired by Paulin's drawing, does not feature bathers (<https://youtu.be/9ZiTtE1St5I>). The reconstructions of the late antique baths in Karanis (Egypt) by the URU Fayum Project (<https://www.karanisbath.com/fly-through>) or of the Central Baths in Herculaneum by the Museo Archeologico Virtuale di Ercolano (<https://youtu.be/WJaFDCB7t5E>) depicts the bathers as rather inanimate figures.

⁷¹ See for example the murder scene in a bathhouse in episode one, season two of the HBO-series 'Rome', the sex scenes, and murders in the novel 'A Body in the Bath House' by Lindsey Davies and the nudity in Mari Yamazaki's manga *Thermae Romae* or sex and violence in Jean Dufaux and Philippe Delaby's comic book *Murena*.

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