

leeuwendeel van de bewaarde handschriften vervaardigd hebben in enkele benedictijnerkloosters in deze regio. Bijgevolg voegt dit essay een belangrijke genderdimensie toe aan dit boek – een thematiek die in de andere bijdragen wat achterwege is gebleven. De geschiedenis van macht, religie, bezit en ruimte zijn namelijk niet enkel het speeldomein van mannen geweest, zoals een haastige blik op de vele essays in dit boek zou kunnen doen uitschijnen. Best mogelijk natuurlijk dat andere onderzoekers een andere selectie zouden maken van de meest opmerkenwaardige essays in dit boek, maar dat vormt – zoals betoogd – juist de meerwaarde van deze bundel. Om de samenstellers ervan gelijk te geven: de oogst is rijk, zoals ze in hun inleiding aanhalen, en er is veel waar een volgende generatie onderzoekers kan op voortbouwen.

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Fabiola van Dam, *Het middeleeuwse openbare badhuis. Fenomeen, metafoor, schouwtoneel* (Hilversum: Uitgeverij Verloren, 2020). 313 p. ISBN 9789087048679.

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When discussing public bathhouses, the Roman bathhouse – considered a place of hygiene as well as a place of representation and social interactions – is often the first example that comes to mind. In contrast, the medieval bathhouse is more difficult to access and has been the subject of only a small number of recent scholarly studies, mostly because it has often been perceived (and described, even by historians) as a place of prostitution and a brothel, rather than a public service tending to people's hygiene and healthcare. Focusing mainly on German- and Dutch-speaking areas of Western Europe, this welcome new study by Fabiola van Dam intends to explore the richness of medieval and early modern bath culture.

In *Het middeleeuwse openbare badhuis. Fenomeen, metafoor, schouwtoneel*, Van Dam convincingly contributes to changing the eroticized perception of the medieval public bathhouse inherited from the nineteenth century. However, the true interest of this study resides elsewhere. By focussing on the place occupied by the notion of bathhouses and bathing in the collective psyche of the Middle-Ages, Van Dam shows the richness of images, concepts, and significations linked to the

medieval bathhouse in the mind of its contemporaries, in addition to offering an in-depth history of mentalities surrounding the medieval public bathhouse.

Bathing is here presented as an element of medieval daily life that was so familiar to its contemporaries that it allowed writers and illustrators to attach a large variety of meanings and symbolism to it. In this book, Van Dam explores how the bath is a place of tension between clean and dirty, health and sickness, order and disorder. Relying on the notion of dirty as ‘matter out of place’ (borrowed from the work of Mary Douglas), she shows that the common denominator between the numerous concepts associated with medieval bathing is the notion of balance as a way to bring order.

Focussing first on the phenomenon of bathing, the book describes the process of bathing and the health benefits associated to it. Using the medical treatise *Regimen Sanitatis* by Magninus Mediolanensis, it shows that in its very conception, bathing is meant to restore balance and order in the body by purifying it from its unwanted elements, from matter that is not in its rightful place. From this medical vision of the body and of the effect of bathing on the body, arises the ‘metaphor’ of the body-that-cooks. This metaphor – designed to represent the flow and changes that intervene in organic metabolic processes – was also used to describe more abstract forms of purifications and ordering. It is, for example, used in religious texts, such as Bernard of Clairvaux’s *Super Cantica Cantorum*, to articulate the inner process of enlightenment of the soul. The metaphor is also used to describe communal living, by assimilating the community to an organism, and by using it to structure the body-politics, as described in John of Salisbury’s *Policraticus* (1159). Eventually, Van Dam describes how the public bathhouse can be used as a ‘stage’ to display religious social and political standpoints. To support her argument, she first relies on two mystical texts, the *Geistliche Padstube* and the *Seelenbadt und ein geistlichewürdschafft*, in which the bathhouse becomes the stage and structural backdrop of prayer exercises designed to deepen the experience of faith. Further, the bath as ‘mirrors of the fools’ serves to depict and ridicule sexual behaviors perceived as threatening to social structures. Finally, the bath is a stage to take a political stance and criticize adversaries, like the pamphlet *Des Bapsts und der Pfaffen Badstüb* (1546) written against the Pope during the Reformation.

What makes this book particularly valuable is the richness and variety of the sources that are used. By addressing the mental image of the

public bathhouse rather than its concrete and technical aspects, Van Dam manages to gather sources from a wealth of different literary and pictorial genres. This rich collection of knowledge and the data presented enable exploring the meaning and power of metaphors in different contexts, in addition to opening the field for further research in the histories of mentalities. Indeed, the back-and-forth between material and immaterial culture creates a convincing image of the medieval reality, or rather realities, that bathing inhabits. However, this variety of sources, which the author herself qualifies as disparate, results in a complex book that is not always clearly structured around one core argument. This complexity makes the book harder to access for non-specialists, and the variety of subject and contexts discussed can appear protracted, taking the reader far away from what one could expect in a book about bath culture. Still, it is this variety of themes and interpretations that can serve as a very welcome incentive for raising new questions and opening new avenues of research into medieval bathing culture.

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Gijs Mom, *Globalizing Automobilmism. Exuberance and the Emergence of Layered Mobility, 1900-1980* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2020). 666 p. ISBN 9781789204612.

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Dr. Gijs Mom's project is ambitious: outlining histories of mobility as shaped by the rise of automobiles around the world. *Globalizing Automobilmism* is a sequel to his *Atlantic Automobilmism* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2015), which focusses on the development of the car and a car society in the United States and several European countries during the first four decades or so of the twentieth century. *Globalizing Automobilmism* expands the scope of inquiry to countries outside the Western world and to the postwar period. Mom draws on different theoretical frameworks – from mobility studies and literary theory to postcolonial critique and studies of science and technology (Introduction). He argues that the spread of automobilmism from Western countries to other parts of the world did not end up with a homogeneous landscape of car societies. Instead, what emerged is a 'layered mobility' that has been shaped by complex local, regional, and transnational dynamics at specific historical moments.