

Building the Thermae Agrippae: Private Life, Public Space, and the Politics of Bathing in Early Imperial Rome

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Public bathing was integral to daily life in ancient Rome. Today, imperial baths loom large in reconstructions of the ancient city, where they evoke the splendor of this uniquely public and social urban tradition. Although archaeological and literary evidence reveals that baths flourished in Rome as early as the third century B.C.E., comparatively little is known about those small, dark, for-profit establishments. This paper examines the introduction of baths into Rome and the earliest bathing facilities before turning to the urban and political impact of the Thermae Agrippae (Baths of Agrippa), constructed in the late first century B.C.E. The formerly private bath complex, made public upon Agrippa's death, marks a radical departure from previous establishments, offering expansive gardens filled with sculpture, large pools, and impressive architecture. This paper, for the first time, traces similarities in the innovative design and luxurious decoration of the Thermae Agrippae with that of the private urban estates (*horti*) of elites in Rome. It situates Agrippa's bequest in an era in which the expediency of offering public access to elite private spaces was rapidly becoming evident to Rome's most astute politicians. This nationalization of Agrippa's former estate aligns with Augustan urban policies and explains a significant shift in architectural nomenclature: from *balnea* to *thermae*.¹

INTRODUCTION

The Romans are known for the importance they placed on public baths and public bathing.² From at least the second century B.C.E. onward, daily visits

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² The bibliography on Roman baths is vast. Recent studies include Brödner 1983; Heinz 1983; Nielsen 1990; Yegül 1992, 2010; DeLaine and Johnston 1999; Fagan 2002. The term "public baths" refers here to any baths that were open to the Roman people, including both the imperial *thermae* and the for-profit ventures that were privately owned but publicly accessible (for a small fee). In contrast, "private baths" signifies those in privately owned residences; although these could be large and luxurious like public baths, their use was restricted by social networks.

to the baths were an essential part of life at almost all levels of Roman society. Baths provided more than simple hygiene; they were vibrant nodes of social and cultural interaction that crossed established boundaries of class or position. DeLaine has labeled this communal experience “peculiarly Roman,” noting that few other societies have put bathing at the center of social life.³ The ritual of public bathing helped shape the quotidian rhythms of the city, while the construction of bathing complexes played a significant role in the urban development of Rome. That an astonishing 856 privately owned public baths were operating in the city by the fourth century C.E. suggests the magnitude of this urban influence.⁴

Rome’s emperors contributed on a grand scale, constructing throughout the capital, for public use, 11 enormous bath complexes before the Late Roman period. These so-called imperial baths integrated a complex group of bathing and cultural spaces that combined recreation and cleanliness with leisure and intellectual pursuits, offering users facilities such as lecture halls, libraries, meeting rooms, auditoria, exedrae, athletic spaces, and religious shrines.⁵ Moreover, it is in imperial baths’ porticoes and surrounding spaces that we see the first large-scale and systematic introduction of civic gardens into the city of Rome.⁶ By the beginning of the second century C.E. and the reign of the emperor Trajan—if not earlier—a standard architectural plan had developed for imperial baths, which set an enormous bathing block notable for its bilateral symmetry at the center of a huge walled garden space.⁷

³ As DeLaine (1999a, 7–8) notes, other important bathing cultures include the Islamic Mediterranean and the classical culture of Japan. On the social importance of Roman baths, see Fagan 2011.

⁴ This number comes from two separate urban census documents: the *Notitia Urbis Regionum XIV* (334–357 C.E.) and the *Curiosum Urbis Romae Regionum* (357–403 C.E.). There is uncertainty surrounding the reliability of these figures (see Bruun 1991, 74; Fagan 1993, 333; 2002, 357), yet, despite these problems, it is clear that a very large number of public baths were operating in Rome in the fourth century C.E.

⁵ On the cultural uses of imperial bath complexes, see Yegül 1992, 172–79.

⁶ Grimal 1969, 195–96, 260–64; Yegül 1992, 179–80; on urban gardens in Rome, see Farrar 1998, 179–86; von Stackelberg 2009; Taylor et al. 2016, 103–13.

⁷ The Baths of Trajan, built after 104 C.E. on the slopes of the Oppian Hill, introduced a new standard of monumentality for bath construction. The complex was dominated by a bathing block with a *natio* (swimming pool), a triple cross-vaulted

This model was followed by a succession of increasingly vast imperial complexes scattered throughout the city, culminating with the Baths of Diocletian, which were constructed sometime between 298 and 306 C.E. and occupied more than 32 acres in the northeast quadrant of the city.⁸

Imperial baths represent some of the largest and most expensive building projects undertaken by the emperors. Constructed to emphasize the wealth, prowess, and magnanimous nature of the emperor and to court the favor of the social classes whose members would otherwise not enjoy luxurious baths, imperial baths incorporated magnificent architecture; lavish decoration including expensive imported marbles, mosaics, and famous works of art; and advanced technologies such as dedicated aqueducts and hypocaust heating. DeLaine has estimated that a workforce of at least 13,000 labored to build the Baths of Caracalla in 213 C.E.—an undertaking surely financed by an equally impressive outlay from the imperial coffers.⁹ The continued construction of imperial baths into late antiquity speaks to the political capital these complexes garnered for their patrons.

The monumental, luxurious, and statue-filled imperial baths of Rome have been the focus of scholarly attention ever since their rediscovery in the Renaissance. Today, there are more excavated examples of baths preserved than of any other Roman public building type.¹⁰ Roman baths have conventionally been associated with the High and Late Imperial periods, because of the substantial material remains from those centuries. The phenomenon of Roman public bathing originated more than 400 years earlier, however, in the Middle Republic (roughly the third and second centuries B.C.E.), and the baths built by Agrippa, the *Thermae Agrippae*—the first large-scale bath complex—was already complete by the end of the first century B.C.E.

frigidarium (cold room) and projecting *caldarium* (hot room), with flanking *palaestrae* (exercise courts). See *LTUR* 5:67–9, s.v. “*Thermae Traiani*”; Yegül 1992, 142–46; Volpe 2010; Caruso et al. 2014; on the “Large Imperial Bath Type,” see Krencker et al. 1929, 175–81.

⁸ On the Baths of Diocletian, see Yegül 1992, 163–69; Tagliamonte 1998; Serlorenzi and Laurenti 2002.

⁹ DeLaine (1997, 175–93) estimates a minimum workforce of 9,000 workers over four years of construction with the number rising to 13,100 in peak periods. On the cost of the baths, see DeLaine 1997, 207–24.

¹⁰ DeLaine 2018, 166.

Yegül has rightly called the *Thermae Agrippae* a “transitional institution” that established both a cultural agenda and an architectural tradition for imperial baths.¹¹ While the status of the *Thermae Agrippae* as the first “imperial” bath complex is being debated elsewhere,¹² this paper investigates the factors that contributed to the monument’s design and decoration as well as to the way it functioned within the city and in the uniquely volatile social climate of the late first century B.C.E.¹³ The Greek and Hellenistic culture of the gymnasium may have offered abstract inspiration for the enlargement and aggrandizement of Agrippa’s baths,¹⁴ but I argue that the features of the complex were directly influenced by contemporary architecture and elite cultural traditions from the private sphere in Rome.

EARLY EVIDENCE OUTSIDE ROME

Bathing was not always part of Roman culture, and much has been written on the purportedly foreign origins of Roman bath complexes.¹⁵ Yet, the most distinctive features of Roman baths—the advanced heating technologies, the communal bathing pools, and a plan focused on a sequence of rooms—have only a tenuous connection to any foreign model.¹⁶ While there certainly was a tradition of public bathing in the Greek world, the only provision the Greek gymnasium made for bathing was the *loutron*, initially an open-air space with basins or simple shower arrangements delivering cold water (fig. 1).¹⁷ There is, however, more



FIG. 1. Athenian black-figure hydria attributed to the Antimenos Painter depicting bathing athletes, sixth century B.C.E. Leiden, Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, inv. no. II 167 (previously PC 63) (ABV, 266, no. 1, 664, 691; *Paralipomena* 117; *Beazley Addenda*², 69; BAPD, no. 230011) (courtesy National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden).

conclusive, and growing, evidence for the widespread use of heated Greek-style baths in Sicily and southern Italy in the third century B.C.E. For example, archaeological evidence from the Greek colony of Gela in Sicily—where a small bath with hip-bathtubs (ca. 310–282 B.C.E.) had relatively primitive in-floor heating with furnaces connected to subfloor channels—illustrates that, although baths in West Greece did not follow a clear sequence of rooms, the potential for heating technologies was already present in the early

¹¹ Yegül 2014, 312.

¹² Heinz 1983, 60–7; Nielsen 1990, 1:45; Yegül 1992, 133.

¹³ This is a period in which a few powerful, elite Romans (Pompey the Great, L. Lucullus, Julius Caesar, and M. Agrippa, to name a few) were using the very fabric of the city of Rome to compete for political influence and emphasize their military supremacy. Recently, see Davies 2017, with bibliography.

¹⁴ Tortorici 1990, 47–9.

¹⁵ See Brödner 1983, 623; Nielsen 1990, 1:14–24; Yegül 1992, 48–66; Fagan 2001. DeLaine (1993, 354–55) has a brief overview of the debate that is still mostly current.

¹⁶ Vitruvius (*De arch.* 5.10–11) describes Roman bath and hypocaust technology, and his writings are supported by a myriad of archaeological evidence; see Rook 1978; Adam 2005, 264–75; Yegül 2010, 100. Debate on the earliest evidence for a subfloor (hypocaust) heating system is summarized, with bibliography, by Yegül (2010, 40–79).

¹⁷ On bathing in the Greek world, see Ginouvès 1962; Heinz 1983, 36–51; Nielsen 1990, 1:69; Yegül 1992, 6–29; Lucore and

Trümper 2013. Attempts to link archaeological evidence for rudimentary heating systems in Greece, such as those at Gortys (mid third century B.C.E.) and at Olympia (ca. 40 B.C.E.), to Roman-style pillar hypocausts have been unconvincing. On Gortys, see Ginouvès 1959; Nielsen 1985, 85–6; Yegül 1992, 268; Trümper 2009; on Olympia, see Ginouvès 1959; for commentary, see Nielsen 1985, 102–3; 1990, 1:20–2; DeLaine 1988, 15; Fagan 2001, 407; Trümper 2009, 153 n. 57.

third century B.C.E.¹⁸ It is also clear that Roman-style bathing became popular during the Middle Republic in Campania—which, like Sicily, was a notably Hellenized part of the Roman world.¹⁹ The proximity of Campania to the Phlegraean Fields, a volcanically active region of thermo-mineral spas west of modern-day Naples, suggests that local hot springs and gases may have been a catalyst there for the development of new bathing technologies.²⁰

The recent discovery of second-century B.C.E. baths in the Latin colony of Fregellae—in the Latium region, only 90 km southeast of Rome—indicates that the transfer of both the cultural and the technological features of hot bathing to Rome may not have been a linear one from Campania, as many previously believed. The baths at Fregellae can be dated to the early second century B.C.E., solidly in the Middle Republican period. The impressive remains include a large, public bath block (ca. 1,100 m²) divided into men's and women's sections, each with an *apodyterium/tepidarium* (change room/warm room) and a *caldarium* (hot room) with a large heated *natatio* (pool). The tight cluster of square and rectangular rooms encouraged the circulation of patrons through heated and unheated spaces and communal pools—a hallmark of later Roman public baths.²¹ Most significantly, the baths included a fully developed hypocaust with *prae-furnium* (furnace) and floors supported on *pilae* (pil-

lars), as well as the earliest known example of *tubuli* (tubes) for wall heating.²²

As the archaeological evidence now stands, advanced bath technologies appear to have developed in both Campania and Latium, and either or both of these areas might have provided accessible models for Rome.²³ During the Middle Republic, which was a period of mass migration from the countryside into Rome, the enthusiastic adoption of public baths may also have been advanced by a tradition of therapeutic and recreational bathing that developed on rural agrarian properties where small bath suites were integrated into residences and often incorporated a series of rooms of variable temperatures as well as emerging heating technologies.²⁴ Whether builders in Rome also played an active role in the creation and development of public baths or mainly received ideas from elsewhere (from Campania or more likely from Latium, closer by) is difficult to determine. Yegül rightly emphasizes that Rome, as the “unmistakable center of power” during the republic, would have been “a natural place” for early experiments in public baths and bathing technology.²⁵ Ultimately, although the archaeological record from this period is compromised by Rome's extensive later development, there is little doubt that the city at least provided fertile ground for the architectural reception and social integration of warm-bathing culture.

THE EVIDENCE FROM ROME

The continuous occupation of Rome is always a challenge in the study of republican architecture, and this is certainly the case for attempts to reconstruct an architectural or urban context for the city's earliest public baths. Although we cannot point to the remains or plans of any Middle or Late Republican bathing establishments, we do have informative early literary evidence, such as the Latin playwright Plautus' colorful allusions to urban baths.²⁶ Plautus' brief but numerous

¹⁸ On Gela, see Orlandini 1960, 184–211; Lucore and Trümper 2013, 272. Similar rudimentary subfloor heating systems have been found at Syracuse (DeLaine 1989; Broise 1994), Megara Hyblaea (Vallet et al. 1983, 49–60), and Morgantina (Lucore 2013). On the role of West Greece in the development of the Roman bath, see Nielsen 1990, 1:25–37; DeLaine 1992; Thébert 2003, 73–4; Lucore 2013.

¹⁹ The Stabian Baths at Pompeii, one of the best-preserved early Roman bath complexes, is often singled out as a groundbreaking developmental monument in discussions of architecture in Campania. Eschebach (1979) identified six building phases and argued that the initial bath complex dated to the fourth century B.C.E. However, recent excavations confirm that there were no major buildings here before the second half of the second century B.C.E. when the colonnaded palaestra and a double-zoned, heated bathing block are now understood to have been first built; see Trümper and Rummel 2016, 2017.

²⁰ Nielsen 1985; Fagan 2001, 421–24; Yegül 2013a, 28.

²¹ The men's apodyterium/tepidarium featured a barrel-vaulted ceiling with terracotta tiles hanging from wooden trusses; Vitruvius (*De arch.* 5.10.2) recommended this type of vault for baths, but it was unknown before the excavations at Fregellae.

²² On bath technology, see Vitruvius, *De arch.* 5.11.3; on Fregellae, see Tsiolis 2001, 2006, 2013; Coarelli 2003; Thébert 2003, 82–5; Yegül 2010, 545; 2013b, 79–81.

²³ Yegül 2010, 66.

²⁴ On the possible importance of rural, domestic traditions, see Di Capua 1940; Fabbricotti 1976; Yegül 2010, 45–9; 2013b, 76–8, 80; on the changing demographics of Italy in the Middle Republic, see Hin 2013.

²⁵ Yegül 2013a, 31; 2013b, 80.

²⁶ Plautus, *Persa* 90–1; *Stich.* 533; *Trin.* 405–8; *Rud.* 382–85; *Poen.* 703; *Asin.* 356–57; *Truculentus* 322–25. See Fagan

references—ranging from the dangers of thievery at the baths to women's habit of lingering there—suggest that his audience was familiar with the institution and that public baths were a regular feature of Roman urban life as early as the late third century B.C.E.

Later sources can be used cautiously to further support the presence of public baths in Rome in the third and second centuries B.C.E.²⁷ For example, when Seneca notes that one of the duties of the “aediles of old” was checking the public baths for cleanliness and heated water, he is speaking specifically of the Cornelii, Fabius Maximus, and Cato the Elder, contemporaries of Plautus.²⁸ The Augustan historian Pompeius Trogus (epitomized by Justin in the third century C.E.) records that the Romans introduced hot-water bathing to Spain after the Second Punic War (218–201 B.C.E.), which implies that baths and bathing were already flourishing in the capital at the time.²⁹ And Plutarch describes Fulvius Flaccus' death in a disused city bathhouse after fleeing his pursuers in the aftermath of the death of C. Gracchus (121 B.C.E.).³⁰

Cicero is the most prolific ancient author on public baths, and his works confirm the institution's social and urban prominence in both the second and first centuries B.C.E. In *De oratore*, Cicero refers to a public bath purchased as an investment by the father of the senator M. Junius Brutus in the second century B.C.E. That there were no social restrictions on senators owning or operating a public bath at this time suggests, again, that the tradition was already widespread in Rome.³¹ Cicero's work is even more useful for the first century B.C.E. as his frequent mentions of public baths reflect an assumption that elite jurors would have been acquainted with these urban landmarks and the activities that took place therein.³² References by Catullus³³

and Valerius Maximus³⁴ support Cicero here, confirming a widespread familiarity with urban public baths by the Late Republic. In sum, it is clear that public baths in Rome were a common, though not always respectable, part of urban life by the first century B.C.E. They were considered important socially but were not yet glamorous venues, nor were they necessarily viewed as appropriate ones for elite display.

Although there is relatively plentiful and varied literary evidence for the existence of baths in Rome during the republic, few authors describe actual bathing facilities built before the time of Vitruvius.³⁵ An exception is Seneca, who writes of a visit to the then almost ancient baths at the villa of Scipio Africanus. Seneca contrasts the simple, small, dark baths he found there with the opulent baths of the first century C.E. Moreover, he notes that the Africanus' baths were “intended for use, not merely for delight,” stressing the utilitarian nature of these early baths compared with the lavishness of later ones.³⁶ Another reference, this time to fickle contemporary bathers who abandon a popular establishment for a newer, fancier one, hints that sumptuous public baths were constructed with some frequency in Early Imperial Rome.³⁷ The trend toward increasing extravagance is also reflected in the first century C.E. in the writing of Pliny the Elder, who specifically notes a rise in the luxuriousness of baths since the days of M. Agrippa.³⁸

According to the Census of Agrippa, there were 170 public baths in Rome in 33 B.C.E.³⁹ Based on the literary evidence, it is safe to assume that most, if not all, of these were still relatively small and probably dark

2001, 419–21.

²⁷ For an overview of the literary evidence for Roman baths, see Fagan 2002, 45–55.

²⁸ Sen., *Ep.* 86.10; Fagan 2001, 420.

²⁹ Just., *Epit.* 44.2.6. By contrast, Lucore (2009, 54 n. 18) suggests that bathing technology was transferred to Spain from West Greece via Spanish mercenary soldiers who occupied Morgantina after the fall of the city to Rome in 211 B.C.E.

³⁰ Plut., *C. Gracch.* 16.4.

³¹ Cic., *De or.* 2.223–24; on senatorial urban property ventures, see Garnsey 1976.

³² Cic., *Cael.* 61–7; *Rosc. Am.* 7–18; Cicero's writings also include numerous references to private baths, see Fagan (2002, 50) for discussion.

³³ Catull. 33.

³⁴ Val. Max. 9.5.3.

³⁵ Vitruvius devotes an entire chapter of his architectural handbook (5.10.1–5) to baths, but his descriptions reflect contemporary (i.e., 30s–20s B.C.E.) structures.

³⁶ Sen., *Ep.* 86.4–12. Fagan (2001, 419) emphasizes that influences surely flowed between public and private bathing facilities, although the extent and direction may not always be clear.

³⁷ Sen., *Ep.* 86.8.

³⁸ Plin., *HN* 33.153, 36.189, on an increase in luxury since the republic; 34.62 on Agrippa's baths as the first to house monumental sculpture.

³⁹ Plin., *HN* 36.121; corroborated by Cass. Dio 49.43.3. See Heinz 1983, 29; Nielsen 1990, 1:35; Bruun 1991, 73; Yegül 1992, 30, 45, 66. Fagan (1993), however, suggests that the term *balneum*, used by Pliny, can be interpreted as the act of bathing and so argues that Agrippa was recording the number of offers of free bathing he presented to the public during his aedileship in 33 B.C.E.

establishments. In fact, Staccioli's 1961 study of baths shown on the *Forma Urbis Romae* finds that, even centuries later, urban baths continued to share these characteristics. In addition to baths labeled on the plan (fig. 2), Staccioli firmly identified three other public bath complexes, which were small in scale and integrated in a haphazard fashion into the dense urban fabric of the city, while a dozen or so possible candidates follow a similar pattern.⁴⁰ Comparable plans and urban distribution are reflected in the evidence from imperial Ostia, where 20 small and medium-sized public baths were incorporated into the crowded port city.⁴¹ It is interesting that there is no evidence for the public construction of bath complexes from republican Rome, unlike other cities in Italy, where inscriptions suggest that local councils were responsible for building and maintaining the baths. Fagan has posited several reasons for this inconsistency, including that public baths, like theaters, were considered too luxurious or too unsavory to be granted public funds.⁴² The objection to luxury appears to be supported by Cicero, who opines that only utilitarian buildings are worthy of public patronage.⁴³ It may simply have been, however, that the baths provided by private investors were deemed sufficient for the Roman public's bathing needs.

When considered as a whole, the literary evidence suggests that by the end of the republic, Rome had a thriving public bath culture and more than 100 urban baths. Ancient references elucidate the types of activities that took place in the baths, though there is little documentation, textual or otherwise, on their design or decoration, which was probably modest in this period. Moreover, unlike in smaller cities, such as Pompeii, the institution of bathing in republican Rome seems to have been served by private enterprise. The question arises, then, what drove the transition from the small, dark, urban baths of the republic to the magnificent and monumental complexes constructed in Rome during the Imperial period?

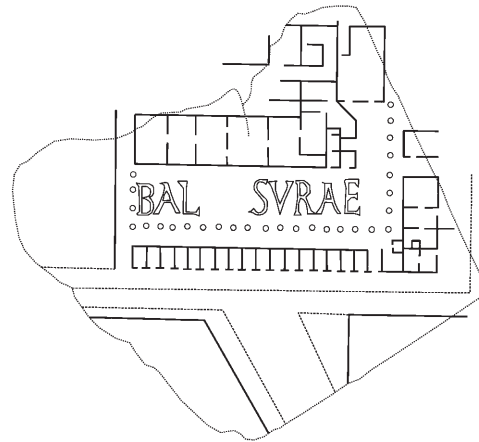


FIG. 2. Reconstruction of the small baths identified as Balneum Surae, *Forma Urbis Romae*, Fragments 21a–d (drawing by C. McClarty, after Staccioli 1961, pl. 39.3).

RECONSIDERING THE THERMAE AGRIPPAE

Many scholars believe that the pivotal monument in this transition was the bath complex built by M. Agrippa, a large-scale project constructed in the Campus Martius in the late first century B.C.E.⁴⁴ Agrippa's baths were so different in scale, facilities, and decoration from the small urban baths—*balnea* in Latin⁴⁵—that existed in Rome at the time that later authors appear to have used a new term when writing about them: *thermae*.⁴⁶ The *Thermae Agrippae*, as they are now known, are widely considered the first of Rome's increasingly impressive and luxurious imperial baths,⁴⁷ and are almost always said to have been planned specifically for large-scale, public use.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ DeLaine 1988, 19, 21; 1999b, 70; Nielsen 1990, 1:43; Gros 1996, 395; Wilkes 1999, 17; Yegül 2014, 312.

⁴⁵ Cicero specifically uses *balnea* for public baths (*Cael.* 25.61–28.67; *Rosc. Am.* 18) and *balneum* to denote private facilities (*Att.* 2.3.4, 13.52.1; *Fam.* 9.16.9, 14.20); in this regard, he follows the grammatical rules set out by Varro (*Ling.* 9.68). See Fagan 2002, 48 n. 29.

⁴⁶ Pliny (*HN* 34.62, 35.26, 36.189) is the first to use this term, followed by Martial (*Epigrams* 3.20.15, 3.36.5–6).

⁴⁷ Heinz 1983, 60; Tortorici 1990, 49; Richardson 1992, 386; Yegül 1992, 133; Coarelli 1994, 279; DeLaine 1999b, 70. The argument of Brundrett and Simpson (1997) that similar baths existed during the republic lacks sufficient evidence.

⁴⁸ Roddaz 1984, 279; Yegül 1992, 135; Brundrett and Simpson 1997; von Stackelberg 2009, 82; Jacobs and Conlin 2014, 125; contra Nielsen (1990, 1:45–46, 47 n. 78) and Dumser (2008a, 244), who both assume that during Agrippa's lifetime the baths may have been private. Fagan (2002, 108 n. 12) paints

⁴⁰ Staccioli 1961; see also Yegül 1979; 2010, 679. Small public baths can be identified on Rodríguez-Almeida (1981) frags. 21, 25, 33, 43a, 47, and 48.

⁴¹ Yegül 1992, 66.

⁴² Fagan 2002, 105–7, esp. 105 n. 3.

⁴³ Cic., *Off.* 2.60

It is clear that this monument marks a critical juncture in the development of the Roman bath, although the mechanics of the change deserve further scrutiny. Much is known about Agrippa, a great military strategist and general, selfless politician, modest citizen, and trusted confidant and heir of Augustus. Seneca wrote that, of those who emerged as successes from the civil wars, Agrippa alone was “happy only for the public good.”⁴⁹ However, the skeptical historian must sometimes question Agrippa’s motives. Galinsky has cautioned that Augustan “memory management” is at work in the presentation of Agrippa as purely a benefactor and a man of the people.⁵⁰ We must carefully reconsider Agrippa’s actual intentions and aspirations, as well as the social and political context for his baths.

Today, the *Thermae Agrippae* are known from multiple literary accounts, archaeological remains, the *Forma Urbis Romae* (fig. 3), and Renaissance sketches by Baldassare Peruzzi, Sallustio Peruzzi, and Andrea Palladio (fig. 4).⁵¹ Renaissance drawings are not always reliable sources for modern architectural reconstructions (e.g., the dependability of Baldassare Peruzzi’s sketch is compromised as it was drawn up in connection with a palace project for the Orsini family that incorporated the remains of the baths).⁵² The well-preserved fragment of the *Forma Urbis Romae* is a more trustworthy starting point. Fragment 38,⁵³ which depicts the *Thermae Agrippae*, belongs not to the Severan marble plan but probably to an earlier, likely Vespasianic, marble map of Rome.⁵⁴ Since this plan predates a catastrophic fire that swept through the



FIG. 3. *Forma Urbis Romae*, Fragment 38, with the top left corner pointing to the north. Rome, Antiquarium Comunale (© Sovrintendenza Capitolina ai Beni Culturali, Rome).

Campus Martius in 80 C.E.,⁵⁵ it follows that this fragment preserves a contemporary record of the plan of Agrippa’s baths as they stood in the first century C.E.

Although there are multiple conflicting reconstructions of the primary bathing block, the plan most widely adopted—not without problems—is that of Hülsen from 1910 (fig. 5). This reconstruction is based on the fragment from the *Forma Urbis Romae* and Palladio’s drawing of the baths, which largely corroborate each other.⁵⁶ It shows an arrangement of large, vaulted rooms that are grouped around an east–west axis and focus on a circular domed space. This core feature agrees with extant archaeological evidence preserved from various phases of the baths (fig. 6).⁵⁷ Estimated to be almost 25 m in diameter,⁵⁸ the domed space was likely the baths’ *frigidarium*, or cold bathing room, typically the largest room in a Roman bath complex.⁵⁹

From their initial construction, the *Thermae Agrippae*, located between the Pantheon to the north, the *Saepta Iulium* to the east, and the *Porticus Pompei* to the south, occupied a prominent place in the an-

Agrippa as a “magnate” who built a public bath house on private property as a “commercial enterprise”; Purcell (2007) outlines the multiple economic activities that were possible in private estates but is not writing specifically about Agrippa.

⁴⁹ Sen., *Ep.* 94.46. Similar characterizations can be found in Velleius Paterculus (2.79.1) and Cassius Dio (54.29.1–7).

⁵⁰ Galinsky 2012, 121; on Agrippa, see Roddaz 1980; 1984.

⁵¹ B. Peruzzi, *Uffizi Arch.* 456; S. Peruzzi, *Uffizi Arch.* 642; Palladio, *RIBA inv. no.* 28207, *Chatsworth port.* 9 f.14; 7 f.5,6.

⁵² On B. Peruzzi’s sketch, see Hülsen 1910, 12–18; on the reliability of Palladio’s drawings, see Zorzi 1959, 712; Lewis 1981, 129–40; DeLaine 1993, 356; Migliorati 2015, 114–31.

⁵³ Rodríguez-Almeida 1981, pl. 31.

⁵⁴ *LTUR* 5:40–2, s.v. “*Thermae Agrippae*”; Steinby 1989; followed by Nielsen 1990, 1:43; Coarelli 1992, 70–6; DeLaine 1993, 356; Gros 1996, 395; D’Alessio 2016, 533 n. 303; contra Rodríguez-Almeida (1995–1996), who upholds that the fragment is Severan, followed by Migliorati (2015, 113). For discussion, see Reynolds 1996, 39–53; Tucci 2007, 476–77.

⁵⁵ Cass. Dio 66.24.2.

⁵⁶ Hülsen 1910, 31, fig. 11, pl. 3. DeLaine (1993, 356) takes issue with the widespread use of Hülsen’s plan, which is at best tentative. However, the accuracy of its details is not critical for the current debate.

⁵⁷ Migliorati 2015.

⁵⁸ Migliorati (2015, 119) estimates that the dome would have been 23.90 m in diameter.

⁵⁹ Contra Yegül (2014, 312), who suggests that this was the bath’s *caldarium*, *caldaria* often being round. On previous domes and concrete construction, see Rakob 1989, 1992; Ball 2003, 236–37; Lancaster 2005.

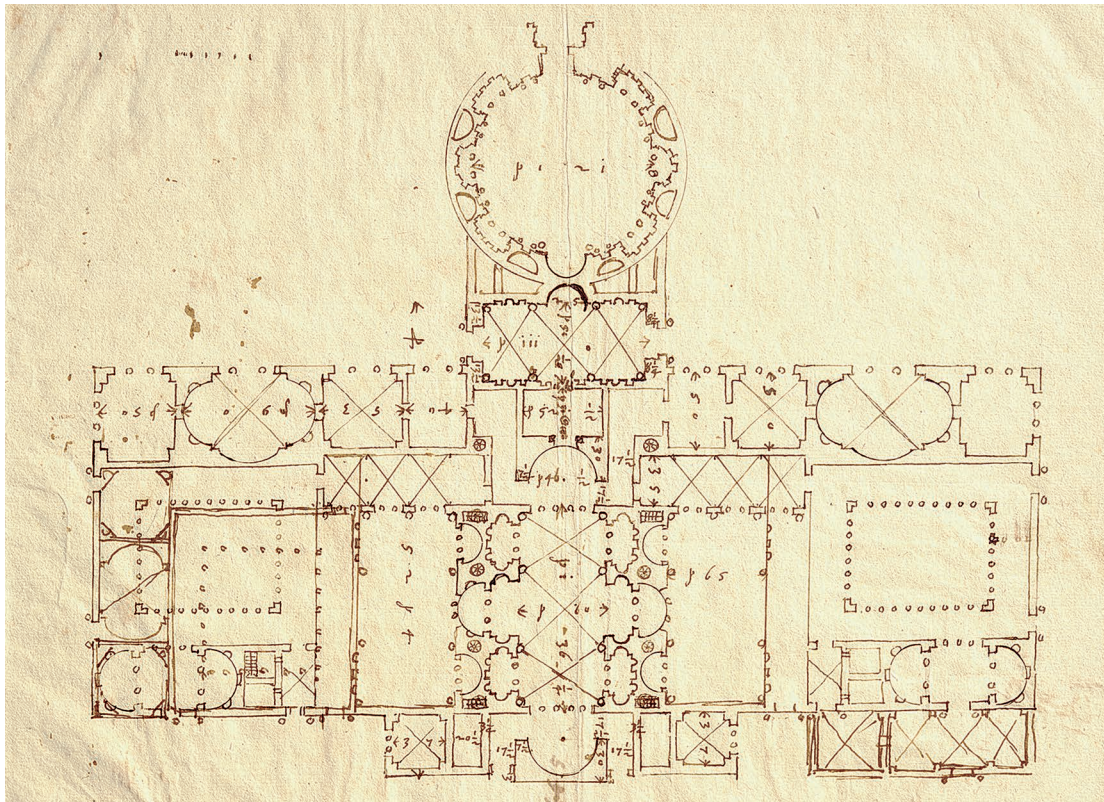


FIG. 4. Reconstruction drawing of the Thermae Agrippae by Andrea Palladio, oriented with north at the top. London, British Architectural Library, Royal Institute of British Architects, inv. no. 28207 (© RIBA).

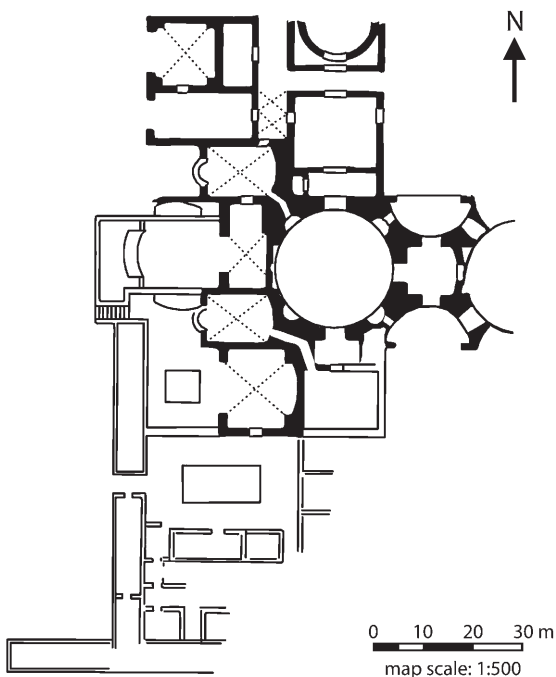


FIG. 5. Restored plan of the Thermae Agrippae (drawing by C. McClarty, after Hülsen 1910, pl. 3).

cient Campus Martius (fig. 7).⁶⁰ During most of the republic, this area, a low-lying floodplain, was sparsely developed. The expansive, marshy field was used seasonally for military exercises and as a voting precinct. Located outside the *pomerium*, it was a neutral space unrestrained by the rules of Roman state religion, where foreign visitors were greeted and victorious generals could anxiously await the start of their triumph. Although the expansion of Rome into the Campus Martius began in the Middle Republic, the pace of development accelerated rapidly toward the end of the first century B.C.E., aided by Agrippa's reworking of Rome's sewer system, which increased the number of drains and dried the swampy land, opening up new real estate for large-scale building projects.⁶¹

⁶⁰ The modern boundaries are Via Chiara on the north, Largo Argentina and Corso Vittorio Emanuele on the south, Via dei Cestari on the east, and Via Tor Argentina on the west.

⁶¹ On development, see Rehak 2006, 16–25; on water management, see Jacobs and Conlin 2014, 112–20.

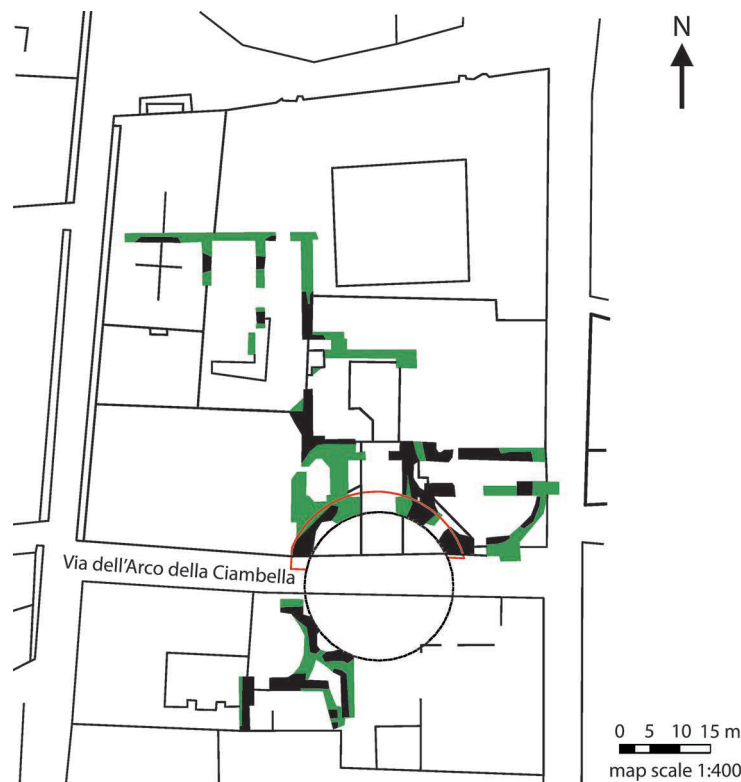


FIG. 6. Extant remains of the Thermae Agrippae, mostly fourth-century C.E., overlaid on the modern street plan; remains are indicated in green; the circle reconstructs the bath's central domed space, as depicted on the *Forma Urbis Romae*; the so-called Arco della Ciambella is outlined in red (drawing by C. McClarty, modified from Migliorati 2015, fig. 3).

Today in the Campus Martius, the Thermae Agrippae are most easily visible in a large brick rotunda (once part of the domed, central core of the bath and now known as the Arco della Ciambella) that can be found directly south of the Pantheon (see figs. 6, 8, 9). While this feature may follow the original layout of the baths, the complex underwent multiple repairs and rebuilding in antiquity to a degree that is still not entirely clear. Cassius Dio records that the baths were damaged by fire in 80 C.E. (an event that would also necessitate the rebuilding of other monuments constructed by Agrippa, including the Pantheon, Saepta, Diribitorium, and the Poseidonion; see fig. 7),⁶² and Hadrianic restorations are attested in the *Scriptores*

Historiae Augustae as well as by Pliny.⁶³ Only a small portion of first-century B.C.E. masonry (in *opus quadratum* and *opus reticulatum*) survives, and brick-stamps indicate that an otherwise unrecorded restoration likely took place sometime in the third or fourth century.⁶⁴ An unattested Severan rebuilding, which had been previously proposed, is now contradicted by the ribbed construction of the extant dome, a technology that did not become common until the fourth century C.E. (see fig. 9).⁶⁵

Notwithstanding various repairs that clearly date to the later empire,⁶⁶ the baths continued to be rebuilt along an asymmetrical plan (see figs. 5, 6). Some have

⁶² Cass. Dio 66.24.2; Yegül, 1992, 135. The Poseidonion, which can be tentatively identified as the Stoa of Poseidon (and is often confused with the post-Augustan Basilica Neptuni), has been excluded from fig. 7 since its topographical relationship to the Thermae Agrippae and the Saepta remain unclear; see Dumser 2008b, with bibliography.

⁶³ SHA, *Hadr.* 19.10; Plin., *HN* 35.26; also, *CIL* 6 9797, 1165.

⁶⁴ For a review of the archaeological evidence and a possible Hadrianic rebuilding, see Migliorati 2015, 112–16.

⁶⁵ On Severan reconstruction, see *LTUR* 5:40–2, s.v. “Thermae Agrippae”; on the dating of the dome, see Lancaster 2005, 108, 195; Migliorati 2015, 117–18.

⁶⁶ Steinby 1986, 123, 142; Migliorati 2015; Conte 2016.

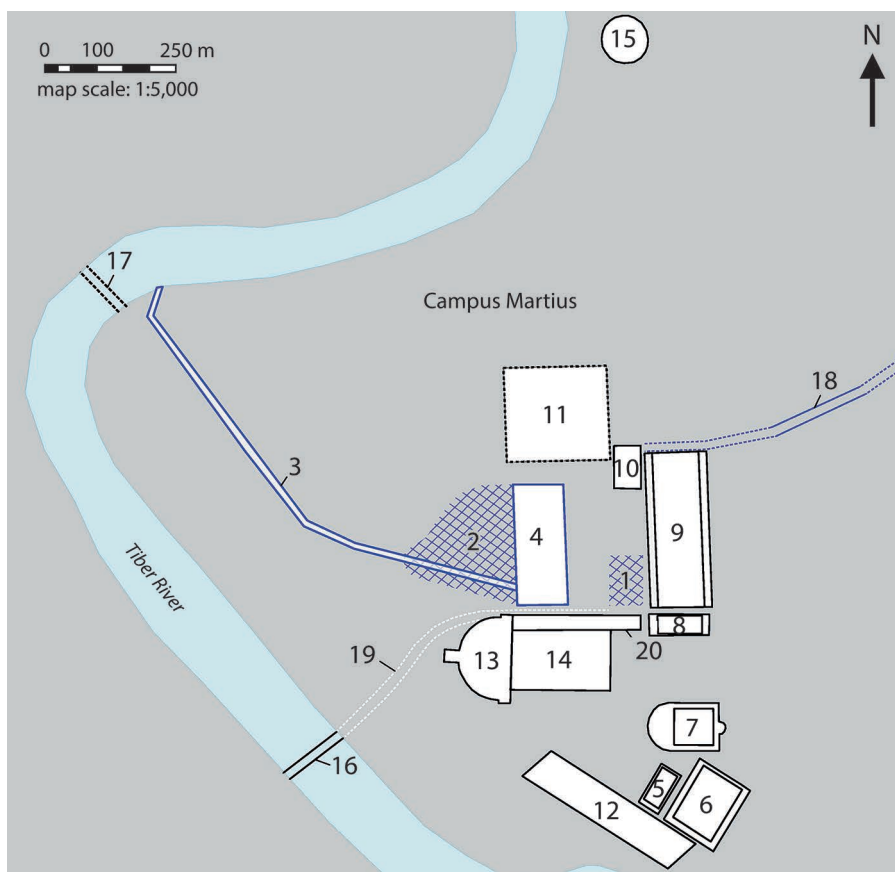


FIG. 7. Map of the Campus Martius in the late first century B.C.E. The boundary of the first-century B.C.E. Agrippan baths is not marked, as the extent of the original building is unknown. Features in blue are related to the *Thermae Agrippae*. Dotted lines indicate unattested features and features constructed after the Agrippan baths. 1, *Thermae Agrippae*; 2, *Nemus Agrippae*; 3, *Euripus*; 4, *Stagnum Agrippae*; 5, *Porticus Philippi*; 6, *Porticus Octaviae*; 7, *Theatrum and Crypta Balbi*; 8, *Diribitorium*; 9, *Saepta Iulium*; 10, *Pantheon*; 11, *Thermae Neronis*; 12, *Circus Flaminius*; 13, *Theatrum Pompei*; 14, *Porticus Pompei*; 15, *Mausoleum Augusti*; 16, *Pons Agrippae*; 17, *Pons Neronianus*; 18, *Aqua Virgo*; 19, *Aqua Virgo extension*; 20, *Hecatostylum* (drawing by C. McClarty, modified from Carandini and Carafa 2016, table 222).

argued that, since the imperial architects and their patrons eschewed a more modern, symmetrical layout, the later reconstructions must have preserved the initial Agrippan plan;⁶⁷ the scale of the dome of the *Arco della Ciambella*, which aligns with Augustan comparanda such as the so-called Temple of Mercury at Baiae,⁶⁸ could further support this reasoning. And while that is an appealing notion, based on the surviving physical evidence it is ultimately impossible to

reconstruct anything more than the location of the original bath complex. Both the size and the layout of the late first-century B.C.E. *Thermae Agrippae* must remain speculative.⁶⁹

Despite the inconclusive archaeological remains, other evidence fosters insight into the first phase of

⁶⁷ Esp. Richardson 1992, 387; Gros 1996, 395; Migliorati 2015, 132. Ghini (*LTUR* 5:40–2, s.v. “*Thermae Agrippae*”) is skeptical.

⁶⁸ On first-century B.C.E. domed architecture from Baiae and Praeneste, see Rakob 1989, 1992.

⁶⁹ Estimates of the size of the complex (e.g., Nielsen 1990, 2:2) typically rely on the scale of the Severan *Forma Urbis Romae*, not the Vespasianic version. It is impossible to argue that measurements taken from either marble plan would accurately represent the scope of Agrippa’s original construction. For a recent, but still preliminary, study of new archaeological evidence and the topographical limits of the *Thermae Agrippae*, see Migliorati 2015.



FIG. 8. Remains of the central, domed space of the Thermae Agrippae, vaulting dated to the fourth century C.E., in Via dell'Arco della Ciambella (courtesy J. Udell).

the Thermae Agrippae and can further a holistic reconstruction of the most significant elements. Critical to the present study is the testimony of Cassius Dio, who writes that when Agrippa died in 12 B.C.E. he left his baths to the Roman people, ensuring that they would have access to the facilities free of cost, in perpetuity:⁷⁰

Καὶ τότε γοῦν κήπους τέ σφισι καὶ τὸ Βαλανεῖον τὸ ἐπώνυμον αὐτοῦ κατέλιπεν, ὥστε προῖκα αὐτοὺς λοῦσθαι, χωρία τινὰ ἐς τοῦτο τῷ Αὐγούστῳ δούς. Καὶ ὃς οὐ μόνον ταῦτ' ἐδημοσίευσεν, ἀλλὰ καὶ καθ' ἑκατὸν δραχμὰς τῷ δήμῳ ὥς καὶ ἐκείνου κελεύσαντος διένειμε.

At any rate, even at his death he left them gardens and the baths named after him, so that they might bathe free of cost, and for this purpose gave Augustus certain estates. And the emperor not only turned these over to the state, but also distributed to the people four hundred sesterces apiece, giving it to be understood that Agrippa had so ordered.

⁷⁰ Cass. Dio 54.29.4 (trans. E. Cary, 1917, Loeb Classical Library).

The construction of the baths had begun 13 years before, in 25 B.C.E., as part of a larger recreational complex, which also included porticoes and landscaped gardens, known in this period as the *Nemus Agrippae* (the Grove of Agrippa). Grimal pointed to a series of extant topographical inscriptions in the Campus Martius that mention this *nemus* to posit that these expansive gardens covered approximately 1,000 m² and occupied a roughly triangular area defined by the Pons Neronianus, the Pons Agrippae, and the Thermae Agrippae (see fig. 7, no. 2).⁷¹

A critical transition occurred in 19 B.C.E., when Agrippa completed the Aqua Virgo, an aqueduct that supplied water to the Campus Martius before crossing the Tiber River, over the newly built Pons Agrippae, to Trans Tiberim (see fig. 7, nos. 16, 18, 19).⁷² The course of the Aqua Virgo is well known from extensive physical remains,⁷³ and Frontinus accurately records that the aqueduct ran on arches above ground from the east slopes of the Pincian Hill to a point on the Campus Martius “beyond the front of the Saepta” (*secundum frontem Saeptorum*).⁷⁴ In addition to providing a reliable supply of fresh, clean water to the area, the new aqueduct must also have been the catalyst for the enlargement of Agrippa’s baths, which were at this time transformed from a comparatively rustic Laconian *pyriaterion* (sweat bath) into full-service Roman-style baths with *frigidarium*, *tepidarium*, and *caldarium*.⁷⁵ Frontinus notes the large capacity of the Aqua Virgo and its small number of *castella* (distribution tanks),⁷⁶ suggesting that it dispersed extremely large volumes of water to a limited number of sites.⁷⁷ In this context, it is not surprising that in 19 B.C.E. Agrippa also added two large water features to the *nemus*: an artificial water channel, known as the Euripus after the straits between

⁷¹ CIL 6 39087, 29781; LTUR 3:52, s.v. “Horti Agrippae”; Grimal 1969, 125–28; contra De Capariis 1991–1992. If Grimal is correct, the horti occupied ca. 80–100 m east–west and 100–120 m north–south.

⁷² Frontin., *Aq.* 1.10; Cass. Dio 54.11.7 (Pliny [HN 36.121] erroneously dates the Aqua Virgo to 33 B.C.E.).

⁷³ LTUR 1:72–3, s.v. “Aqua Virgo”; Lloyd 1979, 193–95; Evans 1994, 105–9.

⁷⁴ Frontin., *Aq.* 22.2 (trans. C.E. Bennett, 1925, Loeb Classical Library).

⁷⁵ Shipley 1933, 48; Gros 1996, 395.

⁷⁶ Frontin., *Aq.* 84.2.

⁷⁷ Evans 1994, 108–9.



FIG. 9. Remains of the central dome of the Thermae Agrippae, the so-called Arco della Ciambella, showing a pattern of fourth-century C.E. lattice ribbing (courtesy L. Lancaster).

the island of Euboea and mainland Greece,⁷⁸ and a large artificial pool, the Stagnum Agrippae.⁷⁹

Although small, the Euripus played an important role in Agrippa's rapidly expanding bath complex. There is no consensus on the exact route of the channel, but a compelling theory proposed that it is depicted on the Severan Forma Urbis Romae following an approximately 1 km course that ran parallel to the Tiber in the northwest part of the Campus Martius (see fig. 7, no. 3).⁸⁰ Various excavations of this feature over the past century suggest a semicircular channel 3.35 m wide and ca. 1.73 m deep. Stratigraphic dating,

in combination with the channel's flanking *opus reticulatum* and volcanic tuff ashlar masonry walls, confirms a Late Republican or early Augustan origin.⁸¹ In this scenario, the Euripus would have been used to drain stagnant water from the baths into the river.⁸²

There is greater agreement on the location of the Stagnum Agrippae, the large rectangular pool that was oriented north–south and aligned with the thermae to the east (see fig. 7, no. 4). Remains excavated between

⁷⁸ On the name and its associations with *otium* and Hellenistic luxury, see von Stackelberg 2009, 40; Dyson 2010, 143.

⁷⁹ The dating of the Euripus and the stagnum comes from Frontinus (*Aq.* 84), who indicates that 460 *quinariae* (a measurement of water capacity) were delivered from the Virgo for the Euripus. The planning of the aqueduct appears to have considered the large volume of water that was necessary for the new water features of Agrippa's bath complex and to have in turn facilitated their construction.

⁸⁰ Coarelli 1977, 834; Rodríguez-Almeida 1981, frag. 37g; contra Bruun (1991, 121–23), who questions the usefulness of depictions of water conduits on the Forma Urbis Romae.

⁸¹ Coarelli 1977, 834–37. Archaeological evidence has been found near Sant'Andrea della Valle, near Farnesina ai Baullari, near the Palazzo della Cancelleria, on Vicolo del Pavone, near Via dell Pellegrino, on the Via dei Cesarini, and on Via Paola; see *LTUR* 2:237–39, s.v. "Euripus"; Gatti 1987, 282; Hülsen 1910, fig. 3; Quilici-Gigli 1983; Coarelli 1997, 549–59; Muzzioli 2009, 32–9; Filippi 2010, 59–63, figs. 33, 34; D'Alessio 2016, 508, 532 n. 292.

⁸² First proposed by Coarelli 1977, 827–28; see also *LTUR* 4:344–45, s.v. "Stagnum Agrippae"; Nielsen 1990, 1:43; Richardson 1992, 367; Coleman 1993, 50–1; Scaroina 2006, 36; contra Lloyd (1979, 196–99), who cites the description of the Euripus and its clean, icy waters by ancient authors (Ov., *Pont.* 1.8.37–38; Martial, *Epigrams* 11.47.5–6; Sen., *Ep.* 83.5) to argue that it served as the bath's natatio; followed recently by Taylor et al. 2016, 40.

the Corso del Rinascimento and the Via del Teatro Valle delineate the pool's western extent, while an Augustan *peperino* wall and three marble steps found in Piazza di Sant'Eustachio belong to its northern edge, with the steps providing access to the water.⁸³ On the basis of the archaeological evidence, the stagnum has recently been reconstructed by Scaroina as a basin lined with *opus signinum* and enclosed by a portico and rusticated *peperino* wall.⁸⁴ The southern boundary is depicted on the Forma Urbis Romae just north of the Hecatostylum, suggesting that the feature was an impressive size (ca. 210 x 90 m) (fig. 10).⁸⁵ Most scholars support the hypothesis that the stagnum was fed directly by the Aqua Virgo and drained into the Euripus. In this scenario, the pool would have been filled with clean water appropriate for swimming and would have functioned as a natatio for the baths.⁸⁶

The Stagnum Agrippae served another appealing function at the baths: it was deep enough to be navigable by boat, eventually becoming infamous for the late-night revels of the emperor Nero. Tacitus describes a banquet organized by Tigellinus aboard an extravagant pleasure raft that was towed around the pool by boats glittering with gold and ivory. In addition, the stagnum was lined with quays (*crepidines*) full of brothels and naked parading prostitutes. The adjacent grove "shone brilliantly with lights."⁸⁷ Although the stagnum was unlikely to have been used for depraved purposes under Agrippa or Augustus, Tacitus' anecdote again emphasizes its impressive size, bucolic setting, and an enduring connection between the new water feature of the Thermae Agrippae and Roman conceptions of *otium* (leisure).

According to ancient sources, Agrippa's baths and gardens were lavishly appointed. Ancient authors praise the luxuriance of the *nemus*: Martial's frequent references suggest that the gardens were a popular

urban destination, while Ovid reminisces from exile about their beauty.⁸⁸ Pliny records that Agrippa erected a staggering 300 statues in the Campus Martius,⁸⁹ and many of these could have been displayed in the *nemus*. Strabo describes Lysippos' statue of a fallen lion, plundered from Lampsacus and set up between the stagnum and the Euripus.⁹⁰ Another famous statue by Lysippos, the Apoxyomenos, depicting an athlete scraping his oiled skin after exercise, was certainly installed in front of the baths (fig. 11). This work was a favorite with the Roman public, and Pliny recounts the uproar when Tiberius tried to move it to his private residence.⁹¹ The interior of the thermae was equally resplendent, with stuccoes adorning walls and vaults, encaustic decoration applied to terracotta surfaces, and paintings hung throughout.⁹² For the recipients of Agrippa's bequest—the *plebs urbana*—this bath complex must have offered an experience staggeringly different from that at the small-scale, gloomy baths throughout the city with which they were familiar.

The scale and scope of the Thermae Agrippae are so unlike anything seen before in Rome that it is in many ways difficult to know what to make of them. Repeatedly, Greek gymnasia are proposed as suitable and monumental inspiration. One scholar suggests that "a strong desire for transplanting the Greek gymnasium to Rome could well be expected in an era when acceptance of Greek ways and manners was encouraged by Augustus."⁹³ This view predominates despite the important formal differences between Agrippa's baths and contemporary Greek gymnasia, including the baths' monumental scale, the inclusion of very large gardens, the lavish decoration, and the Roman emphasis on hot bathing and pools, to name just a few. Further functional distinctions between gymnasia and all Roman baths (both public and private)—including the Roman social conventions of daily bathing, mixed-gender bathing, and mixed-age bathing, plus the tan-

⁸³ This corresponds roughly to the area between the present-day Piazza Navona and Largo di Torre Argentina. Recently on excavations, see Ghini 1988, 169–72; Scaroina 2006; Filippi 2010.

⁸⁴ Scaroina 2006, 45–6.

⁸⁵ Coarelli 1977, 828; Rodríguez-Almeida 1981, pls. 31, 32, frag. 39a; Roddaz 1984, 254–55; Scaroina 2006, 49; Dumser 2008c; D'Alessio 2016, 508, 533 n. 297; on the Hecatostylum, see *LTUR* 3:9–10, s.v. "Hecatostylum."

⁸⁶ Contra Lloyd (1979, 196), who proposes that the stagnum was fed by runoff from the baths; supra n. 82.

⁸⁷ Tac., *Ann.* 15.37 (trans. J. Jackson, 1937, Loeb Classical Library).

⁸⁸ Martial, *Epigrams* 10.58, 11.47.5–6, 14.163; Ov., *Pont.* 1.8.37–38; see also Statius, *Silviae* 1.5.26.

⁸⁹ Plin., *HN* 36.121.

⁹⁰ Strabo 13.1.19.

⁹¹ Plin., *HN* 34.62.

⁹² Plin., *HN* 36.189; on the decoration of imperial baths, see Manderscheid 1981.

⁹³ Yegül 1992, 137; see also Brödner 1983, 75–85; DeLaine 1988, 21; Tortorici 1990, 47–50; Zanker 1990, 139–40; Yegül 1992, 6–29; Wallace-Hadrill 2008, 169–90; Yegül 2013a, 23; 2013b, 83–5; Migliorati 2015; D'Alessio 2016, 509.

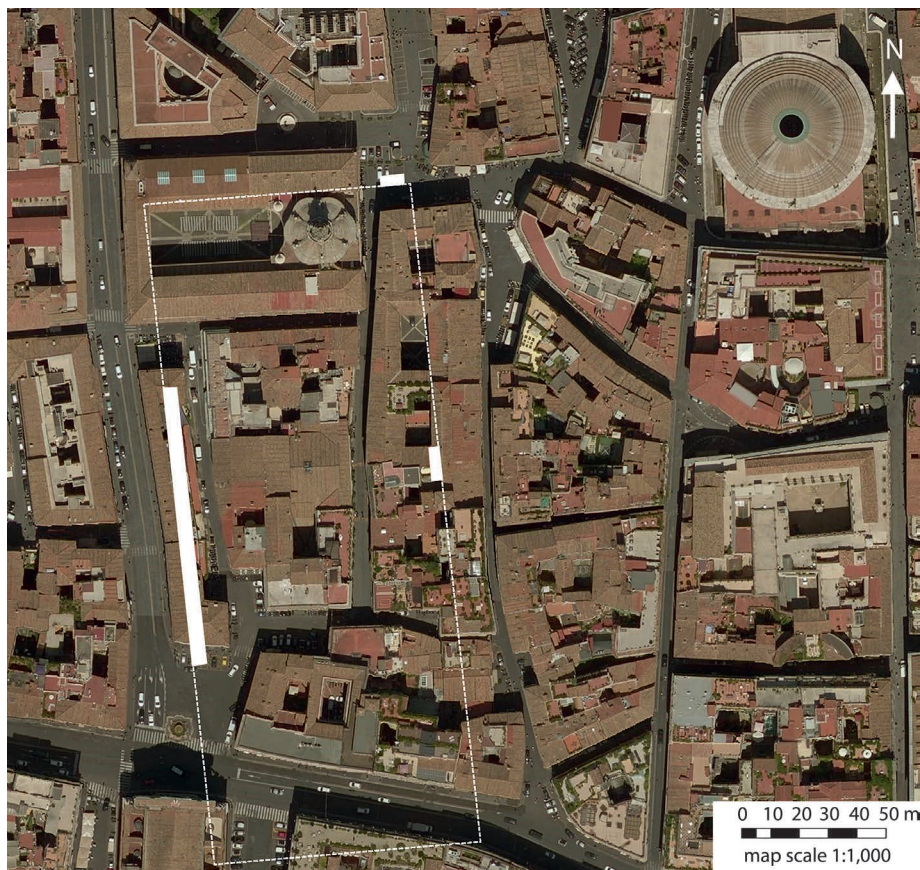


FIG. 10. Hypothetical reconstruction of the perimeter of the Stagnum Agrippae with archaeologically attested features in solid white (after Scaroina 2006, pl. 10; map from Bing Maps Aerial, 2018).

gential connection between Roman baths and either athletics or philosophical training—makes this explanation even more difficult to accept.⁹⁴

Another fundamental problem is that the *Thermae Agrippae* are conventionally spoken of by scholars as having been public in nature from their earliest construction, in 25 B.C.E.⁹⁵ For example, Fagan states that the baths were a publicly accessible, for-profit venture before Agrippa's death, at which time his bequest effectively nationalized them.⁹⁶ Cassius Dio, however, actually says only that the *thermae* were bequeathed to the Roman people in 12 B.C.E., and there is nothing,

in Dio's text or elsewhere, to suggest that they were designed as a public venue. Furthermore, in an interesting passage, Pliny the Elder first praises Agrippa for publicly calling for the nationalization of private art but then criticizes his acquisition of expensive objects and the inappropriately lavish display of paintings in the hottest rooms of his baths. The apparent dichotomy here suggests that we are dealing with differing public and private social norms. Pliny's comments reveal the exclusive, private world of Agrippa:⁹⁷

Exstat certe eius oratio magna et maximo civium digna de tabulis omnibus signisque publicandis, quod fieri satius fuisset quam in villarum exilia pelli. Verum eadem illa torvitas tabulas duas Aiakis et Veneris mercata est a Cyzicenis HS XII; in thermarum quoque calidissima parte marmoribus incluserat parvas tabellas.

⁹⁴ On Greek bathing and the gymnasium in the Hellenistic period, see Yegül 2010, 41–5; Lucore and Trümper 2013; Lucore 2016; on gardens in Greek gymnasia, see Carroll 2018, 186; on Roman social conventions of bathing, see Fagan 2002, 1–222; Yegül 2010, 5–39.

⁹⁵ *Supra* n. 48.

⁹⁶ Fagan 2002, 110; see also Brundrett and Simpson 1997, 222.

⁹⁷ Plin., *HN* 35.26 (trans. H. Rackham, 1952, Loeb Classical Library); on Agrippa as an art collector, see Syme 1986, 72, 351.



FIG. 11. Apoxyomenos, Roman marble copy of a fourth-century B.C.E. Greek original by Lysippos. Vatican City, Museo Pio-Clementino, cat. no. 1185 (© Scala/Art Resource, NY).

At all events there is preserved a speech of Agrippa, lofty in tone and worthy of the greatest citizens, on the question of making all pictures and statues national property, a procedure which would have been preferable to banishing them to country houses. However, that same severe spirit paid the city of Cyzicus 1,200,000 sesterces for two pictures, an Ajax and an Aphrodite; he had also had small paintings let into the marble even in the warmest part of his hot baths.

Thus 12 B.C.E., not 25 B.C.E., should be considered the critical year in which an extravagant—but private—bath complex became Rome's first public *thermae*. The ancient texts indicate that before 12 B.C.E. the *Thermae Agrippae* were private baths, and though their original architectural scope is still not clear, they were certainly set in a vast garden and were lavishly adorned with sculpture. After 19 B.C.E., the newly built *Aqua Virgo* facilitated the conversion and expansion of the baths and prompted the construction

of two large, impressive water features, the *Euripus* and the *stagnum*, in the heart of the *nemus*.

A point often overlooked in discussions of the *Thermae Agrippae* is that it was built at least partly on what had previously been a large urban estate that belonged to Pompey. That estate's precise location and boundaries are uncertain, though it was probably located near the Tiber River and certainly incorporated Pompey's house near his theater (see fig. 7, no. 13).⁹⁸ After Pompey's death in 48 B.C.E., the property appears to have changed hands several times before Marc Antony gained possession of it, either by purchase, inheritance, or as a gift from Julius Caesar.⁹⁹ After Antony's defeat at Actium, Agrippa acquired the estate and built his baths and gardens on part of the property (cf. fig. 12).¹⁰⁰ This previous history suggests that a model for the *Thermae Agrippae*—and perhaps, by extension, for the later imperial *thermae* of Rome—need not be searched for in the architecture of the Greek East or among the early public baths in Campania or Latium. Nor should Agrippa's baths be interpreted as the natural integration of architecture and the cultural or athletic activities traditional to the *Campus Martius*.¹⁰¹ There was another model, a uniquely Roman social and architectural invention (albeit indirectly influenced by the Hellenistic world) that had existed for centuries within the city of Rome: the architecture of private Roman urban estates, or *horti*.

⁹⁸ On the location of the estate of Pompey, see *LTUR* 3:78–9, s.v. “*Horti Pompeiani*”; Jolivet 1983; Palmer 1990, 11–12.

⁹⁹ Jolivet 1983; Coarelli 1997, 545–59; Muzzioli 2006, 334–35; Rehak 2006, 19–20; Capanna 2016a, 75, table 3; D'Alessio 2016, 505, 532 n. 261. It was here that Antony received Octavian when Caesar's will was read in 44 B.C.E.; see Cic., *Phil.* 2.67–8; Vell. Pat. 2.60.3.

¹⁰⁰ *LTUR* 3:51–2, s.v. “*Horti Agrippae*.”

¹⁰¹ DeLaine (1988, 21) views the physical proximity of cultural activities in the *Campus Martius* and various elements of the *Thermae Agrippae* (i.e., the adjacent *stagnum* and baths) as significant factors in the later development of imperial baths. DeLaine (2018, 180–82, following Bouet 1999, 476–77) also proposes that *campi* (large areas for exercise and quasi-military training associated with *iuvenes*) may have influenced the development of Roman baths, although *campi* are focused on exercise and typically lack features critical to Roman baths, such as pools or gardens; on *campi*, see Bouet 1999; Borlenghi 2011, 24–39.

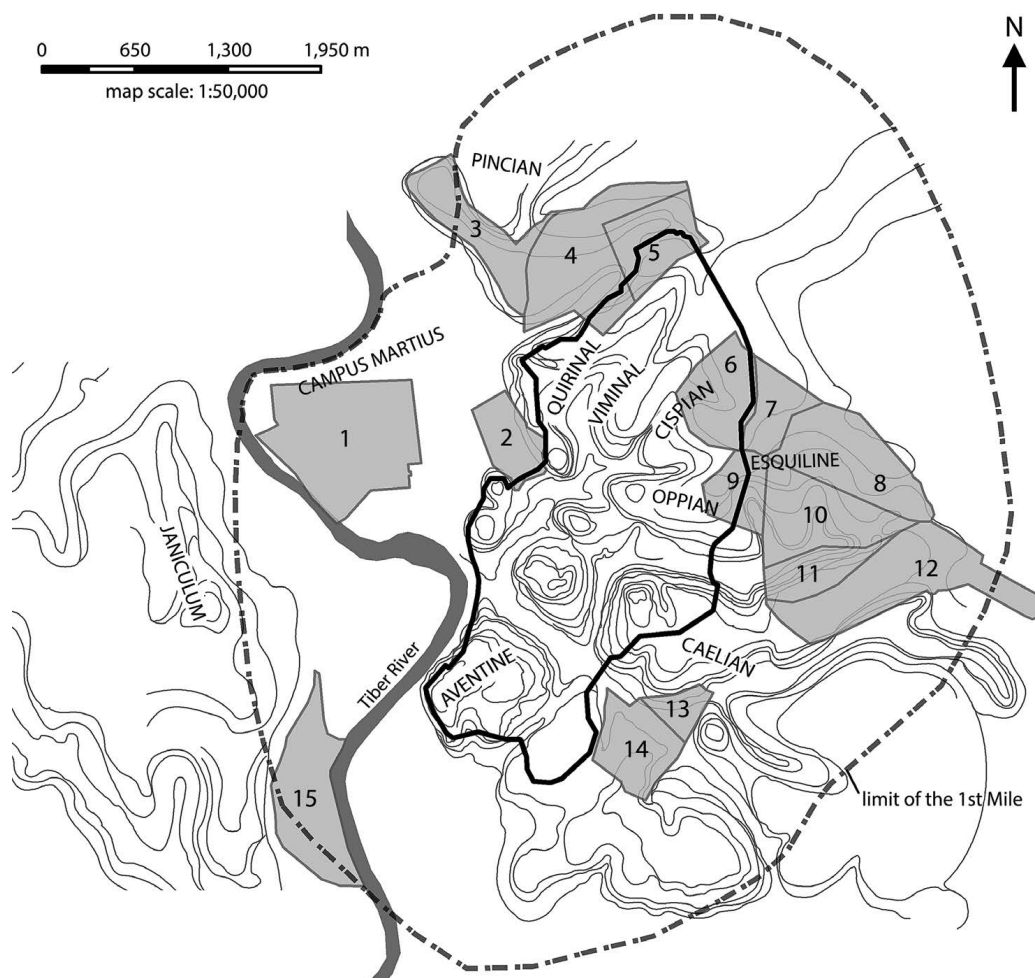


FIG. 12. Map of Rome with horti marked. 1, Horti Agrippae; 2, Horti Scipionis (?); 3, Horti Lucullani; 4, Horti Caesaris (ad portam Collinam); 5, Horti Sallustiani; 6, Horti Lolliani; 7, Horti Calyclani (?); 8, Horti Tauriani; 9, Horti Maecenatis; 10, Horti Lamiani; 11, Horti Maiani (?); 12, Horti Siliani; 13, Horti Drusi (?); 14, Horti Asiniani; 15, Horti Caesaris (drawing by C. McClarty, modified from Carandini and Carafa 2016, table III, and Taylor et al. 2016, fig. 80).

HORTI

Although *hortus* is a common Latin word signifying a domestic cultivated space or small-scale vegetable garden, in the context of the ancient city of Rome, *horti* referred to large, elaborate peri-urban (*sub urbe*) estates owned by the most affluent and elite.¹⁰² An alternative to the traditional elite *domus* constructed adjacent to the Forum Romanum or on the slopes of the Palatine Hill, opulent *horti* were built on the outskirts of the city. There, the owners were far enough from the center not to be constrained by the traditional morals of

virtus (strength), *gravitas* (seriousness), and *severitas* (severity) championed by republican Rome, and at the same time, they were close enough to stay involved in public life, while also advertising and enjoying their immense personal wealth (see fig. 12).¹⁰³

Large garden estates were not new to the ancient world: Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid urban parks and royal estates served as a model for the Diadochi, who integrated parks, known as *paradeisoi* (from the Persian for “enclosure”), into their Hellenistic palaces. In cities such as Alexandria, Pella, and Jericho, these

¹⁰² On the term *horti* and common problems with its use and translation, see Purcell 2001, 548–51.

¹⁰³ La Rocca 1986; Wallace-Hadrill 1998. Purcell (2001, 548–49) cautions that discussions of republican *horti* may rely too much on later, better-known, imperial realities.

garden spaces were lavishly adorned with plantings, pavilions, pools, nymphaea, libraries, and promenades.¹⁰⁴ Owners of Roman republican horti, many of whom had campaigned in the east, were inspired by the scale, design, and luxury of the palaces of the Hellenistic world.¹⁰⁵ They made use of architectural advances in the Roman construction industry, as well as immense resources acquired on foreign military campaigns, in financing, building, and decorating these urban retreats. Purcell has argued that it was precisely because of the complex, ambiguous nature of horti—simultaneously suburban and urban, Roman and Hellenistic, public and private—that the traditional word for vegetable garden may have been adopted: the term *hortus* cleverly provided positive moral connotations for a new, daring, even provocative architectural type.¹⁰⁶

Horti were being constructed in Rome as early as the beginning of the second century B.C.E. P. Cornelius Scipio Africanus was an early patron, and Cicero records that Ti. Gracchus ordered his augural tent set up in Scipio Africanus' horti so he could take consular auspices in 163 B.C.E. (see fig. 12, no. 2).¹⁰⁷ Not just the most famous names in republican politics were linked with Rome's horti; a combination of inscriptions and literary sources cite more than 60 republican examples of the garden estates.¹⁰⁸ Unfortunately, evidence for these earliest horti is frequently limited to the proprietors' names, vague locations, and the attestation that properties eventually ended up in the imperial fiscus. It is not until the end of the Republican period and the beginning of the Imperial that Roman authors, including Sallust, Horace, Pliny, Suetonius, Plutarch, and Tacitus, among others, begin to offer greater detail on horti—about their owners, functions, and decoration, as well as their significant urban impact. Cicero focuses on horti as objects of materialistic desire that, once obtained, became sites for displays of wealth, educated taste, and learning.¹⁰⁹ Horace con-

fides that the value of his horti lies both in its removal from the troublesome realities of city living and in the advantages it confers in social and political rivalries with peers.¹¹⁰ Ancient authors are particularly interested in the properties of some of the Late Republic's most influential and interesting residents—men like Pompey, Caesar, Lucullus, Maecenas, and Sallust.¹¹¹

The archaeological exploration of these famous horti has been hindered by the dense development of *Roma capitale* and the sprawling character of the garden estates themselves. But results of various archaeological campaigns, in conjunction with evidence from other sources, such as epigraphy, make it possible to develop a general picture of how these Late Republican horti were organized and decorated, and, ultimately, how these elite residences functioned.¹¹² Although we cannot reconstruct the complete plan of any one horti, the archaeological record confirms that these residential complexes lacked the traditional linear organization associated with the urban Roman domus. Instead, like many rural villas, horti were organized around elaborate architectural components surrounded by bucolic garden spaces.

The Horti Maecenatis on the Esquiline Hill, owned by C. Cilnius Maecenas (see fig. 12, no. 9), provides the best architectural evidence from the Late Republic through a combination of extant material remains, mostly uncovered during the 19th century, and abundant ancient literary commentaries. Among the many well-known features of the Horti Maecenatis is the so-called Auditorium, a subterranean apsidal room that probably functioned as a large, elaborate *triclinium* (dining room) and that can be dated to the Late Republic (ca. 40 B.C.E.) on the basis of its *opus reticulatum* walls and red and white mosaics (figs. 13, 14).¹¹³ The Auditorium was built into the Servian wall, and it seems that the wall—no longer needed as a fortification once the city outgrew the circuit in the second century B.C.E.¹¹⁴—was also incorporated elsewhere

¹⁰⁴ Grimal 1969, 22–4; on Alexandria, see Strab. 17.1.8; Nielsen 1996, 131–33; on Pella, see Farrar 2016, 110–11; on Jericho, see Eviyasaf 2010, 31–4; on archaeological evidence for Hellenistic gardens, see Farrar 2016, 112–16.

¹⁰⁵ La Rocca 1998.

¹⁰⁶ Purcell 1987, 203; for recent studies of horti with current bibliographies, see Jolivet 1997; Cima and La Rocca 1998; Frass 2006; Cima and Talamo 2008; Capanna 2016a.

¹⁰⁷ Cic., *Nat. D.* 2.11.

¹⁰⁸ Grimal 1969, 113–75.

¹⁰⁹ See von Stackelberg (2009, 11 nn. 5, 6) for all passages from Cicero regarding horti.

¹¹⁰ Hor., *Sat.* 1.9.18, 2.4.15–16, 2.6.

¹¹¹ E.g., Hor., *Sat.* 1.8.13–16; Plin., *HN* 35.26; Prop. 4.8.1–2; Plut., *Luc.* 33.1, 42.4–6; *Pomp.* 40.5, 44.3; Suet., *Ner.* 38; Val. Max. 9.15.1.

¹¹² On the discovery and early excavation of horti throughout Rome, see Talamo 2008; on the economics, multifunctionality, and the eventual disappearance of horti, see Purcell 2007.

¹¹³ See *LTUR* 3: 74–5, s.v. “Horti Maecenatis: ‘Auditorium’”; Rizzo 1983, 226; de Vos 1983, 234.

¹¹⁴ Haselberger 2007, 18–22.



FIG. 13. The Auditorium of Maecenas, a triclinium located in the Horti Maecenatis, ca. 40 B.C.E. (© Scala/Art Resource, NY).

into the design of the horti. In fact, Horace's own description of his walk on the wall, which he called a "stroll on the sunny rampart,"¹¹⁵ points to the innovative and also extravagant architectural possibilities for this type of domestic construction. Possibly also associated with the Servian wall is the famous tower of the Horti Maecenatis (the *Turris Maecenatiana*), from which, according to Suetonius, Nero watched fire destroy much of Rome in 64 C.E.¹¹⁶ It has been speculated that other extant architectural features—an apsidal building, a long colonnade, and a curving wall—served various functions, including as promenades, a riding ground, an aviary, a water triclinium, an art gallery, a nymphaeum, and a bath complex.¹¹⁷ The use of *opus reticulatum* and sculptural finds such

as marble column capitals help date these features to the Augustan era.¹¹⁸

Similar types of buildings have been identified on the properties of Maecenas' elite contemporaries. At the Horti Sallustiani, owned by the historian C. Sallustius Crispus and located on the Quirinal Hill and the *Collis Hortulorum* (see fig. 12, no. 5), two *opus reticulatum* porticoes date to the Late Republic, one constructed with stucco-covered travertine columns and the other with extravagant colored marble columns.¹¹⁹ At the nearby Horti Lamiani (see fig. 12, no. 10), the estate of the prominent Aelii Lamiae, which was also laid out in the Late Republic, archaeologists identified a similar series of building types, constructed with high-quality materials on a monumental scale but with no common orientation.¹²⁰

¹¹⁵ Hor., *Sat.* 1.8.13–6 (trans. H.R. Fairclough, 1926, Loeb Classical Library).

¹¹⁶ Suet., *Ner.* 38; see also Oros. 7.7.6; Colini 1979; Häuber 1990, 36–8.

¹¹⁷ *LTUR* 3:70–4, s.v. "Horti Maecenatis"; Cima 1986, 57; Häuber 1990, 89–95; Wiseman 1998; von Stackelberg 2009.

¹¹⁸ Gatti 1983, 135; Häuber 1990, 30 n. 61.

¹¹⁹ Talamo 1998, 125–26; on the Horti Sallustiani, see also *LTUR* 3:82–3, s.v. "Horti Sallustiani: Ninfeo o terme"; Innocenti and Leotta 2004; on the date of the Horti Sallustiani, see Purcell 2001, 555.

¹²⁰ *LTUR* 3:61–4, s.v. "Horti Lamiani"; Alagia 2014, 250,

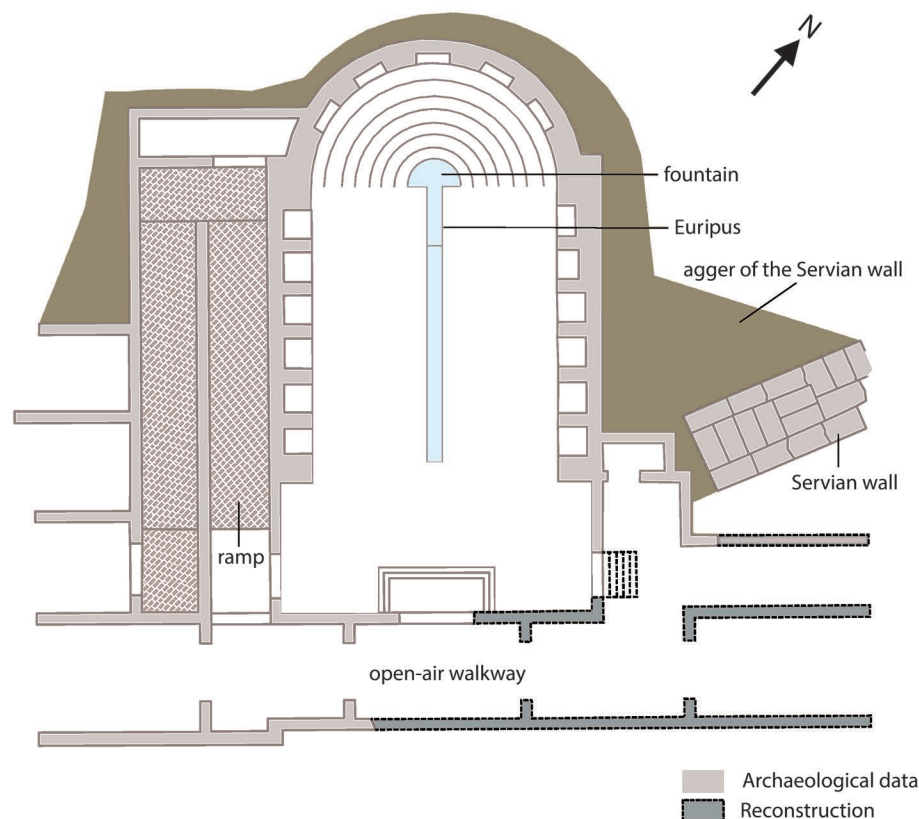


FIG. 14. Plan of the Auditorium of Maecenas (drawing by C. McClarty, modified from Carandini and Carafa 2016, table 124).

The archaeological evidence from these Late Republican horti reveals a noteworthy trend toward architectural experimentation. One aspect of this has been explained by Coarelli, who argues that the unusual variety of building types found in private domestic settings in the Late Republic was influenced by contemporary innovations in sacred architecture. At a time when politics and power were being privatized in Rome, there was also a drive to associate elite individuals with deities through extravagant patronage projects (e.g., Pompey with Venus Victrix in his theater and Julius Caesar with Venus Genetrix in the Forum Iulium). These trends would eventually result in seepage from the public and the sacred architectural vocabularies into the designs of private estates, as seen in the ramps and terraces that link rural sanctuary sites such as Praenestae with the extravagant horti constructed

on the hills of Rome.¹²¹ In addition, Greek gymnasia—another locus for learning and culture—may have inspired the colonnaded garden spaces integrated into many Roman villas and horti.¹²² However, private gymnasia in Roman villas seem to have been meant to evoke, but not imitate, their Greek models. Archaeological evidence is sparse for spaces that served the same athletic function as a Greek gymnasium and followed a similar architectural plan.¹²³

Regardless of their precise architectural inspiration or specific use, it is safe to say that the *raison d'être* of all these structures appears to have been the pursuit of *otium*. In fact, the importance of architecture in Roman horti is often underestimated. There is a tendency to think of these properties as large gardens scattered with small buildings or pavilions. Yet Purcell has rightly noted, “It is to misunderstand the term horti to

fig. 1, with current bibliography. On the location, see Philo., *Leg.* 351; Cima 1986; Alagia 2014, 248–49; on a republican date, see Grimal 1969, 146–47.

¹²¹ Coarelli 1996.

¹²² Recently, Zarmakoupi 2014, 107–11.

¹²³ Yegül (1992, 181–83) recognizes the problems but still tries to connect these building types.

think that formal gardens as such were the dominant element.”¹²⁴ Indeed, the material evidence compiled from Late Republican horti points to extensive combinations of large and elaborate architectural spaces designed for leisure and various intellectual activities, including sites for music, poetry readings, and dramatic performances. Together, these buildings would have created the wholesome, healthy environment that Horace associates with Late Republican horti.¹²⁵ In addition, they would have been unparalleled venues for social and economic self-display.

Cassius Dio says that the Horti Maecenatis included its own private bath complex (the exact site on the property has not been securely identified) and notes its most luxurious feature: it was the first private bath with a warm water pool in Rome.¹²⁶ Whether or not Maecenas was actually the first to have his own warm bath, it is certain that others soon followed suit. By the Late Republic, sumptuous bath complexes appear to have been an essential element of both urban horti and suburban elite dwellings. In Rome, bath complexes are known through archaeological remains of and textual references to the Horti Maecenatis, the Horti Sallustiani, the Horti Lucullani, and the Villa Farnesina, and frequent literary mentions allude to the existence of many more. Cicero describes a horti that he contemplated buying (one of many he claims to have considered) in 45 B.C.E. as an unattractive villa, with large and small baths, and a grove.¹²⁷ Writing at the beginning of the Imperial period, Seneca contrasts current trends for decorating private baths with mirrors, mosaics, costly imported stones, columns, and statues with the rustic baths of Scipio Africanus constructed less than two centuries earlier. He wonders, “Who in these days could bear to bathe in such a fashion?”¹²⁸

Water is a vital aspect of horti. In the case of the Horti Maecenatis, the Aqua Marcia (constructed in 143 B.C.E.)¹²⁹ delivered what was considered the best water in Rome to the Esquiline over the Porta Vimi-

nalis, ensuring that the high ground of the horti could be exploited for both Maecenas’ private baths and his luxurious gardens. Propertius writes about the “watery Esquiline” and the “new fields” replacing an old potter’s cemetery on the hill.¹³⁰ The *Elegiae in Maecenatem* (first century C.E.) describes Maecenas thus: “He preferred a shady oak and falling waters and a few reliable acres of fruitful soil.”¹³¹ Seneca says that Maecenas at his horti “diverted his worried mind with the sound of rippling waters.”¹³² While the Aqua Marcia provides a functional connection between the gardens and the baths of the Horti Maecenatis, other sources confirm that the interdependent relationship of baths and gardens was well established before the latter were formally integrated into the great thermae of imperial Rome. For example, Pliny the Younger boasts of the garden view from the heated rooms and pools of the baths at his Laurentian villa.¹³³ And smaller urban baths without garden spaces, such as the Stabian and Forum Baths at Pompeii, brought gardens indoors with illusionistic scenes painted on their walls.¹³⁴

It was in the gardens of republican horti, scattered among the “rippling waters,” that some of the city’s most famous artworks—particularly sculpture—were displayed. As the properties of Rome’s most affluent men and most important generals, horti became the settings for new works of art and a leading conduit for the import of Greek and Hellenistic masterpieces into Rome.¹³⁵ Häuber has argued that five Late Republican statues of Muses now in the Musei Capitolini and the Museo del Prado were part of a group of nymphs, Pierides, and Muses with Apollo commissioned by Maecenas for the gardens of his horti.¹³⁶ Among many statues dating before the Augustan period possibly displayed at Maecenas’ horti, Häuber has also identified a so-called fisherman, now in the Louvre, and two marble portraits of poets, as well as the famous Lao-

¹²⁴ Purcell 2001, 548–49.

¹²⁵ Hor., *Sat.* 1.8.13–16.

¹²⁶ Cass. Dio 55.7.6. Rodríguez-Almeida (1975–1976, 278) suggested the bath might be depicted on the Forma Urbis Romae; see also Rodríguez-Almeida 1981, 593 (slab VIII-3, frag. 10v).

¹²⁷ Cic., *Att.* 13.29.

¹²⁸ Sen., *Ep.* 86.4–14 (trans. T. Corcoran, 1970, Loeb Classical Library).

¹²⁹ *LTUR* 1:67–9, s.v. “Aqua Marcia.”

¹³⁰ Prop. 4.8.1–2; on the potter’s cemetery, see Hor., *Sat.* 1.8.13–16; Bodel 1994, 13–23, 38–54; Bell 1998.

¹³¹ *Elegiae in Maecenatem* 1.33–36 (trans. H. Schoonhoven, 1980, Gröningen: Bouma).

¹³² Sen., *Prov.* 1.3.10 (trans. J.W. Basore, 1958, Loeb Classical Library).

¹³³ Plin., *Ep.* 2.17.11.

¹³⁴ See DeLaine 2018, 171–75.

¹³⁵ Generally on sculpture in horti, see Häuber 1998a; on the importance of art in elite domestic contexts, see Neudecker 1988, 1998.

¹³⁶ Häuber 1991, 1998b, 2011; contra Schröder 2004, 202–20.

coön group housed in the Vatican Museums, which can be attributed to the time of Maecenas (ca. 78–70 B.C.E.).¹³⁷ Similarly, Pliny records original works by Praxiteles and Scopas in the Horti Serviliani and says that the Farnese Bull (the Hellenistic original) was part of the collection at the Horti Asiniani (see fig. 12, no. 14).¹³⁸ Greek and Hellenistic originals of the Niobids (fig. 15) and of Artemis and Iphigenia were found in the Horti Sallustiani, and two statues depicting Gauls are thought to have been originally set up there by the previous owner of the horti, Caesar, conqueror of the Gauls.¹³⁹ A copy of Myron's Discobolus was discovered at the Horti Lamiani, along with the Esquiline Venus.¹⁴⁰

Often, popular mythological subjects such as Dionysus and members of his Bacchic entourage—Silenus, maenads, satyrs, thyiades—as well as nymphs and centaurs, accentuated the bucolic nature and possible pleasures of the garden settings, many of which were, appropriately, planted with grape vines.¹⁴¹ At the same time, statues of athletes reinforced the wholesome, healthy environment that was associated with horti.¹⁴² Combined with columnar porticoes, these large statue collections may have evoked the crowded sculptural scenes depicted in a series of evocative terracotta Campana reliefs (fig. 16), also likely from the Horti Sallustiani.¹⁴³ It is significant that in Pliny's inventory of the statues in the Horti Asiniani, he employs the term

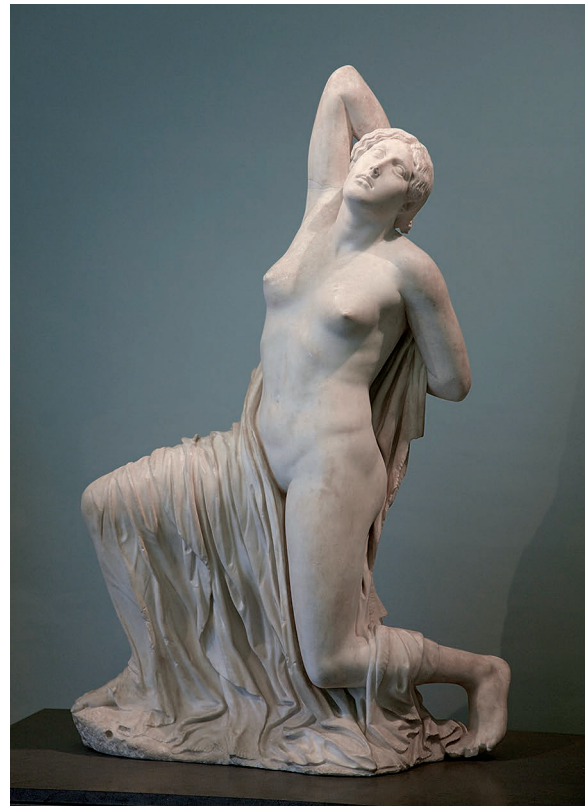


FIG. 15. Dying Niobid, Greek marble statue of the fifth century B.C.E., from the Horti Sallustiani. Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano (Palazzo Massimo alle Terme) (© Vanni Archive/Art Resource, NY).

¹³⁷ Häuber 2011; on the date of the Laocoön and current debates with bibliography, see Stewart 2005, 494–500.

¹³⁸ On the Horti Serviliani, see Plin., *HN* 36.23–25; 36.33–36; *LTUR* 3:84, s.v. “Horti Serviliani”; on the Horti Asiniani, see Plin., *HN* 36.23–25; *LTUR* 3:54, s.v. “Horti Asiniani.” Stewart (2005, 510–13) redates the Farnese Bull to the Late Republic and proposes Mark Antony as patron.

¹³⁹ Coarelli 1978, 234; first suggested by Visconti 1831, 325–26. The Gaul statues are now in the Musei Capitolini (inv. no. MC0747) and Museo Nazionale Romano, Palazzo Altemps (inv. no. 8606), Rome.

¹⁴⁰ The boundary between the Horti Lamiani and the Horti Maecenatis has not yet been determined, and neither the archaeological remains nor the sculptural finds help resolve the issue; see Grimal 1969, 143–47; Häuber 1990; Alagia 2014, 248–49. On sculpture at the Horti Sallustiani, see Talamo 1995; 1998, 138–69; Moltesen 1998; Hartswick 2004, 83–142; on sculpture at the Horti Lamiani, see Cima and La Rocca 1986, 79–82, 97–8; von Stackelberg 2009, 27.

¹⁴¹ Neudecker 1998, 80. On vines, see Plin., *Ep.* 1.24.3–4; Wallace-Hadrill 1998, 7.

¹⁴² Hor., *Sat.* 1.8.13–16.

¹⁴³ Neudecker 1998, 80–2, fig. 7.1.

monumenta, clearly alluding to the artworks' origin as spoils of war.¹⁴⁴ However, unlike the public displays of famous Greek works of art in republican Rome, such as the Granikos monument glimpsed through the colonnades of the Porticus Metelli, horti offered a more refined and, importantly, more restricted viewing environment for a garden's owner and his chosen friends.

The innovative architectural contexts of Rome's Late Republican horti and their lavish sculptural decoration raise the question of whether—or to what degree—the urban garden estates were actually intended to be restricted spaces. On one hand, boundary stones inscribed “PRIVATUM” discovered in the Horti Agrippae and the Horti Lolliani (see fig. 12, nos. 1, 6) explicitly indicate that these were designed as pri-

¹⁴⁴ Plin., *HN* 36.23–25, 36.33; Neudecker 1998. On the connection between the influx of Greek statuary and Roman architectural innovations, see Welch 2006.



FIG. 16. Terracotta Campana relief with statues, vessels, and garlands displayed in a portico similar to those known from republican horti, early first century C.E., width. 41 cm x ht. 34.5 cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre, inv. no. Cp 3834. (© Scala/Art Resource, NY).

vate residences.¹⁴⁵ On the other hand, their proximity to the city center and high visibility suggest at least some exclusive and semi-exclusive access, most likely based on the owners' desire for competitive display. The frequent inclusion in horti of buildings such as libraries (examples are known from the estates of C. Asinius Pollio and L. Lucullus), which sources report were opened to various learned residents in Rome, indicate that horti sometimes catered to a larger, though probably still elite, population.¹⁴⁶ Also, semi-public sanctuaries appear to have been incorporated into the plan of horti throughout Rome. A sanctuary of Fortuna could be found in the Horti Lucullani, a temple to Minerva Medica may have been located in the Horti Lamiani, and Cicero jokes about his plans to build an

ornamental mock temple on the grounds of his new horti (once he finally purchases one).¹⁴⁷

It seems that strategic viewing was a significant element in the design of these hilltop estates. Manipulation of the natural environment to improve the view from—and draw eyes to—the horti is evident in many properties. Elaborate terraces and porticoes, found in almost all of the hilltop republican horti, simultaneously enhanced the prospect for those living or visiting on the hills and created a more impressive vista for ordinary Romans looking up.¹⁴⁸ In its earliest phase, the

¹⁴⁵ On the Horti Lolliani, see *CIL* 6 31284; on the Horti Agrippae, see *CIL* 6 29781; D'Arms 1998, 34.

¹⁴⁶ Plut., *Luc.* 42.1–2; on libraries and intellectual activities in horti, see von Stackelberg 2009, 94–5.

¹⁴⁷ On the Sanctuary of Fortuna, see Broise and Jolivet 1998a; on the Temple of Minerva Medica, see Häuber 2011, though some argue that this was an elaborate dining room (von Stackelberg 2009, 25); on the mock temple, see Cic., *Att.* 13.29.1. A parallel for the erection of a sanctuary on private land is the Temple of Fortuna Augusta in Pompeii, where an inscribed cippus (*CIL* 10 821) marks the site as private property; see Ball and Dobbins 2017, 493.

¹⁴⁸ The Horti Lucullani (see fig. 12, no. 3), one of the largest, most lavish, and best-situated horti of the Late Republic, illustrates the symbolic value these urban estates had for Romans:

Auditorium of Maecenatis was open on one side, not only to take in the city below but also revealing itself to the city (see figs. 13, 14).¹⁴⁹ Towers, known from the Horti Maecenatis and the Horti Caesaris, exploited the view for owners and provided soaring landmarks for everyone in the city.¹⁵⁰ Certain elements of horti appear to have been aligned for visual impact, such as the semicircular porticoes of the Horti Lamiani, which coordinate with the tower of the Horti Maecenatis. At the Villa Farnesina, an early Augustan horti on the west bank of the Tiber that may also have been owned by Agrippa,¹⁵¹ the architectural remains, unusually well preserved, delineate a large urban villa constructed on a series of terraces climbing from the Tiber towards the Janiculum Hill. The rectilinear structure of the villa's core is dominated by a large hemicycle incorporating planted terraces that offer views of the city and the distant Alban Hills. This is, as Yegül notes, a calculated exercise in landscape architecture,¹⁵² and it again invites comparisons with public sanctuary architecture of republican sites such as Palestrina. Interestingly, Lugli, who published the plan of the Villa Farnesina in 1938, noted another connection: the similarity between the

hemicycle of the Villa Farnesina and similar features in later thermae of the imperial period.¹⁵³

Not until the very end of the republic was the *plebs urbana* allowed direct—though controlled—access into some of Rome's elite horti. During the consular election campaign of the *novus homo* L. Africanus in 61 B.C.E., Plutarch tells us, Pompey used his horti on the Campus Martius to pay off voters.¹⁵⁴ Pompey's bribery of voters in his gardens is the earliest attested example of an individual from the political elite admitting members of the plebs into a private horti in large numbers. Presumably, entrance into this garden space would have been an exceptional experience for the average Roman, offering them a garden experience a full six years before the Porticus Pompei opened as Rome's first public park.¹⁵⁵

The *plebs urbana* were again invited into a private horti in 45 B.C.E., when Julius Caesar moved the *epulum publicum*—the public feast traditionally held in the space of the Forum Romanum or Forum Boarium after a triumph—celebrating his defeat of C. Pompeius to his own horti in Trans Tiberim (see fig. 12, no. 15).¹⁵⁶ This event took place at a moment of high social and political tension, with Rome's *optimates* increasingly concerned about Caesar's plans to renovate Rome's civic infrastructure. Caesar's decision to host the celebration in his private gardens altered the experience and the traditional social dynamic of the *epulum publicum*.¹⁵⁷ When the plebs entered the elite space, they were greeted by a carefully curated landscape focused on a single individual and his personal accomplishments, a setting vastly different from the Forum Romanum, where generations of monuments set up by Rome's most prominent families jockeyed for attention. The temporary public accessibility of the Horti Caesaris was made permanent when Caesar bequeathed his horti, along with all its statues and paintings, to the Roman people upon his death.¹⁵⁸ The enormous bequest, offering green space and an unprecedented level of public *luxuria*, was entirely

L. Licinius Lucullus originally had this horti built outside the *pomerium* between 66 and 63 B.C.E., after his removal from the Mithridatic campaign and before his delayed triumph. Although Lucullus was shut out of direct political power, his very visible occupation of the Pincian Hill was a conspicuous topographical reminder to all of his wealth and influence. See Plut., *Luc.* 33.1, 42.4–6; *LTUR* 3:67–70, s.v. “Horti Lucullani”; Keaveney 1992, 143–65; Broise and Jolivet 1998b; Wallace-Hadrill 1998, 3–4; Tröster 2008, 49–76; von Stackelberg 2009, 77; Capanna 2016b, 481–82. On the visual significance of horti, see Purcell 1987, 193–95; 2001, 556; Jolivet 1997, 198; Hales 2013, 64–6. Von Stackelberg (2009, 75) has also emphasized the martial nature of the hilltop villas of Marius, Pompey, and Caesar on the Bay of Naples.

¹⁴⁹ *LTUR* 3:74–5, s.v. “Horti Maecenatis: ‘Auditorium’”; Häuber 1990, 62–4.

¹⁵⁰ Purcell 1987, 193–95; Hales 2013, 64–5; it is not clear which of Caesar's horti Suetonius (*Ner.* 38) is referring to; see Hartswick (2004, 11) for discussion.

¹⁵¹ Beyen 1948, 15–21. Lugli (1938), however, identified Clodia, the wife of Q. Metellus Celer and mistress of Catullus, as the owner and suggested a date in the mid first century B.C.E. The villa is dated stylistically on the basis of its wall paintings; for an overview of the debate, see Clarke 1991, 52–6.

¹⁵² Yegül (1992, 181–83) argues that the impetus for this was the integration of Greek gymnasia into private Roman villas.

¹⁵³ Lugli 1938.

¹⁵⁴ Plut., *Pomp.* 44.3.

¹⁵⁵ Gleason 1990, 1994; von Stackelberg 2009, 81. There is no reason to assume, per Wood (2009, 78, 81), that the Horti Pompeiani continued to allow public access after this event.

¹⁵⁶ Val. Max. 9.15.1.

¹⁵⁷ D'Arms 1998.

¹⁵⁸ Plin., *HN* 35.26.

without precedent in Rome and stood as an example for Agrippa, who, like Augustus, publicly followed Caesar's lead.¹⁵⁹ Both Pompey and Caesar had demonstrated that access to an elite horti could be a direct, popular, and enduring way to garner political power.

Horti are rarely considered in discussions of the architectural and urban growth of republican Rome, but they played a critical role in the development of the built environment while also providing the setting for some of the most interesting social and political events of the day. Considering the precedents—architectural, decorative, functional, political—that men like Maecenas, Sallust, Lucullus, Pompey, and Caesar had established, the fashion in which Agrippa built onto the elaborate private horti he had acquired in the Campus Martius is not surprising. He incorporated into the estate the by-now-typical features associated with leisure—pools, gardens, porticoes, and baths—and he adorned it with famous art. Some scholars have argued that the construction of an elite horti and luxurious private bath complex would have been untenable for Agrippa in light of Augustus' moral regulations,¹⁶⁰ but in the early years of Augustus' prominence the long tradition of elite horti in Rome was a perfectly viable model for the *novus homo* Agrippa. It can even be argued that the water features typical of republican horti would have been particularly appropriate for Agrippa, who often chose to showcase his personal aquatic achievements as both a builder of aqueducts and commander of Augustus' victorious naval forces at the Battle of Actium.¹⁶¹ Thus, by the Late Republic, there was a long-standing tradition of peri-urban elite estates in Rome with inventive architecture—including baths—and garden spaces luxuriously decorated with impressive art, all designed around the pursuit of *otium*. By the end of the first century B.C.E., it had also

become clear that the political capital to be gained by opening these formerly restricted estates to the public was increasingly valuable.

FROM BALNEA TO THERMAE, FROM PRIVATE TO PUBLIC

This sociopolitical dynamic of public and private Rome is extremely significant for the Thermae Agrippae. In the Campus Martius, Agrippa offered the *plebs urbana* what Zanker and others have aptly called "a villa for the common people," by effectively publicizing features that had long been urban perquisites for Rome's elite.¹⁶² Caesar had set a precedent with important political implications. By transferring formerly exclusive private properties to the city's plebs, Agrippa—and, by extension, Augustus—also gained immense popular support and robbed the elite of one of their established arenas of power.

This tactic was already a key element of Augustus' urban policy. It had a parallel in his construction of the monumental Porticus Liviae, a large, widely admired public recreational complex surrounded by a vine-covered quadriportico and filled with art.¹⁶³ The Porticus Liviae, built on the north slopes of the busy Oppian Hill,¹⁶⁴ replaced the lavish private house of Vedius Pollio, a wealthy but infamous Roman who had maintained tanks of lampreys to which he fed slaves condemned to death. Augustus inherited Pollio's palatial urban residence in 15 B.C.E. and razed it because, according to contemporary accounts, its example of opulence was morally harmful.¹⁶⁵ The official message was that Pollio's ostentatious house did not reflect the frugal ideals of the emperor's new legislation. However, later authors saw in Augustus' move a more sinister motive: to erase Vedius Pollio from the urban record in Rome.¹⁶⁶

¹⁵⁹ On Octavian/Augustus building urban associations with Julius Caesar, see Favro 1996, 95–8.

¹⁶⁰ Esp. Fagan (2002, 108 n. 13), who writes that it is "scarcely credible that Augustus, who placed great emphasis on ostensible moderation in the behavior of the ruling class, would have allowed his right-hand man to construct exclusively for his personal use such a vast and luxurious bathhouse." This view buys into the propaganda of Augustus' building program rather than considering the realities of elite building in the late first century B.C.E.

¹⁶¹ von Stackelberg 2009, 82; on allusions to victory at Actium, see Zanker 1990, 82–5.

¹⁶² Zanker 1990, 139–40; on "villa for the common people," see Grimal 1969, 195–96.

¹⁶³ Martial, *Epigrams* 3.20; Ov., *Ars Am.* 1.71–2; Plin., *HN* 14.11 (on trellises covered in vines); Strabo 5.3.8; *LTUR* 4:127–29, s.v. "Porticus Liviae."

¹⁶⁴ Remains have been found between the Via in Selci and the Via delle Sette Sale; see Panella 1987, 614–15. The location has been identified on the *Forma Urbis* and fixed by overlaying the fragment on the modern network of streets and houses; see Rodríguez-Almeida 1981, pls. 7–9.

¹⁶⁵ Ov., *Fast.* 6.639–48.

¹⁶⁶ Cass. Dio 54.23.6; Bodel 1997, 10; Roller 2010.

A similar narrative involves the house of M. Aemilius Scaurus on the Palatine. Pliny records that, in 58 B.C.E., Scaurus had been the first Roman to build a three-story theatrical stage building, or *scaenae frons*. Romans marveled at its extravagance, as it included 360 columns and was decorated with 3,000 bronze statues.¹⁶⁷ After the wooden theater was taken down,¹⁶⁸ four of the columns—particularly fine ones of Hymettus Greek marble—were set up inside Scaurus' private house. However, in 13 B.C.E., Augustus demolished at least part of that house, removing the renowned columns and returning them to public use by integrating them into the stage building of his newly constructed Theater of Marcellus.¹⁶⁹

Agrippa appears to follow Augustus' lead by leaving his horti to the people, although one wonders if he was somewhat more reluctant to make his own property public than the property of political opponents. As previously discussed, Pliny the Elder tells of Agrippa's programmatic address of 33 B.C.E. "on the need to display publicly all Greek statues and works of art." While we do not know any more details of this speech, Pliny considered it "magnificent and worthy of the greatest citizen" and contrasted Agrippa's virtuous, civic-minded vision with that of Rome's elite hiding works of art in their private homes.¹⁷⁰ Many of the most famous of these works were precisely those held in private horti throughout Rome.¹⁷¹ Agrippa did eventually allow his Greek originals to be displayed in public but only after his death, more than 20 years later.

Undeniably, Augustus also gained political capital from his association with Agrippa's newly public baths and the opening up of another elite horti in the center of Rome. Furthermore, his relationship with Agrippa and this building complex might be a key to one of the longstanding debates over Roman baths: the problem of their nomenclature. Yegül notes that the "linguistic variation and inconsistency [in the use of the terms *balnea* and *thermae*]" continues to baffle modern audiences.¹⁷² While some argue that a *thermae* was a bath complex that incorporated the colonnaded space

of a gymnasium and use this term for both republican and imperial complexes,¹⁷³ others, more convincingly, use *balnea* to describe smaller, more modest, private bathing establishments—specifically, those from the republic—and *thermae* for larger, more luxurious baths like Agrippa's, built and run (after his time) by the Roman state and open to the public.¹⁷⁴ Martial supports this latter understanding when he writes that Sempronius Tudca had built two baths, a *balneum* constructed of wood and a *thermae* of masonry decorated with marble.¹⁷⁵ This is certain: the baths built by Agrippa are the earliest to be designated by ancient sources as *thermae*, and the term first appears in the architectural vocabulary of the Early Imperial period.¹⁷⁶

Although a semantic shift for such a common building type may seem surprising, the neologism marks a broader change in the way architecture was exploited under the empire. It signals the movement toward large-scale, unified architectural programs designed and constructed for a single purpose: to honor the imperial family. Similar, contemporary change can be seen in the replacement of the word *spectacula*—a descriptive term emphasizing the functional space in which spectators gathered to watch gladiatorial events—with the Greek-inspired *amphitheatrum* (meaning a place for looking from both sides) in the early first century C.E.¹⁷⁷ It is also in the Augustan period that *arcus* (a Latin transcription of the Greek word for bow) replaces *fornix*, a term that had long been used for freestanding arches as well as for any vaulted form, particularly when incorporated into the substructures of buildings or utilitarian constructions such as aqueducts and bridges.¹⁷⁸ By the Late Republic, *fornices* had apparently acquired some seamy associations (hence the English word "fornicate"): both Horace and Seneca use *fornix* as a synonym for brothel.¹⁷⁹ Considering Augustus' emphasis on traditional Roman values and the base associations the word *fornix* now brought to mind, it is not surprising that the term ceased to be used for

¹⁶⁷ Plin., *HN* 34.17; on the theater of Scaurus, see Medri 1997.

¹⁶⁸ On the republican tradition of setting up temporary wooden theaters, see Gruen 1996, 205–10; Klar 2006, 163–64.

¹⁶⁹ Asc. *Scaurus* 45.

¹⁷⁰ Plin., *HN* 35.26; Rawson 1985, 114; Rehak 2006, 21.

¹⁷¹ See Zanker 1990, 139–40.

¹⁷² Yegül 1992, 48.

¹⁷³ Nielsen 1990, 1:3.

¹⁷⁴ Staccioli 1961, 93; recently, see Yegül 2010, 48–9; 2014, 300–1.

¹⁷⁵ Martial, *Epigrams* 9.75.

¹⁷⁶ Plin., *HN* 34.62.

¹⁷⁷ See Welch 2007, 107–8.

¹⁷⁸ *TLL* 2.479, s.v. "Arcus," iii. See Hrychuk Kontokosta 2013, 30–1.

¹⁷⁹ Hor., *Sat.* 1.2.30; Sen., *De Vita Beata* 7.3.

freestanding arches beginning in his reign. While we know that by the Late Republic small private bath complexes had become a regular part of the urban fabric of Rome, it is also clear from the ancient literary evidence that they were not always the most respectable part.¹⁸⁰ With such established negative connotations, perhaps the adoption of the term *thermae* to describe the new, larger, and more magnificent *Thermae Agrippae* provided a clean slate for this building type, just as with *arcus* and *amphitheatrum*. Interestingly, these three building types—baths, so-called triumphal arches, and amphitheaters—would also become fundamental components of imperial building campaigns.

THE LEGACY OF THE THERMAE AGRIPPAE

The next imperially financed public bath, the *Thermae Neronis* (see fig. 7, no. 11), incorporated the same functions as the *Thermae Agrippae* but took a significantly different form. Located in the Campus Martius, just a few hundred meters north of the *Thermae Agrippae*, Nero's baths were not constructed until between 60 and 64 C.E., almost 70 years after Agrippa's complex was bequeathed to the Roman people. Contemporary Romans received Nero's baths with great excitement. Writing under the Flavians, Martial famously wondered, "What could be worse than Nero? What could be better than Nero's baths?"¹⁸¹ Unfortunately, like Agrippa's baths, the *Thermae Neronis* are not well preserved, and the original plan is further complicated by restorations during the time of Hadrian and again under Alexander Severus in 226–227 C.E., after which they were known as the *Thermae Neonianae Alexandrinae*.¹⁸² However, Ghini has argued that, in this case, the drawings of the building by Palladio more accurately depict the extant remains.¹⁸³ And Ball has also

posited, based on the baths' layout, proportions, absence of modular design, and the continuity expressed in the name itself, that Palladio's plan may represent the original Neronian design (fig. 17).¹⁸⁴

At present, we can best reconstruct the mid first-century C.E. *Thermae Neronis* as an axial and symmetrically designed, fully integrated complex incorporating a central bathing block with projecting caldarium, tepidarium, vaulted frigidarium, and natatio flanked by matching *palaestrae* (exercise courts) on each side.¹⁸⁵ While there are still spaces for bathing, exercise, and swimming, presumably decorated with exquisite and extravagant materials and art, as in the nearby *Thermae Agrippae*, these areas are now conceived and executed as a single unit. Gone are the luxuriant gardens and expansive public spaces of the *Horti Agrippae*; the open plan of Agrippa's baths, with its Euripus, stagnum, and statue-filled *nemus*, is not emulated again in a public bath complex in Rome. In the *Thermae Neronis*, we see the beginnings of the formal, enclosed planning that will become a hallmark of later imperial bath complexes.¹⁸⁶

It is perhaps not surprising that this dramatic shift in the structure of imperial *thermae* took place during the reign of Nero, a period known both for its architectural innovation and for the emperor's courting of the Roman plebs.¹⁸⁷ Over the course of the previous century, Pompey and Caesar, followed by Agrippa and Augustus even more extensively, had proved how

¹⁸⁰ E.g., in Cicero's *Pro Caelio* (25.62–26.63), the public Senian baths are the setting for nefarious dealings. P. Licinius, a friend of Caelius, is persuaded to procure poison intended to murder Clodia, but Clodia, having received news of the plot, arranges for her friends to seize him during the transaction at the baths.

¹⁸¹ Martial, *Epigrams* 7.34.5 (trans. D.R. Shackelton Bailey, 1993, Loeb Classical Library).

¹⁸² Yegül 1992, 137 n. 30; 2014, 312.

¹⁸³ Ghini's study (1985) suggests that most of the remains date to the time of Alexander Severus (222–235 C.E.). Yegül (2010, 107), although he questions the degree to which the Palladio drawings reflect the original plan, confuses matters by adding that "the double palaestra . . . appears to be a remnant of the original scheme."

¹⁸⁴ Ball 2003, 240–43; on modular design, see DeLaine 1997; on problems with Palladio's plans, see DeLaine 1993, 356.

¹⁸⁵ On symmetrical layout, see Yegül 1992, 141; 2014, 312; Ball 2003, 238–49. Nielsen (1990, 1:47) suggests that the axiality and symmetry of the plan is related to the influence of "Hellenic culture" on Nero. MacDonald (1986, 75) considers the Baths of Titus to be the first of the symmetrical type. Suetonius (*Nero* 12) describes the baths as "*thermas atque gymnasium*," and debate centers on whether this should be translated as "gymnasium baths" or as separate structures. See Bourne 1946, 50; Ball 2003, 239.

¹⁸⁶ It is for this reason that Nielsen (1990, 1:45) identifies the *Thermae Neronis*, not the *Thermae Agrippae*, as the first of the imperial bath type.

¹⁸⁷ On architectural innovation, see Ball 2003. Nero's relationship with the *plebs urbana* is best exemplified by the possibility that he allowed at least some degree of public access into his own provocative urban horti, the *Domus Aurea*. On the *Domus Aurea*, see Tomei and Rea 2011; on access to the *Domus Aurea*, see Griffin 1984, 140–41; Champlin 1998, 334–35; Wood 2009, 84.

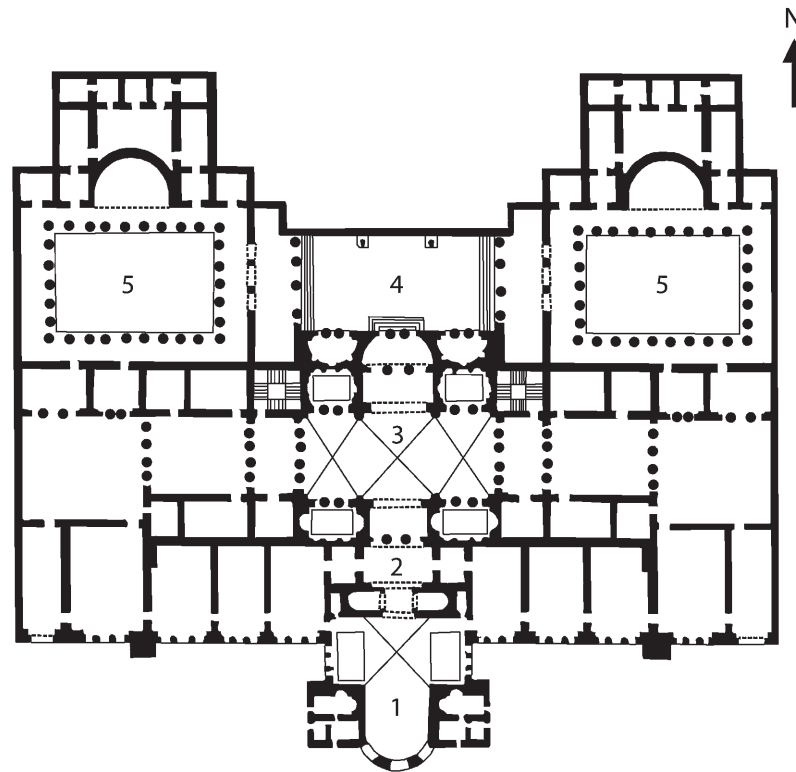


FIG. 17. Plan of the Thermae Neronis in Rome. 1, Caldarium; 2, Tepidarium; 3, Frigidarium; 4, Natatio; 5, Palaestra (drawing by C. McClarty, after Ball 2003, fig. 82).

politically profitable it could be to provide the *plebs urbana* with what had traditionally been elite havens of private space. However, in the Thermae Neronis, the now-familiar pools, gardens, and extravagant baths began to be architecturally entrenched within an imperial system of negotiated social access and formalized space. Nero was, as Elsner has emphasized, a young emperor attempting to legitimize his rule.¹⁸⁸ Part of his strategy was to emulate, and even to challenge, the urban and architectural legacy of Augustus—in particular, his predecessor’s building program in the Campus Martius.¹⁸⁹ Nero’s construction of yet another thermae in the Campus Martius—the only area of the city already furnished with a large-scale public bath—clearly follows this strategy (see fig. 7, no. 11). After the fire of 64 C.E., the construction of the Domus Aurea, an expansive horti located in the heart of Rome, would further emulate the milieu of the Agrippan Campus Martius, incorporating as its central feature the Stag-

num Neronis, an enormous lake that deliberately referenced—and rivaled—the Stagnum Agrippae.

CONCLUSION

To understand the pivotal role the Thermae Agrippae played in the development of Roman bath architecture, it is not enough simply to look at their poorly preserved archaeological remains. The baths and the horti to which they originally belonged must be situated within the social, historical, and architectural context of the Late Republican period. Ultimately, the inspiration for Agrippa’s baths—the first large-scale imperial baths in Rome—did not come from abstract Roman ideas about the Greek gymnasium, from the cultural activities of the nearby Campus Martius, or from a newfound Roman interest in sport, as some have suggested.¹⁹⁰ Instead, the source of the Thermae

¹⁸⁸ Elsner 1994, 112.

¹⁸⁹ Wood 2009, 82–4.

¹⁹⁰ For recent consideration regarding the gymnasium, see Wallace-Hadrill 2008, 169–90; Yegül 2013a, 23; on cultural activities, see DeLaine 1988, 21; on sport, see Nielsen 1990, 1:36; Jacobs and Conlin 2014, 126.

Agrippae can be found in the preexisting architectural and decorative traditions of the local horti of Rome. To the ancient viewer, this connection between horti and Agrippa's first public baths must have been visually explicit because of their physical connection within the Campus Martius. It is easy to see how this connection may have been lost as development in the city accelerated and as imperial baths evolved. The Agrippan series of leisure pavilions connected by water features and garden spaces and decorated with masterpieces of Greek art became an increasingly formalized architectural type characterized by a massive symmetrical bathing block eventually situated within a walled garden, first seen in the Thermae Neronis and fully formed by the time of Trajan. These large, public imperial edifices recall few formal elements of the old republican horti, and this may be the reason that models for imperial baths are so frequently sought farther afield—for instance, in the architecture of the Greek East and Hellenistic world.

The development of monumental imperial thermae coincides with the general demise of independently owned horti in Rome. Changes in the sociopolitical climate contributed to the acquisition of these prestigious elite residences by the imperial fiscus, while the growth of the urban center emphasized an alternative economic potential for the land they occupied.¹⁹¹ Interestingly, horti, perhaps because of their foreign influences, never became part of the urban vocabulary anywhere except Rome, while the imperial thermae of Rome provided a flourishing model for large-scale public bath complexes throughout the empire. Yet an unrecognized legacy of Rome's Late Republican horti lies in their significant influence on the Thermae Agrippae. Agrippa's baths brought heretofore unavailable luxuries to the Roman people, continued an accelerating tradition of nationalizing elite resources, and at the same time forever changed bathing in Rome and its burgeoning empire. Republican urban balnea—and before them, Greek public baths—generally had been small, utilitarian, even rustic in nature. After Agrippa, as Pliny the Elder clearly recounts, Imperial thermae were rapidly transformed into architectural showcases

and bustling urban hubs that offered a formerly elite experience to all social classes of the Roman people.¹⁹²

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¹⁹¹ On imperial acquisition, see Capanna 2016a, 75, table 3; on alternative economic potential, see Purcell 2007.

¹⁹² Plin., *HN* 33.153, 36.189.

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