

All the Dirt: A History of Getting Clean

Katherine Ashenburg

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From Mussolini and Marie Antoinette to Telemachus and Booker T. Washington, Katherine Ashenburg gets intimate with the ever-evolving customs and convictions behind bathtime in *All the Dirt: A History of Getting Clean*.

Going all the way back to Ancient Greece in 3000 BCE and continuing forward in time and across civilizations all over the globe, *All the Dirt* offers a unique perspective on everything from the rise and fall of the Roman Empire to the effects of modern advertising and consumerism—all through the common lens of keeping bodies clean, or dirty, as the case may be. Find out how recipes for soap have changed over the years, who used margarine and peanut butter as skin-care products, and the various ways in which communal bathhouses and saunas have been used as influential political forums.

Fluctuating popular opinion is easy to follow as each chapter progresses on a timeline highlighting the various ways in which religion, wealth, foreign policies and prejudices, superstition, and science have all played key roles in how societies have viewed the rituals and roles of cleanliness, while an entertaining and informative combination of photographs and humorous cartoon images from illustrator Capucine Mazzille keep the pages colorful and bright. With chapters like “Some Like It Cold: 1715 to 1800” and “Soap Opera: 1875 to 1960,” even the most reluctant historians are sure to be delighted with this open look at hygiene from around the world that exposes the naked truth and nixes any preconceived notions about “clean.”

PALLAS GATES MCCORQUODALE (Winter 2017)

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