

***Thermae Romae* Manga: Plunging into the Gulf between Ancient Rome and Modern Japan**

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ABSTRACT

A cultural similarity between ancient Rome and modern day Japan seems improbable. What could these two distinct cultures possibly have in common?

In *Thermae Romae*, an award-winning manga by acclaimed author Yamazaki Mari, we discover that there is indeed a special connection that can be shared by Romans and the Japanese, the love of baths. Through the comical story of the Roman architect Lucius, who is mysteriously transported to modern-day Japan, Yamazaki proves that there are similarities between these two cultures and that people can share the same habits and customs, even if they are worlds apart. The story is a perfect example of classical reception and cultural acceptance. In classical reception the ancient world is usually thought of as being the most influential element, but here Yamazaki turns the tables and it is the world of ancient Rome that responds to the modern culture of Japan.

The author herself also embodies a successful combination of Eastern and Western influences; she is Japanese by origin, but studied in Italy and settled in the USA, yet she writes manga (a Japanese medium) in Japanese. Thus the story embodies the unique life experiences of the author, who even created a character who greatly resembles her, in the hero's love interest Satsuki, a Japanese archaeologist.

The manga is therefore a triumph of reception and understanding, and proof that people are basically the same, regardless of geography or time.