The drainage system at Pompeii: mechanisms, operation and design

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Water in ancient towns has been a perennial topic of discussion, from ancient authors remarking on contemporary towns to modern scholars researching urbanism,1 but interest has focused disproportionately on the means of supply rather than the mechanisms of removal.2 For Pompeii3 this gap in our knowledge is surprising given the nearly three centuries of research at the site. It was not until 1900 that the first discussion dedicated to sewerage was published by S. Cozzi and A. Sogliano,4 and it is still the only description or illustration of a number of subsurface features,5 but, as H. Mygind noted,6 it is frustratingly incomplete and difficult to use. Late in the 20th c., more comprehensive attempts to describe drainage out of the town were made by L. Richardson, jr. and by H. and L. Eschebach,7 but their reconstructions of sewer lines contain omissions and errors and are surprisingly different from one another (fig. 1).8 The general lack of interest may perhaps...