



The Material Life *of* Roman Slaves

Sandra R. Joshel and Lauren Hackworth Petersen

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THE MATERIAL LIFE OF ROMAN SLAVES

The Material Life of Roman Slaves is a major contribution to scholarly debates on the archaeology of Roman slavery. Rather than regard slaves as irretrievable in the ruins of ancient Roman cities and villas, the book takes the archaeological record as a key form of evidence for reconstructing slaves' lives and experiences. Interweaving literature, law, and material evidence, the book searches for ways to see slaves in these various contexts – to make them visible where texts tell us they were in fact present. Part of this project involves understanding how slaves are often actively, if unwittingly, left out of guidebooks and scholarly literature. Individual chapters explore the dichotomy between visibility and invisibility and between appearance and disappearance in four physical and social locations – urban houses, city streets and neighborhoods, workshops, and villas.

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To Michael L. Hackworth and Robert B. Joshel

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PREFACE

It was . . . hard to observe borders, to see and unsee only what I should, on my way home. I was hemmed in by people not in my city, walking slowly through areas crowded but not crowded in Beszel. I focused on the stones really around me – that I had grown up with. I ignored the rest or tried. . . .

. . . Unseeing, of course, but I could not fail to be aware of all the familiar places I passed grosstopically, the streets at home I regularly walked, now a whole city away, particular cafés I frequented that we passed, but in another country. I had them in background now, hardly any more present than Ul Qoma was when I was at home. I held my breath. I was unseeing Beszel. I had forgotten what this was like; I had tried and failed to imagine it. I was seeing Ul Qoma.

—CHINA MIÉVILLE, *The City & the City*

IN *THE CITY & the City*, a novel by China Miéville, the cities of Beszel and Ul Qoma exist side by side. At points, areas of the cities overlap and interweave, so the same street, albeit with a different name, can belong to both. Although no wall separates the two cities, the people of Beszel must have no visual or physical contact with the people of Ul Qoma: in the terms of the novel, they must not “breach.” Thus, two people may “live, grosstopically, next door to each other . . . , each in their own city, . . . never breaching, never quite touching, never speaking a word across the border” (134). From childhood, the inhabitants of each city learn the key signifiers of difference in order to see only the buildings, people, animals, and vehicles in their own city and to un-see everything in the other city. Yet, as a weary Inspector Tyador Borlú of Beszel makes clear, un-seeing takes effort because nothing but “unseeing others with care” or “polite unsensing” separates the sights and sounds of his own Beszel from those of the supposedly alien Ul Qoma. And when Borlú officially crosses

over to Ul Qoma, he must see what he has always un-seen and un-see what he has always seen.

The Material Life of Roman Slaves is a book about seeing and un-seeing in the terms imagined by Miéville, but we talk about slaves and owners rather than the inhabitants of different cities that are really the same. We consider how we have been trained to recognize owners and the free in the archaeological record of ancient Italy and how we learn to ignore the slaves who were “grosstopically” in the same places. In the following chapters, without making owners or the free disappear, we look for the slaves whom we have been taught to un-see. In a way, then, at least metaphorically to borrow Miéville’s language, this book “breaches” the divide between owners and slaves to live in between the two.

Many people have helped us to see and un-see, and it is our great pleasure to thank them. John Clarke read individual chapters and provided sage advice along the way. The observations and expertise of Michael Thomas on villas in general and on Villa A at Oplontis and the Villa of the Mysteries have been invaluable. For our work at Oplontis we also appreciate the insights and generosity of Jess Galloway, Lea Cline, and Nayla Muntasser. Our friend and colleague Margaret Laird gave us the benefit of her perception and knowledge. The work and support of Eleanor Winsor Leach, Jennifer Trimble, and Natalie Kampen have enriched our project in many different ways. Lawrence Bliquez, Catherine Connors, Alain Gowing, Jeremy Hartnett, Deborah Kamen, Darby Langdon, Margaret Malamud, and Amy Richlin commented on various chapters, offering valuable observations and criticism. Beatrice Rehl encouraged this project from its inception, and Anastasia Graf shepherded it toward publication. We thank Susan Greenberg for her judicious editorial help. Most especially we are grateful for Stephen Petersen’s insight, photographic abilities, and time spent on the book’s illustrations. Without his work, ours would not have been possible.

Individuals and institutions facilitated our research in Italy. We thank the American Academy in Rome for a place to stay and to work in its wonderful library; we are especially grateful to the library staff and to Professor Corey Brennan during our stay in January 2012. We express our gratitude to the Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Roma and the Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Napoli e Pompei and especially to the former and current Soprintendente at Pompeii, Dottore Pietro Giovanni Guzzo and Dottoressa Teresa Elena Cinquantaquattro, and to Signore Vitale at Herculaneum. The custodial staffs at Pompeii, Herculaneum, Villa San Marco, Villa Arianna, and Ostia were unfailingly helpful. The Hotel Diana at Pompeii and its wonderful staff provided us with a home away from home for many weeks in 2010, 2011, and 2012. We owe a special thanks to Signore Alfonso Boccia for getting us where we needed to go.

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Finally, we dedicate this book to our fathers, who believed in their daughters and instilled in each the value of perseverance and a sense of humor.



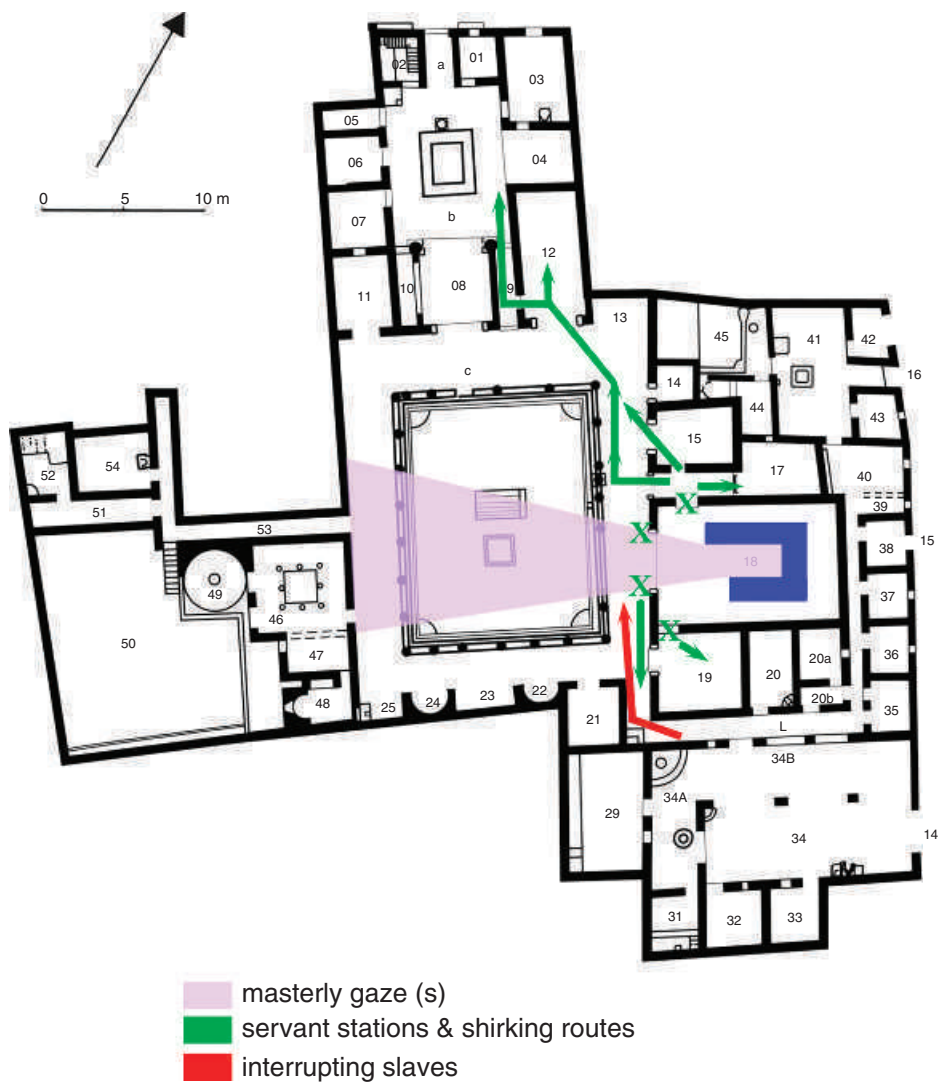
I. Banquet scene with a slave standing behind the reclining couples, House of the Chaste Lovers (IX.12.6-7), room g, east wall, Pompeii, first century. *Photo: Michael Larvey (su concessione del Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali – Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Napoli e Pompei).*



II. Banquet scene with a slave supporting the standing woman, House of the Chaste Lovers (IX.12.6–7), room g, west wall, Pompeii, first century. *Photo: Michael Larvey (su concessione del Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali – Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Napoli e Pompei).*



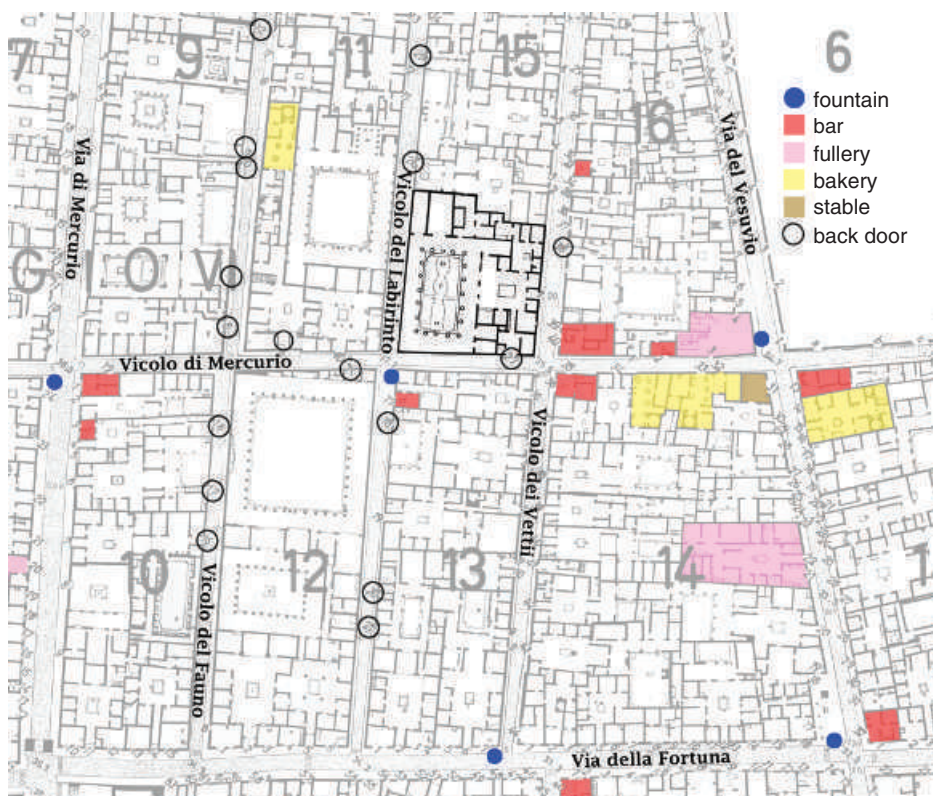
III. Banquet scene with a slave standing in front of the dining couches, House of the Triclinium (V.2.4), dining room 7, north wall, Pompeii, first century (MANN inv. 120031). *Photo: Michael Larvey (su concessione del Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali – Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Napoli e Pompei).*



IV. Plan of the House of the Menander (I.10.4, 14–16) marked with routes for possible slave tactics during a banquet in dining room 18, Pompeii. (*Plan only after Allison 2004, fig. A.3.*)



V. Reconstruction of Via dell'Abbondanza, Pompeii. © DeA Picture Library / Art Resource, NY, ART370836.



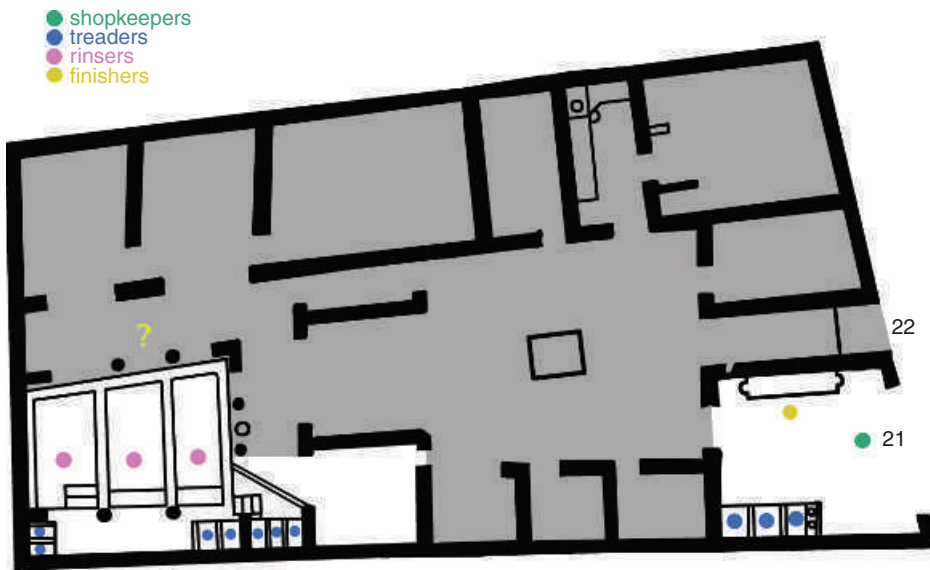
VI. Plan of the area around the House of the Vettii (VI.15.1, 27), marked with many of the neighboring bars, fountains, bakeries, fulleries, and stables, along with some back doors to houses, Pompeii. (Plan only after Eschebach 1970, plan 2, section 2.)



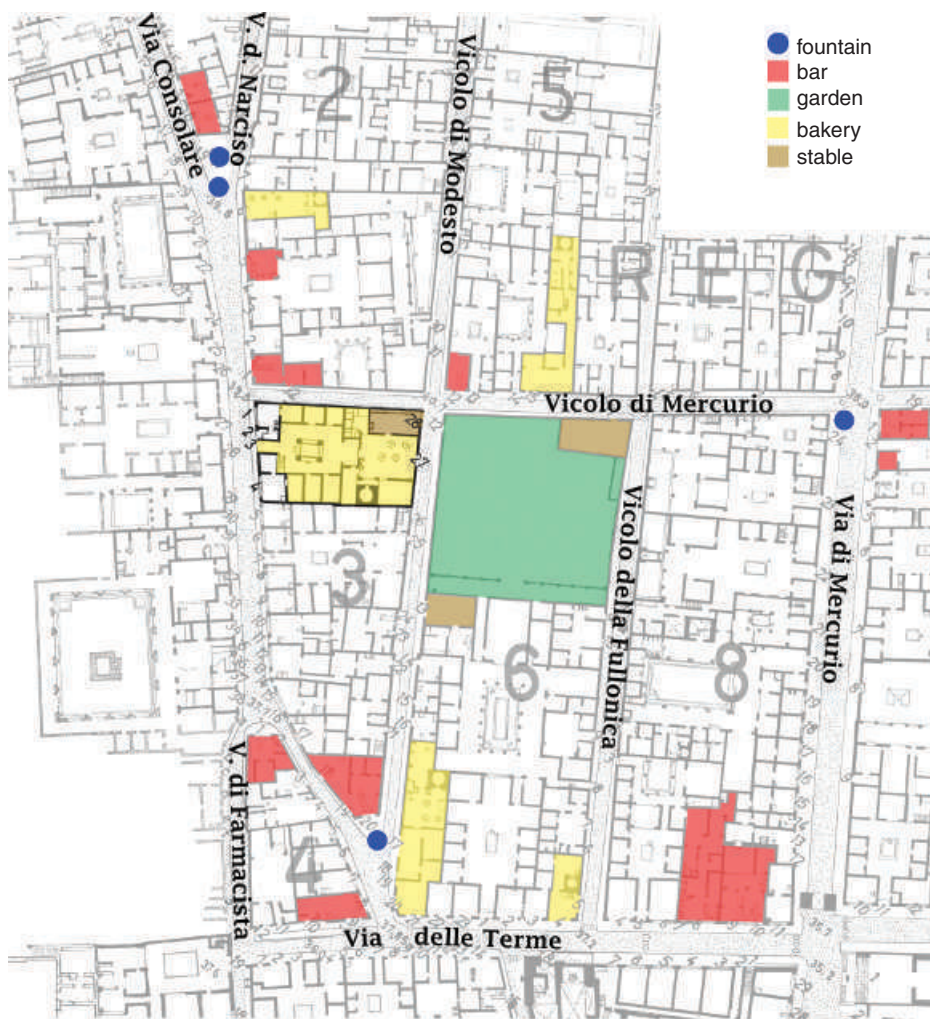
VII. Plan of the area around the House of the Menander (I.10.4, 14–16), marked with many of the neighboring bars, fountains, bakeries, fulleries, stables, and garden plots, along with some back doors to houses and stairways feeding onto streets, Pompeii. (Plan only after Eschebach 1970, plan 2, section 6.)



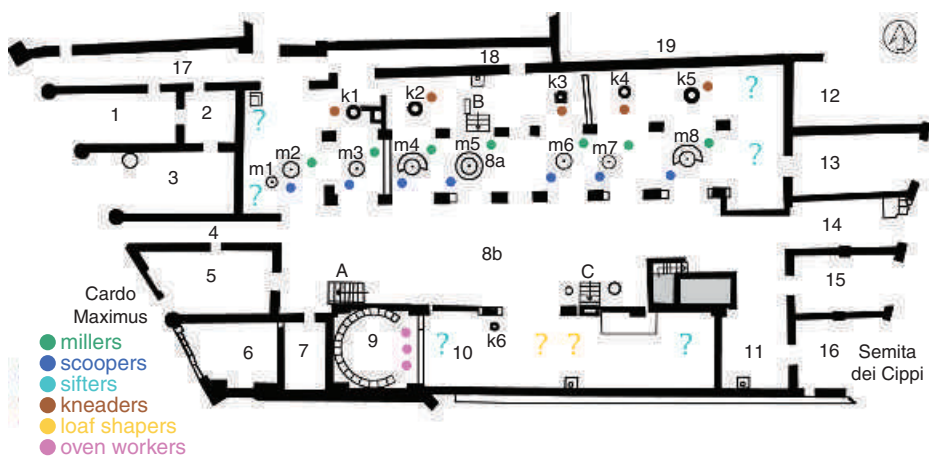
IX. Painted pier with scenes of fullers at work from the fullery at VI.8.20, Pompeii (MANN inv. 9774). *Photo: Michael Larvey (su concessione del Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali – Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Napoli e Pompei).*



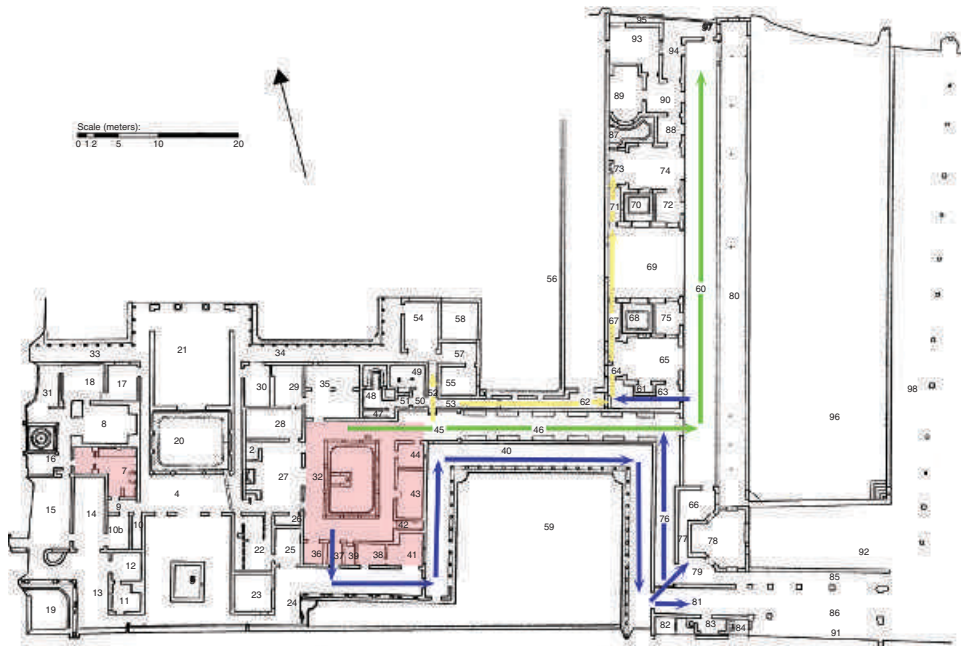
X. Plan of the Fullery of Vesonius Primus (VI.14.21-22) marked with locations of different types of workers, Pompeii. *Drawing by Glynnis Fawkes. (Plan only after Moeller 1976, fig. 5.)*



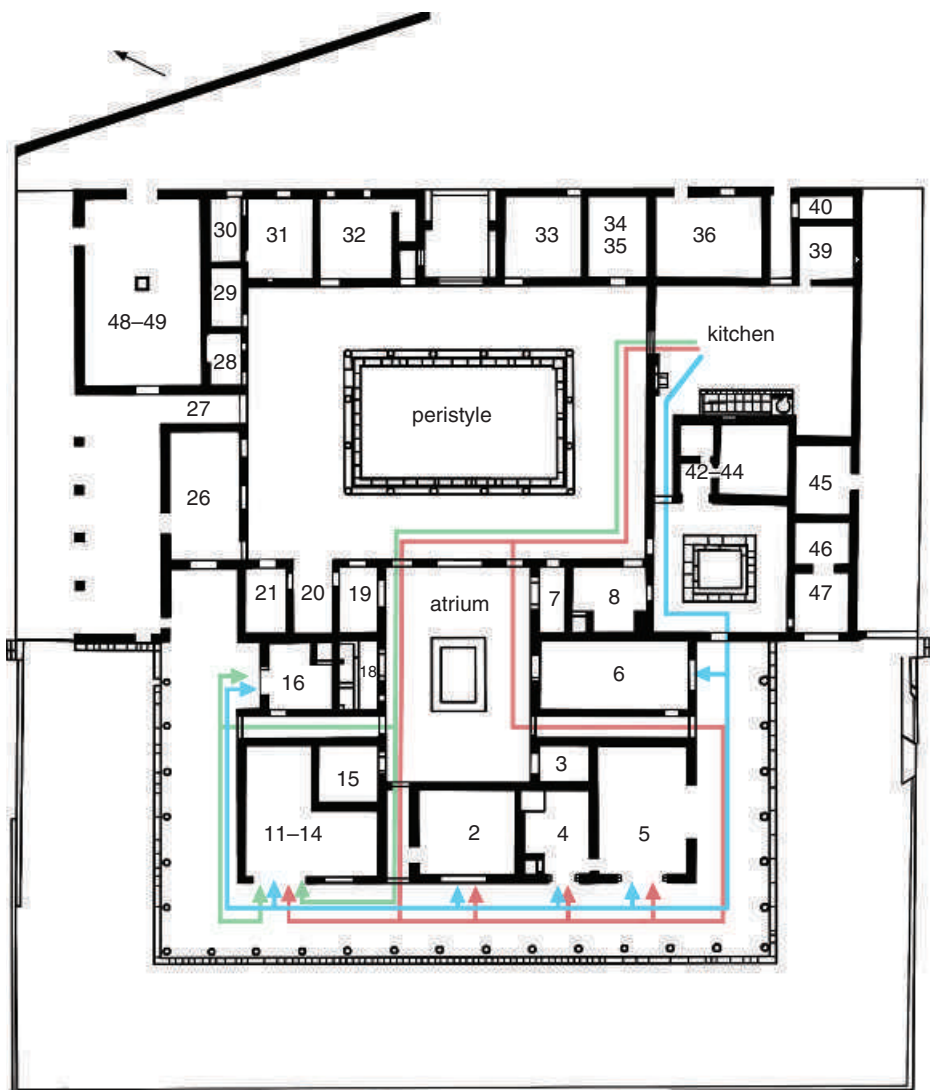
XI. Plan of the area around the House of the Baker (VI.3.3, 27) marked with many of the neighboring bars, fountains, stables, and bakeries, Pompeii. (*Plan only after Eschebach 1970, plan 2, section 2.*)



XII. Plan of the bakery at I.13.4 marked with locations of different workers, Ostia.
Drawing by Glynnis Fawkes. (Plan only after Bakker, ed. 1999, fig. 19.)



XIII. Plan marked with the routes of slaves moving from courtyard 32 to the eastern wing at Villa A at Oplontis (Torre Annunziata). *Plan only courtesy of the Oplontis Project.*



XIV. Plan marked with possible routes of slave servants from the kitchen to the rooms on the western side of the Villa of the Mysteries in the early stage, Pompeii. *Drawing by Glynnis Fawkes. (Plan only after Esposito 2007, fig. 8.)*