

Revisiting the City of the *Cena Trimalchionis*
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The name of the city in which the *Cena Trimalchionis* takes place is never mentioned in the surviving text. It is clear, however, that the episode is set somewhere in Campania, because three cities from this region are mentioned in the text: Cumae (48.8; 53.2), Baiae (53.10; 104.2), and Capua (62.1). Two main criteria can be found in the text. The city has to have colonial status and it has to have a Greek identity, although it is not entirely clear how this Greekness should be defined. Since the nineteenth century many names of cities have been suggested, but since the 1980's Puteoli has been the undisputed candidate to be the city of Trimalchio. Puteoli has no difficulty in claiming its status as a Greek city for it used to be called Dicearchia, a settlement founded by exiles from the island of Samos. The city had achieved the status of a *colonia* by the time of Augustus, and out of all the cities in Campania it is by far the most appropriate setting for a freedman who has accumulated a fortune by engaging in trade. The city was flourishing in the first century AD and enjoyed enormous prosperity thanks to its proximity to Rome. Since there is more than one *colonia* in the area, the label of a Greek city has become the most important clue to seal the identification of Trimalchio's city. In modern discussions of the setting of the *Cena* the argument that *Graecae urbis* = Puteoli is presented as fact rather than as an item which requires further examination. This paper wants to argue that there is more than reasonable doubt that Puteoli is **not** the city of the *Cena*. In this paper I will show that there are numerous elements in the episode which do not agree with the expectations created by the label of a Greek city. The most important objection is that the freedmen assert that they prefer Roman over Greek culture. With this element removed the argument that Puteoli is the location of the *Cena* is irreparably damaged. Instead it will be argued that the city of Trimalchio is an imaginary urban location especially designed by Petronius to suit the activities of the freedmen.