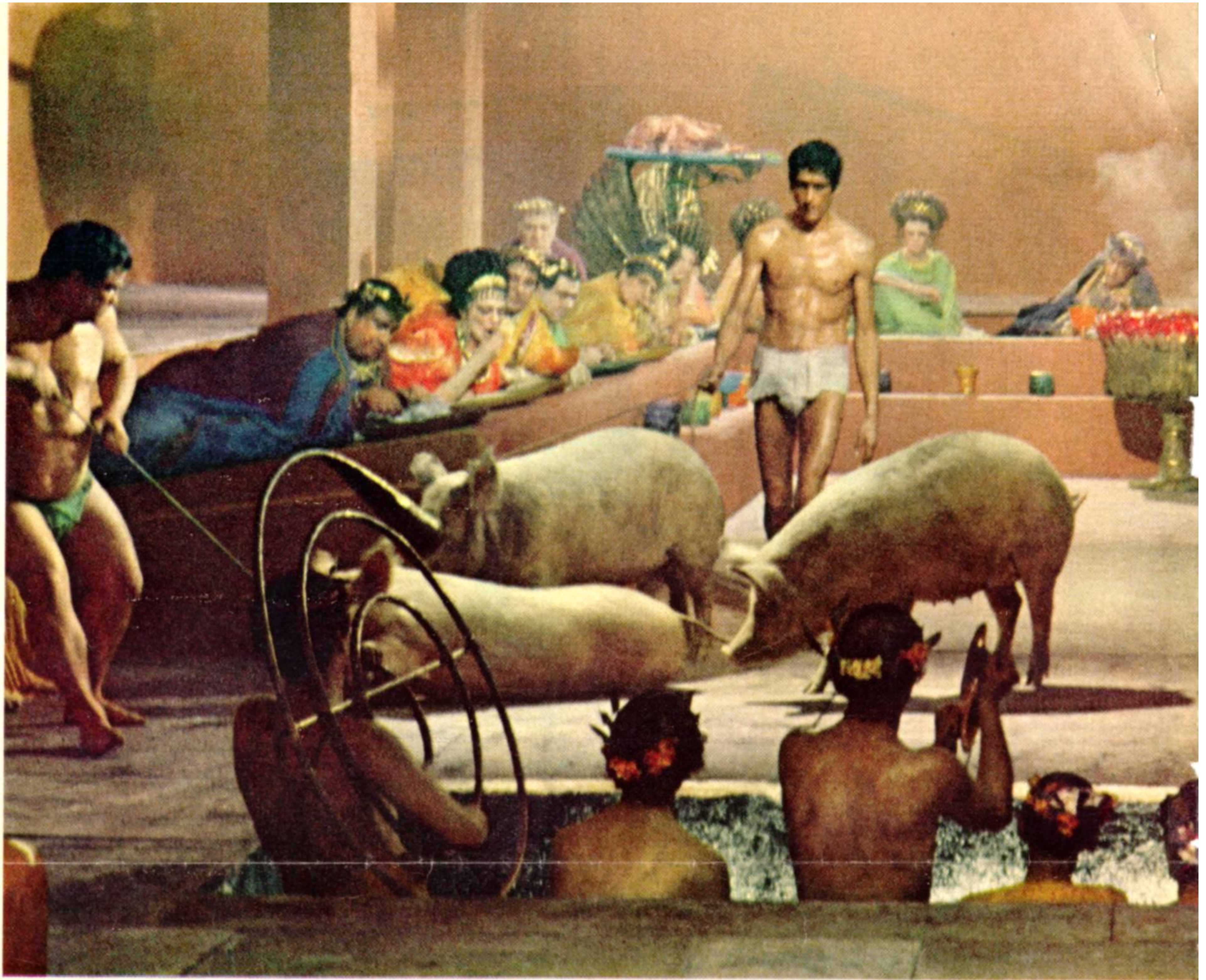


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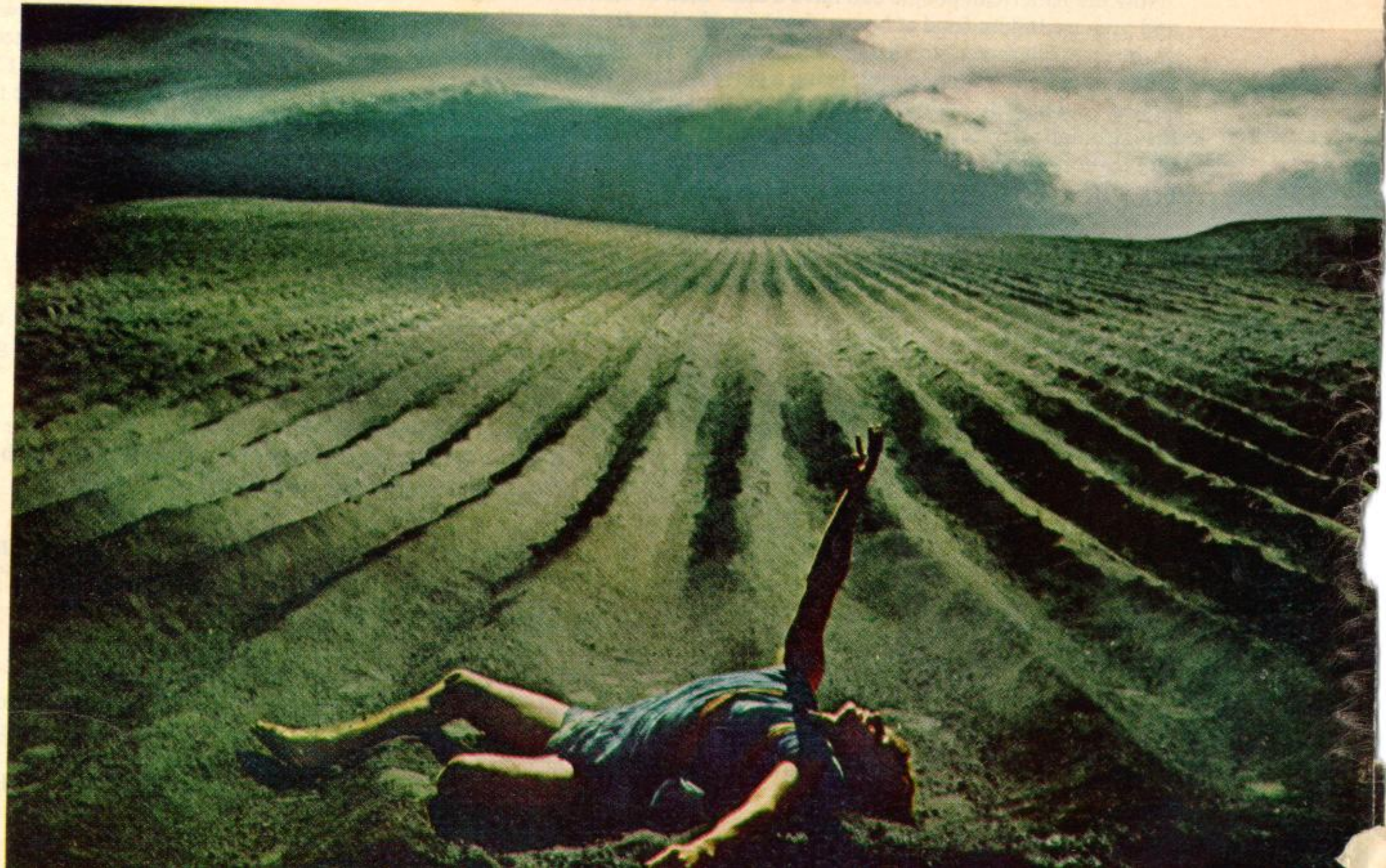
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*Not in this world
nor the next
could Satyricon
really exist*

Encolpius, one of the student heroes, lies drunk in a field after Trimalchio's banquet. Artificial clouds, made out of dry ice and ammonia put into hot water, were used to create the surreal light.

THERE'S NO PLACE





LIKE ROME

Through the cinematic mists and the glow of eerie lights emerges a vision of pre-Christian Rome, *alla* Federico Fellini. This time, with a cast of a thousand freaks and a phantasmagoria of grotesque episodes, Rome's wizard of the weird has outdone himself, if only in terms of sheer excess. A rich man's heirs devour his body to claim their legacy. A woman mates with a mouse. A nymphomaniac gets hourly relief from her sexual torment. A rich ex-slave plunges through one of the longest, most Bacchanalian banquets in history.

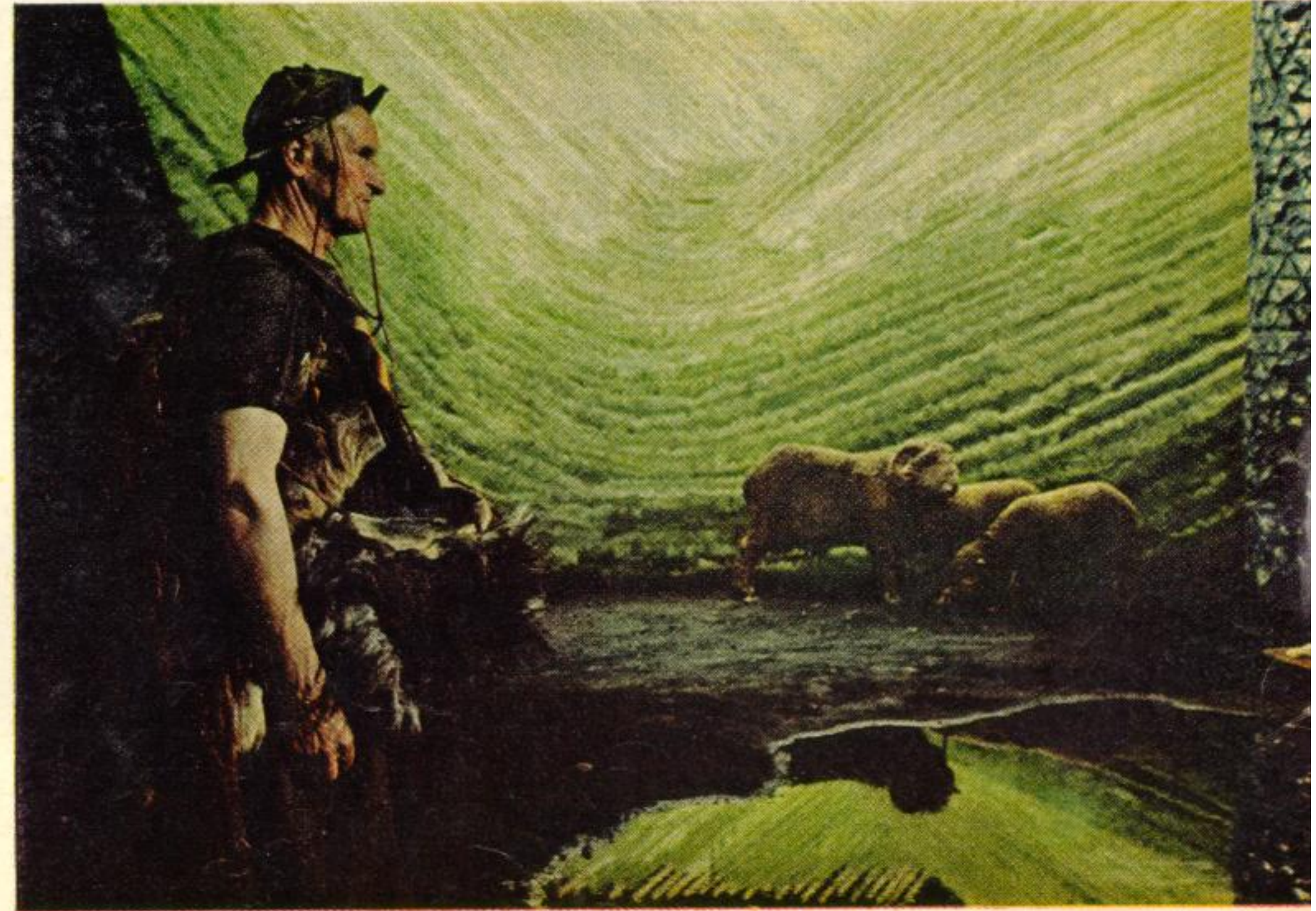
Loosely based on the Latin classic *Satyricon* of Petronius Arbiter—a bawdy account of two adventurers in Nero's Rome—Fellini's *Satyricon* is his first full-length picture in nearly four years. Though films like *La Strada*, *La Dolce Vita*

and *8½* have long established him as one of the world's great film fantasists, *Satyricon* is uniquely ambitious. "It is a science fiction picture," Fellini says, "but projected into the past, not the future. It is a journey into the unknown, and I am obliged to invent everything, a universe." Indeed, to give the film its remote and mysterious atmosphere, new lighting, sets and props had to be devised as fast as Fellini could dream them up.

Fellini is famous for improvising, but he prepared this script carefully and filled it with nightmares beyond even Petronius' imagining. Fellini describes it as "a fresco of pagan times." Is the picture pornographic? No, warns Fellini; it is chaste if seen with innocent eyes. Pagans knew nothing of conscience or morality. Pornography, he says, is in the mind of the beholder.

During his banquet, above, the ex-slave Trimalchio chooses the live pig to be cooked for his guests. Fellini far outdid Petronius' original version of the feast, the most famous episode in the "Satyricon."

A shepherd, below, travels to worship at a shrine to a child hermaphrodite. The two heroes also visit the shrine, steal the child and its jewels, and escape through the desert, where it dies of thirst.



Garish masks of the director's fantasy



Elisabetta Mocadelli, a studio extra, was made up with cream, flour and glue to play a procuress.

To me," says Fellini, "faces are more important than anything else." When he first announced he would film the *Satyricon*, he boasted it would include the faces of everyone from the Beatles to Charles de Gaulle—contemporary myths to identify with the myths of Roman times. But he changed his mind. "There will be 75 or 80 principal characters but no big names," he decided. "There is little difference, except that it costs much less."

He scrutinized more than 3,000 people to find the faces he wanted; the resulting cast, a *Grand Guignol* troupe of races, nationalities and physical types, has few professional actors in it. One of the major parts, Trimalchio the rich ex-slave, is played by Mario Romagnoli, a 69-year-old Roman restaurant owner with the face of a sad-eyed mastiff. "Fellini pestered me to do it," he laments, "and now my clients tease me and my wife complains, 'All these years you have lived a clean life. Now in your old age you have ruined your reputation and become a dirty old man.' "



Gennaro Attanasio, cast by Fellini as a wizard, above, is a fish peddler from the streets of Naples. At right, Fanfulla, an oldtime variety actor, does a turn as Ver-

nacchio, the leading comic in the commedia dell'arte of Nero's day. His gladiator-clown costume, invented by Fellini, was made by set designer Danilo Donati.



A life-size whale in three days—'It's enough to make you cry'

Is Fellini's *Satyricon* merely another *La Dolce Vita*, set in ancient Rome? Fellini furiously denies that his eleventh film has any connection with its predecessors, which have been largely autobiographical. "This is my most tiring film," he says, "because it is a voyage from an unknown antiquity. It is more anguishing than *La Dolce Vita*. That had the reality of daily life. In this film, there is nothing where I can recognize myself. It's a kind of autodestruction."

He spent a feverish two months writing the 500-page screenplay with Bernardino Zapponi. "Fellini thought of the *Satyricon* as an adventure," Zapponi says. "We were like two boys in a stolen boat on the sea, because Petronius' *Satyricon* is only a departure point. De Mille would have documented ancient Rome, but we took ourselves away from concrete things to invent absurd things. It was bestial work."

It was also an enormous research job. "We didn't know anything," says Danilo Donati, the set and costume designer. "Everything had to be invented. It's made me crazy. We have the epoch, but only as Fellini wants it to appear. He has his own way of seeing the ancient world."

Donati, who won this year's Oscar for his *Romeo and Juliet* costumes, had never designed film sets before. Once he had to prepare six new sets overnight, prostitutes' cells placed in a setting resembling the *Cloaca Maxima*, the ancient Roman sewer. "You see how everything is done on the spur of the moment. That's how things work in Italy," he complained, as he frantically scribbled graffiti on the walls. The director joined him to make his own mark: "Ego Hic Facevit Amorem," "Here I made love," scrawled in incorrect Latin.

Later, Fellini decided he needed a life-size whale in three days. "It's enough to make you cry," wailed Donati, but he courageously produced a 220-pound whale of foam rubber. As the picture progressed, the shooting came to be

called "The Daily Miracle," and Fellini "il Faro" or "the Light-house," because only he could shed light on what would happen.

A number of episodes from Petronius were expanded and elaborated. *The Dinner of Trimalchio*, famous in the Petronius version, appears in the film filtered through Fellini's own fantasy. As Zapponi explains, "Fellini makes it much more somber. Nobody is plucking grapes or having wine poured down his throat. It is chaste and anguished, with little joy, more like a funeral banquet."

On the tables are some of the same strange dishes Petronius describes, as well as others concocted by Fellini and designer Donati. Sweating slaves run in and out, bearing huge steaming trays of writhing black eels in inky sauce . . . a whole white calf, its head adorned with a brass helmet . . . a stuffed pig spewing tripe and intestines, giant livers and chicken and long strings of sausages.

Trimalchio, a crass nouveau riche of ancient Rome, is a character made to order for Fellini. As he does in the book, Trimalchio makes his slaves carry him on a cushioned litter and ostentatiously displays his every possession, even the hairs of his first beard preserved in a golden chest. But then his wife Fortunata (French actress Magali Noël) does a wild dance that is pure Fellini. And when she shows off her jewelry to Scintilla, the wife of Trimalchio's tomb builder, and embraces her lasciviously, the director is insistently explicit.

"Silenzio," he bellowed to the cast and crew as he prepared to direct the scene. He turned to Scintilla (Danka La Loggia). "Don't stay there three days—kiss her." When she didn't do it to his satisfaction, Fellini, who always acts out all the parts himself, showed her how. "Kiss her for real," he ordered. Once again Fortunata launched into the seduction scene. Suddenly Fellini asked Scintilla, "Have you ever kissed a woman?" "No," she

replied, startled. "Neither have I," Fortunata was quick to add. Fellini said, "Sit in profile, nose against nose. Put your hands up, the palms of each against the other's. No, lower. Now. Lips against lips, like two children, like two kiddies. No, Fortunata! Do it elegantly!"

In the midst of this scene of macabre guests gobbling and guzzling on the murky smoke-filled set, Fellini is asked the obvious question, "Is all this a study in degradation?" "Not at all," he replies. "The purpose of my film is not to show vice or corruption—this, to me, would be vulgar. So far as I am able, my intention is to give an unbiased look at this world." Inevitably, though, audiences are bound to find, in his unbiased look at this world, a scathing look at their own.

EILEEN HUGHES



Fellini, wearing his familiar broad-brimmed hat, directs restaurant-owner Mario Romagnoli, in costume as Trimalchio. True to his métier, Romagnoli was heard grumbling during filming of the banquet scene, "I have never in my life seen so much food wasted for such a stupid thing!"