

ing money from the impressed onlookers. They require the ass to carry a statue of the Eastern goddess Cybele, whose adherents they purport to be.

Lucius describes his falling into their hands as the work of "merciless Fortune" which is what we might nowadays call karma. A changed attitude can bring about a changed circumstance so, at root, any "lack of mercy" is a lack of repentance.

A couple of interesting points are made in the text about pseudoreligious experience and pseudo-occult knowledge. The first is in his description of pretended ecstasy of one of the priests—"heaving deep sighs from the very bottom of his lungs, as if filled with the spirit of the Goddess, he pretended to go stark-mad." He goes on to comment: "A strange notion, this, that divine immanency, instead of doing men good, enfeebles or disorders their senses." The other amusing point, which might well be applied by occult charlatans of today, is their all-purpose oracle. To any who come seeking prophetic guidance they chant:

*The patient oxen plough the soil;  
And harvests rich repay their toil.*

This can be applied to any conceivable problem as a welcome generally optimistically toned answer from the gods.

The ass remains with the eunuch priests for some time, carrying the image of the goddess and the ever-full offertory bags. "I was at once a walking temple and a walking larder" he says, again emphasizing the recurrent symbolism throughout the whole novel of the sacramental symbolism of eating and feasting. This again is universal symbolism found from the ever-flowing cauldron of Ceridwen to the table of the Last Supper.

While he is with them he faces the first of three tests of moral integrity. At some risk to himself he raises the alarm when the eunuch priests attempt to rape a young farm worker. Thus although an ass he shows more than an ass's concern for the well-being of others.

Later he exposes the deception that a cook intends to play in serving up ass's meat instead of venison, although there is a certain degree of self-interest here in that it is he who is likely to provide the ass meat if the cook's scheme goes through. There is an overtone here of the savior-god theme, the hero being eaten. There are more immediate spiritual developments required of Lucius, however, as he is eventually to become an initiate of the Mysteries for which his experiences in animal form are a