

### **The Meaning and Impact of Book 11 of *The Golden Ass* [Discussion]**

Read Book 11 of *The Golden Ass* and make an attempt at answering the following questions:

1. What are the major events in Book 11? Give a synopsis that includes reference to section numbers.
2. In what way is Book 11 connected to the preceding books?
3. Sections 13-16 of Book 11 (see Walsh trans. pp.226-9) recount the reverse-metamorphosis of Lucius and the words of the priest of Isis. How does this episode affect our reading of the novel?
4. When Lucius prepares to be initiated into Isis' mysteries, the profane are dismissed and Isis' priest leads him 'into the heart of the sanctuary' (11.23.4, see Walsh trans. p.234). At this point Lucius pauses and says (11.23.5 and 11.23.7):

'Perhaps the reader's interest is roused, and you are keen to enquire about the ensuing words and actions. I would tell you if it were permitted to reveal them; you would be told if you were allowed to hear. But both your ears and my tongue would incur equal guilt; my tongue for its impious garrulity, and your ears for their rash curiosity. [...] So I shall recount only what can be communicated without sacrilege to the understanding of non-initiates.'

What is the significance of this passage? What is its relationship to the prologue?

5. Many critics see Book 11 as a contrived religious resolution to the preceding ten books of ribaldry.
  - (a) Do you agree with this view?
  - (b) Are there alternative views?
6. In light of existing scholarly views of Book 11 (see below), how should Lucius' religious conversion be interpreted?

#### **Useful reading**

- Griffiths, J.G. (1975), *Apuleius of Madauros: The Isis-Book (Metamorphoses, Book XI)*, Leiden: Brill
- Harrison, S.J. (1996), 'Apuleius' Metamorphoses', in G.Schmeling (ed.) *The Novel in the Ancient World* (Mnemosyne, Supplement 159), Leiden: Brill, pp. 491–516.
- [Consult with caution →] Perry, B.E. (1967), *The Ancient Romances. A Literary-Historical Account of Their Origins*, Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Sandy, G. (1978), 'Book 11: Ballast or Anchor?', in B.L. Hijmans Jr. and R. van der Paardt (eds.) *Aspects of Apuleius' Golden Ass*, Groningen: Boekhuis, pp. 123–40.
- Winkler, J.J. (1985), *Auctor and Actor. A Narratological Reading of Apuleius' The Golden Ass*, Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press.