definition of Near Eastern influence on Greek culture in particular.[13] In short, besides the numerous well-founded and revealing comparisons between the Greek and Near Eastern literary bodies drawn in this study, many other parallels which were interpreted by West as an indication for Near Eastern influence are not necessarily a result of any influence at all. For, as stated above, one should not ignore the fact that similar cultural phenomena may develop independently along strikingly parallel lines.

To cite Raaflaub's sober remark,

> After all, despite these [i.e. Near Eastern] stimuli and influences, Greek culture is not a mere derivative of Mesopotamian or Egyptian culture, and crucial factors that prompted its specific development and character ... apparently cannot be explained by outside influences.[14]

And yet most of those who will come to use this rich book, no matter how critical they may be of its shortcomings, must undoubtedly agree that *The East Face of Helicon* is an important scholarly achievement which will serve as a key work in the study of both Greek and Near Eastern literature for many years to come.

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Simon Pulleyn, *Prayer in Greek Religion*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997. xv + 244 pp. ISBN 0 19 815088 1.

Simon Pulleyn's book undertakes the much needed and courageous task of presenting a thorough account of Greek prayer, a truly Proteus-like phenomenon, one which embraces extremely different aspects of Greek religious life and diverse contexts of utterance, from hymns to curses and oaths. His aim is to provide an account of Greek prayer 'as part of Greek life' (p. 1), deliberately avoiding all universal definitions and cultural comparisons. He studies the overlapping of prayer with other phenomena including rituals, semantic and lexical questions, as well as other aspects of Greek religion, such as supplication, curses, the cult of the dead, and *defixiones*. He draws from literary corpora and epigraphic material, covering a long time span, from Homer to the fourth century, on the assumption that, despite the differences in literary genres and world view, the picture of Greek prayer that we can recover is by and large homogeneous.

He sets out by clarifying his central contention, namely that Greek prayer is a request to the gods articulated as a give-and take transaction between gods and men. He names this two-way relationship χάρις, by which he means to express a 'whole nexus of ideas that we would call reciprocity' (p. 4). This understanding has the advantage of meaningfully linking Greek prayers to the social and political setting and

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[13] See again Raaflaub's (above, n. 2, pp. 61-3) cautious comments on this point.
[14] Raaflaub (above, n. 2), p. 61.

fabric of ancient Greek society, where the role of reciprocity is by now fully recognized and investigated, particularly in its socio-political connotations.[1]

According to this view, sacrifice plays a fundamental role, as it is viewed as the material companion and counterpart of prayer. In this respect he stresses the point that the gods do not sell their favours in exchange for sacrifice, but that 'the worshipper establishes with the god a relationship not of strict indebtedness but rather one where the god remembers the gift and feels well disposed in future' (p. 13).

Consistently with this premise, Pulleyn tries to detect different patterns of reciprocity in the different forms of prayers (i.e. *da-quia-dedi*, *da-quia-dedisti*, *da-quia-dedit*), appeals to the gods (i.e. hymns), and religious utterances or rituals (i.e. curses or supplication). Yet his methodology presents some generalizations that do not always seem to prove effective and to the point.

In chap. 2, Reciprocity and Remembrance, he tackles the εἴ ποτε Homeric prayers as a model of a *da-quia-dedi* structure, where the petitioner asks the god to comply with his request on the argument that the past actions (namely sacrifice) should be reciprocated. In other terms, this prayer argues 'if ever I gave you sacrifices in the past, now grant me this request'. This εἴ ποτε mentality is described as pivotal for the understanding of Greek prayers and it seems to apply at least up to the fifth century. Pulleyn argues that this structure relies on the same pattern governing relations among mortals, and particularly the relationship established by *xenia*, guest-friendship. He returns to this argument several times, claiming that the εἴ ποτε prayer 'is based, beyond doubt, upon the same nexus of ideas as was ξενία ('guest-friendship')' (p. 56), later calling this class of prayers ξενία-prayers.

However, we should consider the fact that reciprocity is a very broad conceptual category, representing different patterns of behaviour, and taxonomic care is required in clarifying what type of reciprocal relationship is at issue. The failure to specify in what sense reciprocity is involved in the gods-men relationship seems to lead Pulleyn to an inappropriate comparison. In fact, as far as the equation of *xenia* and prayer goes, the former is a symmetrical relationship based strictly on the equality of the partners engaged in the bond,[2] properly representing reciprocity *stricto sensu*, whereas prayer expresses a relationship based on the unequal status of the partners.[3]

If the two *xenoi* are equal in social status and economic means and share the same values, men and gods, it goes without saying, have an entirely unequal existential status, since gods have the power to intervene and men have no more than the possibility to ask them to intervene. The men-gods relationship is more comparable to the *patronus-cliens* relationship (which hinges upon the idea of *gratia*, by and large corresponding to Greek χάρις), or the relationship that is enacted by the suppliant with his recipient in the ritual of *hiketeia*. In other words, the consideration that two

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[1]   See G. Herman, *OCD*, *s.v.* 'Reciprocity'.

[2]   See G. Herman, *Ritualised Friendship and the Greek City*, Cambridge 1987.

[3]   A proof *a fortiori* is to be seen in the instances of *xenia* between two gods mentioned in Homer, where it is clear that *xenoi* must have the same 'ontological' status.

different sorts of relationship are ruled by an idea of reciprocity is too generic an assumption, and does not lead to the conclusion that they belong to the same category of *lato sensu* reciprocal behaviour. In chapter 4, Prayer and Supplication, Pulleyn claims that 'on the one hand Greek prayer is sometimes like ξενία and on the other like ἱκετεία' p. 64). He provides examples of Greek prayers ranging from εἴ ποτε prayers, invocations to avert evil, and paeans, on to requests for forgiveness. It is rather difficult to detect a morphologic order in these examples, or a specific connection with supplication. In particular, none of the technical terms of supplication (such as the terms related to the root –ἱκ) nor any of its distinctive features comes to the fore[4] (λίσσομαι and λιτή are technical terms of entreaty, especially between men, not of *hiketeia* properly speaking).

In this case, Pulleyn seems in practice to confuse our notion of 'supplication' as a strong, desperate appeal to the divinity and Greek *hiketeia*, a rather different phenomenon from what the common use of the term supplication might suggest, for *hiketeia* is, in the first place, a human, social institution of twofold structure, made up of powerful ritual gestures on the one hand and of speech with strong rhetorical connotations on the other, covering a wide range of social aspects.[5]

The most fruitful sections of the book are based on careful reconsideration of some of the clichés about Greek prayer, where Pulleyn seems aware of the misleading application of conceptions valid for different religious traditions from the Greek ones.

Pulleyn offers a very important contribution to the subject of divine names. His treatment of magic and names (chapter 6) is a brilliant example of how much we can gain in understanding by dropping ingrained assumptions and examining the texts afresh. He questions the widespread idea that knowledge of the proper names of the gods was one of the main concerns of Greek prayer, as names have a power which can 'magically' compel or, better, persuade the divinity to intervene. The author carefully reconsiders the evidence and successfully shows that this common opinion has no grounding in Greek tradition and derives from a misapplication of Jewish conceptions about the power of the name of God on the one hand and from Roman formulae (which he correctly classifies as a legalistic rather than a magical concern) on the other.

He shows further that the invocations to 'the other gods' or 'all the gods and goddesses' found in speeches, prayers and inscriptions, come from a cultic concern, constituting especially solemn formulae, and from the actual need of the speaker to recruit the aid of all the gods and not from an anxiety 'not to miss anybody out'. The belief in the power of the name belongs, Pulleyn points out, to the post-classical period, particularly after the encounter between Greek, Egyptian, Roman and Jewish cultures, as expressed in the corpus of magical papyri.

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4   *Hiketeia* directed to the gods is more an exception than a rule and requires the 'presence' of the god in the form of a statue.

5   See M. Giordano, *La supplica. Rituale, istituzione sociale e tema epico in Omero*, Napoli 1999, particularly pp. 161-75, for a comparison between prayer and supplication.

In chapter 3 he analyzes hymns as songs of thanks and praise to the gods in relation to prayers, pointing out the difference between the two and rejecting the idea that a hymn is a sung prayer, defining it rather as a gift or offering to the god. He shows very clearly the influence of the language of hymns on that of prayers and particularly on Greek tragedy. Chapter 9, *Sitz im Leben*, is a useful survey of gestures involved in prayers, cultic locations and groups of participants and vocal expressions, which improves our understanding of Greek religious verbal and gestural behaviours. What he describes agrees by and large with the picture of a decentralized practice of cult, especially insofar as he demonstrates the adventitious character of Greek prayer and the lack of canonization or of any kind of normative rules. In the treatment of curses and prayers (chapter 5), Pulleyn appears to view curses as particular instances of prayer according to a traditional view, but he refrains from tracing clear definitions.

He looks for a difference between prayers and curses at the cultic level and tries to connect also curses to the idea of χάρις, on the supposition that the curses uttered in public ceremony relied on a reserve of χάρις accumulated by previous offerings and sacrifices (p. 79). The main problem with this contention is that there is no evidence of sacrifices customarily connected to curses, and furthermore his treatment plays down the power of the uttered word, implying that a curse is not powerful or effective enough without a sacrifice.

If prayer connects the human community with the divine one and relies on gods as agents to be solicited for the accomplishment of an event, the curse is intrinsically performative and, like oaths or judicial sentences, aims to act directly on reality, having the gods as guarantors and protectors of the utterance, not as direct agents, as in prayers.

In chapter 8 we find a very useful survey of the language of prayer, where Pulleyn examines the structure and the lexicon of the constituent parts of prayer (invocation, verbs of hearing and coming, request). In his analysis he singles out some *voces propriae* of prayer, such as κλῦθι (apparently an Indo-European survival) and ἵληθι, but as a general point he notices a relative poverty in formulaic liturgical language when Greek is compared to other religious traditions, something which strengthens once more the idea of the formal flexibility of Greek prayers.

He tackles the use of verbs in prayers synthetically, referring particularly to the difference between optatives and imperatives. According to a traditional view, optatives express a more polite address than imperatives; Pulleyn leaves it undecided whether this is really true, adds the quantitative fact that tragedy has many optatives (it is not clear in relation to what) and raises the question whether the audience would have perceived any difference between the two. The problem that Pulleyn brings to our attention regarding optatives and imperatives might be better understood if we were to take a look also at the difference in utterances rather than verbal forms. As I have argued elsewhere,[6] it is possible, by examining the formal expression of curses and blessings, and particularly the use of moods and tenses, to detect a consistent and

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6   See M. Giordano, *La parola efficace. Maledizioni, giuramenti e benedizioni nella Grecia arcaica*, Pisa-Roma 1999, pp. 17-25.

peculiar structure. Optatives or imperatives directly addressed to the receiver or to the object of the wish mark out the utterance as a curse (or blessing), whereas imperatives or infinitives addressed to the god invoked define the utterance as a prayer. A curse resembles a blessing in form and differs from it in content as much as a prayer for evil resembles and differs from a prayer for good.

A similar taxonomic warning holds true for the *defixiones*, which are a category in their own right, that contain curses but are not downright classifiable as curses. As Pulleyn suggests with insight, *defixiones* are comparable to the Athenian practice of ostracism, both relying on writing and on its effectiveness, but differing in that the former is a private action and the latter a public one. As to the treatment of magic, Pulleyn states the terms of the debate on magic and religion (p. 90) quite fairly, yet he uses what seem rather moral evaluations than interpretative criteria. For instance he claims that in Homer and in the dramatists there are no references to the *defixiones* 'doubtless because it is not very noble' (p. 89). Or, in explaining the absence of appeal to some underworld gods in the *defixiones* as guarantors of justice he asks 'where, after all, is the justice in asking them to incapacitate somebody who has so far done you no tangible harm?' (p. 90).

As a final remark, it may be worthwhile to quote an important linguistic caveat that E. Benveniste expressed, some thirty years ago, on the subject of prayer and supplication: 'we always have the tendency to transpose into other languages the meanings which terms of the same sense connote in our own language. To pray and to supplicate for us are words of almost identical meaning and differ only in emotional intensity. By translating them in this way we deprive the ancient terms of their specific value so that the difference which was originally proper to the words is blurred by a spurious uniformity'.[7] This leaves us with no other resort than a taxonomic effort, where formal and structural analyses of the contexts where prayers and invocations to the gods appear play the major role. The difficulty of the task is increased, as Pulleyn often reminds us, on the one hand by the absence of a corpus of prayers, and on the other by a lack of clear semantic status of the words expressing an appeal to the gods. The verbs εὔχομαι, ἀράομαι, λίσσομαι, and the nouns εὐχή, ἄρα, λιτή and their derivatives are polysemous and it is often hard to pin down their semantic fields.

The book lacks an overall theoretical appraisal of Greek prayer and refrains from drawing systematic general conclusions on the subject of Greek religion. Yet we can find very important remarks throughout the book. Pulleyn points out acutely on more than one occasion that in Greece there was no Book of Common Prayer, something which hints at the absence of a centralized religious system, and a lack of authorities and sacred texts. In approaching the religious concept of sin he notices that in Greece we find offences against individual gods and that particular transgressions are punished by the gods acting in these spheres; and drawing an implicit comparison with the monotheistic system he asks significantly 'how can one have a simple and unified

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7   E. Benveniste, *Indo-European Language and Society*, London 1973, p. 503. Strangely enough, this book does not appear in Pulleyn's bibliography.

conception of good and evil if there are different gods with different personalities, sometimes pulling in opposite directions'? (p. 69).

Its shortcomings notwithstanding, Pulleyn's book provides us with good suggestions, insightful remarks and starting points for further inquiry, and succeeds in mapping out the most important intersections between prayer and the other verbal and ritual phenomena related to it. Connecting Greek prayer to the idea of reciprocity remains the most original and important contribution, although the notion of reciprocity as applied to the gods-men relationship still leaves room for investigation and refinement.

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Piero Totaro, *Le seconde parabasi di Aristofane* (Beiträge zum Antiken Drama und seiner Rezeption Beiheft 9), Stuttgart-Weimar: Metzler, 1999. xxv + 219 pp. ISBN 3 476 45229 8.

Although it is not so described, this useful monograph looks like an adapted and updated version of a doctoral thesis; if so, the author has produced several other publications on Aristophanes and Old Comedy, unfortunately not yet accessible to the reviewer. A pupil of Giuseppe Mastromarco, to whom this book is dedicated, Totaro (T.) acknowledges the help and stimulus of working in the lively group of Old Comedy specialists at the University of Bari. The book contains an Introduction surveying what ancient and modern scholars have meant by 'second parabasis', followed by detailed commentary on the five passages that were already so described as 'second' or 'final' parabasis in the Old Scholia on five of Aristophanes' surviving comedies, *Knights, Clouds, Wasps, Peace* and *Birds*. Finally two appendices discuss a couple of particularly thorny historical problems arising in the relevant parts of *Knights* and *Wasps*.

To qualify for this scholarly title a later 'parabasis' had (*a*) to have at least part of the epirrhematic structure found in the main parabasis, and (*b*) to develop subjects already present in the main parabasis. Unlike the main parabases, these later 'parabases' contain no verbal indication that Aristophanes himself would have so described them, but the epirrhematic form and the choral address to the audience and/or the judges of the dramatic contest suffice to justify the term.

Although confining his detailed study to commentary on the five 'second parabases' recognized as such by ancient scholars, T. discusses also in his Introduction the two passages in *Acharnians* that some modern scholars have seen as also qualifying for the title, or at least to be termed a quasi- or pseudo-second parabasis. The strophic pair at *Ach.* 971-99, in cretic-paeonic metre except for a final trochaic tetrameter, in which the chorus begins with an address to 'you whole city' and has many self-references, is termed 'second parabasis' by e.g. Zieliński (*Gliederung* 175) and Sommerstein (edition ad loc.), and a *Mischform,* of second parabasis and *Makarismos* of the hero, by Zimmermann (*Untersuchungen* II, 154 n. 17), but this is