



# Η ΕΠΙΣΤΟΛΗ

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*written and distributed by the Neokoroi*

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## Household Gods

by Oenochoe

We read a lot about the grand public festivals of ancient Greece, but of the private household cult much less is known. Indeed, there is less primary source information available on this aspect of the religion, in part because it was not as flashy, and also because it would have been almost second nature, not something one thinks of writing about. However, those daily practices centered in and around the house were essential to Hellenic religion, and should be remembered and revived by us today.

First and foremost is Hestia. She was less anthropomorphized than the rest of the Greek gods, rather she *is* the hearth itself. In an ancient house, the hearth occupied a central place, and was the focus of virtually all private sacrifices and offerings. Meals were eaten around the hearth, and at the beginning of any meal a portion would be dropped in the fire for Hestia. She was also the first to receive a piece of a sacrifice made in the home. There is evidence that this led to Hestia being recognized first in larger public sacrifices as well. Any new member of the family was first brought to the hearth, people even swore oaths on the hearth.

Of course, modern homes rarely have a fireplace; we certainly do not tend to use them for daily cooking. Hellenic pagans have come up with a variety of solutions to this. Some consider their kitchen stove to be their hearth, especially if it is gas powered

and therefore has a flame. In this case, a piece of the meal might be put into the oven or burned atop the stove. Others opt to have a candle lit for Hestia, a sort of “eternal flame” (although it is unsafe to leave it burning while asleep or away). Personally, I have a candle, which is set on the windowsill of my kitchen, near to the stove.

After meals, a few drops of unmixed wine would be poured out onto the floor for the Agathos Daimon, the good spirit, often perceived as a snake. While we no longer have earthen floors to absorb libations, we can still pour out this drink into a small dish, and periodically dispose of the offerings outside on the ground.

The storeroom, or pantry, was protected by Zeus Ktesios (acquirer). In fact, many of Zeus’ lesser-known aspects are involved in the household cult. A jar or amphora was dedicated to Zeus Ktesios and placed in the storeroom; it was filled with fresh water, oil, and various fruits (a *panspermia* type of offering) and the handles were decorated with wool fillets. This Zeus, like the Agathos Daimon, often takes the form of a snake. In fact, not only is the belief in a snake house-spirit prevalent across European paganism, it could even still be found in rural areas of Greece well into the last century. The jar for Zeus Ktesios is a fairly simple offering to assemble, and can be placed in modern pantries or just on the shelves you use for foodstuffs.

*(continued on page two)*

## Contents

### *Essays*

Household Gods.....1
Reconstructionist Ritual for Non-Hellenics.....3
New Year’s Kronia Festival.....7

### *Poetry*

Hymn to Artemis.....2
Daughter of Night.....5

### *Miscellaneous*

Summer Festivals.....4
Book Review.....8

## Η ΕΠΙΣΤΟΛΗ

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The Neokoroi are a group of Hellenic hard polytheists working to foster communities, festivals, and temples, to provide guidance and information on religious matters, and to ensure the strength and longevity of the worship of the Greek gods.

Ἡ Ἐπιστολή (a “message” or “letter”) is published four times a year. We offer articles, hymns, prayers, poetry, reviews, information, rituals, community notices, fiction, recipes, and anything else of interest to the Hellenic pagan community. We welcome feedback and submissions from guest writers.

Ἡ Ἐπιστολή is a free publication and can be found in many locations nationwide. If you would like the newsletter delivered to you directly, subscriptions cost \$16 per year – contact us for more information. And please contact us if you would like to distribute copies in your area – in return you receive the issues for free.

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www.winterscapes.com/neokoroi

We have even more articles online, as well as information on the gods, photos, links and more!

Our next issue will be coming out in September '04. The deadline for submissions is August 10<sup>th</sup>. Advertising space is also available.

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### Household Gods (continued from page one)

The rest of the household religion could be found immediately outside the doors. Here again we find Zeus; an altar to Zeus Herkeios (fence) stood in the courtyard and received sacrifices and libations. Some houses also erected an altar to Zeus Kataibates (who descends) in front of their houses to protect them from lightning strikes.

Further, where the courtyard met the street, might stand a high, conical stone in honor of Apollon Aguieos (of the street). Oil was poured on it, and it was decorated with fillets; it stood to protect the house against harm.

In front of the house one might also find Hermes Propylaios in the shape of a pillar, or a triple image of Hekate. Prayers would be made to these for protection and to avert evil.

Aside from replicating these altars and stones exactly, which many of us cannot do, there are ways to carry on these traditions even in an apartment. An image of one or all of these protecting gods could be hung on the front door (inside, if outside is not possible), or perhaps a pile of stones placed by the front step where one could pour libations and such. Considering what a large part of the average person's religious life these small rituals would have occupied in ancient Greece, it seems only proper that we continue to perform them today, if slightly modified. And it is always a good idea to incur the good-will of the gods when it comes to your family and home!

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FMI see Nilsson, *Greek Folk Religion*, chapter “The House and the Family”



### Hymn to Artemis

by Jennifer

O Artemis, the fair light bringer!

Your feet dance and your spirit leaps over all things free and untamed!  
Be it the beasts, purple mountain sides, or the fiery soul!

Come down from your chaste revels, O wild courageous Maiden,  
Goddess of the hunt!  
I seek your fast silvery arrows to guide and protect me!

Wet your whistle with wine now,  
for the dog star, wheeling up the sky,  
brings back summer, the time all things are parched  
under the searing heat.

Now the cicada's cry, sweet in the leaves,  
shrills from beneath his wings.

Now the artichoke flowers,  
women are lush, ask too much of their men,  
who grow lank, for the star burning above  
withers their brains and knees.

- Alcaeus of Mytilene

## Reconstructionist Ritual for Non-Hellenics

by Sarah Lawver

A few days ago, I attended a lovely Hellenic ritual in my hometown. We purified ourselves with khernips, cast barley into a ritual fire, and made offerings and libations to the Gods. The prayers were heartfelt and touching. The Gods were treated with respect and as individuals. It was our best attempt at reconstructing the spirit and form of ancient Greek ritual, even using Greek for some key words and phrases.

However, there's one thing about this ritual that was rather unusual - I was the only Hellenic Reconstructionist there. The rest of the twenty or so participants ran the gamut of paganism. There were Wiccans, Druids, shamans, kitchen witches, herbalists, spiritualists, eclectics, and more. None of them knew much about ancient Greek religion, but it didn't matter. Religion is all about honoring the Gods, and our faith in the Gods was the one thing we held in common. It's that faith that makes it entirely possible for Hellenics to worship with other modern pagans without compromising our beliefs.

For a Hellenic Reconstructionist, to be involved in the pagan community is to be frustrated on an almost daily basis. Most of today's pagans don't know anything about Hellenismos, and a few will go so far as to claim, when it is described to them, that such a religion "isn't anything like Paganism!" Participating in generalized "pagan" groups isn't always easy, but even those who make statements we find truly offensive are generally ignorant, not malicious. The only way to combat ignorance is through education, and public ritual is one of the most appealing methods of education available.

Public ritual is familiar, subtle, and enjoyable. Nearly every pagan group does some sort of public ritual, so it's something people can relate to, but the idea of attending a ritual that departs from the typical circle-casting, quarter-calling format is different enough to pique people's interest. Ritual is a much more subtle form of teaching than lectures and classes, but it is educational by its very nature. Attending ritual is the natural way for people to become familiar with a religion. Ritual makes many silent assumptions about the nature of the cosmos and the Gods, and presents the religion as a complete system instead of as a collection of disconnected myths and ideas. It's easy for people to understand, and it's pleasant. Rituals are generally joyous celebrations, designed to be appealing to both the Gods and the participants. They are theatrical by nature, and there's often food at the end. If a little education occurs in the meantime, nobody's going to complain.

The first step to holding a public ritual is to be active in your community. Get to know other pagans in your area - you might be surprised how many of them are eager to learn more about your religion. Introduce yourself as a Hellenic Reconstructionist and answer the questions that come up. Speak up when blanket statements about pagans are made that you know aren't accurate ("all pagans are earth-based," "all pagans worship the Lord and Lady"), but remember that ideas which you think of as historical inaccuracies or misconceptions are core beliefs in some pagan religions. Sometimes you might just have to chalk it up to blind faith and let it go.

Try to get involved in planning a few eclectic neopagan rituals. If you feel that your religion excludes you from participation in the ritual, you can still help with organizing, cooking, or clean-up. Don't worry about making these rituals more Hellenic - they're not supposed to be. If you want to have reconstructionist rituals that are truly reconstructionist, then you have to allow other pagans to remain true to their beliefs and customs in their own rituals.

After you've gotten to know people, suggest that you'd like to do a Hellenic ritual sometime. Present it as an opportunity for them to learn more about your religion. Even if other rituals your group holds are planned by committee with the whole group helping out, you should expect to do all the planning and organizing for your Hellenic ritual on your own. That isn't necessarily a bad thing - in fact, it's preferable. It's much easier to keep a ritual true to Hellenismos if it's considered to be your "pet project" instead of group property. Doing it yourself also keeps your ritual from straining other group members' time and energy, which is especially important if it falls during a busy time of year. I had several members of the CUUPs group that supported my Mounikhia ritual thank me privately for taking charge of the ritual and doing all of the writing and organizing myself. The group had just held a huge Beltain May Fair three days before, and they were very grateful they didn't have to work on Mounikhia, too!

That's another thing to keep in mind when planning your ritual - try to find a holiday that doesn't fall too near one of the 8 Wiccan Sabbats, but don't compromise the timeliness of the festival in order to move it further away from a Wiccan holiday. A ritual that's tied to the lunar calendar should fall on the correct phase of the moon. Mounikhia was only three days after the Beltain celebration, but we still had twenty people there.

I say, "find a holiday," because starting with a holiday celebration has the advantage of allowing you to cite historical precedence when asked why you're doing things a certain way. The more information you have on the holiday, the easier this will be. You might want to choose a holiday dedicated to a God or Goddess that people in your group already know and love - I chose to do a ritual for Mounikhia partly because I knew the pagans in my area related well to Artemis. In fact, a Wiccan friend of mine had written papers on her because he considered her to be his matron Goddess.

This friend was studying for his Wiccan Priesthood, and asking him to act as Priest of Artemis for the ritual was probably one of the most crucial decisions I made. I felt that it was more important to have a Priest who was personally devoted to Artemis than one who was familiar with Hellenismos, and it turned out beautifully. I worked out a script with him, and while he stumbled over a few Greek words, he took his role very seriously. He practiced his part for weeks and came hours early to prepare, and his devotion to Artemis set the tone for the whole event. Having him conduct

*(continued on page four)*

## **Reconstructionist Ritual** *(continued from page three)*

the ritual left me free to deal with administrative details and last-minute emergencies, and it made Mounikhia the community celebration it was intended to be.

Don't be afraid to take advantage of others' strengths, but don't let them write the ritual for you and don't compromise. This ritual is supposed to be a representation of your religion, not a Wiccan circle with a few Hellenic elements thrown in to make it more ecumenical. Calling quarters would certainly make the ritual seem more "normal" to many neopagans, but in a Hellenic setting, it doesn't make any sense! Religious systems are meant to function as a whole, and they just don't work when you take pieces of them out of context. If someone asks whether you could include some Wiccan or Celtic element, just say no – no matter how fascinating and cool it sounds. There is a place for such things in other rituals, but they don't belong here.

At the same time, remember that your ritual is not going to be perfect. You are necessarily limited in your ability to accurately reconstruct Greek practices by your own knowledge and by the resources you have available. However, there's no better way to figure out how ancient Greek religion worked in society than to take what you have and try to make it work yourself.

A few months ago, I thought that being the only Hellenic Reconstructionist in my area doomed me to a lifetime of solitary worship. Since then, I've learned that a shared devotion to the Gods is enough to bring people together for a ritual, and that more people are curious about my religion than I'd thought. Now that I know people would be interested, I'm thinking about doing Hellenic rituals on a regular basis. Not only is it an opportunity to teach Hellenismos, it's a way to give more honor to the Gods – and aren't they what this religion is all about?



## **Summer Festivals**

by Oenochoe

**Skiraphoria** (June 30) the festival of cutting and threshing the grain, held in the sanctuary of Demeter and Kore. Women threw cakes shaped like snakes and phalluses as well as pigs into the sacred caverns of Demeter. The men had a race carrying vine-branches from the sanctuary of Dionysos to the temple of Athene Skiras. The winner was given the Fivefold Cup, which contained wine, honey, cheese, corn and olive oil. He shared this drink with the goddess, pouring her a libation to request her blessing on the fruits of the season.

**Dipolieia** (July 2) a festival of Zeus as god of the city.

**Sacrifices to Zeus the Savior and Athene the Savior** (July 17) a sacrifice was traditionally made on the last day of the old year to ensure good health and prosperity for the coming year.

**Aphrodisia** (July 21) the bathing festival of Aphrodite and Peitho (Persuasion). First the temple was purified with dove's blood, then the altars were anointed; then the two statues were carried in a procession to the washing place.

**Kronia** (July 29) a festival in honor of Kronos as a god of the harvest, portrayed with a reaping scythe. A huge harvest feast was held, where slaves were invited to dine with their masters. (See article in this issue)

**Panathenaia** (Aug. 14) the celebration of Athene's birthday, when gods and mortals feasted together, one of the largest

festivals in Athens. Every fourth year, the Greater Panathenaia was held, when a new robe was given to the goddess. A huge procession brought the robe to her statue in her temple, where it was placed on Athene's knees, and later stored in the treasury; she was officially re-robed during the Plunteria. Sacrifices were also made to Athene Hugiaia (Health) and Nike. The three or four days following the procession featured contests of sport and art.

**Herakleia** (Aug. 19) a celebration of Herakles by athletes in the gymnasium (date approximate).

**Metageitnia** (Aug. 22) named after Apollon's epithet, meaning "changing neighbors," it may have been a festival of the neighborhood (date approximate).

**Niketeria** (Sept. 16) a festival in honor of Nike.

**Genesia** (Sept. 19) the Athenian state festival in honor of the dead, especially those who died in wars. (Families usually honored their own dead on the anniversaries of their deaths.)

**Kharisteria** (Sept. 20) the feast of Artemis Agrotera (the huntress). After the victory at Marathon, this became a commemoration of that battle, and was known as Kharisteria, "Thanksgiving."

**Boedromia** (Sept. 21) a festival of thanksgiving for Apollon as a god who rescues people in war.

## Daughter of Night

by Todd Jackson

**R**anked first among Thine agonies  
That one so lovely should go cowed.

Early March.  
Cold rains have crossed California  
Then rolled over the Sierras and dipped down upon us,  
And six straight days chilled Las Vegas.  
These cold rains, then carried East along the high wind,  
And did great mischief there;  
Snow lies two feet deep and more all up the seaboard.  
Back here, back West, the Valley lies refreshed.  
At midweek there had been a tight seam of heat inside two cold days,  
And Saturday we burst into the seventies.  
Tonight, the summit of Mount Charleston,  
The high point of Earth in this broad County;  
The crooked Moon hangs above, just off the peak of black Night.  
Hekate's, the crooked Moon, that slices even Night.

The Moon is framed, off-center, by the silhouetted tips of the bristlecone pines,  
That sprouted when quick girls still dared bulls at Minos.  
No longer even a green blush now within that soft mass;  
The pines are but blacker shapes against black Night,  
Jagged in the corners of my sight, the stars all hid behind.

While, below, warm spring sunlight has stroked Las Vegas,  
Then soothed it with cool winds,  
It is white winter here atop Mount Charleston,  
Where the cloudwater fell as it would fall two thousand miles east,  
As snow.  
Winter had entered the valley as a nymph in white taffetta, billowing through Night;  
She drifted southeast, sailing among the clouds,  
Snagged underneath by the tips of all the Sierras,  
And above,  
Snagged also upon the crooked Moon;  
The winter nymph here has paid due tribute  
To Hekate,  
Then flowed eastward in a shredded gown.

Mount Charleston, as the tall peak, has snagged its own big patch off the gown,  
And I am standing here, one man among two amid white snow,  
And I am black, like Hekate,  
And the hounds,  
Here, cast against white snow, as  
Above, on white moondust. I look now with all my eyes  
And behold, the splash of dogprints in the snow.

Io Hekate, Daughter of Night  
Ahead, three roads crossing, and She knows the steepest way.  
Io Hekate, Daughter of Night  
Priced steep is Her wisdom, and only the hard can pay.

For the Moon, and Nevada, are two great concaves toward each other,  
Split by black broad space  
As great palms outspread in the Night,  
So that the Moon, and Nevada, are not aimless wanderers;  
They are pinned,  
Such that that tight cislunar space has sprung five whirlpools,

*(continued on page six)*

**Daughter of Night** *(continued from page five)*

And close upon Nevada, encircling the Earth, a skin of gathered Sunfire.  
I leave bootprints in the snow atop the mountain, as  
Above, in that white sliver dangled among distant stars  
There are boot prints studded in the Moon dust.

Io Hekate, Daughter of Night  
Ahead, three roads crossing, and She knows the steepest way.  
Io Hekate, Daughter of Night  
Priced steep is Her wisdom, and only the hard can pay.

Hers is the Moon, and especially the crooked Moon.  
Hers that part of Dionysos' sap that poisons and heals.  
Hers is the jellyfish sting.  
And that bright droplet off the rattler's fang,  
That inside itself is whirling as it dangles there.  
Hers, the thirst for riches, that gives focus to spirit,  
Hers, the hymen between salesman and closer,  
And the big red X on the board.  
Hers, the black and the red of the dice.  
Hers, the garlic bulb,  
That is poison unto poison itself, and thereby heals.  
Hers, my recent trade of blood against poverty,  
And that blood pays cheap.  
Hers the nuggets still dug deep in the land, unpicked,  
Waiting,  
And the black oil that is the pressed rot of ancient flesh,  
And that pools and surges within the Earth,  
Then sails the broad seas in ships more numerous  
Than breadcrumbs strewn before an audience of birds,  
And all, because it burns.  
Hers the honorific, Nigger, that is the curse, and delight, of my people,  
The choice of Black, and the weight inside that choice,  
That may not now be unchosen. For we now are Hers,  
And Her grip will not be broken.  
Hers the dark shining in the abyss,  
Earth's bowels burst hot through the ocean floor,  
Hers the weird dark forests that thrive there,  
In the pressure.  
Hers the ice and the metal in the Moon.  
Hid beneath deep rock, yet there is no hiding  
From the torchlight.  
Hers, the quarter million miles of cold death.  
Hers is that knowing of woman that woman may only know  
By knowing herself, and among the herbs.  
Hers, the mystique of woman.

I know a lady the color of moonlight on bundled wood.  
People are dying in her dreams who aren't dead yet.  
That comes afterward, and soon.  
I have yet to touch the lady.  
One day I shall.

Under Night,  
Winding down the mountain road.  
My friend and I observe upon the city, art, and blackjack.  
She  
I cannot long speak of.  
She  
Is not yet fully speakable in this time.  
But down in that great splash of lights below

*(continued on page seven)*

## Daughter of Night *(continued from page six)*

Mine is not the only candle lit  
For Hekate. Yes,  
Were She to, with a wave of Her hand,  
Snuff the brilliant plumage of the Strip,  
And Downtown's yellow-white gleaming,  
Were She then to shut down the straggler lights of Summerlin,  
Of North Las Vegas,  
And leave only candles lit for Gods  
The valley floor would at first lie black as the ring of mountains  
Before Apollo brings them forth with the morning.  
The valley floor would at first lie black,  
But in time the eyes would focus, and soon make out  
Pricks of light, only several, but definite.  
Scattered, and yet a gathering,  
Witness to the returning of the time.

It is growing warmer down the slope.  
We descend from winter toward spring.  
But now two fingers on my right hand are struck cold.  
Cold has climbed up my knuckles,  
Till taking fingernail to lips, I find it ice.  
I remind myself of my good health  
Yet can not not ask, Which does this mean?  
Stroke or heart attack?  
No. It is that She has taken my hand.  
She who comes and goes in dread.

I am honored. I will choose something fine tomorrow  
To set before the purple candle.

Io Hekate, Daughter of Night  
Ahead, three roads crossing, and She knows the steepest way.  
Io Hekate, Daughter of Night  
Priced steep is Her wisdom, and only the hard can pay.



## New Year's Kronia Festival

by Gitana

The Kronia was a festival in honor of Kronos, the Titan father of Zeus. It was celebrated just after the New Year; according to the Athenian calendar the date is Hekatombaion 12. <sup>[1]</sup> This year it falls on 29 July. The *nature* of the festival has an agrarian, a social, and a mythological component to it, as did many of the ancient festivals. Practitioners of reconstructionism would do well to understand these different aspects of the festival, as it illuminates a portion of ancient Greek culture of interest to us.

The agrarian aspect of the festival is obvious because it occurred after the final grain harvest. Kronos was the god of the grain; his symbol is the scythe with which he harvested it. He is the husband of Rhea, the Great Earth Mother. She is responsible for making the crops grow, but it is Kronos who harvests the crop.

Socially, it represented a time for restraints to be temporarily

forgotten. Slaves were released from their duties, and participated in the festivities alongside the slave-owners. Slaves were “permitted to run riot through the city, shouting and making a noise.” <sup>[2]</sup> In some cases, the masters were the “servants” of their slaves, serving them food during the feasts. This is in honor of the Golden Age, a time in which there was no slavery, and even no hard labor.

The Kronia also reenacts two myths. Ouranos hated his children and when they were born, he hid them away deep inside Gaia's body. This caused much distress for the goddess. She asked one of her children to take revenge against their father, and Kronos, the youngest, agreed to do this. He set an ambush for his father, and when the moment came, he castrated his father with a large sickle. Kronos thus became the new king. However, it was foretold that he, too, would be overthrown.

*(continued on page eight)*

## New Year's Kronia Festival (continued from page seven)

This is told in a second myth, in which Kronos swallows his children as they are born in order to prevent them from overthrowing him. Rhea, his wife, hides the last child, Zeus,

and instead presents Kronos with a rock made to resemble the newborn child. Kronos immediately swallows the "child" without realizing he has been deceived. As the years pass, Zeus grows and the day arrives in which he fulfils his destiny. Not only does Zeus defeat Kronos and takes his place as king of the gods, but he also frees his brothers and sisters who are trapped inside Kronos' stomach.

Modern-day Hellenic reconstructionists will have some difficulty celebrating this festival. As it occurs in late summer, it does not correspond to the end of the harvest season, at least not for those of us in the US. However, we certainly can celebrate the *season* of the harvest. We also no longer have slavery, so that part of the festival cannot be reenacted. We can replace the master/slave relationship with perhaps the adult/child relationship, and let the children serve the adults, for example.

We can, however, still celebrate its mythological and religious significance without much difficulty. We may offer prayers, food sacrifices, and sports to Kronos. Drew Campbell, in his

*Old Stones, New Temples* has created a ritual in honor of this day, in which passages from the *Theogony* are read, as well as the Orphic Hymn to Kronos.<sup>[3]</sup> Also appropriate for this festival are offerings of cakes and incense, as well as playing sports such as three-legged races.<sup>[4]</sup> As with all festivals, there is a feast, which can be like a "block party," or a picnic at the local park. Of course if there will only be a few people attending, the back yard is just fine.

This is not one of the more "popular" festivals to modern pagans, but the nature of it was very interesting to me, and I plan to celebrate it at a local park. It has a very playful nature, despite the rather gruesome myths associated with it. Even if you don't have a big celebration for this day, be sure to at least take part in this "opposite day." Not all our worship needs to be stuffy & serious!

<sup>1</sup> Previously the month of Hekatombaion was known as Kronion.

<sup>2</sup> Walter Burkert. *Greek Religion*. Harvard Univ. Press, Cambridge, 1985, p. 231

<sup>3</sup> Drew Campbell. *Old Stones, New Temples: Ancient Greek Paganism Reborn*. Xlibris Corporation, 2000, p. 224

<sup>4</sup> Campbell, p. 225



## Book review: Simon Pulleyn's *Prayer in Greek Religion*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1997.

By Gitana

I was very impressed with this book. Written for an academic audience, it contains extensive quotes from primary sources and esteemed secondary sources. The ideas were presented in a very lucid manner, and the language itself was very accessible to an average adult reader. One must keep in mind, however, that this book was not written by a polytheist, or written for a pagan audience. However, it is of great value to us as practitioners of Hellenismos because it presents an accurate description of what prayer was for the ancient Hellenes.

The underlying theme of the book is that prayer is an expression of χάρις. This is the reciprocal nature of the relationship between the gods and humans. We ask things of the gods, and also give things to them. They receive our offerings, and grant our requests. Pulleyn states, "[P]rayer for a Greek meant asking the gods for something. One had to give as well as take. One did not customarily approach the gods empty handed. Prayer was not of itself an autonomous mode of religious action. It relied on sacrifice." (p. 15) He arrives at this conclusion after looking at prayers documented in texts which are still available to us. In fact, throughout the book, he not only sites the primary sources, but gives us the original text with its translation.

Several points that he makes in this book are essential for those of us trying to reconstruct this religion. Let me give a few examples: Sacrifice always accompanies prayer. The gods were usually prayed to separately. Prayers were always said aloud,

even when alone. One raised the hands above the head when praying. Kneeling was a rather uncommon position in which to pray. Magic and curses, while done, were not extremely common. There were no "pre-set" prayers such as ones used by Christians. Women didn't offer public prayers unless they were priestesses. To me, I have found these, and others, to be extremely helpful in understanding the way in which to live my religion. These details allow us to take this from an academic activity and make this into a living religion, complete with theory and action.

One other thing that I liked about this book was that one can pull phrases from documented prayers to use in one's own worship. Even though prayers were composed for each occasion, there were certain phrases that were used often. Myself, I like to use these phrases as I feel I am participating in the tradition of Hellenismos, and continuing it into this century. Therefore phrases such as "Hear me, God of the Silver Bow" which is used in *The Iliad* is something that I will incorporate into my repertoire.

The only criticism I have of this book is the price tag. It seems as though it is only available in hard cover, so it is rather expensive. However, it should be available at larger libraries (and from other libraries through interlibrary loan). It is well worth the trouble of trying to locate it, as reading it will give you a level of understanding that will benefit your worship immensely.