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The Deeper Structure of Religious Discourse
in Aristophanes' *Wealth*:
Plutos, the Eiresione, Metaphor,
and the Reevaluation of the Vegetation Paradigm*

1. *Introduction*

Despite its extraordinary success from the Middle Ages, through the Renaissance, and until 1800, the enthusiasm about *Plutos* has drastically diminished since Romanticism¹. It has become customary to label *Wealth* as a play of decline. Thus, we are used to being confronted with critical judgements, such as that the aged poet has lost his genius and inventiveness or that the play lacks the vitality that we enjoy so much in Aristophanes' early plays. The old rustic humor of Old Comedy seems to have evaporated, and, except for the parodos, choral songs are dropped and only indicated by the χοροῦ-remark in the manuscripts. Scholars usually associate the new features of *Plutos*, performed in 388 BCE, with the genre's development towards Middle Comedy in the wake of Athens' declining political role. The historical and cultural revolutions after Athens' defeat in 404 BCE lead to the end of the classical period and the beginning of the period called the Hellenistic epoch. *Plutos* is part of this process, as it is linked with the end of a predominantly oral culture in reception and the transition to a culture of literacy².

* This article originated from intensive studies, executed in Leipzig and Harvard in the early 1990s, which resulted in lectures at Harvard and Boston University in 1994/95. Other aspects were added for a presentation on the occasion of the Myth-Conference at the Fondation Hardt in 2008. I cordially thank Guido Paduano and Alessandro Grilli for their kind invitation to the INDA-conference «La rappresentazione del divino nel teatro antico», Siracusa, 2019, where I read a totally revised paper that forms the basis for this contribution. I am grateful for the questions, suggestions, and criticism of the audiences.

¹ See TORCHIO 2001, 43-5.

² On exemplary voices about the decline, see TORCHIO 2001, 45 n. 232; MÖLLENDORFF 2002, 127. On the transformation of Old to Middle comedy, see DOBROV 1995; CSAPO 2000, on *Plutos*, 122-5.

Despite all cultural and socio-political changes at the turn of the 5th century³, we should not forget that this last extant play was created by the same author who still applied the same technical skills and techniques as he did in the period of his early youth. The polis and its life still provide the central pool of material for Aristophanes to build a comic narrative. In contrast to tragedy, where the plot can be entirely based on well-known myths, an author of comedy has to invent his story by making use of the daily reality of the Athenian citizens as source of inspiration⁴. In Aristophanic scholarship, much emphasis has been placed on politics, as if it stood in opposition to religious and other cultural discourses of daily life. However, it is well-known that religion, custom, cult, and ritual are an integral part of politics in the broader sense of the Athenian citizen living in the 5th and 4th centuries⁵.

After all, it is still a somewhat neglected fact that the comic plot is often based on mythical and ritual patterns which constitute its narrative core⁶. Comedy as a highly parodic genre seems to draw from several mytho-ritual sources in most cases and integrates these elements into its narrative. It is a fascinating new field to ascertain the ritual components of the pastiche-mixture and to analyze its narrative function in the context of the comic plays. The study is interdisciplinary in the sense that it must combine methods of *Religionswissenschaft* with philological and literary considerations. *Plutos* is less political than Aristophanes' earlier pieces, as it lacks many of the direct political allusions⁷.

³ See TORCHIO 2001, 28-32; SOMMERSTEIN 2001, 1-5; DILLON 1987, esp. 157-63 (with a modification and relativization of the extent of the socio-economic crisis after 404 BCE).

⁴ See BIERL 2001b; BIERL 2002.

⁵ SOURVINOU-INWOOD 1990, calling it «polis religion». To counterbalance this view, see now KINDT 2012.

⁶ See, among others, BOWIE 1993; RIU 1999; BIERL 2001a; eng. trans. and revised BIERL 2009. See also BIERL 2007a; BIERL 2012a. See now CHEPEL 2020.

⁷ On *Plutos*, see the commentaries by VAN LEEUWEN 1904; HOLZINGER 1940; SOMMERSTEIN 2001; TORCHIO 2001; see also FLASHAR 1967; DOVER 1972, 202-9; HEBERLEIN 1981; WÖLFLE 1981; KONSTAN, DILLON 1981; SOMMERSTEIN 1984; DILLON 1987; PARADISO 1987; OLSON 1989; OLSON 1990; BOWIE 1993, 268-91; BIERL 1994; AUFFARTH 1995, esp. 358-63; MACDOWELL 1995, 324-49; SFYROERAS 1995; MCGLEW 1997; MÖLLENDORFF 2002, 125-31; WILLI 2003b; ZUMBRUNNEN 2006; TORDOFF 2012a; TORDOFF 2012b; PAGNI 2013a; PAGNI 2013b; LUDWIG 2014; ORFANOS 2014; BARRENECHEA 2018.

However, it is political in a wider sense, as it deals with the social and economic consequences of any form of wealth distribution. Not only due to a social turn in the studies of ancient drama, the play has attracted new interest since 1980⁸. As the study of Greek religion has been reevaluated with fresh perspectives from anthropology and sociology – the Vernant school and Walter Burkert come to mind immediately⁹ – since the 1970s, the obviously religious aspects of *Wealth* can be readdressed in a new light. Moreover, due to the fact that it is allegedly a dull and insipid play, *Plutos* seems to lay bare its ritual structure and mythic patterns of traditional storytelling. Therefore, it can serve as a test case and good example to explore how Aristophanes shapes his plot in symbolic and metaphorical terms and to detect, aside from its centers of popular religious belief, its deep structure on the ritual-mythic level, based on people's sociological existence and Attic heortology.

2. *Comedy and Religion*

It goes without saying that *Wealth* draws its character of popular and traditional religiosity mainly from the fact that *Plutos*, aside from all other semantic layers, is a god, an old, neglected, and at the same time a new god¹⁰. As soon as religion and gods are focused in comedy, the problem of interpreting the features of abusive laughter and obscenity arises. For a long time, the critical opinion has been dichotomized along the lines of atheism or the exact opposite. In other words, ridiculing or parodying myth, cult, and religion, and even gods in general, has been mostly regarded as an act of anti-religious bias or criticism. This attitude was then linked with a general tendency of philosophical enlight-

⁸ See n. 7.

⁹ See BIERL 2010.

¹⁰ On old and new in Aristophanes, see BIERL 2004; on new gods, see VERSNEL 1990, 102-31; AUFFARTH 1995; on Dionysos as new god, see VERSNEL 1990, 96-205; on *Plutos* as new god, see AUFFARTH 1995, 356-63; BARRENECHEA 2018, 137-61.

enment widely spread in the late 5th century. On the one hand, critics have therefore seen Aristophanes as an atheist intellectual of his times¹¹. A strategy to excuse Aristophanes from atheism has been to detach Old Comedy from the official polis religion and label these forms as popular religion¹². On the other hand, it has been pointed out that comic abuse or parody of cult and gods, in short *Götterburleske*, do not necessarily imply atheism. Rather, based on a broad comparative view of anthropology, research has proved that it is not a late phenomenon of a uniquely Greek form of enlightened distancing from religion in the late 5th century, but a widespread, very old, and strong expression of worship. Obviously, it is alien to our filters of reception as we tend to make generalizations based on our Judaic-Christian experience and through the lens of a modern society¹³. Scholars nowadays tend towards the latter opinion, but at the same time they acknowledge Aristophanes' intellectual engagement with the Sophistic movement. However, in order to understand the paradox of religious laughter about god and to emphasize Aristophanes' attachment to polis cult and lived religion, I believe the question must be scrutinized from the point of view of genre and ritual embeddedness. Old Comedy constantly refers to ritual occasions of temporal or partial reversal and carnevalesque license, from which the genre seems to have developed and in which it must be situated in its *Sitz im Leben*¹⁴. The genre of Old Comedy, so to speak, is the occasion as it totally constitutes the Aristophanic performance.

One decisive feature of Old Comedy is the distortion of reality and the so-called 'world upside down', where all experiences of the daily life are radically reversed. Furthermore, ancient drama is not a secular entertainment, as theater is today, but has to be seen in the context of the city cult and polis religion¹⁵, especially

¹¹ HILD 1880; PASCAL 1911; LESKY 1971³, 471-509.

¹² KOCK 1857; GELZER 1966.

¹³ BURKERT 1982. See AUFFARTH 2007, 390.

¹⁴ See BIERL 2002; BIERL 2019a.

¹⁵ See above n. 5.

in the cultic and ritual frame of Dionysos during the Lenaia and Dionysia, the occasions on which Old Comedy was performed. Dionysos is after all a very ambivalent god who encompasses oppositions in numerous categories of life experience. Many of his ritual characteristics are linked to reversal and to questioning the values of daily life. Dionysiac ritual and myth revolve around narratives of order and disorder¹⁶. However, in order to create the scenario of distortion, Old Comedy does not only rely on its occasion's intrinsically Dionysiac basis but, as a parodic genre, it tends to incorporate different mytho-ritual patterns, combining them to a plot that tends to subvert normality¹⁷.

Old Comedy, I argue, not only mocks the gods, but helps strengthen civic cult and stabilize order given the sincere belief in the Olympian system and the genuine cultic worship of the divine in the city. The genre is situated, to a great extent, in the reality of daily cult, but, at the same time, the overall narrative structure also tends to subvert festive affirmative perspectives insofar as comedy is firmly interwoven with a complex of ritual forms that inherently turn the internal dramatic world upside down. We must bear in mind that *Plutos* oscillates between the personification of wealth and being an actual god, an old, traditional daimon and a new god introduced in the polytheistic system, between an object, i.e. money, and the abstract idea or concept of wealth, between a metaphorical and allegorical figure in respect of economy as well as agriculture with ritual elements¹⁸.

In the following, I would like to show how the ritually structured plot of *Plutos* refers to rites of reversal and agriculture in particular. After the excesses of Wilhelm Mannhardt and the Cambridge Ritualists with their obsession to observe a fertility god or an *eniautos daimon* behind every numinous being, this trend of agricultural interpretation of religion and stressing the fertility paradigm, in German scholarship represented by Mann-

¹⁶ BIERL 2012*b*; BIERL 2013*a*.

¹⁷ BIERL 2002; BIERL 2009; BIERL 2019*a*.

¹⁸ KOMORNICKA 1964, 128.

hardt, but also by Hermann Usener and his school, Albrecht Dieterich, Ludwig Deubner, and by Martin P. Nilsson in Sweden¹⁹, has gone out of fashion after the Second World War. Scholarship has reached a point where this model seems to have been eagerly avoided even if obvious connections with the agricultural year occur, as they do in the case of *Plutos*.

Whereas both the other paradigms of religious studies, that is initiation and year festivals, are nowadays up to date with regards to the integration of modern sociological and anthropological methods and perspectives, the paradigm of vegetation, fertility, and agriculture seems to have lost all influence on the methodological considerations of *Religionswissenschaft* since the 1950s and 1960s²⁰. This is partly due to Walter Burkert's disparaging remarks on this old paradigm²¹. Mankind, according to him, has a cultural memory that goes back far beyond the Neolithic Revolution, its invention of agriculture around 10000 BCE, and its introduction of plants and crop production from the Levant and Anatolia to the Aegean in ca. 6000 BCE, to a very remote past. With Burkert's search of origins he revives Karl Meuli's thoughts of a palaeolithic basis in Greek sacrificial rites²². Burkert then goes further by looking for anthropological and evolutionary grounds. Finally, he even investigates the «biological tracks» of Greek religion²³. By understanding origins, we are supposed to be able to understand our human DNA in terms of religious experience, infrastructure, and our psychic mental disposition. Rites and myths are invented to prevent the human race from falling back into violence and chaos and to control them²⁴.

¹⁹ BURKERT 1985, 2-3.

²⁰ See BIERL 2007a, 23-30, on the paradigm of fertility, 29-30.

²¹ BURKERT 1983, xxi, 44, 141, 260-1; BURKERT 1985, 3; BURKERT 1987, 74-6; see the radical criticism of CORNFORD [1914] 1961² by PICKARD-CAMBRIDGE 1927, 329-49. See VERSNEL 1993, 15-88, 20-48; on a nuanced view of the fertility paradigm, 231-41; BIERL 2001a, s.v. «Fruchtbarkeit (Ackerbau/Agrarmagie)»; on the combination with the initiation paradigm, see G.J. BAUDY 1986; BAUDY 1992; BAUDY 2004.

²² BURKERT 1983.

²³ BURKERT 1996.

²⁴ BURKERT 1996; on BURKERT, see BIERL 2010 and the entire volume BIERL, BRAUN-GART 2010.

Despite all admirable new insights and truths which were brought to light by means of sociology and anthropology, introduced around 1900 and first applied to Classics by Jane Harrison in her *Themis*²⁵, I think there is good reason to revisit the vegetation and fertility paradigm, which she herself has used before. Origins do not explain everything, and one cannot rule out that some rites, myths, and cults were revised and adapted to the relatively recent invention of agriculture. Given that it was the greatest cultural revolution, it must have had an impact on cultural media and forms of traditional expression, such as myth and ritual, and even on political thought. We should not forget that agriculture and farming constitute the economic basis of the archaic and classical time. Farming and the cycle of the agricultural year governed the existence of most of the lives within the Greek population²⁶. In addition to crafts and trades it is an important factor in archaic and classical economy²⁷. Since *Plutos* is eminently driven by the economic reality in Attica, farming, agriculture, and the annual cycle of growth play a decisive role. In this contribution, I would thus like to advocate a careful and balanced return to Wilhelm Mannhardt, James Frazer or Francis Cornford²⁸. The latter is particularly interested in Old Comedy. As a member of the Cambridge Ritualists, Cornford, in a way, is a predecessor of what I am doing, though he is more interested in developing a general structure for all comedies than in pinning down festivals and hortological elements within a specific play²⁹. Particularly in respect of the study of Old Comedy, such a revisit might be fruitful and could help overcome a certain methodological impasse. Of course, scholarship should not merely fall back 150 years. Undoubtedly, time has recently seen a considerable methodological

²⁵ HARRISON [1912] 1927.

²⁶ See HANSON 1999³; see also CAUVIN 1991; ISAGER, SKYDSGAARD 1992; BURFORD 1993; VAN WEES 2009, 444-67, esp. 448-52.

²⁷ See FINLEY [1973] 1985; SCHEIDEL, REDEN 2002.

²⁸ MANNHARDT 1865; MANNHARDT 1868; MANNHARDT 1904-05²; MANNHARDT 1884; FRAZER 1890; CORNFORD [1914] 1961.

²⁹ Via the ritual of the *pharmakos*, the Thargelia are linked with the sociological approach, which is associated with the theory of sacrifice (see BIERL 2007a, 10-1, 33-7). BOWIE 1993, aside from a short criticism (3-5), hardly takes notice of his predecessors. On comedy and the fertility paradigm, see also ADRADOS 1975.

progress and different turns in the study of ancient Greek literature and religion since then³⁰. Therefore, it goes without saying that a reevaluation does not imply that we either explain Greek religion in terms of vegetation magic or that we are again merely looking for year demons. Rather, we should consider what could serve as a useful tool for interpreting Aristophanic narrative on the basis of contemporary methodology and while taking into account literary, sociological, anthropological, and economical perspectives³¹.

3. *Myth and Ritual, Metaphor, Mytonymy, the Symbolic, and the Iconic*

The fertility paradigm can lead to novel insights into the understanding of *Plutos* by analyzing symbolic and iconic effects connected with agricultural phenomena in the course of the calendar. The cults, which, to a large extent, reflect the basic field of plantation and nutrition, bear a symbolic and iconic semantics³². Space and time as well as the agricultural objects should be dealt with within the frame of symbolic processes and actions. Furthermore, I advocate not limiting the view merely to fertility and vegetation, but approaching the issue from a polyparadigmatic perspective³³. Combining the vegetation paradigm with puberty and mystery initiation and new year festivals can be very useful, since the maturation in terms of sexuality is metaphorically linked with agricultural ripening processes in Greek culture. All perspectives meet in the common structure of a *rite de passage*, which constitutes *Plutos* as well. Moreover, I argue, actions that

³⁰ See the Große Mommsen-Tagung, titled «Die Altertumswissenschaften und die *Cultural Turns*. Forschungen zur Klassischen Antike im (inter)disziplinären Dialog» (3-5 May 2019), with my oral contribution: «Die *cultural turns* in der aktuellen Gräzistik: Performance, Raum, Ritual, *choreia*, Bildlichkeit» (4 May 2019).

³¹ Without doubt, Mannhardt, the successor of the Grimm brothers, is in many ways completely out-dated. Today, Mannhardt is unfortunately cited in this context in nationalistic or esoteric circles, from which the present study distances itself. The Cambridge Ritualists pursued a progressive agenda; see also CALDER 1991.

³² See CALAME 1990, 289-396; SCHMITT PANTEL 1992, esp. 117-252.

³³ See also the exemplary study by VERSNEL 1993, esp. 15-88, 165-71.

structure mythic and comic narratives, i.e. the plot of *Plutos*, can be projected upon heortological cycles³⁴.

Festivals define the lives of the people, and constitute the material of their lived religion. On the basis of modern approaches, Aristophanic scholars, as Cornford used to, do not seek after rigid and constructed ritual patterns any more, which are valid for all comedies as they evolve from them, conserved as survival. Rather, it has turned out that Aristophanes creatively alludes to festivals and heortological elements, playing with them in a ludic context. Rituals and festivals are part of the comic performance, and have to be analyzed according to Old Comedy's performativity and rituality. The poet can allude to single elements or play with an entire festival sequence. In his creative process he can take the course of a festival apart and reassemble it in new plans of action that build the syntax of a simple and popular plot. The analysis is not reductive nor one-dimensional, but applies dynamic and multidimensional models that are staged as matrix to lead people to think about the religious, political, and cosmic order in a performative way³⁵. This perspective of contortion of reality and utopia is again constituted by the festive occasion, by festivals of reversal and exception, during which Old Comedy is performed³⁶. The dynamic nature of the occasion is mirrored in the dramatic play such that, during the performance, everything gets in flux. The patterns defined by the ritual and performative frame entail the structure of the mythic plot that the audience of the polis performance is able to decipher and play with.

As far as plot construction is concerned, icon and language are deeply intertwined, particularly in the figurative speech of metaphor and metonymy³⁷. In traditional societies, certain met-

³⁴ See BIERL 2007a, 23-40; on festivals and heortology, see BIERL 1994; AUFFARTH 2007; BIERL 2001a.

³⁵ See BIERL 2001a; BIERL 2002; AUFFARTH 2007.

³⁶ On this type of festival, see AUFFARTH 1991, 1-37; VERSNEL 1993, 115-21.

³⁷ See FERRARI 1997; FERRARI 2002, esp. 61-86. On metaphor and metonymy, see NAGY 2015, also on the activation and fusion of the senses. On metaphor in Aristophanes, see NEWIGER 1957, on *Plutos*, 165-78. On the following see BIERL 2007b, 246-7 and BIERL 2013b, 82-4. On the comic structure and plot, see VAN DIJK 1975; SIFAKIS 1988; SIFAKIS 1992.

aphors, images, and visual configurations constitute the cultural discourse. In a deep structure, they are able to organize the textures of entire performances, dramas, and texts. The weaving process of textual creation extends in paradigmatic-metaphorical and syntagmatic-metonymic ways. As language, according to the linguistic school of Prague, works in both ways, based on the principles of similarity and contiguity, authors or performers can select and condense or combine and displace the material of narrative. A few key images carry the potential to generate and structure entire texts in the «play of tropes»³⁸. In Greek culture, images and metaphors are the vehicles of myth and ritual³⁹. Narrations and performative structures grow out of ritual and mythic scenarios and tableaux. Performance, the bio-environment, and mental concepts all interact in Greek texts⁴⁰.

A metaphor, in the wider sense, can generate a ritual by setting other metaphors in motion, which can be activated by similarity and contiguity⁴¹. Anthropology informs us that rituals are sets of performative and spectacular behavior that serves to control the external world⁴². They are particularly used in basic situations of daily life, such as eating, drinking, washing, in situations of danger and disease, in crises as well as in transitional states during the life cycle, such as birth, marriage, and death⁴³. In addition, metaphors and rituals are connected with action. James Fernandez fittingly defines ritual as «the acting out of metaphoric predications upon inchoate pronouns which are in need of movement»⁴⁴. Due to their iconic quality metaphors taken literally can be translated into action and narrations. Metaphors are movers and shifters, and Margaret Alexiou summarizes the

³⁸ See FERNANDEZ 1977; FERNANDEZ 1986; FERNANDEZ 1991.

³⁹ See ALEXIOU 2002, esp. 317-9. On the role of myth and ritual as marked discourse in traditional societies, see NAGY 1990, 30-3, 66-8.

⁴⁰ See ALEXIOU 2002. See also FERRARI 2002, esp. 61-86.

⁴¹ See FERNANDEZ 1977; FERNANDEZ 1986; FERNANDEZ 1991.

⁴² See ALEXIOU 2002, 317-48.

⁴³ See ALEXIOU 2002, 319-24.

⁴⁴ FERNANDEZ 1986, 23.

intrinsic interaction of metaphor and ritual as follows: «Metaphor shapes ritual (conventional action), just as ritual gives body to metaphor»⁴⁵.

I subscribe to Alexiou's open definition of myth, which is reenacted in a performative way. She tries to avoid a stance in binary oppositions such as oral/written, primitive/civilized, superstitious/rational, false/true, rural/urban, popular/literary, legendary-fantastic/historical. There is a whole range of mythical genres. One of them tends more to one of the poles, the other more to the other. Myth in itself oscillates between these extremes and its meaning is permanently negotiated in this range of opposites. Alexiou's definition reads as follows:

Myth is a story, often involving supernatural or nonnatural elements, which may be told, sung, or implicit, whether by word of mouth or in writing (or a combination of both). It draws on a shared yet not undisputed fund of beliefs, experiences, and memories, rather than on an officially or scientifically determined consensus imposed from outside. It serves to link the past with the present, the known with the unknown worlds⁴⁶.

The meaning of mythic narratives in performance, according to Alexiou⁴⁷, «lies precisely in the gap between 'true' and 'not-true' – that is, between past experience and potential future – and is constantly *deferred*.» Not the question of what, that is the substantial contents, but of how, that is the functional meaning of myth, is decisive. It is thus paramount to focus on how myth works, how it conveys an open message, and how an audience receives it. After all, it becomes clear that myth obviates the clear-cut decipherment of a fixed message. Rather, it is «multidimensional», dynamic, fluid, in motion, and in permanent transformation, since its meaning, just as it is the case with metaphors and metonymies, «can always be deferred/transferred»⁴⁸.

⁴⁵ ALEXIOU 2002, 318, in general 317-410.

⁴⁶ ALEXIOU 2002, 153.

⁴⁷ ALEXIOU 2002, 165.

⁴⁸ ALEXIOU 2002, 166.

It will turn out that Aristophanes' use of myth and ritual to shape a plot functions exactly on these premises. He seems to be a very fitting example of applying the model of an agricultural interpretation, since many of his comedies are full of agricultural motifs and deal with the life of Attic farmers⁴⁹. Simple peasants often act as comic heroes. Therefore, it does not come as a surprise that plants, food, rural objects, and festivals are mentioned rather frequently in Old Comedy. To Aristophanes, the scholia treasure a large amount of information in this regard. In modern times, this data was mostly processed from a sociological and historical perspective. I recall Victor Ehrenberg's famous *The People of Aristophanes. A Sociology of Ancient Comedy*⁵⁰. Since peasants and agriculture are usually associated with the life of Attic society's lower strata, Aristophanes' comedies become a 'mirror of life' and source material for the social history of late 5th century Athens⁵¹.

This novel approach of fertility is to be linked with other heortological features, since many festivals and peculiarities are mentioned, which function as markers in the calendar and in the annual cycle of growth of plants and crops. Furthermore, I will include the Eleusinian mysteries, which are associated with the invention of grain and the epiphany of Plutos as Demeter's child. Additionally, the following interpretation will consider rituals of license and reversal, which very often deal with customs of the rural life and festive occasions in the annual cycle. In the following, I will attempt to demonstrate how Aristophanes constructs the plot of *Plutos* on the basis of heortological structures and idiosyncrasies. The simple comic plot is a myth, as designated in Aristotle's *Poetics* (1450a4-5), and works on the principle of metaphoric and metonymic predication as well as the principle

⁴⁹ See HEBERLEIN 1980, esp. 1-40, 68-116.

⁵⁰ See EHRENBURG [1943] 1962, esp. 73-94.

⁵¹ CORNFORD [1914] 1961, 11, 52-3, 131 already hints at some ritual patterns on which Aristophanes builds his plot. However, he does not elaborate his arguments on the basis of an exact analysis of the narrative structure of *Plutos*, since he is interested in an overall ritual formula of Old Comedy.

of the trans-/deferral as outlined above. Dramatic performance, itself set in a ritual frame of Dionysiac festivals, interacts with other rituals of the Attic calendar. Yet, Aristophanic comedies are never mere scripts of one particular chain of action linked to a single festival. Since comic plots hardly mirror exact heortological realities, they are only of limited value for the historical reconstruction of festivals. Old Comedy is an occasion for exuberant creativity. A comic author like Aristophanes can experiment with such features, he can reassemble parts from different cults and festivals on the principle of selection, combination, addition and variation. He is able to deconstruct, transfer, transform, and decompose structures, and he plays with single units of action by placing them in new and unfamiliar frames.

This approach incorporates and modifies the recent attempt by Francisco Barrenechea to define Plutos' divine agency as well as it includes crafting a fictional plot for a being that oscillates between the personification of an abstract and an old vegetation god⁵². The specific fusion of the actual god and the personification of a concept reinforces the credibility of Plutos' agency in representations. As a metaphor and metonymy, especially enacted in a performative frame, Plutos operates as a «mover» and «shifter». As a metaphor, Plutos creates ritual in the sense of conventional action, and at the same time, ritual brings about myth as a narrative elaborating on the metaphor⁵³. The gap between the god, son of Demeter, born on the fields, and the abstract concept of grain, harvest, plenty, monetary wealth, and money, which he embodies, is constantly deferred in the mythic narrative. The dynamic mediation between these opposites takes place in a myth, a popular and basic plot, which is reenacted in performance, facilitating the multidimensional openness in motion, the dynamic negotiation of kaleidoscopic meanings. Therefore, a distinctive meaning or clear-cut, unambiguous message of Aristophanes' version of the myth of Plutos is avoided, since meaning is con-

⁵² BARRENECHEA 2018, 11-42, esp. 11-9.

⁵³ See ALEXIOU 2002, 318-9, and in general 317-410.

stantly deferred. Myths of Plutos revolve around the transition from poverty to wealth, from hunger to satiety, from scarcity to abundance, from sowing to harvest, from absence to presence, lack and remedy. They tell how poor people become rich, and how they shape all their experiences, beliefs, and hopes in order to have enough food, health, wealth, and well-being. The anxiety to survive and the experience of social injustice and economic inequity lead to the narrative of a blind god who has to be brought into people's houses and who could be cured from his blindness so that he can distribute his wealth in a fairer manner.

Men also try to manipulate affairs on the side of conventional action. Literary metaphors are taken literally and can shape a rite⁵⁴. Therefore, men can conceptualize wealth as an empty branch that will be attached to the door, brought out, later ornated with firstfruits and carried inside again. This corresponds exactly to the Greek eiresione and customs related with it. It must be handled, manipulated, and moved into the public and private space to guarantee the annual plenty. The branch can, on the one hand, be linked to hortological practices and customs in the calendar and the annual cycle of vegetation, and thus to the official cult of festivities. On the other hand, it can generate the idea, figurative representation⁵⁵, and narrative, i.e. the myth, of the arriving god Plutos responsible for well-being and abundance. In this «play of tropes», Athenians conceptualize Plutos between ritual and myth, action and story.

Based on Thomas Harrison's and Sarah Johnston's ideas of mythic storytelling as promoting the spread, transformation, and consolidation of religious ideas, beliefs, and practices⁵⁶, Barrenechea (2018) groups the plot around narrative patterns such as oracle experience and communication with the divine in situations of crisis. Apollo's oracular response implies help from a figure initially blind and miserable, that is Plutos, as well as his cure

⁵⁴ See BOAS 1911, 73 (interestingly, with the example of the devouring of wealth in a winter ritual among the American Indians).

⁵⁵ See CLINTON 1992, 49-59, 82-3, 91-6 (with the cornucopia); see also CLINTON 1994.

⁵⁶ HARRISON 2015; JOHNSTON 2017a; JOHNSTON 2017b.

in the healing cult of Asklepios, and his ensuing reappearance as a new god and savior in the household and the city, supplementing the Olympian apparatus. The traditional and popular story based on lack and liquidation of lack, crisis and healing, hardship and rescue, conveys and reinforces ideas and beliefs of exchange and rapport with the gods as well as salvation that leads to mystery cult in Plutos' descendance from Demeter to his specific Eleusinian association⁵⁷. Miraculous healing on an individual and societal level, the restoration of wealth and health (*plouthygieia*)⁵⁸, is focused on the introduction of a new and at the same time very old god. It culminates in an experience of epiphany, new unity, and utopian cohesion. This traditional story pattern of a myth, «*a traditional tale with secondary, partial reference to something of collective importance*»⁵⁹ according to Walter Burkert, will be complemented by the underlying structure of ritual, genre, metaphor, and anthropology as outlined above. It considers the annual cycle of festivals that structure the life of the Attic citizens through ritual practices revolving around the agricultural existence of farmers. Old Comedy is performed within the frame of Dionysian festivals, and even as a city event, it notionally projects itself back into a rural environment and phase⁶⁰. In the traditional and simple narrative of rural poverty and hunger, it acts out fantasies of a utopia, of a reversal of the polis economy and a return to the golden times of plenty⁶¹. The mythic narrative is projected onto the heortology, ritual practices, and elements that are associated with the agricultural life. Last but not least, even the simple story can still be reduced to the level of metaphor and metonymy (as eiresione and panspermia), as the narrative of Plutos is compared with the ritual practice of carrying the eiresione out of the private household and city as well as bringing it in again and as it is compared with the annual cycle of

⁵⁷ Hes. *Th.* 969-73; fr. 885 PMG; H. *Hom. Cer.* 486-9; Aristoph. *Thesm.* 299.

⁵⁸ HEBERLEIN 1980.

⁵⁹ BURKERT 1979, 23.

⁶⁰ See LOHR 1986, 63-8; BIERL 2002; BIERL 2019a.

⁶¹ See BIERL 2019b.

sowing⁶², growing, and harvesting the corn. These decisive steps are conceived as critical moments that are ritually acted out in festivals of exception and reversal, where Plutos plays a role as well as his metaphorical object as synecdoche does. And on the complementary side of narrative, these concepts are transformed into mythic patterns.

4. *Rites of Temporary License or Reversal: Plutos and the Anthesteria*

Ritual occasions of temporary license, exception, and reversal are mainly new year festivals or other cults that stage similar crises or transitional periods of any *rite de passage* during the annual cycle. Actual festivals of this type are for example the Kronia, Anthesteria, Skira, Thesmophoria, and the Thessalian Peloria, or the Saturnalia in the Roman world⁶³.

During some of these festivals, the cult of the Olympian gods is temporarily suspended, their temples are closed and sacrifices are interrupted. On the aetiological level of the accompanying myths, the present Olympian gods are often ousted by an older generation. The world returns to its origins, and primordial chaos replaces the present order of culture and human civilization. All its current norms and values are temporarily set aside. Barbarian primitive peoples that once ruled over the Athenian soil come back to restore their power. On the level of ritual, masked groups of wild men, especially theriomorphic satyrs and similar figures, rampage in the streets throughout the city. These bands, sometimes also associated with the returning ghosts of ances-

⁶² On the ritual pattern, see BURKERT 1979, 123-42: a god disappears (also Demeter herself); hunger and plague, drought; social disorder; arrival as tree and return to order; the tree brings abundance. The god is envisaged in a primitive plank, tree or bough; the god is invited to a meal (*theoxenia* with *stibas*), dressed, and carried into the polis. On the eiresione in this context, see BURKERT 1979, 134-5.

⁶³ See AUFFARTH 1991, 1-37 and VERSNEL 1993, 115-21. On the cult of Dionysos from this perspective, see HOFFMANN 1989. On the Saturnalia as an underlying structure of *Apocolocyntosis*, see BIERL 2017a.

tors, act out all the wildness in contrast to the civilized behavior of historical Athens. They laugh, break all sorts of taboos, make fun of people, dance in *komoι* in a violent mode and go around begging, abusing, and blessing. These states of return to the past are furthermore associated with a utopian way of life, in which plants and food grow automatically (see *Pl.* 1190), men do not have to work, and people live in peace and tranquility. Kronos seems to have returned from his subterranean recesses to replace Zeus and deprive him of his power. In this way, the Kronia seem to be the most important festival of this type. All hierarchies of the social order become invalid, slaves are freed, and their masters are obliged to serve them. In all these mytho-ritual expressions of utopia lies a deep ambivalence: Utopia ('no-place') becomes ambiguous, a place between eu-topia ('good-place') and dys-topia ('place of distortion')⁶⁴. Finally, people drive these masked bands out of the city. Chaos again gives way to normality. In this transition from total confusion to order men reenact the origins of civilisation. Often, this process is reinforced by performing myths of cosmogony and by telling how the established system of hierarchisation between beast, men, and gods has developed. By ritually falling back into these states of savagery and disorder, the Greeks and other peoples question their values and norms, and they experiment with the limits and pragmatics of their cultural system in a playful way⁶⁵. In the context of Dionysos, where dramatic performances are pragmatically situated, the Anthesteria are of particular relevance as a festival an author can refer to.

In another article, I was the first to link the *Plutos* with the Anthesteria⁶⁶, while this festival has been more prominent in the in-

⁶⁴ VERSNEL 1993, 115-21, 122-35; BIERL 2019b; for *Plutos*, see TORCHIO 2001, 32-8.

⁶⁵ This passage is taken from BIERL 2013a, 377.

⁶⁶ BIERL 1994; on the Anthesteria, the Dionysian festival of exception with its temporary dissolution of normal order, see BURKERT 1983, 213-47 and BURKERT 1985, 237-42, who interprets the Anthesteria as a new year's festival. For the Anthesteria as a festival of exception, see AUFFARTH 1991, 202-76; for an analysis in an unpretentious way, see PARKER 2005, 290-316.

terpretation of *Acharnians* and *Birds*⁶⁷. I see a correlation between the character of Karion, his outstanding role as a slave in this play, and the attested freedom of the slaves during this festival of license. Moreover, the name Karion might be significant in the context of the Anthesteria if we take into account the proverbial saying *θύραζε Κᾶρες* (*v.l.* *Κῆρες*), *οὐκέτ' Ἀνθεςτήρια* (*Carm. Pop.* 883 *PMG*; *Zen.* 4.33; *Phot., s.v.* and in the *Suda, s.v.* (θ 598)) at the end of this festival⁶⁸.

Karion is a representative of the Carians, a barbarian primordial people who, according to the lexicographical sources, lived in Attica before the Athenians' settlements. Slaves, barbarian primitive people of the primordial past, and even ancestral ghosts (*Κῆρες* as a later variant) must be associated with Karion, who represents the Other in respect of the Athenian here and now⁶⁹. Thus, Karion can be seen as a member of this barbarian *Urvolk*, which ritually reenacts masked wild beings rambling in the streets of Athens. To summarize, Karion represents the core of *Plutos'* comic side; to some extent, he appears as a survivor of the former comic hero. Through Karion, Aristophanes stays connected with Old Comedy, because this figure is the only character of this play who fulfills the expectation of the crude, archaic humor of the ritually based genre. With this in mind, it becomes understandable why he appears so notoriously odd and amusing: the Carian attribute is associated with wine, death, the hybrid, confusion, and excess⁷⁰. This also applies to Karion, and he acts, to some degree, like a Dionysian satyr.

The ecstatic parodos, which critics have mostly ignored because of its indecent content, is a masterpiece of a comic choral song. Its Odyssean setting recalls a primordial past before the introduction of the quintessential elements of culture. Karion, in

⁶⁷ E.g. CRAIK 1987; AUFFARTH 1994.

⁶⁸ On the proverb, see DEUBNER 1932, 113-4; BURKERT 1983, 226-30; PARKE 1977, 116-7; BREMMER 1983, 108-23; AUFFARTH 1991, 233-6. PARKER 2005, 297 believes that the proverb does not have to do with the Anthesteria.

⁶⁹ See BURKERT 1983, 226-30. See also BIERL 1994, 30-4.

⁷⁰ BIERL 1994, 31 nn. 7-9.

the role of Polyphemos, acts out the introduction of wine, the event that the Anthesteria ritually reenact every year. The whole scenario is a mirror of the ambivalent utopia, which is going to be reestablished later on by Karion and his fellows as the return of Plutos/Pluton (727)⁷¹. The mythic pair encompasses the ambiguity of the Cronian golden age, oscillating between the notion of wealth and plenty on the one side, death, chaos, and uncivilized status on the other. *Plutos* as Dionysiac theater is a reflection of the ritual return of the old Carians. The wild, masked figures act out their ritual duty of laughter and abuse, and they metatheatrically refer to their masked counterparts in the Athenian theater of Dionysos. Karion is their leader since he is the chorus leader in the parodos.

Moreover, the narrative furthermore works further on the basis of the Anthesteria as a period of exception. In terms of a capitalistic worldview, Zeus and the Olympians are dethroned by means of a sacrificial strike. Zeus has established an effective system of hierarchy and sacrificial nutrition by reversing an evident and valid system of morality. Accordingly, he shuts the just people off from wealth in order to make them give cultic offerings, because he realizes that only the morally good citizens would sacrifice anyway. With this rationale, Zeus achieves a permanent flow of sacrifices. In terms of the comic logic, sacrifice is equivalent with the nourishment of the gods. Zeus blinded *Plutos*, the incorporation and divine personification of wealth, because he was opposed to these mean politics. Aristophanes builds his story upon the proverbial blindness of wealth in archaic and classical literature⁷² and on the motive of Zeus's envy, the so-called

⁷¹ In this context the transmitted Πλούτωνι in l. 727, instead of Πλούτῳ 'τι (a conjecture by Meineke, i.e. the dative of Pluton, the god of the underworld (= Hades)), instead of *Plutos*, could be of relevance. BARRENECHEA 2018, 125-6 explains the ambiguity in a different manner, since the chthonic demons, including Pluton/Hades, are euphemistically addressed as giving wealth from the underworld (see Aristoph. fr. 504 KA); see HENRICHS 1991. On the fusion of both gods, see ZWICKER 1951b, 992, 999; TORCHIO 2001, 26-8.

⁷² For example Hippon. fr. 36 W.² = 44 D.; Timocr. fr. 731 PMG; Amphis fr. 23; Antiph. fr. 259 KA; see ZWICKER 1951a, 1045-6; RICHARDSON 1974, 316-21; SOMMERSTEIN 2001, 6-8.

φθόνος θεῶν or Διός (87-92), translated into action⁷³. Thus, the starting point is that reality, the just regime of Zeus, is by principle a world upside down, for it is unjust. Chremylos knows that through the subversion of this reality – i.e. the *dikaioi* become rich, the unjust people become poor – the dishonest regime of Zeus can be ended. By regaining his eyesight, Plutos can return to his original status, in which he could gratify the good men with wealth. In the long run, the entire population would become just and rich, because the unjust persons would have an incentive to change their immoral attitude in order to have a share in the common wealth. After all, this entails a utopian return to a Cronian world before the rule of Zeus when mankind used to lead a peaceful life, in short, the return to the golden age, when men did not have to work for their living, but food was provided automatically (cfr. 1190). This utopian perspective is undercut by the negative signs that are associated with the primordial times before the invention of civilization. The subversion of a perverted reality is after all nothing but a world upside down raised to the second power. The apparently better world installed by Kari-on and Chremylos under the domain of Plutos can turn out to be a nightmare. There are numerous signs ironically hinting at this hidden negative complex: I need only recall the speech of Penia, the personification of poverty. The participants of rituals of exception, just as the spectators of comedies, were looking forward to the period of chaotic instability being over.

The end of the play is highly problematic. Hermes seeks refuge, the priest of Zeus Soter finally defects to Plutos as well. Both are driven by the hunger resulting from the sudden lack of sacrifice⁷⁴. This again reflects the ritual constellation of the Anthesteria. As a matter of fact, Theopompos (*FGrHist* 115 F 347b) states that on the Choes day there was the custom not to make sacrifices for the Olympian gods except for Hermes the next day, the Chytroi. Moreover, no priest was allowed to eat from the chytrai

⁷³ See RAKOCZY 1996, 264.

⁷⁴ On hungry Hermes, see VERSNEL 2011, 309-77, esp. 354-6, 373.

they boiled all over the city⁷⁵. In these pots a panspermia of different essential fruits was cooked into a kind of porridge. This act recalls the beginning of culture and civilization. Theopompos' description corresponds exactly to the situation in *Plutos*. Hermes comes over and finally gets something to eat, while all the other Olympian gods, including the priest of Zeus, remain excluded. In the end, it remains unclear whether Plutos really has dethroned and replaced Zeus, i.e. whether Plutos is identical with the afore-mentioned Zeus Soter and he is the new savior god, or whether Zeus withdrew into the house of Chremylos (1189-90)⁷⁶. The chytrai, which the Old Woman shall carry in the procession – they should serve as an offering at the installation of Plutos' cult image on the Acropolis (1197, 1203) – perhaps already signify the beginning of the return to Zeus' order and normality corresponding to the ritual procedure of the boiling of chytrai on the last day of the ritual cycle, the so-called Chytroi. Aristophanes leaves an open end, and we, as spectators or critics, always have to keep in mind that comedy is an open genre defying a clear-cut interpretation.

The panspermia ritual, which alludes to the Chytroi day of the Anthesteria, also seems to be essential for *Plutos* in another way. What I have just said concerning the general openness of the genre applies even more to the use of mytho-ritual systems. I contend that Old Comedy does not resort to one model only, but tends to include many ritual patterns that inform the mythic structure, the Aristophanic plot. In the same way as comedy parodies and assimilates all strands of public life and discourses, such as different intellectual or philosophical opinions, various currents of poetic and musical production, or socio-political and historical developments, it makes use of a number of mytho-ritual patterns that are constitutive of the polis identity. The com-

⁷⁵ θύειν αὐτοῖς ἔθος τ(οῖς) Χουσίν (ἔχουσιν codd., em. Wifstrand) τῶν μὲν Ὀλυμπίων θεῶν οὐδενὶ τὸ παράπαν, Ἑρμῇ δὲ Χθονίῳ· καὶ τῆς χύτρας ἣν ἔψουσιν πάντες οἱ κατὰ τὴν πόλιν οὐδεὶς γεύεται τῶν ἱερέων (= *schol.* (R) *ad* Aristoph. *Ran.* 218 = Theopomp.Hist. *FGrHist* 115 F 347b).

⁷⁶ See SOMMERSTEIN 2001, 214-5 and TORCHIO 2001, 239 *ad loc.*

ic assembly of all these multifarious narrative elements elicits laughter. In the narrative process of pastiche the single elements can be distorted in such a way that a modern reader cannot possibly detect all the different allusions that a native Athenian spectator of the 5th and early 4th century was able to recognize⁷⁷.

5. *Plutos in the Ritual Context of Seasonal Maturation of Grain and Wine in Athens. Plutos as a Metaphor and God*

Furthermore, I would like to point out again that Plutos is not only to be seen, as it was mostly the case, as a metaphor, personification or allegory for wealth and money⁷⁸. We should never forget that Plutos is also a god⁷⁹. Plutos is the son of Demeter, product of her sexual union with Iasion on the fields, as we know from Hesiod (*Th.* 969-73; fr. 885 PMG). In the Eleusinian context, he is also closely connected with Demeter and seems to be part of the essential mystery when the hierophant announces that Brimo has given birth to Brimos, «the strong to the strong»⁸⁰. This child seems to be Plutos, represented in the form of the golden ear of corn⁸¹.

Here we can recognize the great Aristophanic art of representing Plutos in a very fluid, almost kaleidoscopic perspective: Plutos certainly is the allegory of wealth in many instances, the personification of the abstract notion and simultaneously the object of desire, i.e. money, plain and simple. However, he is at the same time the mythic god, a numinous divine agent of dynamic and creative lived religion according to religious practice and belief, and again the embodiment of all that he might bring with him. From the

⁷⁷ For a detailed analysis of *Plutos* on these premises, see BIERL 1994.

⁷⁸ See NEWIGER 1957, 165-78; HERTEL 1969, 7-41, esp. 20-32; Hertel insists on the fact that person and object are being confused and both are envisioned at the same time (24-5); KOMORNICKA 1964, 128 summarizes the ambivalence in signification between a) object: money; b) concept and idea; c) condition; d) allegorical figure, while the ritual level is simultaneously present. On money and economy, see SPIELVOGEL 2001; on the money and the divine, see LAUM 1924 and BERNHOLZ 2014.

⁷⁹ See also BARRENECHEA 2018, 11-42; TORCHIO 2001, 24-8.

⁸⁰ Hippol. *Haer.* 5.8.40 (fr. 862 PMG) ἱερὸν ἔτεκε πτότνια κούρον Βριμῶ βριμόν.

⁸¹ See RICHARDSON 1974, 26-8; BURKERT 1983, 289-90; CLINTON 1992, 91-5.

mythological point of view, it becomes obvious that the plenty associated with him originates from agricultural life. We should not forget that *Plutos* is the god and personification of corn and crops. His rich products of the harvest put an end to the annual threats of starvation and hunger. Furthermore, the abundance of food is associated with the peaceful celebration of a banquet, with peace, and with health. From the point of view of anthropology, the meaning of wealth in the sense of abundance in financial funds and money is secondary⁸². According to the logic of metaphor and metonymy, Aristophanes uses all levels of meaning in an ingenious way, shifting, transferring, and constantly deferring the signified. Naturally, he focuses on the monetary aspect which became of increasing interest in the rapidly changing and economically strained situation after Athens' defeat in the Peloponnesian War in 404 BCE. Modern scholarship almost in its entirety stresses this socio-economic context of *Plutos*⁸³. Aristophanes certainly played with the expectations of an impoverished population toward a greater social justice in respect of the partition of wealth. In this way, the question was condensed to a point whether Aristophanes was a social revolutionary, a proto-Marxist, as Sommerstein read him⁸⁴, or whether the plot pursues conservative intentions and is only a vicious or ironic play from a reactionary point of view of the rich oligarchy⁸⁵. Scholarship seems to have reached an impasse in these matters. The question is whether Aristophanes could really pronounce himself in such a partisan way, and whether we are not making too many modern projections on an ancient author⁸⁶. Moreover, in *Plutos*, Aristophanes stages a rudimentary theory of economy and a monetary system, however,

⁸² See HÜBNER 1914; ZWICKER 1951a.

⁸³ See, among others, DAVID 1984. On a revision of the theory of decline, see DILLON 1987, esp. 157-63; WALLACE 1995; ROTHWELL 1995; see CSAPO 2000, 124-5.

⁸⁴ SOMMERSTEIN 1984, esp. 323-33, esp. 332-3 («spokesman of the barefoot», 333).

⁸⁵ See the so-called ironic interpretation; e.g. FLASHAR 1967; HEBERLEIN 1981; on a conservative, anti-revolutionary reading of *Plutos*, see KONSTAN, DILLON 1981 and OLSON 1990.

⁸⁶ See also TORCHIO 2001, 43.

in a comic manner⁸⁷. To write comedies in Athens seems to have been a technical skill, not necessarily a revolutionary challenge, since a comedian had to address politics and the discourses of the polis according to generic norms and in a general manner that applied to all citizens⁸⁸. Thus the material, from which an author draws his plots, stems, as we have seen, from the mytho-ritual context of the city in many cases. Therefore, I would like to place emphasis on Plutos' mythical and ritual identity, and see him as a divinity in the annual cycle of agriculture.

To come back to our Kronian view, Hesiod connects agriculture with the notion of hard labor belonging to the present times, whereas he puts them in strong contrast to the golden times of the mythic past under Kronos. In this respect, the ambivalence of this becomes apparent. Aristophanes plays with the notions of the utopian Kronos time, but underlays it with the opposite idea of work in the fields. Plutos and Penia, who speaks in favor of the status quo in the agon of the play, thereby presenting the system of labor and culture⁸⁹, somehow mirror each other in a dialectical way. Therefore, human beings are fundamentally mistaken, when they believe that with the healing of Plutos a utopian status of happiness could return. It only remains a fantastic dream. The comic author lures the public in with a utopian society. However, its overlapping notions of a threatening dystopia create laughter and anxieties through confusion and mixture⁹⁰.

Karion is, as we have seen, a comic reflection of Kares returning to Athens. Aristophanes underlays *Plutos* with another important 'Carian' pattern which basically seems to be located in Caria or other locations close to the coast of Asia Minor, which forms a cultural bridge between the cultures of the Near East and the Greek mainland. Again, customs and rituals of an exceptional period are central. In the corresponding mythical tales a god

⁸⁷ See FINLEY [1973] 1985, 17-34; OLSON 1990, 225-30; SPIELVOGEL 2001, 189-93; BERNHOLZ 2014, esp. 55-6.

⁸⁸ See BIERL 2002; BIERL 2019a.

⁸⁹ On farmers' work, see *Pl.* 515-6 and 525-6.

⁹⁰ See BIERL 2019b.

or statue suddenly disappears from the center of the city, the citizens set out for an intensive search and the entire community faces a severe crisis. During this period primordial people of a period predating civilization also come back. Finally, the god is found again, placated, and he returns. Entering into the city, he brings an abundance of crop with him. On the ritual level, the message is expressed in similar terms. In Samos, for example, the image of Hera – stolen by Tyrrhenian pirates but miraculously left on the shore according to the legend – is brought out of her sanctuary, and the legendary indigenous people of Carians chain it with branches of *lygos* at the seashore and set up a banquet for her in form of the archaic *stibas*, offering food at a table. Finally the statue is cleansed in seawater and brought back in a solemn procession. The *xoanon* (or *bretas*, the wooden statue) of the diverse gods is a barely iconized form of an originally purely symbolic tree pole in many similar cults. All sorts of firstfruits or little vessels of oil and honey hang from it. When this pole or wand was brought back into the center, it symbolized the new crop and fertility of the community⁹¹.

Hera is equivalent with Plutos, bringing abundance, in the form of the eiresione. Therefore this pattern can be compared with Aristophanes' *Wealth*: Plutos has also disappeared, Carians go and catch him, that is Karion and his fellows, at the sanctuary of Asklepios at Mounychia he is washed and cleansed with seawater close to the Piraeus (656-8)⁹², they offer him a ritual banquet, laying him down at a *stibas* (624, 662-3) and Asklepios cures him of his blindness that has caused Plutos' retreat from humanity⁹³. Then he is led back to Athens. By being showered

⁹¹ Typical features are the foreign original Carian population and the return to a primordial culture. On the pattern, see BURKERT 1979, 129-42; see also KRUMMEN 1990, 239-44. On the Tonaia of the Samian Hera, see BURKERT 1979, 129-32; BLECH 1982, 248-50; GRAF 1985, 93-6. According to Menodotos' report (*FGH Hist* 541 F 1), the ancestral and indigenous Carians reclined on the *stibas*, and according to Nicaenetus fr. 6.4-5 (Powell, *Coll. Alex.* 3) (Ath. 15.673b-c) they wore the ancient garland of the Carians out of *lygos*.

⁹² See ROBERT 1931.

⁹³ On incubation and miraculous healing, with the link to Epidauros, see WEINREICH 1909, 92-109; ROOS 1960; SARTORI 1972-1973; VERSNEL 2011, 403; BARRENECHEA 2018, 69-106.

with the fruits (768-801) that hang from the eiresione⁹⁴, Plutos metaphorically becomes a personified eiresione⁹⁵, bringing back the agricultural abundance (πλουῦτος) of fall.

That an agricultural interpretation is anything but far-fetched is proven by ancient entries in Hesychios, *s.v.* πλουῦτος and εὐπλουτον κανοῦν. 1. (π 2625 Schmidt), *s.v.* πλουῦτος· ἡ ἐκ τῶν σπερμάτων ἐπικαρπία, καὶ ἡ πανσπερμία («wealth: fertility of seed, panspermia») and 2. (ε 7077 Latte), *s.v.* εὐπλουτον κανοῦν· ... πλουῦτον γὰρ ἔλεγον τὴν ἐκ τῶν κριθῶν καὶ τῶν πυρῶν περιουσίαν («an opulent basket: ... they used to call wealth abundance of barley and corn»)⁹⁶. Plutos fulfills the hopes of men for a good crop. He is able to remedy scarcity with a rich harvest of fruits (see *schol. ad Theocr.* 10.19a τῇ τῶν καρπῶν εὐφορία ἰᾶται τὴν ἔνδειαν ἡμῖν). As seen from the Homeric eiresione-song of Samos (*Vita. Hom. Herodot.* 33 = *Carm. Pop.* 1 D.), his presence in the private houses is sought after by begging⁹⁷.

δῶμα προσετραπόμεσθ' ἀνδρὸς μέγα δυναμένιο,
ὃς μέγα μὲν δύναται, μέγα δὲ βρέμει ὄλβιος αἰεὶ.
αὐταὶ ἀνακλίνεσθε θύραι· Πλουῦτος γὰρ ἔσεισι
πολλός, σὺν πλούτῳ δὲ καὶ Εὐφροσύνη τεθαλυῖα,
Εἰρήνη τ' ἀγαθή· ὅσα δ' ἄγγεα, μεστὰ μὲν εἶη,
κυρβασίη δ' αἰεὶ μάχης κατὰ καρδόπου ἔρποι.
νῦν μὲν κριθεῖην εὐώπιδα σησαμόεσσαν

.....

τοῦ παιδὸς δὲ γυνὴ κατὰ δίφρακα βήσεται ὕμνιν,
ἡμίονοι δ' ἄξουσιν κραταίποδες ἐς τόδε δῶμα.
αὐτὴ δ' ἰστὸν ὑφαίνει ἐπ' ἡλέκτρῳ βεβαυῖα.
νεῦμαί τοι νεῦμαι ἐνιαύσιος ὥστε χελιδὼν
ἔστηκ' ἐν προθύροις ψιλὴ πόδας, ἀλλὰ φέρον αἶψα·
ὑπὲρ σε τῶπ' ὅλωνος, ὦ γύναι τι δός·
εἰ μὲν τι δώσεις· εἰ δὲ μή, οὐχ ἔστήξομεν·
οὐ γὰρ συνοικήσοντες ἐνθάδ' ἤλθομεν.

⁹⁴ On the *katachysmata*, see DEUBNER 1978; associated with the eiresione, see also MACTOUX 1990, 56-60.

⁹⁵ See KERN 1905; SCHÖNBERGER 1941, 85-7; SCHÖNBERGER 1980, 17-36; CALAME 1990, 291-301; CAMPS-GASET 1994, 76-90; MACTOUX 1990, 56-60; PARKER 2005, 180, 204-6; CHANIOITIS 2011, 15-7, 19-21, esp. 15, 20.

⁹⁶ See ZWICKER 1951a, 1031-2, with a collection of testimonies.

⁹⁷ See D. BAUDY 1986, esp. 223-7.

We take recourse to the house of a man of great means,
 who has great resources and makes a great noise,
 ever prosperous. Open of your own accord, doors, for Wealth will enter
 in plenty, and with Wealth, flourishing Cheer
 and welcome Peace. May the grain jars all be full,
 and the mound of dough ever top the kneading
 trough. Now [give us] beautiful barley meal laced with sesame

.....

Your son's bride will come to you in a car,
 hard-hoofed mules will bring her to this house:
 as she weaves at her loom may she stand on a floor of electrum.
 I'll return, I'll return each year, like the swallow.
 I stand at the porch, feet stripped, so bring something quickly.
 For Apollo's sake, lady, give us something!
 If you will, well and good: if not, we won't wait about,
 we didn't come here to make our homes with you.
 (trans. M. West)

The situation on the threshold is regarded as the critical *rite de passage*. In winter, spring, or early summer, children come with the empty branch or stick that represents Plutos. The branch metonymically becomes the god. In front of the door they sing and perform their trick-or-treat. This means Plutos is still empty, and when receiving treats and food, he will reciprocate when he returns and enters the house accompanied by abundance at harvest time. To give now is an investment in the future and a promise for abundance of grain, wealth, well-being, and peace. The situation in the beggar song of the Κορωνισταί (crow-singers) is similar, which has been transmitted to us through Phoinix of Colophon fr. 2 D. (Ath. 8.359c):

δότη, ὦγαθοί, <τι> τῶν ἑκαστος ἐν χερσὶν
 ἔχει κορώνῃ· χᾶλα λήψεται χονδρόν·
 φιλεῖ γὰρ αὕτη πάγχυ ταῦτα δαίνυσθαι·
 ὁ νῦν ἄλας δούς αὖθι κηρίον δώσει.
 ὦ παῖ, θύρην ἄγκλινε, Πλοῦτος ἐκρουσε,
 καὶ τῇ κορώνῃ παρθένος φέροι σῦκα.

Gentlemen – give a bit of whatever each of you has in
 his hands to a crow! She'll also accept a lump of salt,
 for she's very fond of dining on this;

whoever gives her salt now will give honeycomb some other time.
 Slave! Open the door – Wealth knocked!
 Let an unmarried girl bring figs for the crow!
 (trans. S.D. Olson)

Figs play a role in the festivals of the Pynteria and Pyanopsia. Dry figs are brought in in May, put on cakes in the procession of the Plynteria (when another washing procedure is enacted), and attached to the eiresione at the Thargelia; the new figs will come in October. The flourishing branches, the eiresionai, will also be brought in from outside at the Oschophoria celebrated on the 7 Pyanopsion in the vintage season, together with the oschoi, the branches of the vine. As far as wine is concerned, the second basic product besides bread, the corresponding festival in early spring is the above mentioned Anthesteria, the festival of reversal and crisis, when the jars of the new wine are opened⁹⁸. Then the branches will be attached to the doors as symbols of maturity and fecundity, and stay there until early summer, when they are totally dried out. With the song we can compare the famous Rhodian swallow song, in which begging and verbal abuse are combined. It is the popular costum of children to cry out the *chelinodizein* in the month of Boedromion, in the Rhodian calendar perhaps corresponding to the Attic Gamelion in February (Ath. 8.360b-d = fr. 848 PMG):

ἤλθ' ἤλθε χελιδών	
καλὰς ὥρας ἄγουσα,	
καλοὺς ἐνιαυτούς,	
ἐπὶ γαστέρα λευκά,	
ἐπὶ νῶτα μέλαινα.	5
παλάθαν σὺ προκύκλει	
ἐκ πίονος οἴκου	
οἴνου τε δέπαστρον	
τυροῦ τε κάνυστρον·	
καὶ πύρνα χελιδών	10
καὶ λεκιθίταν	
οὐκ ἀπωθεῖται· πότερ' ἀπίωμες ἢ λαβώμεθα;	
εἰ μὲν τι δώσεις· εἰ δὲ μή, οὐκ ἔασομες·	
ἢ τὰν θύραν φέρωμες ἢ τὸ ὑπέρθυρον	

⁹⁸ See PARKER 2005, 206.

ἦ τὰν γυναιῖκα τὰν ἔσω καθημένα·
 μικρὰ μὲν ἔστι, ῥαιδίως νιν οἴσομες.
 ἂν δὴ † φέροις τι, μέγα δὴ τι † φέροις·
 ἄνοιγ' ἄνοιγε τὰν θύραν χελιδόνι·
 οὐ γὰρ γέροντές ἐσμεν, ἀλλὰ παιδιά.

15

The swallow (*chelidon*) is come, is come,
 bringing good weather
 and a good year,
 white on her belly
 and black on her back!
 You – roll a cake of dried fruit out
 of your wealthy house,
 and a cup of wine,
 and a basket of cheese!
 The swallow rejects
 neither wheat
 nor pea-cake. Should we leave or should we take something?
 If you'll give us something, (fine); but if not, we won't leave you alone.
 We'll carry off your door, or your lintel,
 or your wife who's sitting inside!
 She's small – so we'll carry her off with no trouble!
 But if in fact † you bring something, something big in fact † might
 you bring!
 Open your door, open it, to a swallow! For we're not old men, but
 children.
 (trans. S.D. Olson)

Again, the *eiresione* stands for what will hang from it in fall. The children are hungry and beg for products that could have been stored in the house over the winter. If they do not get what they ask for, they threaten to abduct the wife of the house owner, who symbolizes sexual fertility and the well-being of the small economic unit. She is notionally connected with Demeter and the earth. The lady of the house is small such that young boys can carry her off; thus, it is better for the husband to bring out something big and to open the door. It is still the season of spring. If the farmer gives and invests in the new generation, he will already open the door for Plutos to come at the end of summer. It is like a deal, a reciprocal exchange. The farmer can avoid losing his wife and center of house, by opening the door to give them something

to eat. It will be reciprocated since the same branch will come again to fill the storage rooms for the next winter to come.

The Athenian eiresione song performed by boys during both the Thargelia and the Pyanopsia was famous and shows similar features⁹⁹:

εἰρεσιώνη σῦκα φέρει καὶ πίονας ἄρτους
καὶ μέλι ἐν κοτύλῃ καὶ ἔλαιον ἀναψήσασθαι
καὶ κύλικ' εὐζώροιο, ὥς ἂν μεθύουσα καθεύδῃ.

Eiresione for us brings figs and bread of the richest,
brings us honey in pots and oil to rub off from the body,
strong wine too in a beaker, that one may go to bed mellow.
(trans. B. Perrin)

This song seems to visualize the situation when the branch arrives not dry and bare, but full of food. As begging song, sung at the Thargelia, it can conjure up the blessings that are promised to those who give. The eiresione, the branch of fruits and other attached food, is obviously a symbol of agricultural affluence. As branch, carried in the procession of the Pyanopsia in late fall, it encompasses the entire harvest. It celebrates all products that summer has brought in ritual retrospect¹⁰⁰. It symbolizes total well-being. Plutos is the divine personification of this concept. Thus, the eiresione metonymically represents the god; this means that Plutos and the branch of affluence are identical according to comic logic. To summarize, on the basis of the cited songs the different categories of the eiresione custom become evident: young and hungry people beg with an empty branch or stick. They ask to open the doors to let Plutos enter the house, or respectively, to receive something of the previous year's stored wealth; they bless, if they receive what they need, and promise that blessings in the shape of Plutos will come again later, symbolized by a rich branch; they curse, if they do not get what they beg for, and threat-

⁹⁹ Crates *FGrHist* 362 F 10; Plut. *Thes.* 22.7 = *Carm. Pop.* 2 D.; *schol. ad Aristoph. Eq.* 729; *schol. ad Aristoph. Pl.* 1054; see also SCHÖNBERGER 1980, 26-33; CALAME 1990, 296-301; PARKER 2005, 204-6.

¹⁰⁰ See PARKER 2005, 205-6.

en to carry off the goods or even the wife. This corresponds to the worst scenario that all well-being is lost and Plutos as branch bearing all products does not enter the house again.

Social anthropology shows that a metaphor can produce a ritual by setting other metaphors in motion which are activated by similarity and/or contiguity¹⁰¹. Aristophanes seems to produce a comic plot in a similar way. He sets metaphors into a narrative motion and aligns them with already existing rituals to fit the comic plot of a 'ritual' drama. In doing so he feels free to reassemble ritual elements, to duplicate certain parts and even to invent new rituals on the basis of the same process of similarity and/or contiguity.

In *Götternamen*, Hermann Usener lists the eiresione among the gods of the moment ('Augenblicksgötter')¹⁰². The eiresione itself is only a metonymy of Plutos, just as the god stands in a relation of contiguity with the branch. We could take Usener's remark as a starting point, since Aristophanes practically reassembled elements of the eiresione rituals to a dramatic plot and adds other metaphors relating to the notion of Plutos¹⁰³. Thus, he succeeds in combining the complex monetary aspect and the strike against the divine capitalist exploiters.

The panspermia and the eiresione as ritual signs are used in several Athenian rituals grouped around crucial instances in the process of maturation. At this point, we will take a look at the ritual matrix of Athens, which is linked to the annual agricultural cycle from sowing to harvest. Decisive festive incisions, festivals and dates are:

Winter/spring: Anthesteria – 6 Mounichion – Thargelia // Summer: Kronia (12 Hekatombaion) – Eleusinia (15-23 Boedromion) – Proerosia / Autumn: Oschophoria – Pyanopsia / Theseia – Thesmophoria (5-13 Pyanopsion).

In the following sketch I will try to synchronize the fortune of Plutos with the course of the Attic year and the vegetation process.

¹⁰¹ See FERNANDEZ 1977 and above pp. 261-3.

¹⁰² USENER [1896] 1948³, 284-5.

¹⁰³ On the analogy between metaphor and myth, see BURKERT 1979, 27-8; see also BIERL 2007b, 246-9 and above p. 263.

Plot of Pl	Growth/Food	Festivals	Season/Ritual Objects	Features	Month
Plutos blind	seed beneath	after Pyanopsia	<u>Winter</u>	atypical offerings	Pyanopsion
Plutos found	green, sprouting plants wine	Lenaia <i>Antheateria</i> Orestes end of deluge θύραζε Κῶρες/ Κηρες	panspermia/chytra	death impurity regeneration μυαρά ημέρα wine offerings, life	Maimakterion Poseideon Gamelion Anthesterion
Asklepios	drought/hunger	City Dionysia Delphinia	empty branch <u>Spring</u>	purification	Elaphebolion Munichion
Plutos led out		<i>Thargelia</i>	pharmakos eiresione/thargelos	purification firstfruit offerings	Thargelion
Plutos healed vision restored Zeus Soter		end of the official year	<u>Summer</u>		Skirphorion
Asklepios	corn/harvest fruits/grapes	Kronia, Synoikia, Panathenaia Eleusinia		normal sacrifice meat (culture) βουλίουμιν εξέλασις	Hekatombaion Metageitnion Boedromion
Plutos led in Plutos' 'thesauration' reinvestment	plenty, wealth sowing, back to soil	<i>Pyanopsia</i>	eiresione/panspermia	regeneration	Pyanopsion

Figure 1: *Plutos and the Attic Year*

It is my contention that Aristophanes constructs his simple and popular plot spanning the sowing in autumn, when Plutos is buried (cf. *Pl.* 238), the sprouting, and the new harvest, when the fruits are brought into the center of the agricultural community in the form of an eiresione during the Pyanopsia.

In the following we compare the plot of *Plutos* with the analogy in Figure 1:

1-252: Prologue: Chremylos and Karion follow blind Plutos. Chremylos convinces Plutos that he does not have to fear Zeus at all, if he could only regain vision, because Zeus' power is based on the partition of wealth among mankind. Plutos is the most powerful of all the gods; he could even dethrone Zeus. Chremylos leads Wealth into his house. *blindness*

253-321: Parodos: Karion and the chorus of peasants: abusive comic song *hunger*

322-486: Chremylos-Blepsidemos: Blepsidemos expresses his suspicion that Chremylos might have stolen his new wealth. Both want to lead Plutos into the sanctuary of Asklepios where he is supposed to be healed. Penia tries to impede them.

487-626: Chremylos-Penia: Poverty explains that the just and equal partition of wealth would lead to an end of civilization. Despite her superior arguments she is driven off the scene. *boulimou exelasis*

627-770: Karion declares that Plutos can see again and describes the cure of incubation which has taken place in the temple of Asklepios. *healing*

771-801: Chremylos comes with Plutos who declares that from now on he only wants to go into the houses of just people. Chremylos' wife wants to throw treats over Plutos as he enters the house. *eiresione/plenty/health*

802-958: Episode I: Karion describes the new state of plenty. The Just Man wants to dedicate his coat and sandals to Plutos. A sycophant is angry that the new developments have deprived him of his income. Karion takes his exclusive garments and shoes and drives him out after having decorated him with the old garments of the Just Man.

959-1096: Episode II: The Old Woman complains that her young lover has left her because he has become rich. The Young Man comes in drunk and makes fun of the Old Woman. Chremylos forces him to stay with her.

1097-1170: Hermes comes and threatens with the vengeance of Zeus; but having seen the plenty of foods, he prefers to desert to Karion's side.

1171-1209: Exodos: The priest of Zeus comes, driven by hunger, and deserts as well. Chremylos declares Plutos as the new Zeus. The priest participates in the curious procession that installs Plutos in the Parthenon of Athena.
storing/sowing

After all, in the Attic year and vegetation cycle, we face a complex ritual set of movements, where a branch or a pole is carried from the center to the peripheries or vice versa in a procession. Furthermore, besides the obvious cultic link with Demeter, many of these festivals are linked with Apollo and Dionysos, who are responsible for providing fruits, corn, and wine from outside the borders to the city. In short, people carry something, mostly a branch, in a dry and empty form inside and back outside, such that it can be carried back inside, now rich, decorated, and bearing firstfruits and/or other products of the year. Furthermore, the change of the seasons and the course of the different conditions – for example the state of scarcity, the threat of hunger and drought in early summer, when all the store houses and magazines are empty, the new fruits not yet ripened, and the ensuing status of abundance at harvest time, often associated with the panspermia – are translated into a syntactic ritual movement of expulsion and reintroduction. A good example is the *boulimou exelasis* (βουλίμου ἐξέλασις) at Chaironeia¹⁰⁴. On the occasion of this rite, a servant is beaten at the public hearth and in the private houses and spoken to with the words: «Out with Hunger, in

¹⁰⁴ Plut. *quaest. conv.* 6.8, 693f: Θυσία τις ἔστι πάτριος, ἣν ὁ μὲν ἄρχων ἐπὶ τῆς κοινῆς ἐστίας δοῶν τῶν δ' ἄλλων ἕκαστος ἐπ' οἶκον· καλεῖται δὲ βουλίμου ἐξέλασις, καὶ τῶν οἰκετῶν ἓνα τύπτοντες ἀγνίαις ῥάβδοις διὰ θυρῶν ἐξελαύνουσιν ἐπιλέγοντες «ἔξω Βούλιμον, ἔσω δὲ Πλούτον καὶ Ὑγίειαν». See ROTOLO 1980.

with Wealth and Health». This custom is closely connected with narrative elements of *Plutos*. We can think of the scene in lines 870-958, where Karion and Dikaïos attack the sycophant and chase him away¹⁰⁵. With the new politics of equal distribution of wealth, the sycophant has lost his source of income. Thus he faints from hunger (βουλιμῖα, 873) and protests. Moreover, the change of status is also acted out on the symbolic and theatrical level of costume. The Just Man has already bought a rich mantle and intends to dedicate his old and poor mantle, comically linked with the dress of the Eleusinian initiates (845), and his shoes to the new god. After the exchange, the sycophant accuses the Just Man of having destroyed democracy (948-50) and compares the new utopian life with the life of sheep (922-3), an allusion to the relapse into a primitive status of Kronos¹⁰⁶.

Karion forces him to take off his mantle and shoes and comically establishes the sycophant – the etymological play with the fig is alluded to – as an anti-eiresione (938-43), which in its empty form can soon return bearing all products. Karion says he will nail the old shoes to his forehead, like a dedication to a wild olive tree (942-3). Another instance is the scene where Chremylos drives Penia off the scene at the end of the agon (594-600)¹⁰⁷. The notions of hunger on the one side, wealth and health on the other side, are again noteworthy, as we have seen in the Homeric eiresione-song of Samos. They seem to belong to a common pattern from which Aristophanes draws inspiration as well. Hunger and poverty are the basic themes at the beginning of our play: *Plutos* has not come yet. In some iconographic representations, *Plutos* comes up from the earth, as an ear of corn grows out of the earth. His blindness might also be seen as an anthropomorphic transla-

¹⁰⁵ See KERN 1912.

¹⁰⁶ On an analysis of the scene in terms of *polypragmosyne* as ingredient of the democratic system, see BIERL 2017b, 40-3, esp. 42-3.

¹⁰⁷ See also CORNFORD [1914] 1961, 11. On the repetition of the scene, see TORCHIO 2001, 216 *ad* 926-58. On Chremylos' and Blepsidemos' blindness of prehistoric Cronian dimension (ὡς Κρονικαῖς λήμαις ὄντως λημῶντες τὰς φρένας ἄμφω), see *Plut.* 581. Similar motifs are mentioned: mantle (540), hunger and poverty (536, 539, 562 (*loimos*)), *stibas* 541, olive (586).

tion of his status beneath the earth, where the seed has to ripen and grow until it can pierce the soil.

At crucial moments during this process of maturation, the growth of corn is accompanied by cultic practices. The Thargelia shortly before the last ripening are an exact counterpart of the rite of Chaironeia: a *pharmakos* is expelled¹⁰⁸. On the next day a panspermia of firstfruits and an eiresione procession (maybe a confusion with the Pyanopsia!) are attested. Already one month earlier (6 Mounichion), an empty greenish branch had been carried outside to the Delphinion such that it might come back as an eiresione soon¹⁰⁹. At the end of June and early July there are a couple of rituals marking the New Year: especially the Kronia, like the Anthesteria in February (a festival for the reintroduction of the ripened wine), are, as seen, another model for this comedy. Another link consists in the Eleusinia in September, where Plutos plays such an important role. The entire healing scene, where Asklepios and his ritual of incubation are superimposed onto our plot must also be seen in this context. The healing of blindness corresponds to the mysteries and the experience of the light for the initiates¹¹⁰.

The complex cycle of Pyanopsion seems to be another ritual core of *Plutos*. Just at the point of sowing, the new plenty of agricultural products is celebrated with a panspermia in chytrai and with the introduction of the eiresione. There is a significant ambivalence between the chytrai and the panspermia, which means that the chytrai are consumed and order is restored¹¹¹. The ambivalence corresponds to the two eiresionai, the dry one and the one bearing products. The tensions are mirrored in the final scene of *Plutos*. The new order is also exemplified on the sexual level, the reversal of the dominance of the Old Woman over the Young

¹⁰⁸ On the *pharmakos*, see BREMMER 1983; PARKER 1983, 24-6, 257-80; MACTOUX 1990, 60-2; CALAME 1990, 308-10; CAMPS-GASET 1994, 54-62; on the link with Old Comedy, see CORNFORD [1914] 1961, 10-1 (with the eiresione and *Plutos*), 33, 131; BOWIE 1993, 74-5.

¹⁰⁹ See CALAME 1990, 311-2.

¹¹⁰ On connections between the cult of Asklepios in Piraeus and Eleusis, see ROBERT 1931.

¹¹¹ See BRUIT 1990, esp. 167-70.

Man. He enters with the Eleusinian torch. Chremylos mocks her by saying that she would burn like the old, very dry eiresione, the one attached to the house (1054)¹¹². Chremylos, defending her against the Young Man's offences (1171-2), finally forces the Young Man to go into the house with her and sleep with her. The final procession with the Old Woman carrying the chytrai (1204-7) and the joke about the reversal of the wrinkly skin's position, normally on the top of pots, now beneath the pots, again alludes to the quintessential ambivalence of the eiresione and the chytrai. Despite the epiphany and entrance of Plutos, the god of abundance, symbolized by the decorated eiresione and the panspermia, and the Old Woman, as major adorant, are visualized in the dry and empty phase. However, in the cyclic logic of the Plutos-eiresione, it will return as a symbol of affluence.

Some sources like the *Etymologicum Magnum* (303.24-5) state that the celebrants would shower the eiresione with *katachysmata* and a cup of unmixed wine, before they would begin intoning their famous Attic eiresione song¹¹³. The Athenian ritual is mirrored in the scene when Plutos, right after his cure, enters into Chremylos' house (*Pl.* 768-801)¹¹⁴: The ingredients of such a ritual shower are again the same as those in the panspermia. And with the *katachysmata*, the entering god merges with his metonymic symbol. The Oschophoria repeat these out-and-in movements, in this case connected with Dionysos and the ripening of wine¹¹⁵. At this point, branches, this time full of grapes (called oschoi), are also carried into the city, another sign of plenty. Karion also alludes to the Theseia (627). On this occasion, a ritual meal would take place in the form of an primitive pap or milk soup. Its date was set, like the Oschophoria, to the 8th Pyanopsion. The schedule

¹¹² See Aristoph. *Eq.* 729, *Vesp.* 399.

¹¹³ Καταχύσματα δὲ καὶ κύλικα οἴνου κεκραμένην καταχέοντες αὐτῆς ἐπιλέγουσιν. The citation of the Attic song follows (see above: Crates *FGrHist* 362 F 10; Plut. *Thes.* 22.7 = *Carm. Pop.* 2 D.) in *E.M.* 303.26-8. See SCHÖNBERGER 1980, 33. The fruit hanging from the eiresione were practically identical with the ingredients of the ritual shower; see CALAME 1990, 293. See also MACTOUX 1990.

¹¹⁴ See DEUBNER 1978, 240-1 and MACTOUX 1990.

¹¹⁵ See CALAME 1990, 324-7.

of different porridge meals was so dense that even the scholiasts of Aristophanes have confused the different occasions. The scholia on *Ach.* 961 erroneously state that the date of the Choes at the Anthesteria was on the 8th Pyanopsion. Evidently, they mixed up several dates¹¹⁶. Perhaps Aristophanes himself was responsible for this confusion, he who so ingeniously made a pastiche of all these rites. I again present the most important festivals and dates that are relevant to understand the course of action in *Plutos*:

in/out: branch, dry and empty			in: branch bearing products of year
corn: Thargelia (6-7 Thargelion/May)			Pyanopsia (7 Pyanopsion/October)
vine: Anthesteria (12-5 Anthesterion/February)			Oschophoria (8 Pyanopsion/October)
olive: green branch with wool (6 Mounychion)			with eiresione/in Thebes Kopo as bride (Daphnephoria)
wine: jars opened: Pithoigia, first day of Anthesteria (12 Anthesterion/February)			
Corn			
Harvest: May/June			Sowing: February/November
Thargelia			Pyanopsia
drought/hunger	firstfruits	New Year	ripenature—new seed (reinvested into the soil)
Munichion/Delphinion	Thargelia		Boedromion (Eleusis) and Pyanopsia
		PLUTOS	
empty wand	chytra/(eiresione)		chytra/eiresione with fruits and oschos

Figure 2

On the basis of figures 1 and 2, we can determine a ritual syntax or matrix of the Attic year onto which the Aristophanic plot of *Plutos* is projected. A polyparadigmatic approach is confirmed by the corresponding aetiological myths which explain the festivals of the eiresione¹¹⁷. The concepts and ideas associated with the different rites are transferred into figurative representations and mythic narratives that transmit and reinforce the belief about natural growth. Plutos as both a personification and god is the emblem of this process, which is so essential in the traditional life of

¹¹⁶ See DEUBNER 1932, 224.

¹¹⁷ See also CAMPS-GASET 1994, esp. 76-90 with table 2 (90).

Mediterranean farmers. As metonymic eiresione and actual god he holds everything together. His multidimensional and dynamic aspects coalesce and fuse into an image, a story, or a ritual object. Plutos has a distinct biography, and as an emblem of wealth, he wants to distribute his blessings to everybody; Zeus blinds him out of envy, he is expelled, lives a wrecked life until he is caught by poor people. They expose him to a cure, his sight is restored and he triumphantly enters into the house of his friends, making them rich. Finally he enters into the city and replaces Zeus. For the Delia, Thargelia, and Pyanopsia we encounter the same set of narrations. They describe the act of institutionalizing the festivals as a response to famine catastrophes (λιμός) or plague (λοιμός). The impulse to found such cults came from the oracle of Apollo in Delphi in most cases, just as hungry Chremylos received an oracle from the god at the same Pythian shrine¹¹⁸.

Thus, all these rites revolve around Apollo. Therefore, Chremylos and Karion seem to go to the Delphic Apollo, who corresponds to Apollo Pythios in Attica, to set out for their task to bring back the eiresione-Plutos into their house. In the end of *Plutos*, in a solemn and comic procession with chytrai, eiresione-Plutos, now merging with the monetary aspect, is finally carried into the center of Athens, to the opisthodomos of Athena's Parthenon, where the state treasure was deposited (1191-207). This corresponds to the bidirectional symbolic interaction between the private *oikos* and the public city, also reported in the case of the eiresione, as the branch was attached above the door of each house as well as to the entrance of the temple of Apollo Delphinios for the entire city. Aristophanes has the poetic license of not providing an exact copy of the ritual. Since he wants to emphasize the importance of the city center, Plutos is carried to the central temple of the Athenian god par excellence, Athena¹¹⁹. In doing so, he certainly has in mind that the state treasuries were also kept in

¹¹⁸ Schol. ad Aristoph. *Eq.* 729 and ad *Plut.* 1054.

¹¹⁹ See the procession at the Panathenaia with the olive branch. On the festival, see now SHEAR 2020. Some sources even connect the eiresione with the festival (e.g. schol. ad Clem. Al. *Protr.* 10.10), but this seems to be a confusion; see DEUBNER 1932, 28.

the temple of Athena, and the comic author quickly switches back and forth between the aspects of Plutos as monetary resource and his ritual personification as eiresione/panspermia.

Furthermore, all narrations linked with the eiresione were associated with the myth of Theseus at a later stage¹²⁰. In this case, we can detect a similar process of a mythic narration as in comedy. The author projects a simple plot upon the ritual syntax of a series of festivals. Obviously, the meaning of the rites remains rather open. Therefore, they can adopt diverse myths. The meaning is determined only by syntagmatic events that coalesce into a plot. In the case of *Plutos*, the message seems to be rather indeterminate, too. Several elements based on rituals build a plot which is held together by a critical idea only.

The ritual matrix of the Attic agricultural year (fig. 1), on which Aristophanes builds *Plutos*, can be summarized as follows: In autumn, the agricultural year has come to an end. The fruits have been harvested. This stands for Plutos, as plenty and wealth. In the form of a rich branch, he is led in. A panspermia is consumed. Then earth must regenerate. The cycle starts again. Plutos must be stored, such as grain is stored in silos. This can be interpreted as a form of thesaurization. Furthermore, a part of it must be reinvested through sowing. It must return into the soil, beneath the earth. Plutos as personification is blind now, since he cannot see the things above in the dark. The winter months are considered to be a period of death, fear, impurity, and regeneration. When the first plants sprout in early spring, Plutos is metaphorically found. This happens in the month of the Anthesteria, the critical time when death and ghosts return temporarily onto earth and are finally expelled. A panspermia and a chytra ritually symbolize new life and growth. In early spring drought and hunger are eminent. The silos are empty and the sun dries out everything. Everybody is poor and in danger of starvation. Empty branches represent Penia, the personification of poverty. Therefore, Plutos, when he is found, is such a poor creature and

¹²⁰ See CALAME 1990, 289-465.

in such bad shape. Somehow he is the flip side of Penia. Then Plutos/Penia is expelled at the end of the agon (594-600). In a *pharmakos*, aboriginal people spell away hunger and carry in an eiresione with firstfruit offerings. What people desire is symbolically introduced. In the comedy, Plutos is led into the house and then to Asklepios. During summer, Plutos is healed, his vision is restored, just as it happens in the sanctuary of Asklepios in the comedy. The events during the incubation ritual are narrated by Karion. At this critical point of the year, plenty is expected to arrive in the form of the harvest. This marks the end of the year. The danger must be faced that harvest will not be sufficient for everybody. The uncertainties are acted out in New Year festivals of transition and reversal¹²¹. This period is translated into Aristophanes' anxiety of a utopia. At the Panathenaia, the normal sacrifice is restored. The representation of the incubation in the sanctuary of Asklepios in Aristophanes has some links with Eleusis, where Plutos and Demeter play the dominant role¹²². Finally Plutos, fruits, and grapes arrive. Grain has already been present since early summer. All this signifies plenty. Moreover, while Plutos' epiphanic arrival in late summer and early autumn is being celebrated with a symbolic procession of a rich eiresione and a panspermia, wealth is distributed among all citizens. Then the cycle starts again, old becomes new and will turn old again¹²³. By integrating Plutos from the private house into the *polis*, Chremylos' and Karion's mission has come to an end.

5. Conclusion

At the end, we must find an answer to the question how the elements of reversal go together with the allusions to agricultural rites. The solution lies in the basic structure of the play as a *rite*

¹²¹ See the cycle of Athenian festivals, as described by BURKERT 1983, 135-61.

¹²² See ZWICKER 1951a, 1041-4; ROBERT 1931.

¹²³ On old and new in Aristophanes, see BIERL 2004.

*de passage*¹²⁴. In the transitional phase, in which *Plutos* is located, the world seems to be abnormal in many ways until the status of reintegration is reached. Karion and his fellows want to turn the world upside down, and the audience is lured into the fascinating fantasy of a better world after the overthrow of Zeus and the Olympian order. However, at the same time, the play only redramatizes an essential ritual in the farmer-based life of the Athenian *demos*. It appears as if the comedy playfully reenacts the whole ritual year with its movement from chaos to culture, from the perspective of the reversal on the occasion of the early spring festivals of Dionysos, looking forward to the Pyanopsia. Through the mirror of the comic distortions the audience has, nonetheless, the opportunity to reinforce the common beliefs, norms, and values of the city. Many Attic citizens assembled in the theater of Dionysos can share basic ideas and practices that are constitutive of their polis, agricultural economy, and existence as farmers. The processional movements between inside and outside symbolically redefine the spatial territory of Attica and provide the Athenians with a ritually structured rhythm according to the annual cycle of maturation. The chytra meal and the eiresione processions are moreover symbolic acts to reaffirm the relations between the city as a whole and the private *oikoi* in its single units. Furthermore, by the *theoxenia*, the invitation of the god at the banquet in a *stibas*, the gods, who are normally categorically separated from men, get in close contact with human beings. The citizens have the chance to meet them on an almost equal basis.

In Old Comedy, Attic citizens laugh about the gods and watch them as they are about to be dethroned. This is not an expression of anti-religious, rational, or even atheistic attitudes, however, in the frame of festivals of Dionysian exception and according to the generic conventions, the city does nothing but act out patterns of the official state rituals grouped around license and subversion. Comic theater, as we have seen, becomes another form of ritual, a play in which reaffirming and destabilizing forces work

¹²⁴ See PARADISO 1987.

simultaneously and are intertwined with a mythic narrative that helps the audience to negotiate and redefine their identity in the complex city life. The gods, as agents of practices and thought, belong to this system and overarch it from a cosmic perspective. According to the generic laws of Old Comedy, Aristophanes invents a fantastic scenario to think about reciprocity in terms of the relation between mortals and gods, but also among the citizens in the polis. *Plutos* takes the audience on a magical journey into a utopia of primordial equality and just distribution of goods. The inherent ambivalence is translated into a simple *fabula*, a plot and myth that is structured by mytho-ritual patterns derived from the heortology of the Attic year of agriculture. This emphasis on contents, practices, symbols, and icons of the people's existence as small farmers correlates with the specific popular perspective of Old Comedy, which often focuses on peasants eating, drinking, laughing, merry-making, celebrating in their circumstances of a life based on agriculture and farming. Furthermore, it particularly suits the kaleidoscopic and multidimensional figure of *Plutos*, who is primarily linked with Demeter, corn, and the products of the fields. To reevaluate the paradigm of vegetation and fertility in Greek religion and connect it with approaches of mythic storytelling as symbolic expression is thus a method appropriate to the subject matter. The plot therefore has a deeper structure. It follows a syntax and grammar that come from agricultural customs and rituals. Therefore, I hope to have shown how many fruits can be picked in this field. Yet, Aristophanes cannot be reduced to this perspective. Composed by an extremely ingenuous and creative poet of the polis, *Plutos* is at the same time a play about the city life and its economy, a first comic reflection of the effects and consequences of a monetary system, or of a theory of money¹²⁵.

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¹²⁵ See SEAFORD 2004.

ABSTRACT

This paper argues that Aristophanes does not only compose his *Wealth* around its personification in the sense of an abstract concept reflecting economical and political thought, but that he also uses Plutos as a numinous god and divine agent of dynamically and creatively lived religion according to the religious practice and belief of the polis.

This contribution explores how the rather simplistic plot of *Wealth* – the movement of Plutos' expulsion and reintroduction – is constructed upon myths, practices, and rituals of the Athenian agricultural year and the deep crisis felt during the annual festival of New Year. Applying the generic poetics of utopia and the displacement of the usual order under Zeus, *Plutos* takes the audience on a fantastic journey back into the circumstances of primordial equality and just distribution of goods, which equal the golden age under Kronos. According to the comic ideology and the expectations of an audience, consisting of farmers in their majority, Aristophanes builds his performance on mythic and ritual discourses revolving around the vegetation cycle, the harvest of the crop as the incoming abundance. On top of this deep narrative structure – myth and ritual, set in motion, create a plot and theatrical play – *Plutos* reflects other vivid religious discourses, such as oracles, cult understood as reciprocity, the epiphanic arrival of a new god into the city who is comically envisioned as eiresione, the upcoming idea of a henotheistic and just god as savior, reflections about the traditional Zeus religion, healing rituals, and miracles.

KEYWORDS

Plutos – eiresione – Old comedy – metaphor – fertility – agriculture – festivals of exception – mythic-ritual poetics – heortological basis – Athenian religion.

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