

On Being Heard: Protest, Imperialism, and the *Adōniazousai*

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I. Aristophanes, *Lysistrata* 387–398:

ἄρ' ἐξέλαμψε τῶν γυναικῶν ἡ τρυφή
χῶ τυμπανισμὸς χοῖ πυκνοὶ Σαβάζιοι,
ὅ τ' Ἀδωνιασμὸς οὗτος οὐπὶ τῶν τεγῶν,
οὐ γὰρ ποτ' ὦν ἤκουον ἐν τῆκκλησίᾳ;
ἔλεγε δ' ὁ μὴ ὥρασι μὲν Δημόστρατος
'πλεῖν ἐς Σικελίαν,' ἡ γυνὴ δ' ὀρχουμένη
'αἰαὶ Ἀδωνιν' φησίν, ὁ δὲ Δημόστρατος
ἔλεγεν 'ὀπλίτας καταλέγειν Ζακυνθίων'
ἡ δ' ὑποπεπωκυῖ ἡ γυνὴ πὶ τοῦ τέγους
'κόπτεσθ' Ἀδωνιν' φησίν· ὁ δ' ἐβιάζετο
ὁ θεοῖσιν ἐχθρὸς καὶ μιαρὸς Χολοζύγης.
τοιαῦτ' ἀπ' αὐτῶν ἐστὶν ἀκολαστήματα.

So the women's licentiousness has flared up again then?
Again with their drumbeating, their crowded *Sabazioi* rites,
their *Adoniasmos*—that rite-on-the-roof
I myself once heard in the assembly?
While Demonstratos—damn him!—was saying,
“Sail to Sicily!,” his wife was dancing,
“*aiai Adonis*,” she said; and while Demonstratos
was saying, “Enlist the Zakynthian hoplites!,”
on her roof his somewhat-drunken wife said,
“Strike yourselves for Adonis!” But he forced the issue,
that enemy of the gods, that polluted *Kholozyges*.
Such is the licentiousness of women.

IIa. Plutarch, *Nikias* 13.7:

οὐκ ὀλίγους δὲ καὶ τὰ τῶν ἡμερῶν ἐν αἷς τὸν
στόλον ἐξέπεμπον ὑπέθραπτεν. Ἀδῶνια γὰρ εἶχον
αἱ γυναῖκες τότε, καὶ προὔκειτο πολλαχόθι τῆς
πόλεως εἶδωλα, καὶ ταφαὶ περὶ αὐτὰ καὶ κοπετοὶ
γυναικῶν ἦσαν, ὥστε τοὺς ἐν λόγῳ ποιουμένους
τινὲς τὰ τοιαῦτα δυσχεραίνειν καὶ δεδιέναι περὶ τῆς
παρασκευῆς ἐκείνης καὶ δυνάμεως, μὴ
λαμπρότητα καὶ ἀκμὴν ἐπιφανεστάτην σχοῦσα
ταχέως μαρανθῆ.

But also the events of the days during which [the Athenians] were sending out the expedition disturbed more than a few, for the women were holding the Adonia at the time. Little images [of Adonis] were being laid out in many places across the polis, and there were funerals and women lamenting for them, so that those who made anything of such things felt misgivings and feared that the powerful armament, though it had so manifest a splendor and strength, should be quickly extinguished.

IIb. Plutarch, *Alcibiades* 18.2–3:

ἐπιψηφισαμένου δὲ τοῦ δήμου καὶ γενομένων
ἐτοιμῶν πάντων πρὸς τὸν ἔκπλου, οὐ χρηστὰ
παρῆν οὐδὲ τὰ τῆς ἑορτῆς. Ἀδωνίων γὰρ εἰς τὰς
ἡμέρας ἐκείνας καθηκόντων εἶδωλα πολλαχού
νεκροῖς ἐκκομιζομένοις ὅμοια προὔκειντο ταῖς
γυναῖξί, καὶ ταφὰς ἐμμούντο κοπτόμεναι, καὶ
θρήνους ἤδον.

And after the demos voted in favor [of the expedition] and after everything was ready for its departure, there occurred several inauspicious omens, especially in connection with a festival. For the Adonia was happening during that time, so that little images [of Adonis] were being laid out by the women like corpses laid out for burial, and they held mock-burials as they beat their breasts and sang laments.

III. Σ Ar. *Lys.* 389:

ὁ Ἀδωνιασμὸς· ὀργιάζονται αἱ γυναῖκες θεοῖς οὐ
δημοτελεῖς οὐδὲ τεταγμένους.

ὁ Ἀδωνιασμὸς: The women celebrate rites for the gods that are neither publicly funded nor prescribed [i.e. counted among the ‘official’ rites].

IV. Plato, *Phaedrus* 276b:

ΣΩΚ· τόδε δὴ μοι εἶπέ· ὁ νοῦν ἔχων γεωργός, ὦν σπερμάτων κήδοιτο καὶ ἔγκαρπα βούλοιτο γενέσθαι, πότερα σπουδῇ ἂν θέρους εἰς Ἀδώνιδος κήπους ἀρῶν χαίροι θεωρῶν καλοὺς ἐν ἡμέραισι ὀκτῶ γιγνομένους, ἢ ταῦτα μὲν δὴ παιδιᾶς τε καὶ ἑορτῆς χάριν δρώη ἄν, ὅτε καὶ ποιοῖ· ἐφ’ οἷς δὲ ἐσπούδακεν, τῇ γεωργικῇ χρώμενος ἂν τέχνη, σπείρας εἰς τὸ προσήκον, ἀγαπῶη ἂν ἐν ὀγδόῳ μηνὶ ὅσα ἔσπειρεν τέλος λαβόντα;

Socrates: ‘Well tell me this: would a sensible farmer, who cares for his seeds and who wishes them to become fruitful, plant them in all seriousness during the summer in gardens of Adonis and then rejoice at seeing them become beautiful in eight days, or would he do this, whenever he did it at all, for fun and amusement; and when he was serious, would he not, using his agricultural skill, having sown his seeds in the proper place at the proper time, be content with what he has sown attaining maturity in seven months?’

V. Theophrastus, *Historia Plantarum* 6.7.3:

ἀβροτόνον δὲ μᾶλλον ἀπὸ σπέρματος βλαστάνει ἢ ἀπὸ ῥίζης καὶ παρασπάδος· χαλεπῶς δὲ καὶ ἀπὸ σπέρματος· προμοσχευόμενον <δὲ> ἐν ὀστράκοις ὥσπερ οἱ Ἀδώνιδος κήποι τοῦ θέρους.

Wormwood sprouts better from a seed than from a root or a cutting, and it is difficult even from a seed. It is grown from planted cuttings in *ostraka* just like the gardens of Adonis in the summer.

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