



Jon Clay, 'On 'pladd. (you who say either)'. (2021)
13(1): *Journal of British and Irish Innovative Poetry*.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16995/bip.6560>



On 'pladd. (you who say either)'

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Anna Mendelssohn's 'pladd. (you who say either)', from *Implacable Art* seems to me to be entangled and intoxicated in both its composition and actualisation; this surrenders nothing, yields nothing, to any kind of unreason but does involve a broader assemblage of which reason is only a part and within which a transcendent morality has no part:

nothing can be clear when knowing the associations
 are read by unread people, exposées, exposures.
 new poems for old. groovy. associations
 and world societies of interactive growth.
 groan. a play full of untrained actors
 absorbing dimensions of cradling pain
 securing test periods of temperature change.
 sewing elbes to harare, scratch luck.
 nothing matches the theoretical tuck.
 nutmeg. primus stove. raised eyebrows.
 work sharing. retreat into the forest.
 the silver conifers. the crumbs. chums.
 biceps & musical hairs. plaesthetics.
 planna vanne. plin plor plon pladverbially
 plodding along with a net in sturdy
 boots, add a few bulletins, patrol.
 centuries. narrowly missing. pointed
 drop. matches stove. matches museum.
 curves around a few hundred unsent
 letters, all impassioned, no, perfectly
 spelt, satirical tirades. benjamin constant.
 adolph who? painting his face whiter—
 interview. tripping around in a chanterelle.
 pulled. puppet. placed directly opposite.¹

There are suggestions here of esoteric knowledge, most clearly across the first two lines: 'nothing can be clear when knowing the associations / are read by unread people.' Mendelssohn was interested in esoteric ideas and in the Kabbalah in particular.² However, by their very nature, esoteric ideas are often 'unread' and most readers, even skilled or expert readers of poetry are 'unread' in this sense. I certainly am, for one. For the unread, for me, the dominant affect here is one of delirium. A delirium-affect; and that is how I read the poem.

Delirium should not be taken to suggest madness or foolishness necessarily, although there are strong and significant traditions of these in literature and poetry, and perhaps in innovative poetry in particular. But that is not the case here, or at least it is not what I am interested in as such in my reading. Rather, I read delirium as style, as the affect the poetry has on me as I actualise, only in this specific instance, the poem's orientation towards the world.

In fact, the notion of delirium might very often be taken to be a distinctly individual mode of existence, or orientation towards the world. Mendelssohn's use of language in this poem, her use of caesura as she simultaneously strings together and separates words and phrases that may have for a particular reader at a particular time no necessary or obvious way for a reader to connect them – 'nutmeg. primus stove. raised eyebrows.' – or her use of seeming nonsense words – 'plin plor plon pladverbially' – can seem individual to the point of being shut in or shut off from the rest of the world and from readers. It is, with the help of a search engine, possible to find some meanings for the 'plin', 'plor' and 'plon', just about, but that does not help to construct very much in the way of signification for those words presented together in this way. Nor does it help very much to construct a missing narrative around the fact that 'nutmeg' and 'primus stove' may be connected via a semantic field of 'cooking' that might then lead to somebody's 'raised eyebrows', though this aforementioned semantic field and this potential for a narrative might have some role in the construction of the poem's performance – and the consequent performative affects it gives rise to – as an assemblage of text and reader. As might the fact that this narrative is missing, and that the connections are only half there, and have to be constructed by a reader's own associations and creative capabilities.

Of course, a major element of this poem's actualisation as a conjunction with me in my reading-performance of it is the delirium-affect itself. It is a major element of what the poem is as it is actualised with me in this way, and it is one of the major pleasures that is embodied, by me, in my performance of it. This is a powerful and deterritorialising pleasure, an aesthetic force that is communicated by the poem in its performance-actualisation, that is also vitally ethical. It is what makes the poem good for me. It is intoxicating, like being 'drunk on water',³ a tracing of a line of flight that creates new connections and new possibilities; my encounters with the world are always becoming but through the assemblage that I am now and that includes the poem, such encounters are further enriched, particularly noticeably immediately after reading.

Notes

- ¹ Anna Mendelssohn, *Implacable Art* (Applecross, Western Australia and Great Wilbraham, UK: Folio and Equipage, 2000), p. 17
- ² See Joe Luna, 'Poetry's Law', *Journal of British and Irish Innovative Poetry* 11:1 (2019) [Last accessed 29 September 2021] <<https://doi.org/10.16995/bip.746>>
- ³ Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet *Dialogues II*, trans. by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (London and New York: Continuum, 2012), p. 53.

Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

