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## In Defiance of “Cant”: J. H. Prynne’s *Sub Songs*

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**Abstract.** The article focuses on J. H. Prynne’s 2010 volume *Sub Songs*, arguing that the poems respond to the reality of crisis-ridden Britain. Particularly, it is the jargons of neoliberal economy that are explored and opposed, as Prynne’s poems challenge the simplistic and thought-deadening language of the contemporary world, they offer a chance to cast about for new ways of sense-making.

**Key words:** J. H. Prynne, contemporary British poetry, neoliberalism, economic crisis

On the occasion of J. H. Prynne’s eightieth anniversary, Anthony Barnett, the publisher of Prynne’s first collected poems entitled plainly *Poems* (1999), ascribed Clarence Brown’s words about Osip Mandelstam to Prynne: “Probably no writer of our time, except possibly Ezra Pound, has had a higher conception of the writer’s calling, his obligation to his art and to his reader [than Prynne]” (2016, 57). Pound is, of course, invoked by design because it is most frequently to his *Cantos* that Prynne’s work is compared due to its syntactical and lexical complexity and an unrestricted reliance on the reader’s ability to penetrate through the thick veneer of recondite knowledge in pursuit of understanding (see Mellors 2005, 117-143). Pertinently enough, both Pound and Prynne would gladly substitute “enlightening” (not enlightenment) for the more mundane “understanding.” What is more, beginning with his early “I Gather the Limbs of Osiris” all the way to the last *Cantos*, Pound credited verse with the ability to bring the vital knowledge of the world, from Confucian teachings, through Thomas Jefferson’s doctrines, all the way to C. H. Douglas’s economic ideas, into a sharper focus than any prose could. Perhaps the crispest articulation of the idea is found in *ABC of Reading*, where Pound claims that “If a nation’s literature declines, the nation atrophies and decays” (Pound 1960, 32). Compared to the grandiloquent Pound, Prynne speaks of the role of the poets in far more hushed terms when he concludes his essay “Huts” by asserting that “ruin and part-ruin lie about us on all sides” and it is thanks to the poets that

“we know this, are how we may dwell not somewhere else but where we are” (Prynne 2008a, 631-32). This is as high a calling for the poet as any espoused by a modern writer; and yet Prynne’s work does not immediately yield that impression of utmost care about the external world, its ethical make-up and aesthetic ideals.

Prynne is three years older than Seamus Heaney, and with the obvious differences between the two poets’ life experiences firmly in mind, one is bound to initially concede to Heaney the greater concern for the his immediate world. Recall the ending of “The Toome Road” from *Field Work*: “O charioteers, above your dormant guns, / It stands here still, stands vibrant as you pass, / The invisible, untoppled omphalos” (Heaney 1979, 7). Via myth and image the poet has access to the “invisible, untoppled omphalos” and so means of resistance of the presumably English invaders. This, by contrast, is Prynne’s response to political violence: “At leisure for losing outward in a glazed toplight / bringing milk in, another fire and pragma cape / upon them both; they’ll give driven to marching / with wild fiery streaks able” (2005, 410). Syntax, not as paratactic as in the later volumes, nonetheless contorts its way around the scene that suggests a warzone as set against a serene urban scene. The people carrying milk are also implied to undergo a transformation in those first lines, as they “give driven to marching,” a military context distinctly in place. While he does not depend on the image for effect of his lines to be exerted on the reader, Prynne desires us to pause and interrogate the very means whereby political, ethical or whatever else tensions are created. This interrogation leads to the conclusion that whereas the material reality is out there, it is solely in language that we can begin to make sense of it, in which case poetry proves a crucial form of discourse that can frame material reality in an adequate light. By adequate Prynne tends to mean more complex, internally divided – dialectical. As he points out at the outset of his 2010 essay “Mental Ears”: “for all the pungent games in which poetry can engage, it comprises at its most fully extended an envelope which finds and sets the textual contours in writing of how things are; while also activating a system of discontinuities and breaks which interrupt and contest the intrinsic cohesion and boundary profiles of its domain, so that there is constant leakage inwards and outwards across the connection with the larger world order” (2010a, 126-27). The phrase “how things are” is calculated to suggest a dual context. On the one hand, it is committed to material reality of physical entities and socio-political motions, both of which Prynne approaches through the notion of internal dialectic, or contradiction, a term he borrows from Mao Zedong’s essay “On Contradiction” (see Pietrzak 2015, 48-49). On the other hand, “how things are” insists on a poetic intertext, Wallace Stevens’s “The Man with the Blue Guitar,” in which the eponymous man stresses that “‘Things as they are / Are changed upon the blue guitar’” (1982, 165). Prynne has commented on Stevens’s “Prologues to What Is Possible,” saying that the poem sets out to invent “a possible domain” by manipulating qualities of the objects evoked in the poem (Prynne 2014, 32). In effect, Stevens contrives to fashion what Prynne in the same essay terms “conceptual schemes,” which he defines as “structures of mental procedures or representations” comprising concepts understood as “mental construct[s] related to idea, notion, etc.” (Prynne 2014, 13). Such schemes are historically constructed, “some [...] occur fleetingly as temporary aspects of a thought-process, and some persist as mental patterns or characteristics that can be durable, capable of being retrieved from memory, worked out and set down in discursive expression; creeds and covenants, legal jurisdictions and moral or political schemes of conduct fall into this category” (Prynne 2014, 13). In his delineation of conceptual

schemes, like in his reading of Stevens's poem, Prynne shares with Foucault the desire to strip what we may too readily believe to be self-evident of its ostensible naturalness.

As a result, he argues in "Poetic Thought," an essay contemporary with "Mental Ears," that "the focus of poetic composition, as a text takes shape in the struggle of the poet to separate from it, projects into the textual arena an intense energy of conception and differentiation, pressed up against the limits which are discovered and invented by composition itself" (2010b, 596). This is a crucial statement in that Prynne identifies here two of his central ideas about poetry and poetic composition. Firstly, a poem is a product of the poet's "coax[ing] and hurl[ing] at finesse and judgement, and [setting] beliefs and principles on line, self-determining but nothing for its own sake merely; all under test of how things are" (2010b, 597); as a consequence, once the poem is completed the poet must "sever the links [with the poem] in order to test finally the integrity of the result" (2010 598). Secondly, "poetic thought is brought into being by recognition and contest with the whole cultural system of a language" (2010b, 598). What this implies, therefore, is that poems are interventions in the linguistic, or conceptual, construction of reality. Bearing that notion in mind, it is little wonder that when the modern world entered into the gravest economic crisis since the Great Depression, Prynne sought to address the situation. In the period between 2008, which marked the beginning of the crisis, and 2014, when it is agreed to have been brought to a standstill, Prynne published four collections of poems, *Streak~~~Willing~~~Entourage / "Artesian"* (2009), *Sub Songs* (2010), *Kazoo Dreamboats; or, On What There Is* (2011) and *Al-Dente* (2014). Of the four collections, it is *Sub Songs* that seems to be most openly preoccupied with the realities of the crisis, approaching the conceptual schemes that inform the economic domain of the time.

*Sub Songs* alludes to the idea of sub-song, a fledgling bird's "song of low volume" that includes "all performances which are so inwardly or faintly uttered that they do not carry to anywhere near the distance over which the bird is physically capable of making itself heard" (Thorpe and Pilcher 1958, 509). This definition by British ornithologists W. H. Thorpe and P. M. Pilcher is likely to have attracted Prynne who worked at Cambridge at the same time as Thorpe. According to Thorpe and Pilcher, sub-songs, particularly in the Chaffinch, unlike "the true song [that] consists of a well-defined burst of sound lasting, on the average, between two and three seconds and repeated at intervals of about 20 seconds, the sub-song consists of an irregular and indefinite series of notes continuing for perhaps half a minute or more, although broken up into ill-defined phrases each lasting for perhaps two or three seconds" (1958, 510). The suggestion that the fully-grown bird sings in a sustained manner and a young in "ill-defined phrases" resonates with Prynne's ideas of poetic composition being in continuous contest with the domain of language. While the "ill-definition" underlies Prynne's paratactic manoeuvres, the implication of completion in the adult bird links with the traditional ascription of poetry to the song of the bird. Thus Keats and Shelley but also Whitman and Yeats would have been patron saints of adulthood, Prynne chooses the fledgling's stunted, if committed, efforts.

The opening poem of *Sub Songs* "As Mouth Blindness," ushers in the jagged syntax that refuses to impart the meaning unless an effort is invested in the reading. The emphasis on "now," which appears twice in the first line, implies a focus on the present situation, which is suggested to be grim. Whereas "beyond the brunt yet afforded" alludes to the intensive encouragement on the part of the European, including British,

governments to coax people into buying more, the later phrases “nothing not due” and “the road on offer / be level be sane two for one” indicate the sort of encouragement ruses that were employed at the time. The advice would sit well in the mouths of an advocate of a political culture that, as Wendy Brown posits, “figures citizens exhaustively as rational economic actors in every sphere of life” (Brown 2015, 35). As a result, before we can further explore *Sub Songs*, the neoliberal response to the financial crisis must briefly be sketched.

The studies of the European attempts to deal with the crisis suggest that while it was initially thought that the economic downturn “demonstrated fatal flaws in unregulated markets” hailed by neoliberal economists and so it “signalled the consignment of neoliberalism to the dustbin of history,” the fact is that “neoliberalism appears to be alive and well” (Cahill 2011, 480). Cahill ascribes this endurance to the fact that neoliberalism, unlike its critics have claimed, is deeply “embedded” in the people’s consciousness. The three modes of this embeddedness, according to Cahill, are 1. discursive, in that “neoliberalism has become the new political ‘common sense’”; 2. institutional and embodied by the state regulations enabling the easy flow of capital; and 3. class relations, in that “transformations to the regulatory apparatus of states facilitated changes within processes of capital accumulation, which in turn led to: a weakening of the power of organised labour and a strengthening of the power of capital at both the level of the firm and the level of state policy-making” (Cahill 2011, 487). It is the first mode of embeddedness that has contributed to neoliberalism’s entrenchment. As English et al. demonstrate, “neoliberal outlook permeated the discussion and presentation of economic crisis in the U.K. media, and can be attributed to actors across the political, economic, and civil society spheres,” which, in effect, has led to a perception of people not “in terms of their human qualities [...] but rather solely in relation to their role in the market – whether as consumers or producers” (English et al. 2016a, 554-55). Thus dehumanised, people once more become statistical figures in the game of macroeconomics because, as Schram et al. show, “neoliberal ideology emphasizes the constructive and intentional application of market principles to diverse social relations that extend beyond economic markets” (Schram et al. 2010, 742). What is more, as many studies point out (see eg. Swarts 2013), in Britain, neoliberal doctrines have long become the dominant ideology not only among the Conservatives but increasingly among the Labour, a “convergence” that, in defiance of expectations following the onset of the crisis (see Besley and Preston 2007, 1473-75), “suggests that (a) the British political consensus continues to be maintained, and thus (b) the critical juncture of the economic crisis did not challenge the consensus between the Labour Party and Conservatives” (English et al. 2016b, 593). English and Cahill both agree that due to its deep entrenchment in the domain of public discourse, especially in the media, the neoliberal paradigm is proving quite resilient.

What is crucial for framing the discussion of *Sub Songs* is the fact that, as Hayward pointed out in 2010, “any ‘recovery’ which shores up the current global financial system will be more than economic; it will also involve the hearts and minds of individuals, convincing and coaxing them into believing that it is once more safe to swim in the waters of investments and credit” (2010, 286). Although one would agree that the change needs to take place in people’s minds, Hayward embodies just the sort of neoliberal thinking that English has diagnosed. Under the guise of a broader, more humanely-oriented approach, he still cherishes the hope that the old impulses might return and so resuscitate the ailing global economy. Even realising that the crisis is beyond the plain

matters of economy, Hayward fails to understand the “dehumanising” aspect at the heart of neoliberal thinking. Brown aptly summarises her investigation of the effects of the crisis, noting the role that language plays in preserving the neoliberal front:

The point is simply that as long as it operated in a different lexical and semiotic register from capital, liberal democratic principles and expectations could be mobilized to limit capitalist productions of value and market distributions; they could be a platform for critiques of those values and distributions, and they could gestate more radical democratic aspirations. When this other register is lost, when market values become the only values, when liberal democracy is fully transformed into market democracy, what disappears is this capacity to limit, this platform of critique, and this source of radical democratic inspiration and aspiration. (Brown 2015, 208)

It is with an eye to “this platform of critique” of the market values as sole determinants of justness and truth that Prynne steps up in his work. Against the silent dehumanisation and desensitisation of language-turned-measuring-stick that *Sub Songs* deploys its “low-volume” and “ill-defined” verses.

Towards the end of the poem, “As Mouth Blindness” incites us to step up against the market-oriented supporters of “be level be sane two for one” ideology: “Time in the news to be not silent indoors, mouth in thought / shut up chew it the choice separates its like or is lame for / wounding in what is due would tell you suffused” (Prynne 2010c, 6). The “mouth in thought” returns to the idea that “poetic thought” is created in the act of composition in language and then tested against “how thigs are.” As elsewhere in Prynne (see Pietrzak 2014, 11-13), it seems the imperative mood of “shut up chew it” represents the ruse towards blocking “mouth in thought” as it only begins “to be not silent indoors.” The ending of the poem bleakly confirms that the slowly rising opposition to the market order is quenched, for despite the “market [being] done and stunned in face,” “we say / sustainable our mouth assents slave dental unbroken torrid reason / will commute previous and lie down” (Prynne 2010c, 6). By the end of the poem the “mouth” can only say “sustainable,” a word synonymous with the neoliberal agenda of recovery as expressed by the joint communiqué of the participants of the G20 summit in 2009 in London: “We believe that the only sure foundation for sustainable globalisation and rising prosperity for all is an open world economy based on market principles, effective regulation, and strong global institutions” (“Global Plan for Recovery and Reform”). This is the world where “great lack breeds lank / less and less” and where the ruling financial bodies can resort to “no less than fitting the race / to birthright and natal place, our lingo” (Prynne 2010c, 6). What comes after the concluding imperative of “As Mouth Blindness”: “Now get out” (Prynne 2010c, 6), are songs seeking to oppose “our lingo” with a language committed to critical and dialectic thought.

“In Forge Incremental” directly focuses on the idea of “our lingo” calling it “cant”:

[...] In block  
 sweet lurid trapezoid creamy stretch first, single glance ill  
 ascends all yet higher and streaming bird-like, for rounding cant  
 stick dementive and back block. (Prynne 2010c, 9)

The recurrent use of “sweet” throughout *Sub Songs*, which is here coupled with “single glance ill / ascends all yet higher and streaming bird-like,” invoke Shelley’s “To a Skylark” that “Higher still and higher / From the earth [...] springest / Like a cloud of fire; / [...] / And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest” (Shelley 2005, 876). But whereas Shelley is allured to the skylark’s fully-fledged song, which implies a disembodied beauty of perfect expression that “we feel that it is there” (Shelley 2005, 877), for Prynne, such a view of poetry, “hidden / In the light of thought” (Shelley 2005, 877), represents “rounding cant.” In “Poetic Thought,” Prynne argues that “in whatever stage of social evolution, a discourse practice defaults in a wink to facile acceptance of the commonplace, to bending compliantly under commercial or political distortions, to accommodate by self-corruption” (Prynne 2010b, 598). The cant as deployed in “In Forge Incremental” corresponds to the “facile acceptance of commonplace,” which has preoccupied Prynne throughout his career.

In his 2014 volume, *Kazoo Dreamboats*, he invokes the image of “mendacious smiles” that characterise popular culture’s heroes (Prynne 2014, 16) and sets that against a panorama of bloodshed and environmental damage. In an earlier poem, “L’Extase de M. Poher,” Prynne associates this cant with rubbish, stressing that “Rubbish is / pertinent; essential; the / most intricate presence in / our entire culture;” poetry’s task is therefore to “collide head-on with the unwitty circus” (Prynne 2005, 162). Commenting on the poem, Reeve and Kerridge observe that “in order to ‘survive,’ poetry has to ‘collide’ with the powerful instrumental discourses of the culture [...], rather than dodging into alley-ways while they pass, or lingering in safe places like gardens” (9). This argument pertains also to “In Forge Incremental,” although in this later poem, Prynne ascribes the cant not to popular culture or general “unwitty circus” but to economic jargon: “Puff creamy delusion split asset never franker / remedy alert, you lurk, offer” (Prynne 2010c, 10). The “Puff creamy delusion” is another embodiment of cant and here refers to accounting, which is then placed in a sequence that links finances, frankness, alerting and offer, behind all of which “you lurk.” The implication that there is something alarmingly dishonest in accounting is then superimposed on the issue of language: “neither one / nor the whole clam will do, satisfy align / numeral redress perfect relegate in run / out of this or then far within our reach” (Prynne 2010c, 10). What may refer to various type of mollusc, in the context of “numeral redress” also conjures more pecuniary associations, for a “clam,” as *The Oxford English Dictionary* explains, is “an instrument resembling a forceps employed in weighing gold” (“Clam”). This would suggest that the satisfaction of alignment denotes a process of correct accounting that results in “numeral redress.” The use of clams and redress may here be calculated to summon Heaney’s version of the two in the poem “Oysters” and his Oxford lectures. “Oysters” is focused on the poet’s responsibility to the oppressed peoples across time but for Prynne, being “quicken[ed] [...] all into verb, pure verb” (Heaney 1979, 3) would sound too escapist a note. Poetry offers no purity, for it must “collide head-on with the unwitty circus” or else perish. This ties in with Heaney’s idea of the redress of poetry as an “agent for proclaiming and correcting injustices” (Heaney 1995, 5) but in “In forge Incremental,” Prynne sees no such possibility available to poetry, for if there is a redress “far within our reach,” it is solely “numeral.”

This “numeral redress,” however, does not apply to “a flighty inducement,” for “that’s enough no register / precludes effect on extended wings to care for this” (Prynne 2010c, 10). Alignments and redresses notwithstanding, the cant is aimed at inducing more

reckless purchasing, which is implied in the use of phrases such as "on demand," "replace and fit" and at par that's what you get" (Prynne 2010c, 10). Here again Stevens's "Sunday Morning" is invoked, especially that the ending of the poem summons images that recur in *Sub Songs*:

Deer walk upon our mountains, and the quail  
Whistle about us their spontaneous cries;  
Sweet berries ripen in the wilderness;  
And, in the isolation of the sky,  
At evening, casual flocks of pigeons make  
Ambiguous undulations as they sink,  
Downward to darkness, on extended wings. (Stevens 1982, 70)

There are bird songs and "Sweet berries," there is also "isolation of the sky" that returns in *Sub Songs* and yet, what seems particularly striking is that the final image of pigeons "sink[ing], / Downward to darkness," when recalled in the context of "In Forge Incremental," emphasises the emotional and intellectual inertia, for in Prynne, there is "no register [...] to care for this." In the world of cant and "puff creamy delusion," dominated by economic jargon readily associated with deeply-embedded neoliberal doctrines as discussed above, there is only the chiming of repetitive "flighty inducements;" as it is put in "Creosote Damping": "We are / known for this stuff frequenting by want of fixed prelude / as not on trade floor" (Prynne 2010c, 7).

Consumerism coupled with a critique of the mendacious language of economy that proves deadly to deeper interpersonal relationships come to the fore in "Accept on Probate," which in its title points to the issue of authenticity, in this case legal. First the cant is pointed out in the jingling passage "remit sky / halo do silo skip to store" (Prynne 2010c, 13). The "remit sky" once more alludes to "isolation of the sky" but in Prynne, this restricted view of the sky leads to the staccato of "halo do silo" that seems to be one of the aspects of "some game," invoked towards the end of the first stanza. The following part of the poem continues the exploration of the language of technology-informed consumerist encouragement (not unlike the one described by English et al. 2016a), setting it against the vision of a collapse of emotional candour: "denote value each lot gaining fine off / main device, using this model. Spurn less. Rifle peak edit, add / flip love unending fair, barbary swarm" (Prynne 2010c, 13). The injunctions to "Spurn less" and "Rifle peak edit" are indicated to mingle with "flip love unending fair," thus implying that in the world of purchasing abandon, feelings like love are reduced to being "flip." "Flip" brings into play a constellation of meanings, which include primarily flippancy and cursoriness (as per the *OED*: "glib, flippant;" but also, as a noun, for example "a smart stroke or blow" and "a sudden jerk or movement"), thus suggesting that in lieu of emotional attachment, people are plunged into a world of a carnivalesque "unending fair." This disconnection is further emphasised in the sonnet-resembling middle section: "on a fast brim / taper down does the rate slow not like / this or this, some game transit ever have / to run over" (Prynne 2010c, 13). The passage unravels a tension between fast and slow movement, of which the former is associated with "game transit," thereby alluding to "some game" of the jingling jargon of the opening of the poem. The poem speaks against slowing down in the following passage that again comprises implications

of increased commercial activity: “have there and more over stream / boiler” (Prynne 2010c, 13).

The middle section of “Accept on Probate” is followed by a crucial stanza that summons the central preoccupations of the poem and merits a full quotation:

To make proud on grist in fit argue since not on limb true rate  
 undo one to the other most adjust quick add-on, edge facile  
 clip flap fond as ever hold and true, rote mendicant abstain  
 despite summit

list how far presently they’ll go here through  
 undertow no more down, weak born to make allow fervent or you  
 such ever true more unclear in likeness nearness trip instinct  
 pattern gone away. Say so say less next to this asset low fixed  
 mean stoop can do inversion, cram fit scarlet may do can if will  
 so to say true may only. (Prynne 2010c, 13)

The stanza interweaves ideas of modality, signalled by the intensive use of modal verbs in the last two lines, jingling phraseological inanities known from “In Forge Incremental,” and the notions of truth and ambiguity mixed with falsity. The principal tension that sets in from the beginning comprises truth and ambiguity. On the one hand, “To make proud on grist,” which connects pride with sustenance, requires one to “fit argue not on limb” so that the argumentation is implied to be consistent, clipping all loose ends. On the other, this certainty leads to “true rate” that is then shown to “undo one to the other,” thus suggesting that the argument is self-divisive. The adjective “true” recurs four times across these lines, initially pointing to consistency of argument. Later, however, it appears in contexts that emphasise an ironic perception of what is considered “true;” therefore on its second appearance, in “edge facile / clip flap fond as ever hold and true,” the company of jingling “facile / clip flap fond,” each of which is to do with silliness or duplicity, suggests that truth is only the product of catchphrases, a reading supported by the ending of the poem: “what this makes true or true / one to against what that, is / that now what, insidious it / is” (Prynne 2010c, 14). The piling up of pronouns along with the repetition of “true or true” stress the ambiguous aspect of the language that begins to refer back to itself in a series of stuttering phrases. In a similar way, the “facile / clip flap fond” jingle is used to underlie how “insidious” this language is and so how far removed from the precision with which “true” was initially associated.

This ironic perception of truth is then explored in the following lines, as the poem accusingly refers to a “you”: “weak born to make allow fervent or you / such ever true more unclear in likeness nearness.” There is a contrast between the pliant “weak born” and the “you / such ever true” which shares with Eliot the reader-aimed “hyprocite lecteur” without assuming the identity of “mon semblable, – mon frère” (Eliot 2002, 55). Appearing for the third time, this time in a jingling context, “true” becomes not only metonymic but also auditory extension of “you.” Moreover, this truth is “unclear in likeness,” which emphasises that the coherence of “true rate” is further undermined; so much so, indeed, that we end up with “pattern gone away.” When “true” appears for the last time, it is placed amid an array of modal verbs, which deals away with the implication that there is any actuality to truth. Instead, a presupposed “you” once more is found to “say true,” which at this point shares more with “inversion” than with a



statement of some actuality. Also "fit scarlet," which implies tormented royalty as in the biblical reference to Jesus' robe, is, first of all, placed in the context of dismissive cramming and then followed by markers of modality, as though to suggest that the scripture is in no way free from riddling ambiguities. Secondly, the reference to Jesus' scarlet robe points out the ambiguity in the Bible, for while Matthew 27:28 speaks of "a scarlet robe," the same Apostle speaks twice of "purple robe" (Matt 15:17 and 15: 20) In effect, the imperative to "Say so" is indeed tantamount to "say less" that immediately follows it.

In the concluding lines, "Accept on Probate" invokes the figure of the "rudimentary idiot," a "clamant fuse / in deep amazement in tremor no yet divided" (Prynne 2010c, 14). This is not yet the "Idiot Questioner" from Blake's "Milton," who "is always questioning, / But never capable of answering" (Blake 1975, 159) but a more primitive embodiment of man bereft of imagination, who trusts the chimes and the "clamant / fuse" of consumerist culture. Thus "Accept on Probate," one of crucial *Sub Songs* alongside "As Mouth Blindness" and "In Forge Incremental," leaves us at a point where truth understood as consistency has been reduced to advertising slogans and modal ambiguity. In this world of snippets of neoliberal jargon being cast about in an attempt to coax people into purchasing ever more, Prynne's collection sets up a mode of resistance that pitches ways of sense-making alternative to the buzzing of catchphrases. If rudimentary idiots chirp of a "fit pasture new-found" (Prynne 2010c, 14), Prynne prefers his always fledgling sub songs, poised on the brink of understanding and incomprehension, in the very nook where voice, language and thought promise to be born.

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