

Un-defamiliarising Ireland: Paul Lynch's Dystopian Approaches in *Prophet Song*

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In an extremely illuminating Q&A after being awarded the 2023 Booker Prize for Fiction, Paul Lynch openly stated that, with *Prophet Song*, he “aimed to dismantle the foundations of the dystopian novel”, since the speculative elements that are an intrinsic part of this sort of narratives clash with the ordinary reality and the traumatic events he portrays in his book. Taking into account that defamiliarization turns out to be the most distinctive feature in dystopia, as it enables authors to estrange both the temporal and spatial framework and to detach it from the historical period in which these stories were published, it seems that, even though Lynch's goal appears to be much closer to un-defamiliarising reality, the outcome cannot be more dystopian. *Prophet Song* recounts the story of Eillish Stack, a Dublin mother of four children, who is trapped at a time of suffocating social unrest, political turmoil and economic unpredictability. Her stable familiar and professional life is suddenly torn into pieces when her husband is kidnapped by the newly established *status quo*, never to be found again, and one of her sons joins the rebel forces that seek to overthrow that regime. In this chaotic scenario, which somehow echoes the most discarnate images of current world conflicts, Eillish does not only have to cope with mere survival, but with a family that is gradually crumbling. Apart from warning about the dangers of totalitarianism, *Prophet Song* is a novel in which all characters are faced with numerous ethical dilemmas and situations that constantly put their principles and ideals at stake. Bearing all this in mind, the aim of this paper will be to approach *Prophet Song* as a dystopian novel, for which we will draw on Víktor Shklovski and Darko Suvin's theories on the notion of defamiliarization to probe into how Lynch, in spite of his rather sceptic takes on dystopia, builds up a story that presents the most recurrent tropes in the genre.