

Political, Social and Linguistic Discourse of Dystopia in Paul Lynch's Novel, *Prophet Song*

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Abstract

Paul Lynch's *Prophet Song* (2023) is a contemporary novel providing social and political elements with a brilliant and provocative account of the Stack family in a totalitarian regime. An unconventional use of language is also included in the narrative of the novel such as run-on phrases, long sentences, uninterrupted paragraphs, and dialogues without quotation marks. These political, social, and linguistic features of the novel determine its dystopian discourse. Several literary studies have argued the problem of political, social and linguistic discourse; however, these features in the context of contemporary dystopian literature remains to be explored properly. Thus, this study aims to analyse the dystopian elements in the novel within the context of political, social, and linguistic discourse. The study enables a discussion on the authoritarian political system, the oppressive social order, and dystopian language use in Paul Lynch's novel, *Prophet Song* in the light of the discourse analysis. All things considered, Paul Lynch's *Prophet Song* appears to have a dystopian discourse including political, social, and linguistic elements.

Introduction

In the contemporary world literature, describing imaginary totalitarian societies and portraying fictional dehumanized individuals have been gaining much popularity over the past few decades. This popularity with a wide range of literary works simultaneously has provided the development and spread of dystopian literature around the world. Authors dealing with dystopian themes are overfondly welcomed with great interest by the readers. Thus, dystopia has been becoming a fundamental genre with a particular set of characteristics in the contemporary world literature. Perhaps dystopian

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literature is momentarily essential because it throws light upon the existed troubles and fears of the today's world and foresees the expected problems and anxieties of the people in the future. It is still an arguable but at the same time a prevalent fact that dystopia takes its inspiration from the real events and actors of the present-day communities. On the contrary, Northrop Frye (1965), an important literary critic, claims that, "Life imitates literature up to a point, but hardly up to that point. The utopian writer looks at his own society first and tries to see what, for his purposes, its significant elements are. The utopia itself shows what society would be like if those elements were fully developed" (p. 324). This is also true for a dystopian writer from a different perspective. Unlike Utopia with systematic, harmonious, idealistic and perfect order, Dystopia attempts to show dangerous, extreme, offensive and devastating elements within a society which the writer has observed and considered in the society. The reflection of the current and forthcoming real-life circumstances into the literary atmospheres from an anti-utopian perspective is specifically important since dystopian literature encourages its readers initially to think, perceive and question the social practices and political endeavours of the surviving governments and then to take a rational and necessary action to stop the probable manipulations, oppressions and controls by the authoritarian forces. Thus, dystopian literature might be considered as a comprehensive insight into citizen-state relationships and an immediate notice in advance about present and future tyrannies.

As a very remarkable representative of this dystopian tradition in literature, Paul Lynch is one of the most significant and distinguished authors of both Irish and contemporary world literature. Paul Lynch, a highly talented author, discusses both modern and tyrannical world struggles such as the emigration into another country from a totalitarian regime, the racial and other discriminations by a despotic government, and the existing and foreseen cruelties against the people in a particular society. He especially concentrates upon the fears, worries and sufferings of the individuals surviving in the authoritarian systems. In his writing, he uses a mesmerizing and provocative poetic language with a style of a brilliant description of his characters and a valiant depiction of realistic issues into the fictional realities. Furthermore, his use of language in his novels allowing a sort of explanation, discussion and warning to readers and critics clearly defines what the dystopian discourse is and greatly provides how the dystopian discourse is to be comprehended in literary circles. Thus, the dystopic discourse might be discussed politically, socially, and linguistically, because dystopia by its definition refers to an invented place which is ruled by a totalitarian regime; a society in which the people are oppressed, controlled and conditioned; and a system in which the

language is restructured and manipulated. Lynch's works make significant contributions to the political, social, and linguistic dystopian discourse in literature.

Among Paul Lynch's novels, *Prophet Song* is by far the most outstanding novel signifying a dystopian discourse in literature politically, socially and linguistically. Published in 2023, the novel was awarded 2023 Booker Prize. It has become one of the bestselling books not only Ireland but also all over the world. This apparently illustrates that readers desperately need a new understanding and/or perhaps a proper solution to their current troubles in their lives under the despotic regimes, because the world is unfortunately being ruled by these regimes and people's troubles are getting to resemble one another more strongly. For readers and critics, Lynch's novel is fairly eye-opening to consider the prevailing practices of the states and highly encouraging to question the probable activities of the governments. Moreover, reading those characters' fictional experiences in the novel makes the readers initially to empathize with their actual lives and then to question their own identities and societies.

Paul Lynch's *Prophet Song* is a crucial dystopian novel focusing Eilish Stack and her family in the Republic of Ireland which has turned into a tyranny. The Stack family – Eilish and Larry with their four children, Mark, Molly, Bailey, and Ben – is trapped within a dark and nightmarish society under a totalitarian regime. While Eilish is a competent biologist who is unable to work owing to the recent despotic activities in the country by the new order, Larry, her husband, works a teacher and a leader in a trade union. In this terrifying social and political atmosphere as Larry is interrogated by the GNSB (The Garda National Services Bureau), a police force because of his protest against the new system and then disappeared mysteriously, Eilish is left alone and desperate with her children. The whole country and Eilish's mind are in turmoil: The country has been started to be ruled by an oppressive government with the emergency powers, and she does not want to accept these overbearing practices of the new regime. In the meantime, Mark, her eldest son, disappears and loses contact with his mother and other siblings, because after he has been called by the military service, he prefers not to join the army and to involve in the rebel forces against the regime instead. Whether he is alive or is killed by the government or not remains a mystery. Bailey, her second son, gets a shrapnel wound to his head in an attack and is taken to the military hospital without her consent, then she eventually finds his son's dead body in a morgue. He is probably tortured and killed by the regime. Molly, her only daughter, has to deal with some kind of depression as a result of their losses and experiences in this

environment. Ben, her toddler, even feels insecure and needy in these war circumstances. After these series of tragic events, even though she still has a hard time believing what she struggles and she suffers from some varieties of misery, Eilish with her two children, Molly and Ben, decides to escape from this totalitarian regime. The end of the novel is still ambiguous and open-ended, because whether they manage to escape from this terror or not, is unclear. However, it ends hopefully with Eilish's bright words, "...to the sea, we must go to the sea, the sea is life" (Lynch, 2023, p. 309).

Paul Lynch has composed a very complicated and sophisticated structure with his novel from the perspectives of the individuals to the core of the politics and society with an unconventional use of language. This intense structure might be studied by different approaches to the literature. Nonetheless, amidst these approaches, the discourse analysis is by far the most appropriate method of literary criticism to discuss the dystopic discourse of the novel politically, socially and linguistically, because *Prophet Song's* dystopic content determines its political, social and linguistic discourse of dystopia. Accordingly, discourse analysis provides abundantly what the purpose of the novel is and how the meaning of novel is constructed. Furthermore, it paves the way for not only how the language use works effectively in some contexts but also how power relations determine political and social circumstances. Thus, discourse analysis is quite essential and beneficial to question dystopian elements within a novel. Lynch's novel elaborates the political issues of authoritarian rule, such as surveillance, manipulation and control in a totalitarian regime. Furthermore, it unfolds the social problems of oppression, suppression, loss of identity and individuality, misinformation, uncertainty, chaos and confusion in an authoritarian society. Additionally, it illustrates the concerns dealing with the use of language such as language manipulation, censorship and silencing the individuals in a despotic environment. In the light of these themes, *Prophet Song* criticizes the existing and forthcoming anxieties of dystopian discourse in terms of politics, society and language within the governments.

Paul Lynch's *Prophet Song* is a contemporary novel providing political, social and linguistic elements with a brilliant and provocative account of the Stack family in a totalitarian regime. An unconventional use of language is also included in the narrative of the novel such as run-on phrases, long sentences, uninterrupted paragraphs, and dialogues without quotation marks. These political, social and linguistic characteristics of the novel define its dystopian discourse. Several literary studies have argued the problem of social, political and linguistic discourse in dystopian literature; however, these features in the context of contemporary dystopian literature

by discourse analysis remains to be explored properly. Thus, this study aims to analyse the dystopian elements in the novel within the context of political, social and linguistic discourse in three sections. In the first section, political discourse is going to be discussed in terms of authoritarian rule, surveillance, manipulation and control. The second section is going to analyse social discourse within the novel in view of oppression, suppression, loss of identity and individuality, misinformation, uncertainty, confusion and chaos. In the third section of the study, linguistic discourse is going to be argued with regard to language manipulation, censorship and silencing the individuals. Lastly, the conclusion summarizes the main arguments of the study. All things considered, this study enables a discussion on the oppressive political system, the authoritarian social order and dystopian language use in Paul Lynch's novel, *Prophet Song* in the light of discourse analysis. Clearly, the novel appears to have dystopian discourse including social, political and linguistic elements.

Political Discourse

Politics involves the activities of states, governments and organizations by making laws, applying rules and expanding practices in a particular society of a particular region. It has a direct and profound impact on the common behaviours of the society, the general attitudes of the individuals, communication and interaction patterns. It simply determines the way people think, behave and speak according to some rules and laws. These characteristics of the politics make political issues the core basics of dystopian literature, because politics is a powerful tool to systematize the society and classify individuals under the authority. Dystopia represents political issues in a very bad, unfair, abnormal and terrifying systems, but these political issues are the representations of real-world problems in imagined, futuristic, nightmarish and dehumanized versions. Thus, it might be stated that dystopian novels imitate some political issues and discourses under the rule of extreme totalitarian regimes. "While dystopias are greatly exaggerated and fictional, dystopian literature provides critical commentary of the social, political, and technological issues of their time" (Thuta, 2023, p. 74). On the other hand, political discourse includes both the individuals' interaction and communication and their thinking, speaking and behaving patterns about politics, governments, ideologies, power relations and political systems. Paul Lynch's *Prophet Song* is also highly political in terms of its political content demonstrating some political issues and discourses such as authoritarian rule, surveillance, manipulation and control. Thus, analysing political discourse of this dystopian novel is important since it offers a critique about these political issues with their discourse.

Authoritarian rule is the central political issue in *Prophet Song* referring a type of political structure where political plurality is rejected. As for in the novel, authoritarian rule is closely related the National Alliance Party (NAP), a radical political party in the Republic of Ireland in the fictional near future. Irish government is taken over by that party and Irish constitution is suspended by emergency powers. Then, a different and despotic secret police service, the Garda National Services Bureau (GNSB) is founded and the Garda Síochána is permitted an extensive authority. It has specific and special powers on the individuals. Michel Foucault (1995) argues police power in his book, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* that “Police power must bear ‘over everything’: it is not however the totality of the state nor of the kingdom as visible and invisible body of the monarch; it is the dust of events, actions, behaviour, opinions – ‘everything that happens’” (p. 213). Thus, the police power is one of the main responsible and authority of the government. With the police force, the government has a domineering power over the individuals of the society, especially applying a number of restricting rules and laws by expecting from people to obey them without questioning.

A reign of fear is also established by the governmental authorities and organizations in the society. In the novel, there are various instances showing this authoritarian rule: “The government has issued a series of new decrees, all schools and third-level institutions have been closed with immediate effect, citizens have been ordered to stay at home except to buy food or medicine or to provide care to the elderly or sick” (Lynch, 2023, p. 183). Another instance for authoritarian rule is that judicial system is also a tool to exercise its power in this regime. For instance, “Habeas corpus has been suspended under the national emergency legislation, in effect, the state has special powers and has silenced the judiciary” (Lynch, 2023, p. 39). As a result of these despotic practices and discourses, Eilish sees and understands that this is a new and dystopic political order, “What she sees before her is an idea of order coming undone, the world slewing into a dark and foreign sea” (Lynch, 2023, p. 45). This dark and foreign sea changes their reality and determine how they have to live and talk and what they have to think and feel. This is their new political reality and their new political discourse. That Paul Lynch warns people about the present and future of the states through his writing and what Eilish actually experiences are unfortunate facts of this universe, and most people are familiar with this kind of oppressive applications. According to Eric Voegelin (1953), “The vast majority of all human beings alive on earth is affected in some measure by the totalitarian mass movements of our time” (p. 68). Consequently,

these fictional compositions are the representations of the political realities, discourses and probabilities concerning all human beings.

Surveillance is another political issue in the novel. It alludes a close observation of a person or place, particularly by a superior power such a police force or governmental organization authorised by a totalitarian state due to an anticipated crime. In the novel, The Garda National Services Bureau (GNSB) has become a very powerful structure empowered by the government to surveil the individuals and organisations in the society in order to obtain information about their anticipated illegal activities and crimes. In the novel, Larry points out that “Look, Eilish, you know how they work, what it is they are after, they gather information, they do so discreetly” (Lynch, 2023, p. 5). Eilish and her family are being observed and followed by the government considering what if they could become objectionable to the benefits of the state. Surveillance turns out to be a usual act of the government under these tyrannical circumstances. Accordingly,

State surveillance, as depicted in Lynch’s Prophet Song, infiltrates the most intimate spaces of the Stack family, destabilizing their unity and transforming their home into a place of fear and uncertainty. The constant presence of the Garda National Surveillance Bureau (GNSB) imposes an invisible but pervasive control over their lives, affecting their interactions, emotions, and sense of security... we can understand how the fear of surveillance shapes behavior, erodes trust, and compels individuals to self-regulate under the oppressive gaze of the state (Shah, Ansar & Ali, 2025, 1295).

The above quotation brilliantly clarifies that surveillance decides the way a family live and how the individuals think and behave in an authoritarian society. Their relationship between the family members, their safety and comfort, and even their feelings are destructively restructured by surveillance.

In *Prophet Song*, manipulation is one of the fundamental issues. It is a sort of technique of controlling and affecting individuals in a social order, typically in an unfair and deceptive way in order to change someone’s own ideas and behaviours. In the novel, the despotic government possesses an ability to manipulate the characters by rationalizing its activities with various judgements, justifying its actions with laws and pretending to care its citizens. In the novel, during the Larry’s interrogation by the police, he claims that “This is not an allegation, it makes no sense, you’re twisting something, taking one thing and turning into something else, it looks like you typed this up yourself” (Lynch, 2023, p. 10). The chief inspector interrogates Larry according to their own invented rules without considering Larry’s democratic rights. This is a very obvious example of manipulation in the

novel. Manipulation is also evident in Simon's talk to Eilish that "The NAP is trying to change what you and I call reality, they want to muddy it like water, if you say one thing is another thing and you say it enough times, then it must be so, and if you keep saying it over and over people accept it as true" (Lynch, 2023, p. 20). Thus, it might be claimed that manipulation is an absolute technique for political discourse of dystopia, because their objections, talks, protests do not represent anything, and their perspectives and speeches are not valid in this authoritarian rule.

Control is also a predominant political issue in *Prophet Song*. It might be defined from a dystopian perspective as the systems and methods of a ruling class by using force in order to preserve its power and prevent personal ideas from being expressed and behaviours from being acted. Foucault's (2021) definition of state is somehow parallel with the state which controls its power in the novel: the art of governing based on divine, natural, or human laws is not the reason of the state. Respecting the global order is not a must. According to the power of the state, it is governed. The government's goal is to strengthen this position within a broad and competitive framework (p.47). Lynch's dystopian government seems as if trying to take this opinion as a model governance. The government in the novel is trying to increase its power over the individuals. Perhaps it determines and maintains its power according to the control over the individuals. In the novel, the characters have to live under the rule of an authoritarian regime and continue to survive under the total control of the government: they do have no rights, no work to do, no place to go or travel, even no way to get a passport, no atmosphere to think and question the system and lastly no room to escape. Wretched and dehumanised, they have turned into the victims of control by the authoritarian rule. It is quite obvious in the novel that "They are lifting people from everywhere now... did you hear the journalist Philip Brophy was taken, the NAP have some nerve, it has been all over the foreign news but not a word said about it here, they are controlling the newsrooms now though social media is alive with it" (Lynch, 2023, p. 36). According to Hannah Arendt (1951), "Wherever totalitarianism possesses absolute control, it replaces propaganda with indoctrination and uses violence not so much to frighten people as to realize constantly its ideological doctrines and its practical lies." (p. 341). Control is also one of the ultimate aims totalitarian governments to keep people passive and restricted as political actors, in this way their political discourse dominates over the individuals.

Social Discourse

A society contains various dynamics: a group of people surviving together, an organized structure making decisions and a particular place having some definite customs. The society is quite influential to shape people's thoughts, behaviours and communication. The social roles, rules and customs also determine the way the individuals live like politics. They are also quite influential on people's hopes, opportunities, fears, and anxieties, and these elements within the society are similarly in the scope of dystopian literature. Thus, societies in dystopian novels take its roots from the actual practices and dynamics of the society. Dystopia also indicates social issues in a corrupt, discriminating, unusual and frightening societies, but these social issues are also the reflections of existing problems in imaginary, futuristic, terrible and exaggerated versions. Thus, it might be pointed out that dystopian novels reflect various social issues and discourses under the rule of extreme totalitarian regimes. Furthermore, social discourse involves how people interact and communicate and what they perceive social systems, roles, norms, values, beliefs, rituals and culture in a particular society. Paul Lynch's *Prophet Song* is also abundant enough for social problems in terms of its social content representing some social issues and discourses such as oppression, suppression, loss of identity and individuality, misinformation, uncertainty, chaos and confusion. Similarly, Pankaj Bala Srivastava (2024) points out that "Paul Lynch's 'Prophet Song' delves into how dystopian literature, with its imaginative and speculative nature, illuminates urgent societal issues and fosters critical reflection on our future trajectory" (p. 216). Thus, discussing social discourse of this dystopian novel is essential, because it suggests a kind of warning about some social issues in terms of these social problems with their discourse.

Oppression is the main social problem in *Prophet Song* meaning a persistent situation of being under demanding, discriminating and forbidding conditions of an authority by restricting individual rights, freedoms and opportunities. "A further paramount theme within 'Prophet Song' is the gradual erosion of personal freedom, which Lynch masterfully utilizes to lay bare the insidious mechanisms through which authoritarian regimes dismantle the independence of their citizenry" (Srivastava, 2024, p. 228). The novel is set in a world in which all the people in the country are oppressed by the authoritarian rule. Lynch demonstrates a number of oppression methods in the novel as in the following, "In the towns and cities across the country the GNSB is knocking on doors and rounding them up, the subversives who occupied the streets, the terrorists hiding in the civilian population." (Lynch, 2023, p. 101). Besides, for instance, Eilish's husband, Larry Stack, who is

both a teacher and trade union leader, is first inquired and then detained by GNSB, because he has protested the new regime and declared his own truth even though he is arrested and killed. Larry is an evident symbol of truth against the oppression. As Foucault (2016) emphasized that instead of remaining in the safe zone of the life where the truth remains unspoken, one would risk death for the sake of telling the truth (p. 79). Larry is the embodiment of this Foucauldian explanation. This is also a very obvious example dealing with the resistance against oppression. Oppression is such a powerful tool for the authoritarian rule that these people living under the authority of this regime have no right to talk and protest. Thus, a new form of truth and discourse signifying the privilege of the ruling elites is adopted by force for the common people in the society. Authoritarian rule ignores the democratic and personal rights of the individuals such as freedom of speech and protest. Thus, a new social order and a different cultural system are established with fear, anxiety and hatred. Another instance of oppression in the novel is associated with Eilish's and her four children's surviving conditions under the attacks of a civil war in the country. She has numerous serious and challenging responsibilities, but the limited space to live and the insufficient capability to do in this oppressive environment: dealing with her children's demands, trying to find food, money, help, and caring for her father, Simon, who has dementia. They have a deprived life in a deprived environment, having not enough money, plenty food and shelter from the danger. These shortages and deprivations about human services and humanitarian need are also the forms of oppression, demonstrating the ultimate power of oppressive government. The country is brought into a destructive war. Foucault (2023) knowledgeably explains this issue again that in this situation, society will be defended against the threats that come from and inside its own structure by the concept of an internal war. (p. 224). War emerged as a defence mechanism for the authoritarian rule to justify their mentality, simultaneously as an instrument used to oppress the people without leaving them the right to survive fairly. This vividly means that oppression also determines social discourse of dystopia and changes the way people communicate and resist.

Suppression is also an important social problem in the novel. From a dystopian perspective, it might be described as an action of averting and prohibiting personal wishes, desires, thoughts, acts and roles from being emerged. There is a slight difference between the concepts of oppression and suppression: oppression is a kind of long and cruel treatment to personal freedoms and suppression is the act of putting down or stopping personal rights. Suppression is a conscious act over the individuals of the society by

the government. In the dystopian worlds, “Freedoms such as the freedom of assembly, free speech, and a free press, as well as individuality and critical thought are suppressed” (Thuta, 2023, p. 66). In the novel, the opposition parties and the improper actions of the individuals are suppressed: Larry Stack is detained by the police and then he disappears. Mark Stack, Eilish and Larry’s eldest son, is called up for joining military service. Instead of military service, he hides and joins to rebel forces, but rebel-held territory is bombed by the government. He also disappears like his father. They lose their contact with Eilish and other members of the family. Protesting and opposing against the governance and its organizations are the reasons of suppression of the individuals in the society. In the novel, the reality of suppression is presented as, “She reads the ticker on the state TV news, the headlines speak of ordinary things, a world that belongs to the past or to a present that lies in strange parallel, in one world there are announcements about new appointments and budget cuts, in another there are rumours of a mass killing by government forces, civilians rounded up and executed” (Lynch, 2023, p. 171). On the surface, media with all the components focuses on delivering news to the people from a peaceful and normal perspective as if there are no domination and control in the country. However, in reality people are tortured and killed for the sake of the authoritarian desires. It is obvious in the dystopian worlds. that media is even monopolized by the government, deliberately presenting false news about the happenings in the country. In fact, Eilish sees two kinds of world: The one belongs to the suppressors and the other to the suppressed. Another striking and interesting instance of suppression from the novel is Eilish’s cutting her daughter’s and own hair. In order to “make sure nobody looks at” (Lynch, 2023, p. 294) Molly and herself, she cuts Molly’s and her own hair. This is also a clear indication of internal suppression caused by the fearful environment of the authoritarian rule. Eilish has to suppress their own desires such as having long hair. Thus, the authoritarian rule creates both an internal suppression which the characters internalize and create for themselves, and then an external suppression which the governmental organizations plan and put into practice over the individuals. Thus, suppression might also be regarded as a determinant of social discourse of dystopia.

In *Prophet Song*, loss of identity and individuality is another social problem. It refers losing one’s qualities, beliefs and values by suffering and also abandoning one’s abilities, habits and hopes forcibly by the oppressive and suppressive orders and rules of an authority. In the novel, all the members of the Stack family experience and suffer from some kind of loss. Similarly, the other people within the society lose their identity and individuality.

For instance, Eilish “turns to face the street, watching the world pass by in strange pretence, the pale and stolid faces hurrying back to work, they are mostly civil servants, every day another international firm closes its doors and makes its excuses, soon the city will be emptied out.” (Lynch, 2023, p. 124-125). New identities and individualities are purposefully formed by this authoritarian system. Perhaps, Eilish is the key character who has lost the most. These losses are: her husband, Larry, in custody, her eldest son, Mark, by the government’s bombings rebel force, her elder son, Bailey, in the hospital as a result of his injury in one of the attacks, her job as a highly skilled biologist, her house and other possessions, her father Simon, her sister Áine, her sense of joy, her safety and comfort and lastly her country. There is no contact between the family members owing to the disappearances of Larry and Mark, Bailey’s death, social and political turmoil in the country. As a result, they have lost their identity and individuality as the members of a society and citizens of a state. It is also quite ironic that Eilish remains calm and resilient with the hope of change by rationalizing and questioning things although she has lost many things during this process. Nonetheless, Mraović-O’Hare (2024) suggests that “That her reliance on reason is wasteful, dangerous for her children, and probably as problematic as the totalitarianism against which it is directed” (p.17). Another shocking example from the novel dealing with the loss of identity and individuality is that Eilish sees the rebels in a pickup truck and thinks as, “They seem to be enjoying themselves, not so long ago they were employees of all kinds, students and trainees and the unemployed who in the blink of an eye became seasoned to bloodshed” (Lynch, 2023, p. 204). At the end of the novel, the rest of the family, Eilish, her daughter, Molly, and her youngest son, Ben, have to escape from this despotic regime with the hope of a new beginning to build a new identity and individuality. Dystopian society causes the individuals to lose what they have gained and created in their lives, because social discourse of dystopia has a great impact on constructing a kind of purpose and meaning on their identity and individuality.

Paul Lynch puts the problem of misinformation in the centre of the novel. In dystopian terms, it is inaccurate and inexact information used as a tool and a campaign for propaganda in order to blur the individuals’ mind about the practices of a ruling class and condition people to the benefits of the government. In the novel, the new Irish government turns into a God-like figure belonging an omnipotent and omnipresent role. Thus, it has a domineering power over its citizens controlling all forms of organizations, actors and media providing wrong information to the public. Then, it becomes the source of misinformation and scaremongering with false news

and wrong practices, usually by force. In the novel, Eilish's friend, Carole says that "It is clear now they've been lying to us all along, that the silence is permanent, that our husbands will not be coming back, they will not be returned because they cannot be returned, everybody knows this, even the dogs on the street know it" (Lynch, 2023, p. 165). Mark also claims about the lack of information and law in this new order that "And what law would that be, Mam, seeing that there's no longer any law in the land?" (Lynch, 2023, p. 134). The public do not understand what is socially and politically happening in the country and thereby slides into uncertainty, chaos and confusion, because there are no order and law, but only misinformation. Furthermore, Sara Mill (2023) discusses Foucauldian concepts of discourse and power in her book and suggests about knowledge and power that Foucault has always focused on establishing the links between truth and power, as well as between knowledge and power...As a result, it helps us realise that knowledge is always used to the advantage of particular groups, moving us away from the idea that knowledge is neutral and objective. (p. 104). Because of this reason, it might be asserted that the knowledge of the authoritarian rule is not knowledge for the benefits of the society, rather misinformation and it is also used as a kind of apparatus to oppress and suppress the individuals. Misinformation deeply manipulates the people in the society, because it spreads quickly among the members of the society. Moreover, misinformation deconstructs the meaning people have composed. Thus, it is quite influential in social discourse of dystopia.

Uncertainty, chaos and confusion are the basic social problems in *Prophet Song* which are interpenetrated and complementary to one another. They might be defined as a fearful process and/or a painful situation in which common people in a society know little or nothing about the real intentions and ongoing practices of a totalitarian regime. Uncertainty, chaos and confusion are unfortunately the ultimate and inevitable results of the tyrannical regimes. Lynch has intentionally built this environment, because "The purpose, really, is to set the mood (apocalyptic) and a stage from which the trauma of the past few years can slide almost imperceptibly into a disaster less familiar" (Markovits, 2023). Oppressive and oppressive structures through misinformation creates an unknown, mysterious and ambiguous environment. People does not understand what is going on and make sense about what is happening. Eilish is also one of these people struggling with this unrest in the country while also trying to deal with difficulties resiliently. She does not know why Larry is detained and where he is after his arrest by the police even though she tries to search him by writing a petition. Whether Mark is alive or not is not clear although she attempts to find him.

How Bailey is transferred into a military hospital after his injury from his skull and why is tortured and killed in the hospital are also unknown after she even finds his son's dead body in the morgue. Right along with the uncertainty about the fate of those individuals, chaos and confusion have become prevalent in the country. There is an ongoing clash between the new government and the opposition parties, between the police force and the rebel force, and even among the individuals. Attacks, bombings, explosions and the civil war are de facto realities in this new regime creating chaos and confusion. The process of uncertainty, chaos and confusion also brings violence against the public. In the novel, the brutality of the police force is indicated as "She sees police with batons, they are beating the marchers into grovelling shapes, they are beating them into the corners of the street, tear gas skulking within some slow time occurrence while without the marchers flee in repeat clips" (Lynch, 2023, p. 30). Nevertheless, the novel itself does not directly present any idea about the development of the rebel force against the government. The readers could guess but do not know much about the resistance of the characters and other people in the country. In view of that characteristics, Paul Lynch gives the readers room to consider the ambiguous structure of the novel and ambiguous environment of the totalitarian regime. All in all, uncertainty, chaos and confusion are the key features of social discourse, and these elements determine and shape people's actions, thinking, understanding and reacting.

Linguistic Discourse

Language is a powerful tool and designed system for human communication and human interaction within a particular society consisting of many elements. It definitely influences the discourse of the society and individuals. It refers the study of the language in all forms used by organizations and people. Dystopia also demonstrated various issues related to language in an unpleasant, hostile, unfamiliar and fearsome places, but these issues dealing with language are also the exemplifications of present problems in fantastic, futuristic, horrifying and overestimated versions. Thus, it might be suggested that dystopian novels argue various linguistic issues and discourses under the rule of extreme totalitarian regimes. Furthermore, linguistic discourse contains how people use language, namely think, speak and express themselves in particular political system and a particular society. In Paul Lynch's *Prophet Song*, there is an ample scope for linguistic issues in terms of linguistic structure and discourse of the novel indicating some linguistic issues such as language manipulation, censorship, and silencing the individuals. Linguistics concern of the novel is twofold: linguistic structure

of the novel and linguistic discourse of the characters. Thus, examining linguistic structure and discourse of this dystopian novel is significant, for it provides a sort of caution for present and future about some linguistic issues with their discourse.

Language manipulation is the major issue dealing with linguistic discourse of dystopia in *Prophet Song*. The term refers the use of words and phrases to oppress, repress and suppress the individuals under totalitarian rules. Paul Lynch specifically uses some words and phrases to intensify the chaotic and gloomy atmosphere of the dystopian world in the novel. In the novel, the word, 'darkness', is used throughout the novel in order to depict the evils of the despotic world. At the beginning of the novel, it is stated clearly, "The darkening garden not to be wished upon now, for something of that darkness has come into the house" (Lynch, 2023, p. 4). Moreover, Paul Lynch's use of language is manipulative through long sentences, no paragraph breaks, no dialogues of characters, use of comas to connect the sentences. Long sentences are literary and linguistic tools which create some kind of tension and suspense and build a sense of confusion and chaos. They also make the novel unclear to understand and the readers weary to follow the sentences. On the other hand, they provide a detailed account of events and rich descriptions of the characters in the novel. Moreover, there are no paragraph breaks in the novel either. A paragraph break is used to separate the ideas in a piece of writing. Without paragraph breaks, the novel becomes hard to read and understand. All the ideas and events have interconnected one another with this use of language. Furthermore, the dialogues of the characters within the novel are not demonstrated clearly in apostrophes. Instead, readers could infer from reading who is talking to whom without dialogues. This feature also causes some kind of unclarity, ambiguity and confusion in understanding. However, it enables readers to increase their attention on their ideas and allows understanding to become deep and multilayered. Additionally, use of comas instead of periods makes the novel more continuous, rhythmic and fluid. Conversely, with the use of the comas in the novel, ideas and events become overlapped, and thereby ambiguity and confusion are created in the meaning of the novel. These techniques which Lynch has used are summarised as in the following,

Comprised of blocks of text, with no paragraphs or dialog markers, which are only interrupted by occasional one-line spaces and chapters headed by numerals alone, Prophet Song exudes the air of "paranoia creeping in" (Marvkovits) but also creates the aura of "claustrophobia" (Harrison) in which the characters as well as the reader suffocate. (Pietrzak, 2025, p. 5)

Lynch has vividly created a gloomy and dark atmosphere with the words he has chosen and the techniques he has applied in his writing. These kind of uses related to language can also remind the readers the technique, the stream of consciousness in which ideas and events flow irregularly. These techniques make the novel more lyrical and denser, but at the same time more confusing and complicated. In this way, it might be asserted that readers have to read the novel with the authoritarian power of the author according to his linguistic rules. Readers could empathise with the dystopic atmosphere through the language rules he created. These structural characteristics also make the content of novel consistent with the nature of dystopia. Thus, language manipulation is one of the key features of linguistic discourse, because it helps readers to understand the nature of dystopia.

Censorship is another principal issue related to linguistic discourse of dystopia in *Prophet Song*. Literally, it simply refers the control of various words, concepts, materials and organizations through various means due to political purposes. From a dystopian point of view, it is a control mechanism for a government to maintain and exercise its power over its citizens, because the political actors interpret some ideas of people as a threat for their own benefits and find some practices dangerous for their own existence. In the novel, it might be confirmed that “Another decree is announced on the news, the listening to or reading of any foreign media has been prohibited, news channels from abroad will be blocked and an internet blackout starts from today” (Lynch, 2023, p. 175). The authoritarian rule prevents the public from accessing accurate information and the truth through censoring foreign media and internet by pumping its own truth. Censorship is also related to language in this novel, because the characters are censored by the authoritarian rule. They are not allowed to talk about and protest the new regime freely. Instead, they are prevented from expressing themselves and stopped themselves from doing and saying things. All the members of the Stack family are somehow censored, because they are regarded as being dangerous and having undesirable opinions about the government. Since they do not support the new regime, they are considered to be usual suspects planning secretly against the government and to be guilty of having offensive activities against the regime. That’s why they are deliberately eliminated from the society and killed by the police force. Censorship restricts people and indirectly restricts their linguistic discourse, and the authoritarian rule enforces its own laws, ideologies and practices.

In *Prophet Song*, silencing the individuals is one of the important issues concerning linguistic discourse of dystopia. It might be described as a method of preventing people from telling the truths, expressing themselves,

stating their opinions and showing their feelings. In order to silence people, censorship might be used as a tool in a dystopian society. In other words, silencing the individuals might be achieved by censorship. Additionally, the characters unconsciously turn into silent people because of the traumas they have suffered from and become astounded about what they have faced in the tyrannical conditions. In the novel, it is also clear from Eilish's complaint about the silence of the people that "Look at you lot, ...the unions bowed and silent, and at least half the country in support of this carry-on and casting the teachers as villains" (Lynch, 2023, p. 38). Thus, silencing could be achieved externally by the oppressive methods of the government or internally by the individuals themselves resulting from the things they have faced in this dystopian world. Consequently, discourse is not only related how language is used, but also to who could speak and who couldn't, what is the source of silence in the society, which voices are powerful or not, and what is spoken by the authority to silence. In the novel, silence leads to language problems, lack of communication and interaction, and distortion of linguistic discourse, because the purpose of social and political norms is determined by the dominant power, not by all participants of the society, the meaning, truth, reality, and identity are built by the appointed rulers opinion leaders not collectively.

Conclusion

Dystopian novels are increasingly attracting the attention of both readers and critics in the twenty first century. Compared to other types of literary genres, dystopia is still a new phenomenon that is supposed to be explored in detail and clearly understood. This study demonstrated a descriptive and critical account of political, social and linguistic discourse of dystopia in Paul Lynch's *Prophet Song*, explaining dystopian elements in the novel, offering discursive facts from the characters of the novel, and analysing the dynamics of dystopian discourse. More principally, a new point of view has been presented with the hope of providing perceptions into the dystopian discourse politically, socially and linguistically. Paul Lynch's *Prophet Song* is a critical novel in terms of its political, social and linguistic discourse of dystopia focusing a family struggle under a totalitarian regime. Thus, this study has been discussed in three sections. While the novel's political discourse has been argued in the first section, the social discourse was analysed in the second, and the linguistic discourse was explored in the third. In this conclusion section, the key arguments of the study are going to be highlighted and reinforced the idea of dystopia in political, social and linguistic perspectives.

This study is bringing a new perspective in terms of political, social and linguistic discourse of dystopia in Paul Lynch's novel, *Prophet Song*. Discourse analysis does not only explore how language works in certain works of literature but also how political and social realities are created in those works. How and why politics, society and language are shaped, constructed, manipulated, controlled, oppressed and deconstructed is important in this kind of analysis. In Paul Lynch's dystopian novel, *Prophet Song*, there are a number of issues related to politics, society and language which could be discovered through this criticism. All things considered, political discourse of dystopia determines how a society is ruled, how the individuals are surveilled, how they are manipulated and how they are controlled in a state. The rule is authoritarian, the surveillance is devastating, manipulation is brutal, and control is oppressive in dystopia. Hence, human beings transform into the thing who are servile and subservient to the totalitarian regimes by losing their purpose, meaning, identity and truth. Furthermore, social discourse of dystopia explains what oppression and suppression tools are, how people lose their identities and individualities, why misinformation is prevalent in the society, and how uncertainty, chaos and confusion are created in the society. In dystopian societies, oppression and suppression is used to control people, members of the society lose all of their individual and societal roles, and uncertainty, chaos and confusion are created deliberately by the tyrannical government to maintain its power. Thus, people could not communicate, interact, share things, and keep together in this social order. Additionally, linguistic discourse of dystopia defines how language is manipulated, what is benefit of censorship for a dictatorship and why individuals are silenced. The purpose of language manipulation, censorship and silencing is to control the masses, maintain the authority and shape the society according to the authoritarian rules. Therefore, individuals become the obedient followers of the dominant regime leaving their own language, thought, truth. Paul Lynch discusses these issues comprehensively in his novel and he is not pessimistic either. However, instead of just demonstrating political, social and linguistic discourse of dystopia in the novel, he also proposes a solution with Eilish's way out from this horrible world. He considers that all the human beings can end, resist, escape from this kind of dystopian world although they have lost their hope and belief and experienced a lot of troubles. Thus, he is singing a song through his book, *Prophet Song*. The Prophet is Paul Lynch himself, seriously showing what will happen at the present and in the future under the totalitarian regime. The song is his novel, *Prophet Song* itself, clearly providing both a warning to consider and a key to open the closed doors of the hope.

Since this study is among the initial ones, many more studies related to this novel will be conducted in the future. These might be: To analyse symbolism in the novel in order to deepen the understanding of the dystopian atmosphere. To explore more dystopian themes and issues related to archetypes and conflicts based on the characters in the novel by applying psychoanalytical approaches to literature. To discuss the aspects creating power structures within a society in the light of Marxist and/or sociological literary criticism.

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