

# **INFOTAINMENT EDGE**<sup>TM</sup>

Tuesday, November 28, 2023 (Daily E-booklet on Artificial Intelligence, VR, Tech, Robotics, Coding, Global Info, Health, Science & more)

# **SECTION 1 – TECH BUZZ**

# **ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE**



### **Inflection-2 Outperforms Google**

Inflection, an artificial intelligence startup dedicated to creating "personal AI for everyone," has unveiled its latest achievement—a cutting-edge language model named Inflection-2, surpassing Google's PaLM 2. Trained on over 5,000 NVIDIA GPUs, Inflection-2 boasts a remarkable 1.025 quadrillion floating-point operations (FLOPs), aligning it with the caliber of PaLM 2 Large. Initial benchmarks indicate that Inflection-2 excels in reasoning ability, factual knowledge, and stylistic prowess when compared to Google's counterpart.

- Across a spectrum of conventional academic AI benchmarks, Inflection-2 has demonstrated superior performance in comparison to PaLM 2 on various fronts. Notable achievements include outscoring Google's flagship model on the Multi-task Middle-school Language Understanding (MMLU) tests, TriviaQA, HellaSwag, and the Grade School Math (GSM8k) benchmarks. These advancements position Inflection-2 as a formidable player in the realm of large language models.
- The innovative model is poised to empower Inflection's personal assistant app, Pi, facilitating more natural conversations and introducing enhanced features. The transition from NVIDIA A100 to H100 GPUs for inference, coupled with optimization efforts, is

expected to boost serving speed and decrease costs, despite Inflection-2's larger size compared to its predecessor.

- An Inflection spokesperson emphasized that this latest model marks a significant stride toward their mission of providing AI assistants for a broader audience. The team is already anticipating the next phase of development, with plans to train even larger models utilizing their 22,000 GPU supercluster.
- Safety remains a paramount concern for Inflection's researchers, evident in the company's early commitment as one of the first signatories to the White House's voluntary AI commitments in July 2023. The safety team is diligently working to ensure rigorous evaluation of models, adhering to best practices for alignment.
- With commendable benchmarks and ambitious scaling plans, Inflection's latest achievement presents a substantial challenge to industry giants like Google and Microsoft, traditionally dominant in the field of large language models. The competition is heating up as companies strive to usher in the next generation of AI capabilities.

### **Business Consulting Platform Macky AI**

Kinetic Consulting, a leading boutique consulting firm specializing in business growth consultancy, has introduced macky.ai, a groundbreaking AI business consulting platform. This platform, powered by OpenAI's artificial intelligence technology, stands out as the first non-prompt-based AI consulting solution, catering to a wide array of business categories—55 in total.

- Macky AI addresses key barriers hindering the widespread adoption of AI in business environments. Notably, employees need no training to leverage the consulting platform, and there's no requirement for them to possess knowledge on prompting the AI or assessing the output's suitability. Kinetic Consulting has already tackled these challenges, streamlining the process for users. The platform requires users to answer a maximum of three questions to generate the desired output.
- The Macky AI software creators have meticulously identified everyday requirements across key business departments, determining the suitable output achievable through generative AI. Whether it's crafting a job description or undertaking complex tasks like devising new business processes, Macky AI aims to reduce the cost of routine consulting needs, empowering companies to handle such tasks in-house.
- By alleviating expenses related to lower-level activities, organizations can redirect resources towards high-value business initiatives like developing business roadmaps and growth strategy plans. Macky AI, uniquely, offers users access to traditional consultants for more intricate needs. The platform's integration of AI and human consultants represents the future of consulting—a powerful combination enhancing efficiency.
- The OECD's 2023 report on SMEs in OECD countries underscores the challenging environments these businesses face, exacerbated by factors like the COVID-19 pandemic, geopolitical tensions, inflation, and supply-chain disruptions. Attracting and retaining staff has become a significant concern for SMEs, with many grappling with depleted cash reserves and difficulty raising capital.
- The significance of a thriving SME ecosystem is even more pronounced outside the OECD, particularly in the Gulf region. SMEs contribute substantially to the economies of

countries like the UAE, where they represent 94% of businesses and contribute over 50% to the GDP. In this context, Macky AI emerges as a valuable tool, offering affordable consulting services to SMEs and enabling them to tackle key business challenges.

- In the broader context of business consulting, the industry is experiencing disruption driven by technological advances, particularly artificial intelligence. Macky AI addresses concerns about AI accuracy by emphasizing its fitness for business purposes. The platform is designed exclusively for business-related needs, and even in open-question scenarios, the AI is programmed to stay focused on business matters.
- Joe Tawfik, the founder of Macky AI, envisions the future of consulting as a synergy between AI and human consultants. While the exact balance between AI and human involvement remains uncertain, Tawfik is confident that traditional human consulting will no longer dominate. Macky AI represents the initial step toward integrating AI into the workplace, providing controlled, business-specific solutions. Tawfik emphasizes the platform's role in democratizing consulting, making it accessible to organizations of all sizes and helping SMEs overcome everyday challenges to thrive in the future.

#### **OpenAI Extends ChatGPT Voice**

In the latest release following the boardroom challenges, OpenAI has extended voice capabilities to all users of ChatGPT. Users of the free version can now access ChatGPT with voice through the app, enabling them to engage in spoken conversations rather than relying on typing. The application processes audio input and generates corresponding audio responses.

- This development comes in the aftermath of the boardroom upheaval that saw Sam Altman initially dismissed and later reinstated. As a demonstration on X highlighted, developers queried ChatGPT about the number of pizzas to order during a late-night session, showcasing the conversational abilities of the system.
- The newly introduced voice functionality enables seamless interactions with ChatGPT, allowing users to engage in dynamic conversations. OpenAI emphasizes the enhanced capabilities of its speech recognition system, Whisper v3, which powers the voice functionality. Unveiled at DevDay, this latest version boasts improved accuracy and is positioned for broader commercial applications.
- It's worth noting that the introduction of ChatGPT's voice features follows a September update that also allowed users to input images as prompts. Previously, both voice and image options were restricted to ChatGPT Plus and Enterprise users.

#### **Genpact AI Innovation Center**

Genpact, a leading global professional services firm dedicated to delivering transformative business outcomes, has recently announced the inauguration of its Artificial Intelligence (AI) Innovation Center in London.

• This state-of-the-art facility is crafted for collaborative innovation with clients, aiming to unleash the potential of AI in driving business transformations across various domains, including supply chain management, finance and accounting, customer care, sales and commercial, and insurance underwriting. Genpact is committed to upskilling its extensive workforce of 125,000 professionals to support the center's initiatives, foreseeing the creation of new employment opportunities in the UK.

- Leveraging Genpact's profound expertise in both domain knowledge and AI, cultivated through extensive collaboration with clients across diverse industries, the center acts as a nexus to address the challenges and opportunities associated with AI in business.
- Through the presentation of case studies and proof of concepts, this co-innovation hub accelerates client projects into production environments, offering comprehensive guidance and encouraging enterprises to explore the broader benefits of integrating AI technology into their operations. The company is actively enhancing the skills of its employees through its dedicated online learning platform, Genome, and anticipates generating up to 500 highly skilled jobs in the UK within the next two to three years.
- Lord Dominic Johnson, Minister of State in the Department for Business and Trade, UK, expressed enthusiasm, stating, "The UK is firmly on track to being a Science & Technology superpower, and the launch of Genpact's AI centre is testament to our reputation as a centre for tech innovation and world-leading talent and R&D capabilities." He added that Genpact's investment in AI aligns with the UK's position as an ideal hub for fostering AI-led innovation.
- This unveiling of the AI Innovation Center in the UK is just the beginning, as Genpact plans to establish similar innovation centers globally. It is a pivotal element of the company's substantial \$600 million investment in AI over the next three years. Genpact aims to collaborate closely with clients in conceptualizing and defining use cases that provide maximum value for their businesses, drawing from industry-specific expertise and best practices.
- Jas Narang, Chief Transformation Officer and Director of Financial Crime at Santander UK, shared insights into the collaboration, stating, "Partnering with Genpact has helped us to accelerate digital experiences for our key customer journeys and implement smarter ways of working. We are looking at how AI can make further improvements, to scale our business at pace."
- Genpact's dedication to AI development is evident, with over 90 specific generative AI solutions undergoing rigorous testing. The company is transitioning from building proof of concepts and pilots to implementing solutions in live production environments, with 10 solutions either deployed or on the verge of going live. The focus of the Genpact AI Innovation Center team is to expedite the speed of implementation.
- Shibu Nambiar, Global Business Leader, Hi-Tech at Genpact, remarked, "Artificial Intelligence is pushing businesses to rethink how they work, and our clients across all industries are actively exploring how it can benefit them to solve business challenges. To help our clients integrate AI effectively, we are focusing on outcomes beyond productivity, workflows that augment employees' work, and responsible generative AI frameworks. Experimentation is our status quo."

### **INTERNET OF THINGS**

#### **Terahertz Tech Boosts Networks**

University of Leicester computer scientists have introduced an innovative technology designed to manage the increasing demands on mobile networks stemming from the growing number of

users and devices. This groundbreaking solution utilizes Terahertz frequencies and could potentially enhance both speed and power efficiency for mobile device users. Moreover, it holds promise for unlocking the advantages of future mobile technologies, including 6G.

- With the proliferation of devices connecting to the 'internet of things,' the strain on the UK's mobile telecommunications network is escalating. Mobile UK estimates that the current twenty-five million connected devices will surge to thirty billion by 2030. As the 'internet of things' expands, a surge in competing technologies vying for network access is inevitable.
- While state-of-the-art telecommunication technologies have been established for 5G applications, the surge in users and devices has exposed limitations such as slower connections and heightened energy consumption. These challenges are exacerbated by the self-interference problem affecting communication quality and efficiency.
- To address these issues, the research team has explored the multicarrier-division duplex (MDD) technique, which leverages fast Fourier transform (FFT) processing to minimize self-interference in the digital domain. The project introduces a novel technology to optimize subcarrier set assignment and access point cluster numbers, enhancing communication quality across various networks.
- In simulations based on real-world industrial settings, the technology demonstrated superior performance compared to existing solutions, boasting a 10% reduction in power consumption. Professor Huiyu Zhou, the Lead Principal Investigator from the University of Leicester School of Computing and Mathematical Sciences, emphasized the positive impact on energy consumption, device selection speed, and resource allocation for 5G/6G systems.
- Zhou highlighted the University of Leicester's leadership in AI solutions for device selection and access point clustering. Reinforcement learning, a form of AI technology, plays a crucial role in swiftly and effectively identifying optimal parameters for wireless communication systems, leading to energy and resource savings. Zhou stressed the significance of AI, stating that without such technologies, considerable time would be spent fine-tuning parameters for system setup and device selection in the network.
- The research team is actively working to further optimize the proposed technologies and streamline the computational complexity of the technique. The source code for the method has been made publicly available, contributing to the global research community.
- This study is part of the EU-funded 6G BRAINS project, aimed at developing an AIdriven self-learning platform. The platform's goal is to intelligently and dynamically allocate resources, enhance capacity and reliability, and improve positioning accuracy while reducing response latency for massive-scale industrial applications in the future. The project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program.

# VIRTUAL REALITY

### **VR Reveals Phantom Touch**

Virtual reality (VR) has transcended its traditional realm of gaming and entertainment, emerging as a valuable tool in scientific and medical exploration. Researchers from Ruhr University Bochum in Germany have recently delved into the realm of human perception using VR, shedding light on a fascinating phenomenon known as the phantom touch illusion.

- In this innovative study led by Dr. Artur Pilacinski and Professor Christian Klaes from the Department of Neurotechnology, participants engaged with virtual reality scenarios where they interacted with their own bodies using virtual objects.
- Surprisingly, the subjects reported experiencing a tingling sensation at the specific point where the virtual object made contact, despite the absence of any physical touch. This intriguing phenomenon has been termed the "phantom touch illusion," and the researchers detailed their findings in the September 2023 issue of Scientific Reports by the Nature Publishing Group.
- Dr. Pilacinski and Professor Klaes note that the phantom touch illusion is commonly described by participants as a tingling or prickling sensation, akin to an electrifying feeling or the sensation of wind passing through their hands. Seeking to unravel the intricacies behind this phenomenon, the researchers observed that the illusion persisted even when subjects touched parts of their bodies not visible in the virtual environment.
- Marita Metzler, the second author of the study, emphasizes the complexity of human perception and body sensation, asserting that these experiences are not solely reliant on vision but involve a sophisticated interplay of various sensory perceptions and internal representations of the body.
- The study involved 36 volunteers equipped with VR glasses. Initially, they acclimated to the virtual environment by interacting with virtual objects. Subsequently, they were tasked with touching their virtual hands using a virtual stick, leading to the consistent reporting of a "tingling" sensation by the majority of participants.
- To discern the uniqueness of the phantom touch illusion in the virtual realm, the researchers conducted a control experiment using a small laser pointer instead of virtual objects to touch the hand. However, this did not elicit a phantom touch, suggesting that the illusion was specific to virtual touch.
- The implications of this discovery extend beyond the realms of perception research. Dr. Klaes envisions that understanding the phantom touch illusion could deepen our insights into neurological diseases affecting body perception.
- The researchers are set to collaborate with the University of Sussex to further explore the underlying processes of the phantom touch illusion, differentiating it from cognitive processes and delving into its neural basis. This groundbreaking research not only paves the way for advancements in virtual reality but also holds potential applications in the medical field, offering new avenues for understanding and addressing neurological disorders.

# **Quantum Computers**

#### Superfluid 3He Thermo-Dimensionality Discovery

Scientists at Lancaster University in the UK have unraveled the enigma of how it would feel to touch superfluid helium 3He, a substance residing at the intersection of the quantum and classical realms.

- The juncture between the extraordinary domain of quantum physics and the tangible world experienced by humans remains a pivotal challenge in contemporary physics. The lead author of the research published in Nature Communications, Dr. Samuli Autti, expressed the difficulty in articulating the sensation of touching quantum physics in practical terms. He noted the extreme experimental conditions and intricate techniques involved but asserted the breakthrough: "I can now tell you how it would feel if you could put your hand into this quantum system."
- The experiments, detailed by Dr. Autti, took place at a temperature approximately 10,000 times colder than absolute zero, employing a specialized refrigerator. A mechanical resonator, comparable in size to a finger, was utilized to probe the superfluid.
- When agitated with a rod, superfluid 3He efficiently dissipates heat along the container's surfaces. Notably, the bulk of the superfluid exhibits a vacuum-like behavior, remaining entirely inert. Dr. Autti elucidated, "This liquid would feel two-dimensional if you could stick your finger into it. The bulk of the superfluid feels empty, while heat flows in a two-dimensional subsystem along the edges of the bulk in other words, along your finger."
- The researchers concluded that the bulk of superfluid 3He is encapsulated by an independent two-dimensional superfluid, interacting with mechanical probes rather than the bulk superfluid. Access to the bulk superfluid is only granted when subjected to a sudden burst of energy. Essentially, at extremely low temperatures and applied energies, superfluid 3He demonstrates thermo-mechanical two-dimensionality.
- Dr. Autti emphasized the profound impact of this revelation on our comprehension of superfluid 3He, suggesting it may be even more significant for scientists than the concept of hands-on experience with quantum physics.
- Superfluid 3He stands out as one of the most versatile macroscopic quantum systems in laboratory settings. Its influence extends to diverse fields such as particle physics (e.g., the Higgs mechanism), cosmology (Kibble mechanism), and quantum information processing (time crystals). The redefinition of its fundamental structure could have farreaching consequences across these domains.

# **SECTION 2 – GLOBAL INFO**

### **MIDDLE EAST**

### Israel-Hamas War

A group of armed individuals seized control of a tanker associated with Israel off the coast of Yemen, only to release it later, according to officials. The United States Navy intervened, apprehending the assailants. Subsequently, two ballistic missiles, originating from Houthicontrolled Yemen, landed near a U.S. warship assisting the tanker in the Gulf of Aden, escalating tensions amid a series of ship attacks related to the Israel-Hamas conflict.

- Yemen's internationally recognized government attributed the attack to the Iranianbacked Houthi rebels. However, the rebels in control of the capital, Sanaa, did not acknowledge either the seizure of the tanker or the missile attack. The attackers targeted the Liberian-flagged Central Park, managed by Zodiac Maritime, as reported by the company, U.S. and British militaries, and private intelligence firm Ambrey.
- In response to the seizure, the U.S. military's Central Command, along with allies, including the Arleigh Burke-class destroyer USS Mason, demanded the armed assailants release the tanker. According to Central Command's statement on Monday, five armed individuals disembarked the ship and attempted to flee on their small boat. The USS Mason pursued, leading to the eventual surrender of the attackers.

# OCEANIA

### **NEW ZEALAND**

Christopher Luxon, the former chief executive of Air New Zealand, has officially assumed the role of New Zealand's prime minister, pledging to address inflation and decrease interest rates. This transition comes six weeks after the conservative National Party, led by Luxon, emerged victorious in the national elections, bringing an end to the six-year rule of the Labour Party under Jacinda Ardern.

- In a ceremony held in the capital city of Wellington, Luxon, 53, took the oath of office as the head of a newly formed coalition government, administered by New Zealand's governor-general. Speaking to reporters, Luxon expressed his sense of honour and the weight of responsibility that comes with his new position.
- Acknowledging the economic challenges at hand, Luxon emphasized, "The number one job is to fix the economy. We have to mitigate the cost of living and gain control over inflation, enabling us to lower interest rates and make essential goods more affordable."
- Luxon outlined key priorities for his government's initial months, including a focus on restoring law and order and enhancing public services. This multifaceted approach reflects his commitment to not only addressing economic concerns but also ensuring the overall well-being and security of the country.

# ASIA

### BANGLADESH

Bangladesh has initiated an extensive and forceful crackdown on opposition parties as part of a strategy to "eliminate competition" in the lead-up to the general elections, revealed Human Rights Watch.

- The crackdown involves the arrest of nearly 10,000 activists, with a significant number of them affiliated with the prominent Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). Shockingly, a substantial portion of BNP's five million members now face charges that are deemed politically motivated, as stated by HRW.
- HRW's report highlights the all-encompassing nature of the arrests, targeting individuals across the political spectrum, from high-ranking officials to grassroots activists. A source cited by HRW expressed concern, stating, "The arrests, they are not leaving anyone behind, from senior level to the ground level." This indicates a systematic approach to suppressing opposition voices.
- Furthermore, the imprisonment facilities in the country are under severe strain, surpassing double their intended capacity, according to the rights group. The overcrowded prisons point to the magnitude of the crackdown and the resulting impact on the country's detention infrastructure.
- With a population of approximately 170 million, Bangladesh is scheduled to hold its general elections on January 7. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, aiming for her fourth consecutive term in office, oversees a political landscape marked by a notable crackdown on opposition forces, as reported by Human Rights Watch.

### AFRICA SIERRA LEONE

Sierra Leone's government has asserted its full control following an incident at a military armoury in the capital, Freetown. This event led to armed clashes, characterized by President Julius Maada Bio as an attempt to destabilize the state. The West African nation, embroiled in a political crisis since the elections in June of this year, has imposed a national curfew until further notice.

- President Bio, addressing the nation late on Sunday, reassured that tranquillity had been restored after what he labelled an endeavour to undermine peace and stability. He announced that a significant number of leaders involved in the incident had been apprehended, with ongoing security operations and investigations. The President emphasized the government's commitment to ensuring accountability for those responsible.
- Although a sense of calm is gradually returning to the capital, there are still heavily guarded checkpoints in place. Information Minister Chernor Bah affirmed that the government maintains firm control over the security situation in Freetown, noting that the attackers are in retreat. The nation remains vigilant as efforts to address the situation continue.

# **SECTION 3 – MIXED BAG**

# HEALTH

### E. Coli Evolving Antibiotic Resistance

A recent study suggests that E. coli bacteria may possess a greater capacity for evolving antibiotic resistance than previously believed. Conducted by a team led by SFI External Professor Andreas Wagner, the researchers explored over 260,000 potential mutations of a crucial E. coli protein essential for survival in the presence of the antibiotic trimethoprim.

- Through thousands of realistic digital simulations, approximately 75% of the conceivable evolutionary paths of the E. coli protein led to a level of antibiotic resistance so high that clinicians might reconsider prescribing trimethoprim to patients. Wagner, an evolutionary biologist at the University of Zurich in Switzerland, highlights the broader implications of this study for understanding evolutionary processes in various scientific domains.
- Beyond shedding light on antibiotic resistance, the research challenges a longstanding theory related to fitness landscapes, which depict how well an organism or a specific component, like a protein, adapts to its surroundings. These landscapes, representing different genotypes and their adaptability, were previously theorized to trap evolving populations at lower peaks in highly rugged terrains, hindering them from reaching the pinnacle of evolutionary adaptation.
- To test this theory, Wagner and his colleagues utilized CRISPR gene editing technology to create one of the most comprehensive fitness landscapes for the E. coli dihydrofolate reductase (DHFR) protein. Surprisingly, despite the rugged landscape, approximately 75% of the simulated populations reached high-fitness peaks, resulting in elevated antibiotic resistance for E. coli.
- The implications extend beyond the realm of antibiotic resistance. If such rugged landscapes are common in biological systems, it could signify that adaptive processes, including antibiotic resistance, are more attainable than previously thought. This revelation prompts a re-evaluation of theoretical models in various scientific fields, urging a shift from abstract theoretical frameworks to data-informed, realistic landscape models.
- Andreas Wagner emphasizes the profound implications of this study, urging a reassessment of our understanding of landscape evolution across diverse fields. The call is for a transition from abstract models to data-driven approaches, prompting further research into the impact of real-world landscapes on evolutionary processes.

### **SPACE**

#### **Uranus Infrared Aurora Discovery**

Astronomers from the University of Leicester have officially confirmed the existence of an infrared aurora on the distant, frigid planet Uranus. This groundbreaking discovery not only adds a new dimension to our understanding of the outer planets in our solar system but also holds

implications for unravelling the mysteries surrounding planetary magnetic fields and the potential habitability of distant worlds.

- Supported by the Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC), the research team has achieved the first-ever measurements of Uranus's infrared (IR) aurora, marking a significant milestone since investigations into the planet began in 1992. While the ultraviolet (UV) aurorae on Uranus were observed as early as 1986, the confirmation of the existence of IR aurora had remained elusive until now. The team's findings have been detailed in the journal Nature Astronomy.
- Uranus and Neptune, collectively known as ice giants, stand out in our solar system due to the peculiar misalignment of their magnetic fields with their rotational axes. The reasons behind this anomaly have yet to be fully understood, but scientists believe that insights into Uranus's aurora may hold the key.
- Aurorae, dazzling light displays in a planet's atmosphere, are the result of highly energetic charged particles interacting with the planet's magnetic field. On Earth, these interactions manifest as the Northern and Southern Lights. In the case of Uranus, where the atmosphere is predominantly composed of hydrogen and helium, the aurora emits light beyond the visible spectrum, including infrared wavelengths.
- The research team utilized the Keck II telescope to analyze specific wavelengths of infrared light emitted by Uranus's aurora. By examining the emission lines, akin to a barcode, from the charged particle H3+, they could gauge the temperature and density of the planet's atmosphere. Their observations revealed distinct increases in H3+ density, indicative of ionization caused by the presence of an infrared aurora.
- Lead author Emma Thomas, a PhD student at the University of Leicester School of Physics and Astronomy, highlighted the broader implications of the findings. She pointed out that understanding the magnetic fields of the outer planets not only deepens our knowledge of our solar system but also aids in identifying other planets potentially suitable for life. Thomas explained a theory suggesting that energetic aurorae generate and transfer heat from the aurora down toward the magnetic equator, potentially explaining the unexpectedly high temperatures of gas giant planets.
- Moreover, as a majority of discovered exoplanets fall in the sub-Neptune category, similar in size to Neptune and Uranus, studying Uranus's aurora provides insights into the magnetic and atmospheric characteristics of these distant worlds. This, in turn, helps in predicting the potential habitability of such planets.
- Thomas emphasized the significance of the 30-year-long study of Uranus's aurora, stating that the newfound understanding of the infrared aurora marks the beginning of a new era in aurora investigations on the planet. The results are expected to enhance our knowledge of ice giant auroras, strengthen our understanding of planetary magnetic fields in our solar system and beyond, and contribute valuable data for the study of geomagnetic reversal—a rare phenomenon on Earth.
- In conclusion, continued research on Uranus's aurora holds promise not only for expanding our understanding of distant planets but also for gaining insights into Earth's magnetic field behaviour during geomagnetic reversal events.

## BOOKS

### **BOOKER PRIZE**

Irish writer Paul Lynch secured the 2023 Booker Prize for Fiction with his novel "Prophet Song," a gripping portrayal of a dystopian Ireland sinking into tyranny. Lynch, at 46, triumphed over five other finalists during the prestigious award ceremony in London, joining the ranks of esteemed Irish authors who have claimed this literary honour, such as Salman Rushdie, Margaret Atwood, and Hilary Mantel.

- In his acceptance speech, Lynch acknowledged the challenges of crafting "Prophet Song," describing it as a demanding endeavour that even he thought might jeopardize his career. Nevertheless, he emphasized the imperative nature of the narrative, stating, "We do not have a choice in such matters." The accolade not only brought him a cash prize of £50,000 (approximately \$63,000) but also a significant elevation in his literary standing.
- Lynch's fifth novel unfolds in a future Dublin, offering a poignant narrative about a mother of four grappling to shield her family from the clutches of totalitarianism. What sets "Prophet Song" apart is its unique structure—void of paragraph breaks—an artistic choice that adds to the intensity of the storytelling.
- Chairing the judging panel, Canadian novelist Esi Edugyan hailed Lynch's work as "a triumph of emotional storytelling, bracing and brave." She commended the novel for its vivid depiction of the social and political anxieties of the present moment, predicting that readers would find it "soul-shattering and true."
- The Booker Prize, open to works of fiction in English from writers of any nationality, published in the UK or Ireland between October 1, 2022, and September 30, 2023, featured a diverse shortlist this year. None of the six finalists, including two Americans, a Canadian, a Kenyan, and another Irish author, had previously been shortlisted. Only one had been longlisted before.
- The shortlisted novels, chosen from an initial pool of 158 works, encompassed a broad spectrum of themes. Irish author Paul Murray's "The Bee Sting" explored the role of fate in a family's tribulations, while Kenyan writer Chetna Maroo's "Western Lane" delved into grief and sisterhood. US writer Jonathan Escoffery's "If I Survive You" traced the upheavals of a Jamaican family in Miami, and Paul Harding's "This Other Eden" painted a narrative inspired by historical events on Apple Island.
- Canada's representation on the shortlist came in the form of Sarah Bernstein's "Study for Obedience," an unsettling exploration of prejudice and guilt through a dubious narrator. The Booker, established in 1969, has consistently celebrated literary excellence, with last year's recipient being Sri Lankan writer Shehan Karunatilaka for "The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida."
- Among the distinguished Irish winners of the Booker Prize are Iris Murdoch, John Banville, Roddy Doyle, and Anne Enright. Paul Lynch now joins this illustrious cohort, leaving an indelible mark on the literary landscape with "Prophet Song."

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