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THE DISCOURSE OF SPIRITUAL ABUSE IN CLAIRE VAYE WATKIN'S *GOLD FAME CITRUS*

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Abstract. This study examines the discourse of spiritual abuse in Claire Vaye Watkins' novel Gold Fame Citrus. It addresses the limitations of discussions of spiritual abuse in literary studies, particularly regarding the use of spiritual language and moral authority as tools of ideological control in dystopian narratives. The study aims to identify the root causes of spiritual abuse and analyze how spiritual language fosters obedience, authority, and psychological dependence. Using descriptive qualitative methods, this study applies discourse analysis and an intertextual approach to examine dialogues, narrative descriptions, and symbolic expressions in the text. The findings indicate that spiritual abuse is constructed through manipulative spiritual language, claims of moral authority, fear-based obedience, and psychological dependency. Moreover, in a dystopian society, spiritual discourse potentially served as, among other things, mean to legitimize domination and to maintain ideological power. Finally, the study concludes that language plays a crucial role in shaping belief systems and reinforcing symbolic violence through narrative discourse, thus contributing to discourse-based literary studies on spiritual abuse in contemporary dystopian fiction.

Abstrak. Studi ini meneliti wacana pelecehan spiritual dalam novel *Gold Fame Citrus* karya Claire Vaye Watkins. Ini membahas keterbatasan diskusi tentang pelecehan spiritual dalam studi sastra, terutama mengenai penggunaan bahasa spiritual dan otoritas moral sebagai alat kontrol ideologis dalam narasi distopia. Ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi akar penyebab pelecehan spiritual dan menganalisis representasinya melalui wacana dalam novel. Menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif, penelitian ini menerapkan analisis wacana dan pendekatan intertekstual untuk memeriksa dialog, deskripsi naratif, dan ekspresi simbolis dalam teks. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa pelecehan spiritual dibangun melalui bahasa spiritual yang manipulatif, klaim otoritas moral, kepatuhan berbasis ketakutan, dan ketergantungan psikologis. Dalam konteks distopia yang menghadapi krisis ekologis dan sosial, wacana spiritual berfungsi sebagai sarana untuk melegitimasi dominasi dan mempertahankan kekuatan ideologis. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa bahasa memainkan peran penting dalam membentuk sistem kepercayaan dan memperkuat kekerasan simbolis melalui wacana naratif, sehingga berkontribusi pada studi sastra berbasis wacana tentang pelecehan spiritual dalam fiksi distopia kontemporer.

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INTRODUCTION

Literature plays an important role in the exploration of language studies because it places language in a social and cultural framework. Literary works not only reflect human conditions but also encapsulate ideologies, identities, and power dynamics through the use of discourse (Sherqulovich & Teacher, 2025). Research highlights that literature has the capacity to enhance critical literacy and cultural awareness by encouraging readers to examine social issues embedded

within texts (Khawaja, 2022). In this regard, discourse analysis emerges as a relevant methodology for investigating how language constructs meaning and ideological power within literary narratives.

Discourse analysis, supported by Aidinlou & Dehghan (2020), focuses on how meaning is generated not only through linguistic structure but also through the interaction of language, ideology, and power. According to Aris Badara (2014) stated in his book that there are three main views on discourse analysis. The first view comes from the empirical tradition of positivism, which views discourse analysis as an attempt to objectively describe systems of speech, sentences, language, and the meaning of language. The second view, constructivism, emphasizes that discourse analysis serves to uncover certain intentions and meanings constructed in the text. The third view, the critical paradigm, highlights the forces involved in the process of production and pre-production of meaning, where language as a representation shapes a particular subject, a specific discourse theme, and the strategies it employs in a broader social context.

On the other hand, Mumby (2023) explains that discourse and ideology cannot be separated, because each narrative inherently reflects the dominance structure and belief systems that form identity and power. When applied to the study of literature, discourse analysis allows the reader to uncover the ways in which texts reflect and critique the dynamics of society. As noted by Hardinanto (2020), novels often serve as ideological arenas where writers negotiate themes of resistance, control, and moral conflict through language. As Gee argues, language functions not only as a medium of communication but also as an instrument of social action that shapes identity and social reality. Therefore, the novel can be analysed as a discursive space where power and ideology are negotiated through narrative language.

One famous literary work that reflects these dynamics is *Gold Fame Citrus* by Claire Vaye Watkins. The narrative depicts ecological collapse, social instability, and psychological fragility within a dystopian framework. In such an environment, spiritual language and moral authority emerge as tools of control and manipulation. Spiritual abuse, as described by Oakley & Humphreys (2019), involves the exploitation of spiritual authority, religious discourse, or belief systems to psychologically dominate and oppress individuals. Unlike physical violence, spiritual abuse often operates subtly through discourse, making it difficult to identify. Thus, examining spiritual abuse through discourse analysis is crucial for revealing how language functions to legitimize ideological domination and control in literary texts.

Several previous studies have examined *Gold Fame Citrus* from various perspectives. Ruthven (2025) analyzed the novel through the lens of hydrofiction and environmental relativism, emphasizing how ecological crises shape systems of social control and authority. Similarly, Malik & Saraswat (2025) is that *Gold Fame Citrus* depicts an ecological crisis resulting from environmental exploitation, capitalism, and human indifference toward nature. They found that the novel illustrates how environmental destruction not only devastates ecosystems but also affects human identity, social relationships, and power structures within a dystopian society."

Meanwhile, Oakley & Humphreys (2019), Johnston (2021), and Ellis et al (2023) explain that spiritual abuse often operates through manipulative religious discourse, moral authority, and psychological dependence, and according to Doston (2019), practices such as spiritual abuse have a significant impact on the psychological and spiritual condition of victims. Some of these impacts include anxiety, low self-esteem, spiritual identity confusion, and damaged relationships between individuals and God and religious institutions. Chowdhury (2023) also revealed that spiritual abuse often arises when religious authority is used to legitimize domination and silence dissenting voices. The study suggests that language serves as a primary instrument of manipulation in spiritual environments plagued by abuse. Recent research on religious trauma further supports this argument. However, these studies rarely explore how spiritual abuse is discursively represented in dystopian literary narratives, particularly through language and intertextual ideological constructions.

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Keul (2022) found that individuals experiencing uncertainty, social disruption, and emotional insecurity tend to be more susceptible to manipulation by charismatic leaders claiming spiritual legitimacy. Hürten et al (2025) also argue that vulnerability creates conditions in which spiritual authority can become a mechanism of domination and control. These findings have great relevance to dystopian narratives, where social collapse often increases dependence on authority figures.

Ramler (2023) found that religious trauma is often communicated and reinforced through discourse that frames suffering, guilt, and obedience as moral obligations. Oakley et al (2024) concluded that spiritual abuse is often maintained through narratives that position authority figures as morally superior while fostering psychological dependence among their followers. Their findings emphasize the importance of examining discourse in depth when investigating spiritual abuse. Furthermore, vulnerability has been identified as a significant factor in the emergence of spiritual abuse.

Given this gap, this study addresses two fundamental research questions: (1) what are the causes of spiritual abuse as depicted in the novel?, and (2) how is spiritual abuse foster obedience, authority, and psychological dependence? Thus, this study seeks to explain the underlying causes of spiritual abuse and analyze how spiritual language fosters obedience, authority, and psychological dependence within the narrative. Although previous studies have discussed ecological crisis, social instability, and spiritual manipulation in the novel Gold Fame Citrus, attention to how spiritual abuse is discursively constructed through language, ideology, and intertextuality in dystopian literature is still limited. Therefore, this study offers a new perspective by integrating Gee's discourse theory, Renkema's integrative approach, and Kristeva's intertextuality to examine spiritual abuse as a form of ideological and psychological control in the novel.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a descriptive qualitative design with a discourse analysis approach to examine the representation of spiritual abuse in Claire Vaye Watkins' novel, *Gold Fame Citrus*. The study focuses on identifying the root causes of spiritual abuse and analyzing how they are represented through the novel's language, narrative structure, and ideological discourse. Primary data sources come from the novel itself, while secondary data include dialogue, narrative descriptions, and symbolic expressions related to spiritual authority, obedience, manipulation, and ideological control. Data were obtained through careful reading, note-taking, and textual documentation. Relevant passages were selected based on their relationship to the research problem statement and then grouped into analytical categories. The analysis was guided by James Paul Gee's discourse analysis framework, Jan Renkema's integrative discourse framework, and Julia Kristeva's theory of intertextuality. These frameworks were applied to examine how language functions as a social practice, how discourse shapes belief systems and power relations, and how the novel interacts with broader cultural, religious, and ideological discourses.

The collected data were then coded and categorized based on linguistic characteristics, narrative patterns, and thematic representations of spiritual abuse. Particular attention was paid to discursive strategies such as claims of moral authority, fear-based obedience, manipulative spiritual language, and psychological dependency. Intertextual analysis was applied to identify connections between the novel and broader spiritual and cultural narratives. To ensure the credibility of the findings, theoretical triangulation was conducted by integrating multiple analytical perspectives, and all interpretations were consistently supported by textual evidence from the novel.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. RESULT

These findings consist of data and information that have been collected, analysed, and interpreted systematically by researchers to answer the research questions discussed in the previous chapters. This section presents the evidence and understanding gained through the application of the chosen method. The findings are structured and logical to provide a comprehensive overview of the research results.

1. Finding the Theme

The theme in Claire Vaye Watkins' novel *Gold Fame Citrus* focuses on the spiritual abuse that occurs through the practice of manipulation, control, and domination by charismatic authority figures in crises. In the context of extreme environmental destruction, a person becomes more psychologically and emotionally weaker, thus opening up opportunities for the emergence of manipulative power. Such as the character of Levi, who represents his form of leadership by using a spiritual approach as a tool to control other individuals, especially Luz, through the claim of absolute truth, ritual practices, and the use of purification symbols. Therefore, the theme of the novel not only depicts the struggle of physical survival but also expresses one's struggle to break free from oppressive spiritual control and reclaim autonomy and self-identity.

To prove the theme discussed in this novel, the following are the setting, the problem, the development of the episode, and the ending of the story. These elements are discussed sequentially in synopsis, simple story, and story grammar.

Synopsis

Set in a dystopian future affected by climate change, the novel *Gold Fame Citrus* depicts the devastation of California due to severe drought and environmental degradation. Luz Dunn and her partner, Ray, struggle to survive in the abandoned city of Los Angeles after most of its residents were evacuated. Their lives are transformed when they discover an orphan named Ig and decide to foster him while seeking a safer haven further east. During a journey through the Amargosa Desert, Luz and Ray become separated after running out of fuel. Luz and Ig are rescued by Levi Zabriskie, the charismatic leader of a spiritual community who believes the desert holds sacred significance. In her vulnerable state, Luz becomes emotionally attached to Levi and is gradually influenced by his manipulative spiritual teachings. Beneath the colony's peaceful facade, Levi controls his followers through emotional dependency, rituals, and psychological manipulation.

Meanwhile, Ray struggles to survive after being captured and held captive by Levi's community. After successfully escaping, he attempts to convince Luz that Levi is exploiting and manipulating his followers for personal power. Although Luz initially dismisses Ray's warnings, a series of traumatic events eventually leads her to realize Levi's detrimental influence on her life. Ultimately, Luz chooses to leave the colony with Ray, while Ig is entrusted to Dallas for a brighter future. The novel ultimately highlights themes of environmental collapse, identity crises, psychological vulnerability, and spiritual abuse in a dystopian society.

Simple Story

1) Luz and Ray are a couple who live in California after a severe drought.
2) Everyone has been evacuated due to the drought, but they are still trying to survive.
3) One day, they went somewhere to look for blueberries in Seattle.
4) On their journey, they met a small child named Ig, and Luz saw Ig's condition living in a bad environment, which made Luz feel sorry for him.
5) Luz forced Ray to take Ig away with them, and in the end, they lived together like a small family.
6) After they felt the difficult conditions, they decided to move to find a better place.

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7) Before leaving, Ray decided to meet Leoni; his goal was to make a fake certificate for his new family.
8) Leonni firmly refused, not wanting to get into legal trouble, but she suggested that Ray head East, across the desert, in the hope of finding a more stable community and more adequate resources.
9) Lonnie also directed them to avoid the giant desert area called the Amargosa Dune Sea. (Their goal was to find a better life in the eastern region, which was still green and habitable).
10) Before they left, Rita gave him a box of baby equipment and spare food for them to eat on the way.
11) After that, they set off towards the east, in the middle of the desert journey, their car ran out of petrol.
12) Ray went to get help, but never returned. Food and other necessities were running low, and Luz thought Ray was dead.
13) Meanwhile, Luz and Ig are stranded in the desert.
14) They were then found by a group in the desert led by Levi, a charismatic figure.
15) Levi takes them to his community, which seems safe and peaceful, and day by day, Luz begins to be influenced by Levi.
16) The extremely cruel Levi has manipulated and controlled the people in his community.
17) Luz has started to feel comfortable and connected with the people in the colony, including Dallas.
18) It was in the colony that Ig grew emotionally and socially. Luz also started to like Levi.
19) On the other hand, Dallas and Levi's relationship starts to get complicated when Luz realizes that Dallas was once Levi's partner and they even had a child, but their child died at birth.
20) Meanwhile, Dallas behaves well towards Luz and also takes good care of Ig until he breastfeeds Ig.
21) At that moment, Levi began to show his spirituality and manipulation. Levi takes Luz to a mystical ceremony and also takes her to the Holiday Rambler.
22) Luz herself begins to lose control, and she is made into a ritual purification by Levi, with two women, Aza and Cass, while Levi only watches the incident as a form of testing.
23) After the incident, Levi accuses Luz of being dishonest and then manipulates Luz's emotions by saying that Luz is the only hope for Levi
24) Levi also became emotional and possessive. Dangerous scene, he forces Luz to hurt himself for his form of love and honesty towards Levi
25) Ray was no longer on Luz's mind, and now he only trusted Levi. On the other hand, the presence of Ray for a long time did not come; it turned out that all this time he was locked in a truck owned by the rangers, and Ray was shivering to be removed from that place.
26) On the other hand, suddenly the truck smashed into Ray in the middle of the desert, and he fainted.
27) When he came to his senses, he was helped by a second truck, and he received medical treatment while being taken to the strange place. Suddenly, he was handcuffed for precautionary measures.
28) It turns out that Ray is detained in the Limbo Mines, a prison cell where it is a community led by Levi. Ray finds a way to get out of the prison cell by crawling through the airways. Until he felt the heat burning in his body and finally ray was able to return to the surface.
29) Ray also knows the new place of Luz and Ig. He approached Luz and invited her out of the dangerous place.
30) But Luz rejects him because she has grown deep feelings for Levi.
31) However, Ray returns and tries to resuscitate Luz. He vehemently resisted Levi's intervention and warned that Luz could die from the root influence Levi had given.

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32) Ray even emphatically tells Levi that he's "not interested in all your" and that Levi just wants to control, not cure.
33) Ray continues to try to convince Luz that Levi is a bad guy. He stated that Levi attacked him and accused Levi of torturing him "just for fun" and likened Levi to a manipulative cult leader.
34) Luz herself is emotional, and the root dependence shared by Levi. On the other hand, Ray tries to convince Luz that Levi is a dangerous figure who only manipulates and takes advantage of others for his own interests and vision. Luz scolded Ray and kept him away from the Ig. She chose to approach Levi.
35) Levi shows a typical manipulative attitude. He told Luz to come closer, blaming Ray for the closed-off feeling he felt from Luz.
36) The next day, Ig was attacked by a predatory insect so that one side of Ig's body was extraordinarily swollen, his skin was blue and hardened.
37) At that time, Luz was not there, and when Luz came, she saw a very miserable condition on Ig. Luz, in a state of panic and heartbreak.
38) This incident became a major turning point in the story. The attack on Ig not only threatens the little boy's life but also makes Luz aware of the fragility of their situation and how far she has drifted under Levi's influence and lost control of reality.
39) After experiencing mental and physical upheaval, Luz falls ill. She lies weak on the bus, cared for by Ray, who faithfully guards her. Luz was barely conscious, her breath was short, and her condition was alarming.
40) Suddenly, Levi appears at the back of the bus, a large and sturdy figure who always carries an aura of control. He walked over casually but intently, then pulled the dried root out of his pocket and said that Luz needed it that if she didn't eat it, she could die.
41) Ray firmly rejected it and said that Luz was too far away to return to that root dependence.
42) In the midst of that tension, Dallas came with Ig. He calmly told Levi that he himself had stopped consuming root, something that had previously been considered impossible. Dallas' statement shakes Levi
43) After going through that critical period, Luz slowly recovered and began to see everything more clearly. Luz had become aware of Levi's crime to her as well as against Ig.
44) Ray invites Luz to immediately find a new place to live that is filled with walls and water. On the other hand, Ig has been handed over to Dallas because he is eager to take care of Ig.
45) After an emotional breakup with Ig, who was named Estrella by Luz and handed over to Dallas, Luz fell seriously ill again because she had been taking sedatives all this time. Meanwhile, ray faithfully takes care of her and takes care of her.
46) Filled with sadness and doubt, Luz decides to hand over the Ig to Dallas. Ray himself agreed, even though the decision was very difficult.
47) In the end, Luz is fully aware of the influence of Levi and they live a simple life without any manipulation.

Story Grammar

Based on the simplified sequence of events or occurrences presented above, the following analysis examines the story's structure through a psycholinguistic narrative grammar analysis approach. This analysis focuses on how key events, particularly those in the opening section, contribute to the development of the theme and the psycholinguistic transformation of the main character. The grammatical structure of the story in Claire Vaye Watkins' novel *Gold Fame Citrus* shows a structured narrative pattern, reflecting the psychological conflict, environmental crisis, and spiritual manipulation faced by the characters throughout the story. By applying Mandler and Johnson's psycholinguistic approach, the narrative can be explained through

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interrelated elements, namely setting, beginning, development, climax, and conclusion. These elements function synergistically to shape the ideological meaning of the novel, especially in relation to the spiritual understanding in *Gold Fame Citrus*.

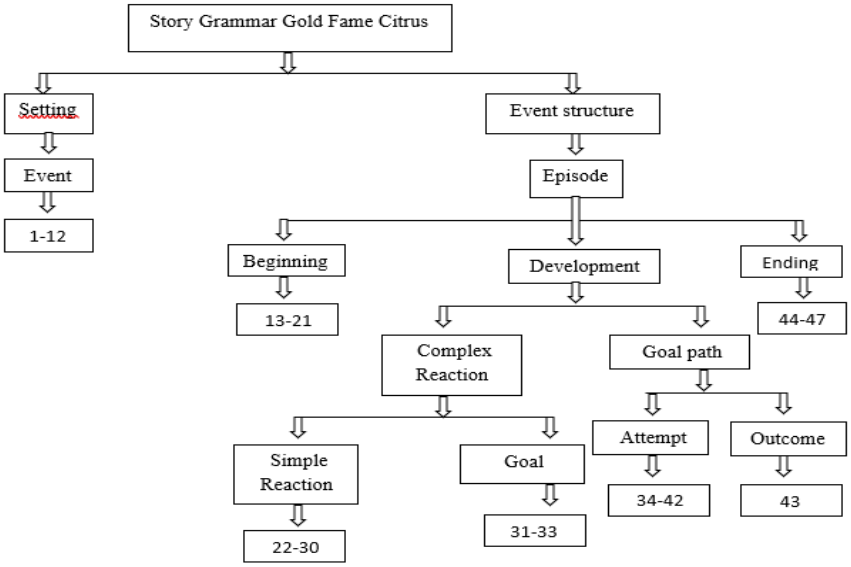


Figure 1. Psycholinguistic Diagram

The Theme

A central theme in *Gold Fame Citrus* is spiritual abuse, manifested through the manipulation of belief systems and spiritual authority. Levi plays a charismatic leader who uses spiritual discourse to legitimize his power and influence the thoughts and actions of his followers, particularly Luz. Through repeated references to salvation, destiny, and divine purpose, Levi establishes a system of obedience that normalizes psychological dependence and inhibits critical thinking.

From a psycholinguistic perspective, these linguistic strategies shape the characters' perceptions of reality and contribute to the internalization of Levi's ideology. The novel ultimately depicts language as a powerful tool of control, demonstrating how spiritual discourse can function as a form of symbolic and psychological domination in a dystopian society.

2. Historical and Biographical Background of Spiritual Abuse

This section explores the historical and biographical background that underpins the emergence of spiritual themes in the novel *Gold Fame Citrus*. Understanding the historical context of the environmental crisis and the author's social perspective is crucial, as literary works are closely tied to the social realities, cultural anxieties, and ideological conditions that shape their creation. Through historical and biographical analysis, this study examines how Claire Vaye Watkins represents contemporary concerns regarding ecological destruction, psychological instability, and manipulative authority in a dystopian society. Furthermore, the author's background and socio-historical context also explain why themes of survival, spiritual dependence, and ideological control occupy a central position in the novel.

The Historical Background of Spiritual Abuse

The historical setting of the novel *Gold Fame Citrus* is closely related to the social, political, environmental, and cultural situation in the United States at the beginning of the

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21st century. At that time, America, particularly in the western regions such as California, was facing a serious environmental crisis triggered by climate change, prolonged drought, and a water crisis. Rising temperatures and scarcity of water resources gave rise to widespread concerns about ecological destruction and the prospects for human survival. These environmental issues became a major public concern and influenced various literary works, including dystopian novels like *Gold Fame Citrus*. Experts note that this work was born amid growing concern about water scarcity, resource management, and migration due to climate change, both in scientific discourse and literary works (Dodeman & Pedri, 2020).

Socially, Americans experienced deepening anxieties regarding instability, migration, poverty, and survival amidst natural disasters. Many feared that climate change would not only damage ecosystems but also destabilize social structures and weaken equality between communities. This situation fueled narratives of displacement, isolation, and psychological fragility, which are clearly depicted in the novel through the experiences of refugees and marginalized groups in the desert. Politically, criticism of the United States government grew due to its inability to effectively address the environmental crisis. Debates surrounding climate policy, resource allocation, and social responsibility became prominent public topics. Distrust of institutions and authorities quickly increased, prompting people to seek alternative leadership and belief systems. This situation is illustrated in the novel by the emergence of charismatic figures like Levi, who gained influence by promising hope and spiritual meaning amidst the crisis.

Culturally, American society at the time was influenced by the development of the climate fiction genre, or "cli-fi," which emphasized the consequences of climate change on human civilization. Writers began to explore themes such as environmental degradation, survival, identity crises, and ideological dominance. Within this framework, *Gold Fame Citrus* was created as a reflection of contemporary anxieties about ecological disaster and the breakdown of social stability in contemporary America.

The Biographical Background of Spiritual Abuse

Claire Vaye Watkins, an American writer born in 1984, is known for her works exploring themes of the American West, environmental crisis, and human fragility. Her upbringing in the Mojave Desert, a region with extreme climates and barren landscapes, profoundly shaped her literary imagination and thematic focus. Her experiences in this desert environment are clearly reflected in *Gold Fame Citrus*, where the setting plays a key role in shaping the plot and the psychological states of the characters.

Watkins also has an academic background in literature and creative writing, having graduated from the University of Nevada, Reno, and later served as a professor of creative writing. His formal education supported his ability to integrate the beauty of literature with social and environmental criticism, especially in the realm of climate fiction. According to Rowland (2019), Watkins' work belongs to a wider wave of contemporary women writers who are using speculative fiction to discuss climate change and its impact on human and societal identities.

In addition, Watkins' personal history, including his complex family background, has shaped her approach to exploring themes of identity, authority, and psychological conflict. This is evident in the novel *Gold Fame Citrus*, where the characters are faced with extreme situations that test their identity and independence. Watkins' association with the concept of the American West as a physical as well as a symbolic space allows him to critique conventional narratives of freedom and territorial expansion. Instead of presenting the West as a land of opportunity, he represents it as an arena of environmental destruction and existential crisis. This view is in line with

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contemporary literary currents that challenge human domination over nature and emphasize the consequences of ecological neglect.

In conclusion, Watkins' biographical background, especially his childhood in the desert, his formal education, and thematic interests were instrumental in shaping the Gold Fame Citrus. His work blends personal experiences with broader cultural issues, resulting in a narrative that not only illustrates environmental disasters but also analyzes their psychological and social impacts, including the emergence of manipulative power structures.

B. DISCUSSION

This chapter presents and analyses the findings in response to the research questions formulated in the previous chapter. This study aims to analyze the root causes of spiritual abuse and how it is presented in the novel *Gold Fame Citrus*. The study addresses the following questions: 1. What are the root causes of spiritual abuse? 2. How does spiritual language foster obedience, authority, and psychological dependence abuse represented in the narrative?

An analysis of the novel *Gold Fame Citrus* reveals that the root cause of spiritual abuse is related to the novel's central theme, which emphasizes human fragility in the midst of environmental destruction and the quest for meaning and stability. The severe drought and social devastation depicted in the novel create a situation of uncertainty, loss, and psychological distress for individuals. This thematic foundation is very important, as it forms the background for the emergence of spiritual abuse. In such an unstable environment, individuals tend to seek direction, reassurance, and a sense of community, which makes them more vulnerable to manipulation by authoritative figures.

The results of this study reveal that the representation of spiritual abuse in the novel *Gold Fame Citrus* by Claire Vaye Watkins is realised through manipulative discourse, symbolic dominance, and ideological control within a dystopian society plagued by ecological damage. This discussion links the findings to the theoretical framework applied in the study, particularly James Paul Gee's discourse analysis, Jan Renkema's integrative discourse approach, Julia Kristeva's intertextual theory, and June Hunt's concept of spiritual abuse.

These findings were obtained through story grammar analysis and a psycholinguistic approach, which synergistically explain how spiritual abuse is not only structurally integrated into the narrative but also cognitively constructed through language use. Thus, this chapter deeply examines how narrative structure and discourse function as means to present and reinforce spiritual abuse in the novel.

1. The Root Cause of Spiritual Abuse

The first research question examines the primary causes of spiritual abuse depicted in the novel. The results indicate that spiritual abuse stems from several interrelated factors, namely ecological crisis, social instability, psychological vulnerability, fear, and dependence on charismatic authority figures. The dystopian environment fosters collective anxiety and emotional insecurity, which in turn drives individuals to seek protection and certainty from figures who claim spiritual legitimacy. This situation facilitates manipulative authorities in gaining greater influence, as vulnerable individuals become psychologically bound to moral and spiritual guidance.

The results of this study reinforce the view of Oakley and Humphrey (2019), who stated that spiritual abuse often develops in situations of emotional vulnerability and imbalanced power relations. Similarly, Ellis et al. (2023) explain that manipulative spiritual discourse becomes effective when individuals experience fear and uncertainty. In the novel, environmental destruction exacerbates social instability, further deteriorating systems of ideological control. Based on this, this study argues that spiritual abuse in the novel is socially constructed through unstable conditions that normalize attitudes of dependency and subservience.

Therefore, in answering the formulation of the first problem, the root causes of spiritual dilemma in the novel include individual vulnerability, power formation, and manipulation of belief

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systems. With respect to the social and historical context reflected in the novel, these findings are also understandable. The depiction of environmental crises and instability is in line with modern concerns around the world, where doubt and uncertainty can increase vulnerability to authority. In such situations, people often seek meaning and protection, which can be exploited through ideological or spiritual stories. Among them are several root causes of spiritual abuse from June Hunt's book, with a story that is in sync with the novel *Gold Fame Citrus*.

a) Desire to dominate–individuals seek to control others for their own personal gain. Individuals seek to regulate others for their own personal interests.
In the story, Levi shows a strong desire to control his followers, especially Luz. He not only expects obedience but also wants complete control over his thoughts, emotions, and behaviour. This is evident in his persistent efforts to pull Luz back into his sphere of influence, even as Luz begins to show doubts. Levi's possessive and domineering behaviour shows that the relationship that is formed is not a healthy spiritual bond, but a relationship of power.

b) Abuse of spiritual power–religious positions are used for manipulative purposes, not for service. Religious positions are used for manipulation purposes, not for service.
Levi uses his role as the leader of the spiritual community to legitimize his behaviour. He uses symbols, rituals, and spiritual narratives to justify his control over his followers. For example, he engages Luz in a "purification" ritual that essentially serves as a tool for manipulation and measurement of loyalty. This phenomenon illustrates how spirituality has been turned into an instrument of domination.

c) Spiritual pride–Feeling holier or more knowledgeable than others, and feeling entitled to judgment.
Levi presents himself as a figure who has a deeper understanding of life, especially through the concept of Neo-fauna. He positioned himself as "more knowledgeable" and "more pious" than anyone else. This attitude reflected spiritual arrogance, in which he felt he had the authority to uphold the truth and direct the lives of his followers, including Luz.

2. The Representation of Spiritual Abuse

The second research problem focuses on how spiritual abuse is represented through discourse in the novel. The research findings indicate that spiritual abuse is depicted through the use of manipulative spiritual language, claims of divine legitimacy, narratives of salvation, coercive moral discourse, and fear-based obedience. Authoritative figures repeatedly position themselves as spiritually superior and morally unwavering, making dominance seem natural and justified. Through this discourse, obedience is associated with morality and survival, while dissenting opinions are framed as dangerous or unethical.

These findings are closely related to Gee's perspective, which states that discourse shapes ideology and power relations in society. Similarly, Mitsigkas explains that discourse analysis reveals how language creates ideological meanings that correlate with specific social contexts. In *Gold Fame Citrus*, spiritual language functions not simply as a means of communication but as a mechanism of symbolic violence that shapes belief systems and regulates behaviour. These findings also reinforce Renkema's perspective, which states that discourse influences social interactions and psychological interpretations, given that repetitive language patterns can shape cognition and emotional responses.

Previous studies by Ruthven (2025) and Subramani and Borah (2025) focused more on ecological destruction and socio-political domination in novels. However, this study expands the discussion by showing that ideological control is also maintained through spiritual discourse and psychological manipulation. Thus, this study makes an academic contribution by illustrating how spiritual abuse in dystopian literature operates as a discursive practice closely linked to ideology, emotion, and social power.

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The depiction of spiritual abuse in the novel *Gold Fame Citrus* can be linked to a broader historical and biographical context. Historically, spiritual abuse often emerges in times of environmental crisis and instability, when individuals become increasingly dependent on authority figures who claim moral or spiritual legitimacy. This pattern is illustrated in the dystopian society in the novel, where fear and uncertainty allow manipulative discourse to operate more effectively. Furthermore, Claire Vaye Watkins frequently explores themes of environmental degradation, displacement, and social instability in her literature. Thus, the discourse of spiritual abuse in the novel can be interpreted as a critique of contemporary social conditions, where ideological power is maintained through emotional manipulation and symbolic authority.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This study concludes that spiritual abuse in the novel *Gold Fame Citrus* is primarily caused by ecological crisis, social instability, psychological vulnerability, fear, and dependence on charismatic authority figures. These conditions create emotional insecurity that allows manipulative spiritual discourse to gain legitimacy and influence. Likewise, this study finds that spiritual abuse is represented through the use of manipulative spiritual language, claims of divine legitimacy, narratives of salvation, coercive moral discourse, and fear-based obedience. Through these discourses, authority figures construct their self-image as morally and spiritually superior, while obedience is presented as necessary for survival, and dissent is viewed as dangerous. Thus, this study successfully addresses the research problem by outlining both the causal factors of spiritual abuse and the discursive strategies employed to maintain ideological control in the novel.

This study's findings provide a theoretical contribution to discourse-based literary studies by demonstrating that spiritual abuse operates as a form of discursive and ideological power closely linked to language, emotion, and social domination in dystopian literature. Practically, this study also raises awareness of how manipulative spiritual discourse can shape psychological dependency and normalize authority in unstable social conditions, and what the root causes of spiritual abuse are.

However, this research has limitations in that its analysis focuses solely on a single literary work and has a primary focus on the representation of discourse within the narrative. Therefore, further research is encouraged to examine spiritual abuse within a broader literary context, conduct comparisons across multiple dystopian texts, or apply other interdisciplinary approaches to more comprehensively explore the relationship between discourse, ideology, and psychological control.

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