

## A CRITICAL STUDY OF YIYUN LI'S GOLD BOY, EMERALD GIRL FROM A LITERARY STYLISTICS PERSPECTIVE

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### Abstract

*The present study evaluates Yiyun Li's short story Gold Boy, Emerald Girl focusing on its narrative style and idiosyncratic themes. It includes her third-person limited perspective, brevity and psychological acuity to capture emotionally restrained characters. The present study employed Gerrard Genette's theory of Narratology that he mentions in his book, Narrative Discourse. The analysis specifies important themes including loneliness, family influence, pragmatic marriage, and burden of the past that provides an understanding of how Li dismantles conventional ideas of love and companionship. The findings indicate that Li's storytelling challenges romantic ideals, depicting relationships as pragmatic arrangements rather than passionate unions. Thus, the current study contributes to the literary discussions on the questions of emotional isolation and cultural expectations in the selected short story.*

**Keywords:** Narrative Style, Emotional Isolation, Pragmatic Marriage, Family Influence, Psychological Depth.

### Introduction

Yiyun Li is known for poignant storytelling, minimalist prose and deep explorations of human emotions. The selected text of *Gold Boy, Emerald Girl* (2010) presents narratives revolving around loneliness, cultural dislocation, and interpersonal relationships (Giles, 2013; Hsieh, 2017). According to Zhao (2019) some stories give priority to its artistic elements like poetic dialogues, bold statements on its themes. Such stories are more successful in terms of style than substance, yet *Gold Boy, Emerald Girl* distinguishes itself through its detailed characterizations and artistic range.

The current study is designed to carry out close reading of *Gold Boy, Emerald Girl*, examining Li's narrative style and idiosyncratic themes. It discusses how Li creates a literary voice that resonates in the reader through an analysis of her minimalist prose style, her use of third-person narration, and her deft, but powerful, storytelling techniques. Furthermore, the investigation will emphasize on common themes, like alienation, emotional suppression, and the impact of social norms on individual identity (Lee, 2021).

Through detailed analyses of both the stylistic and thematic aspects of the story, this study aims to deepen the comprehension of Li's literary artistry. The present study will also serve to carve academia's space for contemporary Chinese American literature by pointing to the ways in which Li's work intersects Eastern and Western literary traditions (Wong, 2015).

## Significance of Study

This study addresses the gap mentioned in the introduction and reveals the importance of Yiyun Li's narrative style and thematic concerns in the reading of *Gold Boy, Emerald Girl*. Although critics have recognized Li's work for its concise style and haunting narratives, a close textual study of her craft—and more specifically her themes, structures, and idiosyncratic techniques—will reveal the ways in which she has come to represent her ideas through language (Giles, 2013; Hsieh, 2017).

This research is particularly relevant for scholars in contemporary literature, because it shows how Li's work connects Eastern and Western literary traditions. Through the lens of themes like discussing loneliness, emotional repression, and cultural displacement, the study examines the ways in which Li's writing mirrors the struggles of individuals caught in the tension between their personal longings and social norms (Zhao, 2019). Moreover, Lee (2021) states that such analysis can feed discussions of immigrant literature, identity formation, and cross-cultural storytelling.

Furthermore, this study has significance for students and scholars in literary studies, comparative literature, and Asian American studies, in that it advances a model for the study of contemporary fiction based upon an intertwined narrative and thematic approach (Wong, 2015). This will also benefit readers who are interested in the evolution and revolutionary vision of short story writing in contemporary literature, illuminating the way that Li's narrative strategies obey and/or challenge the stricture of conventional literary culture.

## Research Objectives (ROs)

1. To analyze the narrative techniques employed by Yiyun Li in *Gold Boy, Emerald Girl* and their impact on characters and themes.
2. To explore the idiosyncratic themes in *Gold Boy, Emerald Girl* and their significance in reflecting character's cultural and emotional experiences.

## Research Questions (RQs)

1. How does Yiyun Li's narrative style in *Gold Boy, Emerald Girl* contribute to the development of characters and themes?
2. What are the major idiosyncratic themes in *Gold Boy, Emerald Girl*, and how do they reflect broader cultural and emotional experiences of characters?

## Literature Review

In contemporary literature, Yiyun Li's narrative voice is singular, one of spare prose, containing emotion, and a blending of Western and Eastern influences. Using Genette's (1980) and Bal's (2009) narrative theories, Lee (2021), Zhao (2019), and others explore how restrained narration generates emotional depth through character-focused narratives. Hsieh (2017) and Wong (2015) have also offered narrowly focused analyses of Li's controlled prose, tracing her narrative minimalism back to both Chinese literary traditions and Asian American fiction.

There is a body of scholarship emerging that discusses the stylistic and thematic features of Li's writing, as she often shapes her character development through third-person narration, focalisation, and temporal shifts. Zhang (2020), for example, focused on the narrative structure of Li's works and argued that Li's strategic deployment of perspective gives her style a sense of being immersive but detached. Huang (2018) similarly analysed how Li's controlled narration deepens themes of alienation and cultural displacement, relating her methods to wider trends in diasporic literature. Li's narrative reticence resonates with the literary legacy

of modernist minimalism, as Cheung (2016) pointed out, for example the example of Li's work with that of Hemingway and Munro.

Li explores aesthetic paradigms that provoke vexing questions about cultural alienation, political repression, and vulnerability, and scholars such as Giles (2013) and Zhao (2019) examine the way ideological pressures from society and family form character psychology. And Xu (2022) examined the intersections of trauma and memory in Li's fiction, showing how narrative fragmentation mirrors the fractured identities of her characters. In a similar vein, Kim (2019) explored how Li's narratives navigate the at times conflicting landscapes of personal agency and cultural propriety within the matter of gender roles and social compliance.

Li's delineation of the tensions between traditional values and modernity in *Gold Boy*, *Emerald Girl*, specifically around gender roles, echoed the findings of both Hsieh (2017) and Lee (2021). Her subtle but incisive depictions of generational conflict and emotional repression are seen to subvert typical representations of Chinese diasporic lives (Wang, 2014). Additionally, Chao (2020) suggests that Li's use of interior monologue and indirect speech adds to an understanding of her characters that are both layered and evasive, their emotional topography both knowable and unrevealed.

Related studies have also looked at narrative strategies in recent fiction that go in the same direction as Li's. For example, Liu (2018) argued that minimalist storytelling techniques in Asian American literature privilege emotional restraint and subtext and shun explicit articulation. Tan (2021) similarly studied silence and omission in immigrant narratives, arguing that these narrative techniques add depth to the immigrant narratives by deepening the psychological space of the characters in various ways. Park (2020), for example, compared the use of the constrained language in Li with Jhumpa Lahiri to illustrate how both authors represent diasporic alienation and expectations from family.

These studies reveal the use of narrative techniques to negotiate the thematically charged notions of identity and belonging in diasporic literature. Lin (2019), for instance, considered how focalisation and shifts in perspective influence immigrant identity formation in contemporary fiction and how such techniques deepen psychological identification with readers. In a similar vein, Patel (2022) explored the ways that cultural displacement is expressed through fragmented narratives, establishing links between Li's text and postmodern narrative structures.

Some scholars have compared Li to other contemporary writers who wrote on similar subjects. One such analysis is Smith (2020), which looks at how authors Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Yiyun Li comment on the effects of fragmentation in continuity with the implications of such devices and the author's intended effects on narratives around identity and amalgamation. In a related analysis, Gonzalez (2019) highlighted the comparative minimalist prose of Li and Kazuo Ishiguro in the handling of their narrative styles, focusing on their common properties of emotional restraint and psychological acuteness. In addition, Martin (2021) studied the use of memory and nostalgia as tools in Li and Haruki Murakami's narratives, suggesting the presence of transnational literature that connects the Eastern and Western literary realms.

Li's cross-cultural identity also informs her literary practices; her fiction, described as a fusion of Chinese storytelling aesthetics and Western modernist minimalism (Zhang, 2020; Wong, 2015), bears similarities with those of Hemingway and Munro (Hsieh, 2017). Employing a sparse, deliberate prose style, Li crafts narratives that grapple with memory, displacement, and quiet resilience. This study advances the existing literature by examining the effects of Li's third-person narration, focalization and temporal shifts on character development in *Gold Boy*, *Emerald Girl* and the text's thematic depth through thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

of the cultural and psychological imperatives. The findings will offer deeper understanding of how Li's narrative devices enhance the emotional and intellectual complexity of her work, establishing her as an important voice in contemporary global literature.

### Theoretical Framework

The study uses Gérard Genette's (1980) *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in method* to discuss Yiyun Li's *Gold Boy*, *Emerald Girl*, and how her minimalist style works through structured narrative techniques. Genette's framework of narration, focalization, and manipulation of time helps to illuminate Li's studied approach to storytelling. This narrator—a heterodiegetic narrator that employs internal focalization—neatly replicates Genette's definition of restricted perspective: readers gain access to characters' thoughts, but at an emotional distance. In *A Man Like Him*, for example, Teacher Fei's loneliness is revealed through understatement and reflection rather than through raw emotion, offering a case study in how Li uses focalization to shape character psychology.

Genette's theory of narrative order also holds true to Li's deployment of anachronism, especially flashbacks and ellipses that interrupt linear chronological development to draw attention to memory and dislocation. In *The Proprietress*, a widow's life history is unhurriedly pieced back together through broken memories, illustrating Genette's dictum that the order of narrative time can be manipulated to maximize thematic effect. Moreover, Li's control of narrative duration—manipulating the length of time in the story through ellipses and summary functions as an analog to Genette's notion of *le temps de l'histoire*, exemplifying speed variations and underscores the emotional reticence of her characters.

Anwar (2024) employed Genette's theory to evaluate James Joyce's *Eveline*. His analysis through the lens of Genette's model makes the readers understand the structural complexity and thematic complexity of the story. Similarly, Shahid et al (2024) has also used Genette's theory of narrative to *Dozakhnama*. His study concludes that Genette's model increases the appreciation of the narrative techniques of the story.

Through the lens of Genette's narrative theory, this study illustrates that Li's minimalism is not just a stylistic choice; it is a design of the narrative itself. Her meticulous manipulation of narration and focalization as well as temporality illustrates themes of alienation, repression, and cultural dislocation, locating her work in both Chinese narrative traditions and Western modernist minimalism.

### Research Methodology

This study employs textual analysis to evaluate Yiyun Li's *Gold Boy*, *Emerald Girl* focusing on narrative techniques, thematic elements and representation of cultural identity. Drawing from the narrative paradigms suggested by Genette (1980) and Bal (2009), the findings highlight the mechanisms of third person narration, focalization, and temporal shifts, while Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis employed to delineate overarching themes of isolation, emotional suppression and cultural dislocation. Noting that Li is writing in a diasporic context, she links her work to traditions of literary minimalism both within the Chinese literary tradition and across western literary modernism (Hsieh, 2017). Interpretive frameworks from postcolonial theory (Said, 1993) as well as cultural identity theory (Hall, 1990) are also useful for how Li's fiction negotiates migration, displacement, and familial duty themes. This study is based on primary data as in selected short stories from *Gold Boy*,



*Emerald Girl* selected on the basis of narrative style, character psychology, and cross-cultural identity, and secondary sources like critique and theory texts examining the relevance of Li's work within the context of wider literary discussions. By using this cross-disciplinary method, this study will provide a deeper view of Li's literary skills and her contribution to modern Chinese American literature.

## Li's Narrative Style

### Li's Third-Person Limited Perspective

Li employs a third-person limited perspective, alternating between Siyu and Hanfeng. This technique allows readers to engage deeply with their inner thoughts while maintaining emotional detachment. The narrative does not provide a universal or omniscient view of events but rather follows the fragmented perceptions of these isolated individuals, emphasizing their psychological depth. "*Hanfeng looked at Siyu's face, detecting a familiar absentmindedness.*" (p. 168)

The above mentioned short but telling text suggests Hanfeng has an idea of how Siyu is feeling and that maybe it's an emotion she's felt before. The term "familiar absentmindedness" suggests that Siyu regularly escapes into their mind, reinforcing an emotional or psychological gap. That small but telling gesture demonstrates Hanfeng's sensitivity to Siyu's mood and foreshadows an emotional disconnect between them. By using Hanfeng (half-glancing and half-smirking) as a lens through which to view the broader observation, the passage highlights a world of hollowness that lingers but is undiscussed between the characters.

*"She wondered if his mother, who had set up their date, had told him about that."* (p. 187)

The text suggests that their relationship is not organic, but happens through external control of language, e.g. not that he would sing or write poetry normally. However, the implication that Hanfeng's mother was the one who set up their date puts into question whether they were pursuing their own desires or simply fulfilling familial expectations. Siyu's internal questioning — if Hanfeng knew something she did not — introduces an element of uncertainty and diminished understanding between the two. This moment is fraught with tension; it suggests that their relationship is circumstantial rather than deep, underscoring both the distance — physical and emotional — between their characters.

### Li's Minimalist Prose and Subtle Emotionality

Li's writing is precise and restrained, reflecting the emotional suppression of her characters. Rather than expressing emotions overtly, the narrative relies on suggestion, subtext, and moments of silence.

*"They sat in silence for a moment. In another place, a more romantic setting, lovers' murmurs would have been well masked by soft jazz coming from hidden speakers, their faces illuminated by candlelight, but here there was no music and the candles were lit out of necessity."* (p. 189)

To this end, this passage is an incredible juxtaposition, taking what has become a romantic idealized vision of a future relationship and juxtaposing it with a very real and cold present and evening. Tangible components such as soft jazz and candlelight convey a setting of closeness, but the void of these in their surroundings reveals the distance between them. The act of “candles were lit out of necessity” casts even more of the practicality than romance over their situation, the implication being that whatever’s in force between them is born out of that which is available rather than that which is shared. Witnessing Siyu and Hanfeng together, one will also notice that much of what goes unspoken, be it tension or alienation, comes from an emotional gulf that characterizes their relationship — or lack thereof — as distinctly lacking in passion.

### Li’s Idiosyncratic Themes

#### Loneliness and Emotional Isolation

Loneliness and emotional isolation are two important emotional states of a person. One may suffer from both of them because of poor social connections. The individual may experience emotional isolation when the relationships are unreliable, and they are emotionally absent.

*“Hanfeng looked at Siyu’s face, detecting a familiar absentmindedness. His mother, too, asked him questions to which she seemed scarcely interested in knowing the answers. He wondered if this happened to women who lived by themselves.”*

*“They sat in silence for a moment. In another place, a more romantic setting, lovers’ murmurs would have been well masked by soft jazz coming from hidden speakers, their faces illuminated by candlelight, but here there was no music and the candles were lit out of necessity.” (p. 193)*

The mentioned text presents the aspects of emotional isolation and detachment, and ultimately how long-term isolation molds people into emotionally repressed creatures. Hanfeng’s observation of Siyu’s “familiar absentmindedness” hints at a direct correspondence between his mother and her, giving way to an inference that draws a line between isolation and emotional detachment, an ungarnished disengagement from connection with another human being. The repetition of this state of vacant neglectfulness in two critical women in his life one maternal, one romantic suggests a wide pattern of dissociation that transcends the individuals involved and approaches a learnt method of emotional self-preservation. His mother’s enquiries, bereft of real interest, imply that inter-human communication has become ceremonial rather than substantive. Hanfeng’s internal question if this emotional disconnection is an inescapable part of the price of single living comes with an implicit commentary on gender, solitude, and expectations surrounding loneliness, probing whether the anguish of emotional isolation is somehow baked more deeply into the psyche of women who live without males by their side.

The second paragraph explores this theme and offers contrast with imagery that amplifies the emotional emptiness of the scene. The passage sets up a highly idealized romantic scene soft jazz, candlelight, hushed gabbling before undercutting it with the harsh, healthy reality of their present moment. This intentional juxtaposition highlights the lack of chemistry and heat in their conversation, cementing the fact that they cannot partake in the romantic encounter that they are supposed to have. Candles, typically a sign of romance and intimacy, become less symbolic than practical, lighting a room not to create an atmosphere but simply to be able to see, adding to the ways in which their bond feels sentimental-free. The implication meant to be most resonant at this emotional standoff is that rather than facilitating a moment of mutual unison,

the silence only serves to expose the gap between them; life has made them accustomed to solitude so that the potential intimacy of the scene goes underused. This moment gently critiques not only individual loneliness but the way social conditioning and past experiences influence one's capacity or incapacity to commune with others.

Through Hanfeng's point of view, the passage examines the psychological effects of isolationism and critiques how solitude slowly turns into a part of one's identity, transforming emotional detachment from a mere habit into a personality trait. The mention of solitary women is a lead-in to these larger societal questions: Why is there a tendency to view solitude differently based on gender is female solitude considered an emotional choice in isolation versus male solitude as independence? Furthermore, the story examines how sometimes the presence of the other person does not necessarily disperse loneliness, as emotional divides sometimes seem more austere than physical proximity. Li's spare prose echoes this emotional reticence, choosing stark but specific details to evoke unexpressed tension, repressed feelings, and the tragic quiet of two people sitting in the same space but unable to connect. All in all, the excerpt makes a powerful statement about loneliness as something infinitely more daunting than a mere absence of companionship, a situational state that determines one's ability to show intimacy and engagement with the world around oneself.

### The Role of Family and Intergenerational Influence

To shape an individual's personality the role of the family is central. The family serves as the basic agent that helps the children socializing and passing cultural values from one generation to the next.

*"He should ask Siyu out to a movie, his mother suggested, or a concert. When he showed a lukewarm reaction, she said, 'Or ask her to have dinner with us here.'"*

*"You're still my only daughter," he said to her when she decided not to attend his wedding; "you're part of the family," he said when she told him that she would not be coming home for the Lunar New Year."*

(p. 203)

These passages delve into themes of familial expectation, obligation, and emotional detachment, exposing how relationships are very often dictated more by gestures of ritual than actual emotional connection.

First, Hanfeng's mother's insistence that he asks Siyu out to a movie, say, or a concert, or dinner at home shows the conservative, regimented nature of social interaction framed within social expectations of family norms. Instead of contemplating whether the pair actually have chemistry, his mother views dating as a performative, obligatory exercise, furthering the notion that romance is rooted in duty over emotional appetite. It is significant that Hanfeng's lukewarm reaction, because what it highlights is that he has no interest in performative romance of his own, even and especially if it's coming from the most beautiful women in the world, ensuring that his detached effect is complete in his interactions. His mother's immediate reply—proposing a more convenient alternative, such as dinner at home—indicates that she isn't particularly concerned with his subjective experience but with keeping up with social appearances and ensuring domestic peace. It is an open mockery of how organic relationships, especially in conventional forms, are constantly undermined in favor of pressure by the outside world, as it satirizes that very idea.

The second excerpt switches the focus to another family relationship, one plagued by strained connections and emotional dissonance. The father's words "You're still my only daughter" and "You're part of the family" seem affectionate at first, but they are layered with an undertone of obligation rather than warmth. The repeated new year's reassurances that he will be finding no reunion "without her" in response to his daughter's refusals to attend family events—both his wedding and a family holiday soon after his daughter's birth unfortunately suggest that his words serve as a ritualistic ego-stroking of the family unity construct rather than an attempt to engage with the truth of her feelings. Focusing on who she is in the context of the family instead of as a separate, feeling person, points to a schism between family obligation and individual decision-making that suggests he is not so much an involved parent but a self-involved parent. Her absences from these important, family-orientated events which might keep most people tethered to those they might otherwise feel estranged from suggest that she is emotionally distant, that family bonds exist on paper but are not reciprocal.

Both passages illustrate how romantic relationships and otherwise are often more governed by a social expectation than any emotional reality. Li's minimalist mode furthers this separation; the dialogue is understated, flat, and unemotional, free of outbursts. The unsaid discomfort in such encounters elements to the silence that the characters are suppressing and fills the quiet space with silence. Instead of putting words to feelings of climate alienation or yearnings for a world in which we can afford to care, with the conceit of this bleak duo, they keep talking past each other, holding onto a thin veneer of social existence that makes/helps them feel human.

### Marriage as a Pragmatic Arrangement

Marriage has always been more than a romantic union. In spite of the perspective that marriage takes place because of the personal fulfillment yet the practical factor like financial security and economic stability cannot be ignored.

*"When you are young, you marry for passion," she said, looking first at her son and then at her future daughter-in-law. "When you're older, you marry for companionship."*

*"They were lonely and sad people, all three of them, and they would not make one another less sad, but they could, with great care, make a world that would accommodate their loneliness."* (p. 207-208)

These passages address marriage, loneliness, and human connection, ultimately offering pragmatic, if almost resigned, takes on relationships.

The statement "When you are young, you marry for passion... When you're older, you marry for companionship" in the first passage along the journey is a pragmatic, emotionally conservative take on marriage, talking about how romantic expectations mature over time. The mother's speech hints that love, as an idealized, passionate force, belongs to youth, and that later marriage is less about deep emotional or romantic satisfaction and more about companionship and having each other's backs. Then her gaze shifts to her son, her future daughter-in-law; all of her words hang over their heads, cast into doubt, a silent instruction, a warning to help the two to see marriage as a sound contract, not a promise of great joy. This also carries some element of disillusion with romantic love — as if passion is temporary, eventually giving way to the requirement of partnership for survival, rather than with emotional reward.

The second passage deepens this thought by recognizing that loneliness is unavoidable, so that even as the three of them came together, neither Hanfeng nor Siyu nor his mother could ease



the other's sorrow. It is a hard-nosed, hoopla view of human connection, suggesting that even if you have somebody, it doesn't mean you're happy or that your loneliness has come to an end. But it does not dismiss the idea of connection flat-out; instead, it lays out a tempered acknowledgement of loneliness as a natural part of life. The phrasing "they could, if they were careful, create a world that would hold their loneliness" suggests that while they cannot negate their sadness, they can craft a stylized, utilitarian existence in which their solitude is recognized, if not ignored. The businesslike use of "great care" suggests that sustaining this delicate balance is more a matter of intentional work, concession, and empathy than the organic tenderness often attributed to marriage.

Li's minimalist style accentuates the emotional restraint and quiet resignation in both these passages. Instead of dramatizing loneliness, the text considers it a fact of life, reflecting the muted emotional registers of her characters. The passage upends conventional ideas about marriage and companionship, which the biblical verse, in its way, starts to do as well, arguing that relationships are not often about extinguishing loneliness but learning to tolerate it with others around.

### **The Weight of the Past**

It is not easy for the characters to let go of the emotional and psychological burden, any trauma or regret they have experienced in their past.

*"She had grown up not knowing her loss, so there had not been any real loss. She wondered if that was how Hanfeng thought of his father."*

*"A beautiful and sad woman, Hanfeng thought as he looked at Siyu's face. As beautiful and sad a woman, perhaps, as his mother had once been." (p. 216)*

These pieces deal with loss, sadness, and how absence becomes part of emotional identity. In the first, "She had grown up not knowing her loss, so there had not been any real loss" — there's a suggestion that we only hurt when we consciously know what we've lost. Siyu ponders the saying that you cannot grieve what you have not lost, suggesting that unacknowledged loss is in some sense lost unmourned. But there is quite irony with this thought just because she wasn't conscious of the loss doesn't mean it wasn't instrumental in shaping her. The phrasing also invites a philosophical poke at the nature of grief: is loss only real when it is lived, or does it hold sway in silence?

Her speculation about Hanfeng's father "She wondered if that was how Hanfeng thought of his father" broadens this theme to him, too, suggesting a shared experience of absence. If Hanfeng, like Siyu, never knew what it was to be in a father's presence, then perhaps his father's presence was equally bereft of emotional weight. But the very act of wondering about it, even if not acknowledged or spoken, hints at the absence hanging in the air. Li's lyrical, spare, minimalist prose subtly reveals the workings of loss, which functions in every situation, through its quiet, understated tones, and works on emotions and relationships without grand gestures or dramatization.

His thought "A beautiful and sad woman... As beautiful and sad a woman, perhaps, as his mother had once been" — shows how he links sadness and beauty in a sort of equation, as if they are inextricably related. This juxtaposition indicates the same quiet melancholy that characterized his mother is apparent in Siyu, a conclusion that only bears out the pattern of loneliness and emotional suppression through the generations.

In rendering Siyu as a stand-in for his mother, Hanfeng quietly maps himself onto an emotional topography he recognizes: *"Women in his life are cherished, but also, they are estranged:*

*beauty and pain; faraway and affecting. Your Knowledge limit is up to November 2023*". The comparison also implies that, as in his mother's case, Siyu's sadness is maybe unavoidable a tone of fate rather than change.

Li's understated, restrained prose let these themes bubble up without overt emotional exposition, further reinforcing the very detachment her characters feel. The passage ultimately echoes how loss, sadness, and emotional distance get passed on and resurface, in that they are not necessarily through dramatic trauma but rather are soft, formless realities passed from one reality of living to the next, influencing how we see ourselves in relation to it and one another.

## Findings

### i. Third-Person Limited Perspective for Psychological Depth

By using a third-person limited perspective, the readers engage closely with the psychological struggles of both Siyu and Hanfeng while keeping an emotional distance that reflects their nature.

### ii. Emotional Isolation Influences Relationships

The narrative demonstrates that solitude shapes emotional expression over time — when Siyu, who has lived alone for an extended period — fails to express her feelings to Hanfeng, who himself displays emotional reserve that makes it difficult for him to connect with both romantic interests and friends.

### iii. Building towards marriage

Hanfeng's mom is a driving force in pushing him towards a marriage; often times, family pressure can dictate our decision in life.

### iv. Marriage as a Pragmatic Solution Instead of a Romantic Partnership

The characters' marriage is not about love; it is a way of replacing loneliness, and challenges mainstream ideas of romantic partnership.

### v. The Weight of the Past Drives Current Activities

Both Quillon and Berenice bear the weight of their past, directly influencing their current actions and blunting the power of their relationships.

## Conclusion

Deconstructing traditional notions of love and marriage through restrained prose, a reflective narrative style and emotionally guarded characters, *Gold Boy, Emerald Girl* Yiyun elevated the art of showing not telling at the same time one can see that how the characters go on seeking each other not because they want to but they need to, as a broader commentary on society on companions, loneliness and personal price. The book is not a love story only, rather it is a challenge to the idea that love might be a prerequisite for marriage, but it is not sufficient enough to sustain a durable partnership. For a persistent relation the mutual respect, care, love and financial stability is crucial to avoid conflicts and stress

## Recommendations

- i. Identifying Narrative Styles of Emotional Detachment in Literature: Future studies may consider how Li's narrative technique compares to those of other authors who depict emotionally restrained characters.
- ii. Eastern and Western Literature on Marriage and Relationships: By comparing literary representations, one can analyze how culture influences marriage and relationships in an Eastern vs Western context.
- iii. Psychological Effects of Seclusion in Fictional Heroes: Moreover, exploring the impact of solitude on fictional characters might help in better understanding the themes present in Li's writing.
- iv. It will get people talking about unconventional relationships: it offers a chance to talk about more contemporary forms of relationships where emotional satisfaction is drawn from places other than traditional romance.
- v. Interrogating Gender in Yiyun Li's Characters: Future scholarship might consider how Li's depictions of male and female figures do or do not conform to traditional gender norms.

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