

Yijun Liu

What is *she*?

For every extra boy gaining literacy,
She's the GDI's lost equity.
In the market where wages are unfairly balanced,
She becomes a problem, left unchallenged.

For chores that vanish in the dark,
She's the unpaid labor, society's shameful mark.
In homes that safety is but wishful dreams,
She becomes the news that the media streams.

For medical research labs favoring males' deeds,
She's the outlier in the statistics.
In closed clinics, her choices recede,
She becomes a doll for politicians to mislead.

Is it *she*, or is it "secondary-he"?
Society assigned roles that shouldn't be.
Gender, class, race, a complex weave,
A trap so tight, *she* struggles to escape.

Reflection

As someone passionate about feminism, this poem largely draws inspiration from my prior readings and societal insights, and class materials from a Women and Gender Studies class. Particularly, Maya Angelou's poem "Still I Rise" inspired me the most. When I thought about feminist poems, I thought of this poem. It addressed the oppression women endure while persevering with resilience. I sought to channel a similar power in my work. My objective was to create a poem that encourages all women, especially those in privileged positions, to empathize with and recognize the gender inequalities pervasive in society. Thus, I mentioned several critical social gender issues in the poems from different perspectives, aiming to be able to resonate with a large population. Moreover, the events/issues mentioned in the poem are easy to quantify or visualize. In crafting the poem, I integrated figurative descriptions, personification, metaphors, and symbolism to evoke emotional responses from the reader. Specifically, I employed the italicized "she" as a symbol for women throughout the poem. The poem's title, "What is She", also stresses that how women are objectified in society. The poem follows an AABB rhyme scheme, with rhyming pairs at the end of each stanza, conveying a musical quality to the verses. Additionally, in the poem, the term "secondary-he" originates from Simone de Beauvoir's seminal work, "The Second Sex," which is one of my favorite feminist texts. In this context, "The Second Sex" refers to females.