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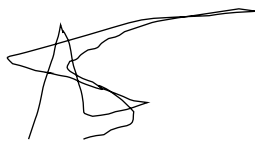
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# Fourth Wave Feminism In Contemporary Poetics

The Crossing of Categorical Boundaries.

**Universiteit Utrecht**



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### **Abstract**

This thesis argues that primary defining characteristic of how fourth-wave feminism aligns with contemporary poetics appears to be the deliberate and strategic crossing of categorical boundaries; this occurs on multiple levels, both in form and in content: from publication platforms, to nationhood, to individual physical bodies including body image. In order to do this, this thesis investigated nine poets on all three levels.

To investigate the level of platforms this thesis will investigate Caroline Kaufman, Nikita Gill and Blythe Baird. To investigate the different nations, this thesis will focus on Rupi Kaur, Lang Leav and Yrsa Daley-Ward. To investigate the issues surrounding body and body image this thesis will look into poets Amanda Lovelace, Laurie Clements Lambeth and Ryka Aoki. This is done in order to find out how their poems align with fourth-wave feminism in order to conclude and point out how they cross these categorical boundaries.

Despite the differences of all the poems, one main message can be found that aligns with fourth-wave feminism: in a world where females and their qualities are still subordinated to males and their qualities, women have to stand together as one united group. A group where everyone is equal, a group where everyone has a voice. Women should stand and be seen as a united group instead of being torn down by their differences and the inequality between these differences.

## **Table of Contents**

### 1. Introduction

1.1: Introduction to the thesis: research question, organization & methodology

1.2: The fourth wave of feminism: a definition

1.3: How does the fourth wave differ from the previous waves?

### 2. Platforms, nations & bodies

#### 2.1: Platforms

2.1.1: printed collections: Caroline Kaufman

2.1.2: social media: Komal Kapoor

2.1.2: spoken word: Blythe Baird

#### 2.2: Nations

2.2.1: Rupi Kaur

2.2.2: Lang Leav

2.2.3: Yrsa Daley-Ward

#### 2.3: Bodies & body image

2.3.1: Amanda Lovelace

2.3.2: Laurie Clements Lambeth

2.3.3: Ryka Aoki

### 3. Conclusion

3.1: How fourth-wave feminism aligns with contemporary poetry

3.2: Discussion: the deliberate and strategic crossing of categorical boundaries

### 4. Bibliography

## Chapter 1: Introduction

### 1.1: Introduction to the thesis: research topic, organization and methodology

In this thesis I will investigate varying manifestations of fourth-wave feminism in contemporary poetry. Through this survey of emerging young poets whose work was produced from 2010 up until the present, this thesis will argue that primary defining characteristic of how fourth-wave feminism aligns with contemporary poetics appears to be the deliberate and strategic crossing of categorical boundaries; this occurs on multiple levels, both in form and in content: from publication platforms, to nationhood, to individual physical bodies including body image.

As this is a thesis about upcoming, new poets, as well as a thesis on the very current and still developing fourth wave of feminism, there is a lack of academic literature about these topics. Therefore, to argue this statement, I will be investigating primary sources; I will be close reading several poets' work as well as relevant popular criticism and commentary on these works in order to provide a more scholarly background on how to situate these poets according to both literary and feminist history.

This thesis will attempt to focus on three key elements of the fourth wave of feminism.

#### 1. Platform

As previously noted, characterising for this wave is its use of social media to convey and spread a message. Therefore this thesis will not only focus on the published works of feminist poets, but also the non-published poets or the spoken word poets. Poets used in this thesis to clarify this topic are Caroline Kaufman, Nikita Gill and Blythe Baird.

#### 2. Nations

A term often used in the fourth wave of feminism is 'white feminism'. It is a term to describe feminist ideas and theories that focus only on white women, without addressing ethnic minority women (Cargle). This chapter will focus on poets of different ethnic backgrounds

and highlight their issues, struggles and the way they see feminism. Poets used in this thesis to clarify this topic are Rupi Kaur, Lang Leav and Yrsa Daley-Ward.

### 3. Body & body image

Lastly, this chapter will explore the issue of body image in poetry in relation to feminism. The toxic belief that women should conform to a certain body type is still alive, even in 2019.

How do different women handle this issue? How do transgender women or disabled women experience this? Poets used in this thesis to clarify this topic are Amanda Lovelace, Laurie Clements Lambeth and Ryka Aoki.

#### 1.2: The fourth wave of feminism: a definition

The fourth wave of feminism is the most recent wave of feminism. It is difficult to determine the exact year it started, as it is an ongoing period defined by a shared ideology. It is still forming itself.

Characteristic, however, to this wave is the use and importance of social media to spread a message. Therefore, the focus of the fourth wave of feminism, in comparison to the previous three, has moved from politicians and other publicly significant women, to a broader, more diverse range of people with a focus on everyday experiences of gender disparity (Rampta, 6). At first it focused on issues surrounding rape culture and sexual harassment (Munro). A well-known example is the #MeToo movement or the *Carry That Weight* performance. These two movements both attempt to fight issues such as sexual harassment and assault by speaking up and raising awareness about them. Another key issue in this wave is intersectionality, which results in the importance of being inclusionary to all women (minorities such as women of colour, disabled women and queer women) in this wave of feminism (Munro). In addition to this, key topics and issues frequently raised by fourth-wave feminists include slut-shaming, unequal pay and the pressure to conform to an

unrealistic body image or an unrealistic and limiting code of conduct (Rampta, 6); the idea that women and girls should behave a certain way; a soft, delicate and sweet way. Fourth wave feminism, lastly, attempts to encourage and motivate women to support each and stand together.

### 1.3: How does the fourth wave differ from the previous waves of feminism?

The first wave of feminism focused mostly on property ownership and the right for women to vote (Munro). The Suffragette movement is a famous example that clearly states what first-wave feminism stood for. Suffragettes stood for a more feminine way of politics and wanted women to have the right to vote (Crawford, 1-5).

The second wave , which started around the 1960's and lasted up until the 1990's (Rampta, 3), emphasized the idea that 'the personal is political' (Munro). This meant that this wave focused more on the personal and private side of feminism, rather than the public side of it, as previously done in the first wave. Aside from the right to vote and the right to own property, second-wave feminist also emphasized the importance of a woman's personal life. Sexuality and reproductive rights were important topics. The second wave also emphasized the importance of breaking down existing gender stereotypes and therefore explaining that feminism was not only a movement meant for women, but also for men (Munro). Feminism is not the process of taking down men, it is the process of creating equality between men and women. This idea was brought to the public with a protest against the Miss America pageant in Atlantic City in 1968 and 1969. Many women thought of these pageants as degrading and were convinced that these contests promoted the objectification of women and that the idea of being beautiful was a woman's only concern. This resulted in the destruction of "oppressive" feminine objects such as bras, high-heels and make up (Rampta, 3). This differs from the fourth wave in the sense that nowadays we would emphasize the fact that women can choose



whether to compete in pageants and wear these ‘oppressive’ objects. Whether a woman wants to wear make up and high heels, or she prefers to keep it simple and natural, it is her own choice. Another issue, however, that many fourth wave feminists have with the second wave, and thus a way in which this wave differs from the fourth wave, is its homogeneity and therefore its lack of intersectionality (Munro).

The third wave of feminism derived many of its key concepts and values from academic investigations of queer theory. Queer theory explains and emphasizes that gender and sexuality are fluid and are not so easily defined as ‘male’ and ‘female’ (Munro); it is a spectrum rather than two opposing terms. More understanding for bisexual and trans people was a key factor for this wave. However, it still differs from the fourth wave in the sense that the third wave was mainly focused on the individual and changing ones personal and own life, rather than making it a public issue in the attempt of making a difference for everyone involved, as done in the fourth wave (Munro). An aspect of the third wave that does agree with the fourth wave is the involvement of *young* feminists. Feminists who, as Rampta stated it, proudly flaunt their ‘lip-stick, high-heels, and cleavage’ (Rampta, 4). Whereas the second wave would have thought of this as male oppression, the third and fourth wave would have seen this as an honest expression of ones femininity. ‘It’s possible to have a push-up bra and a brain at the same time’ (Rampta, 4).

Another side of third-wave feminism is the rise of cultural feminism; feminism becoming popular in art, literature, film and tv. Some view this side as a positive side effect from feminism, others, however do not. As mentioned in an article by Taylor and Rupp, cultural feminism has only lead to the polarisation of genders and an attack on lesbian feminism, which they define as ‘a variety of beliefs and practices based on the core assumption that a connection exists between an erotic and/or emotional commitment to women and political resistance to patriarchal domination (Taylor and Rupp, 33).’

## **Chapter 2: Platforms, nations & bodies**

### 2.1: platforms

A new and key element to fourth-wave feminism is its use of social media and the internet to spread a message. As previously noted, the focus of the fourth wave of feminism, in comparison to the previous three, has moved from politicians and other publicly significant women, to a broader, more diverse range of people (Rampta, 6). This chapter will highlight three different platforms on which to share poetry: printed collections by Caroline Kaufman, social media, in particular the Instagram account by poet Nikita Gill and spoken word performances by Blythe Baird, which can be found on YouTube. This chapter will highlight the messages these poets want to convey by sharing their work.

### 2.1.1: printed collections: Caroline Kaufman

20 year old poet Caroline Kaufman was only a high school freshman when she first started writing and posting her poetry online. Using Instagram as her platform, she quickly grew out to be the poet she is today (CarolineKaufman.net); a young woman writing about her own experience with mental illness, growing up and feminism. The following poem was featured in her debut poetry collection *Light Filters In: Poems*.

I am not pretty.

I have never been pure

or soft

or sweet.

I am beautiful.

dirt still on my shoulders

as I rise from the ground.

scars forming and healing

like galaxies on my skin.

I am beautiful

in the way I fought back

when I was buried.

I turned the dirt and mud into soil,

and grew.

(Kaufman, 208)

Kaufman makes clever use of an extended metaphor in which she attempts to compare the speaker to a flower. She uses this metaphor to emphasize how the flower was once buried as a seed but was strong enough to rise from the ground and grow into the beautiful plant it now is. In the second and third verse she emphasizes that its beauty does not come from its looks, but from the battle it fought to grow.

Several ways are possible for interpreting this poem. One could argue it is about overcoming mental illness, like many of the poems in this collection. However, closely looking at the first verse, one could argue for a feminist theme as well. The first verse could point to the unrealistic and limiting code of conduct mentioned in the first chapter. Kaufman explains that she, or the speaker, never managed to conform to the idea of women being pretty, pure, soft or sweet. Instead she explains she is beautiful, not necessarily in the way she appears, but rather in the way she fought, perhaps against a patriarchal society in which she felt pressured to be pretty, pure, soft and sweet. It is not a woman's looks that make her beautiful, it are the battles she fought and the strength she needed in order to do so.

2.1.2: social media: Nikita Gill

Using mostly the social media platforms Tumblr and Instagram, Nikita Gill has gained a large worldwide following for her poems. Like many of her poems, the following speaks clearly of feminism.

How dare you tell me 'I am not like most girls',  
when those 'girls' you refer to  
are my sisters and mothers, my friends,  
the very solace and the kindness I have sought  
when the worst things in my life have happened?

How dare you assume  
I should take that as a compliment,  
and beam at you like it is praise  
when you are alienating me  
from the very core  
of my proudly female being?

There are a thousand ways  
to tell me you love me,  
and making my sisters small  
to make me big

isn't one of them.

Tell me you love me, but not because I am different.

Tell me you love me, just because you do.

(Gill, *You Aren't Like Most Girls*)

By writing this poem Gill attempts to highlight the aspect of fourth-wave feminism in which women try to seek comfort and strength in unity. It engages with the idea of 'girls supporting girls'.

By writing the second verse, in which she writes about 'the very core of my proudly female being' (Gill), she not only emphasizes her pride for being a woman, she also criticizes those who believe that it is wrong to 'be like most girls'. By saying that someone should not be like most girls, one simply says that most girls are wrong or behave in such a way that is considered subordinate.

The feminist message of the poem becomes even more clear in the third verse where she writes 'there are a thousand ways to tell me you love me, and making my sisters small to make me big isn't one of them' (Gill). This specific sentence aligns with the fourth-wave idea that, in order to grow, women should not be tearing each other down, but rather, should help each other so we can all grow together.

### 2.1.3: spoken word: Blythe Baird

23 year old Blythe Baird is best known for her spoken word performances. Her poetry does not shy away from topics like sexual harassment or feminism. The following fragments are from a written version of her spoken word poetry performance *Pocket-Sized Feminism* during the Button Poetry Live poetry slam in 2016 (Button Poetry).

The poem mentions the fourth-wave feminist issue of sexual assault and the so called rape culture fourth-wave feminists believe we currently live in. The following fragment mentions a few methods women use in order to protect themselves from this culture.

There are days I forget we had to invent  
nail polish to change color in drugged  
drinks and apps to virtually walk us home  
and lipstick shaped mace and underwear designed to prevent rape.

(...)

Once, my dad informed me sexism  
is dead and reminded me to always  
carry pepper spray in the same breath.

We accept this state of constant fear  
as just another component of being a girl.

We text each other when we get home  
safe and it does not occur to us that  
not all of our guy friends have to do the same.

(Baird, *Pocket-Sized Feminism*)

By saying that there are days where she forgets these methods (Baird) she expresses how normalized they have become and therefore, how normalized sexual assault and rape have become in our culture. We have accepted that these issues are part of the daily lives of many

girls. As said in this poem ‘we accept this state of constant fear as just another component of being a girl’ (Baird). By saying this Baird emphasizes how sexism has become a common part of our lives and instead of trying to change that, we have all just accepted it.

Baird also touches upon the issue of being too afraid to speak up when feminism is brought up in conversation and therefore she wonders whether or not she is part of the problem.

Once an adult man made a necklace  
 out of his hands for me and  
 I still wake up in hot sweats  
 haunted with images of the hurt  
 of girls he assaulted after I didn’t report,  
 all younger than me.  
 How am I to forgive myself for doing  
 nothing in the mouth of trauma?  
 Is silence not an act of violence too?  
 (Baird, *Pocket-Sized Feminism*)

This fragment could be seen as a clear example of the issue movements such as #MeToo and *Carry That Weight* are trying to raise awareness for.

Lastly, Baird finishes her performance by raising another fourth-wave feminist issue: the difference in upbringing between boys and girls. She explains how girls are always taught to be careful and to look after themselves and each other, whereas boys were never told to do such things, which, in itself, points directly towards the gender inequality that is still an issue. It is not wrong that parents tell their daughters to be careful, it is wrong that they still have to.

We are the daughters  
 of men who warned us about the news



and the missing girls on the milk carton

and the sharp edge of the world.

They begged us to be careful. To be safe.

Then told our brothers to go out and play.

(Baird, *Pocket-Sized Feminism*)

## 2.2: Nations

Intersectionality is a key concept in fourth-wave feminism. The idea that feminism should be inclusive and open to *all* women is becoming more and more significant (Munro). This chapter will focus on poets of different ethnic backgrounds and highlight their issues, struggles and the way they see feminism. Poets used in this thesis to clarify this topic are Rupi Kaur, Lang Leav and Yrsa Daley-Ward.

### 2.2.1: Rupi Kaur

Rupi Kaur was born in India in Munak Kalan, but moved to Canada at a young age. Despite her young age, language was still a major issue for her and she often found herself isolated and alone due to her lack of knowledge of the English language. That is why her mother had taught her to use art to ‘pour her heart out’ and that is what she did (Minasian). Her poems tell the honest story of sexual assault, feminism, love and what it is like being an Indian-Canadian woman. The following poem is a love poem, but when closely looking into the last two lines, a hint towards bilingualism can be found.

i'd be lying if i said  
 you make me speechless  
 the truth is you make my  
 tongue so weak it forgets  
 what language to speak in.

(Kaur, 61)

When Kaur explains that ‘her tongue forgets what language to speak in’ (Kaur) it might refer to her struggle with the Canadian language. As previously mentioned, not being able to speak the language of her new country as well as the people around her, had a significant impact on her life. Aside from that, being bilingual often comes with the issue of mixing up both languages or not knowing when to speak which language. Perhaps that is the second message Kaur is trying to bring across with this poem.

The following poem brings across an especially powerful message relating to both feminism, beauty and being a woman of colour.

my issue with what they consider beautiful

is their concept of beauty

centers around excluding people

i find hair beautiful

when a woman wears it

like a garden on her skin

that is the definition of beauty

big hooked noses

pointing upward to the sky

like they're rising

to the occasion

skin the color of earth

my ancestors planted crops on

to feed a lineage of women with

thighs thick as tree trunks

eyes like almonds

deeply hooded with conviction

the rivers of punjab

flow through my bloodstream so

don't tell me my women

aren't as beautiful

as the ones in

your country.

(Kaur, 170)

It is first of all important to note that to this day, white models are still dominating the beauty and fashion industry. According to a report from 2018, 82.7% of the models at New York's Fashion Week were white that year (Summer). No wonder the world starts to believe that being white equals being beautiful.

In this poem Kaur mentions this issue and corrects those who believe the previously stated idea of beauty. She paints a picture of what women in her country look like to open a reader's eyes to the exclusion of women of colour in the idea of beauty.

Especially the last four lines perfectly sum up intersectionality. Kaur does not attempt to bring down white women, instead, she attempts to lift women of colour to a level where their beauty is also appreciated. In an interview, Kaur had said that she believes that Indian women have a lot to unlearn and learn. 'Maybe unlearn the idea that they are not beautiful enough, that their skin colour is not good enough or their bodies aren't nice enough' (Magan).

### 2.2.2: Lang Leav

Born in a Thai refugee camp and now living in Sydney, Australia: Lang Leav is a poet who does not shy away from messages about loss, love and female empowerment (LangLeav.com).

#### **Woman's Anthem**

Women are fierce. They are powerful. No matter what language they speak, how they dress, or the work they choose to do. What matters is they have a choice, and the freedom to carve out a life for themselves.

As long as we know women who are strong and resilient, we must respect them, carry them forward, lift them up.

For they are the product of all our other selves, the women we were, the ones we strive to be, the collective struggle of our mothers, our sisters, our daughters.

Our salvation will only come if we stand together”

(Leav, Love Looks Pretty on You)

The way she speaks of women as being fierce and powerful is an obvious feminist message. The second and third line also align with the general idea of feminism: women need to be able to choose for themselves what it is they want to do, and who it is they want to be. It is, however, the first, second and last line, that makes this poem interesting when it comes to intersectionality. The first and second line emphasize the importance of including *all* women, no matter their language. The last line only adds to this: feminism will only work if we *all* stand together, not just white women, but all women.

### 2.2.3: Yrsa Daley-Ward

Born with a West Indian and West African heritage, Yrsa Daley-Ward is now living in both London and Los Angeles (yrsadaleyward.net). The following poem is one from her debut poetry collection *Bones* and talks openly of the struggles she conquers being a woman of colour.

According to you,  
  
people like me  
  
shouldn't go into places like this or  
  
be around people like these  
  
but you don't know the half of it.  
  
The brightest of stars, frankly,  
  
are just a load of hot air and  
  
diamonds, sadly,  
  
were just formed from dust and  
  
rock  
  
and the butterfly,  
  
remember,  
  
used to crawl on its belly  
  
and tiny legs  
  
through the dirt.

(Daley-Ward, 14)

The second line of the poem can be interpreted as a direct reference to racism that many people of colour experience every day. The inappropriate phrase 'people like you' is often used to refer to people of colour in a disrespectful way (Quinn). This might have been what Daley-Ward was referring to in this line. The power of this poem comes from how she proves these people wrong. She uses the metaphor of stars, butterflies and diamonds to explain how even the most beautiful creations, started out in the rough, so perhaps people should not be so quick to judge.



### 2.3: Bodies & body image

The last characteristic of fourth-wave feminism I will investigate are individual physical bodies and the way they are perceived. To this day, the idea of beauty is still based on an unrealistic ideal. This chapter will explore the issue of body image in poetry in relation to feminism. How do different women handle this issue and how is this issue portrayed in contemporary poetry? Poets used in this chapter to further investigate this topic are Amanda Lovelace, Laurie Clements Lambeth and Ryka Aoki.

### 2.3.1: Amanda Lovelace

American poet Amanda Lovelace uses her poetry as a way of rebellion. Writing about feminism, love and selflove, she attempts to empower her reader. Dominant topics discussed in her works are body image and eating disorders. The following poem is no exception to this.

(...)  
 for an entire year,  
 food barely passed  
 through my lips.  
 i did not even allow myself  
 to take a sip of water  
 because i wanted to be  
 so thin that i  
 could blow away  
 with the slightest breeze –  
 d i s a p p e a r .  
 (...)

- *everybody told me how good i looked, though.*

(Lovelace, The Princess Saves Herself In This One, 14)

The line that clearly states the issue fourth-wave feminists have with the current idea or image of beauty is the last one; the punch line. Lovelace explains that everybody seems to believe she looked good, even though she was clearly enforcing extremely unhealthy and dangerous dieting habits. It shows how unhealthy our beauty standards have become and how it is negatively influences women and girls.

Aside from stating what the problem is, Lovelace also attempts to offer a solution, a way out of this toxic and dangerous mind set.

they

tell us

over & over

& over

again

that women

need

to stay

small/

thin/

skinny/

petite.

that way

we are

effortlessly

pocketed

to be used

& thrown out

at a later

time.

curves  
& fat  
& rolls  
are a  
colossal  
'fuck you'  
to the  
patriarchy –

our accidental  
rebellion.

(Lovelace, *The Witch Doesn't Burn In This One*, 47)

In this poem, Lovelace makes the clear connection to fourth-wave feminism by naming the patriarchy and its issues in the third and fourth verse. She explains that by occupying our minds and our time with how we look and trying to conform to a certain body image, women are wasting their time and potential. A similar message was explained by actress Jameela Jamil during a red carpet interview. "The minutes that we spend thinking about how much we hate our bodies are minutes that we are not spending growing our talent, growing our minds, growing our businesses, growing our families, growing our overall happiness (Jamil)." Both Lovelace and Jamil try to explain how the unrealistic idea of beauty is directly linked to feminism as it could be perceived as a way to distract and stop women from achieving gender equality (Yam). The poem is Lovelace's attempt at raising awareness for this issue as well as motivating women to rebel against this unrealistic idea of beauty.

### 2.3.2: Laurie Clements Lambeth

Laurie Clements Lambeth is an American poet. When she was seventeen she got diagnosed with relapsing-remitting multiple sclerosis, which started her life as a poet (laurieclementslambeth.com). Especially her poem ‘*Symptoms*’ is a clear example of her struggle with the illness in combination with fourth-wave feminism.

#### **Symptoms**

*It seems to have a predilection for females.*

- On MS, from Multiple Sclerosis: A Guide for Patients and Their Families

I’ll try to tell you how it feels: girdle my grandmother wore, tight-laced corset worn by her mother in Wales, but it seldom slips from my rib cage. No hooks, or laces, only spaces of remission, then relapse, a trip to the ancient clothes again: crinolines, skirts grazing ankles, long satin embroidered sleeves that rub and pull naked skin, saying *now and then you must try to feel through this, and this*. All that fabric wound around torso, legs, the dresses and sheets binding to keep me in bed. *the cure is rest*, they tell me. dizzy, drunk when I haven’t drunk, I’m drawn to the wall to prop me. I have been known to sport a cane, per the fashion, to smooth the gait. Fix my mouth in a loose pout when speech eludes its muscles, tired, stiff as the garments that hold me. on occasion, they will fall to reveal this body, a window of cellophane wrapping my limbs, a ring for each finger (Lambeth, 3).

The poem, despite its poetic tone, still clearly states symptoms people suffering from MS might experience. Symptoms include a numb feeling in the limbs (gezondheidsplein), in the poem described as ‘now and then you must try to feel through this’ (Lambeth, line 5), disordered speech (gezondheidsplein), mentioned in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> line of the poem and

dizziness (gezondheidsplein), as compared in the poem to being ‘drunk when I haven’t drunk’ (Lambeth, line line 7-8).

Lambeth gives the poem a feminist touch, however, by deliberately adding the first line, saying that MS has ‘a predilection for females’ (Lambeth, 3). Especially the fourth wave can be linked to this poem as this is the wave in which more attention goes to disabled women. In previous waves, they have been overlooked due to the fact that disabled people have always been seen as one group without any gender differences. This poem, as well as an article by Begum, emphasizes the need to give disabled women a more prominent role in today’s feminist movement (Begum, 1).

### 2.3.3: Ryka Aoki

Ryka Aoki is a Japanese/American poet whose poems have played an important role in improving the visibility and well-being of transgender people (Rykeryke.com). Her poems feature topics such as heritage, feeling safe and being transgender.

Aoki's poem '*Being Home*' tells us that as a trans woman, she feels there is a certain idea of what a female body should look like and she explains her struggle of trying to conform to that.

I've sat and meditated, and sat and waited for that magic spray to painlessly  
remove my leg hair... (Aoki, 144)

Further on in the poem, Aoki mentions how sometimes, she does not feel like a real woman, as perhaps, her outside might not perfectly match with how she feels on the inside. The pressing idea of what a female body should look like might even result in severe gender dysphoria, which is the uncomfortableness of feeling like a certain gender, but not looking like that gender (vumc).

I'm as much of a shakuhachi player as I am a woman. I'm always afraid a real  
player, who has spent years with a scowling master in a Japanese bamboo  
grove – learning how to play a single perfect note would hear me and know I  
have never been to Japan. (Aoki, 160)

She finishes her poem by stating that even though her body might not fully look like the set idea of a woman, it does not mean she is not a woman. You are a woman if you identify as one, what you look like should not matter and that is why Aoki explains how she has always felt at home in her body. The home mentioned in the last sentence might refer to her home in the sense of her house, her family, her country, where she might not feel as accepted as she should feel.

Sometimes, people assume because I'm trans that I'm trying to be at home in my body.

Trust me, I've been home all my life, and sometimes, home is the last place I want my body to be. (Aoki, 200)



## Chapter 3: Conclusion

### 3.1: How fourth-wave feminism aligns with contemporary poetry

This thesis argued that the characteristics of fourth-wave feminism align with contemporary poetry. In the previous chapter, I have investigated this on three levels: platforms, nations and bodies. All three significant levels of fourth-wave feminism.

On the level of platforms, one could conclude that, despite the platform used to convey a message, the message stays relatively similar: women need to form a united front that stands together against today's patriarchal society in which sexual violence and assault against women and girls is normalized and we need to unlearn the idea that a woman's looks are her most important aspect; it is not a woman's looks that make her beautiful, it are the battles she fought and the strength she needed to do so.

When investigating nations in female poetry, intersectionality was a strong and recurring topic. The poets mentioned in this chapter all believe that, in order to make a difference, *all* women should stand together and fight for special recognition and attention to minority groups of women.

Lastly, on the level of bodies, a main theme could also be found: a woman's look should not affect her worth, sense of self-worth or her identity.

When looking at female contemporary poetry as a whole, especially those poets and poems discussed and investigated for this thesis, one could conclude that fourth-wave feminism can be found on multiple levels. Despite the differences of all the poems and poets, one main message is fought for and that is the message fourth-wave feminism is trying to bring across as well: in a world where females and their qualities are still subordinated to males and their qualities, women have to stand together as one united group; a group where everyone is equal, a group where everyone has a voice in order to make sure that everyone

feels welcome and safe; disabled or ill, women of all different backgrounds and origins and trans women alike.

### 3.2: Discussion: the deliberate and strategic crossing of categorical boundaries

To continue on the previously stated, one could argue that the alignment of fourth-wave feminism and contemporary poetry is a deliberate and strategic crossing of categorical boundaries; no longer should we divide women and see them as belonging to different categories, we should see them as one united front. Instead of pointing out our differences, we should point what makes us so similar and we should stand together.

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