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ARTICLE

Women, Peace, and Security: Posthuman Feminisms and Oceanic Encounters

Gina Heathcote

Newcastle Law School, Newcastle University
Email: gina.heathcote@newcastle.ac.uk

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Abstract

This article examines the United Nations Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security (WPS) and argues for an expansion of existing agendas to incorporate security away from the repetition of militarized security, extractive capital, and Western humanism through attention to maritime security. Drawing on posthuman feminisms, critical ocean studies, and decolonial and queer feminist engagements with the ocean, I propose the identification of the ocean as a legal subject to enact an unmooring of the ways in which gendered security is currently thought about, realized, and deployed in legal spaces. The liberal feminist preoccupation with including women and creating gender parity, the radical feminist legal agenda for addressing sexual violence, and the cultural feminist legal reforms that center women's differences are challenged as reasserting and reifying the status quo of law and legal arrangements. Feminist maritime security, posthuman, with the ocean as subject, contributes ways to think and know law in new registers and addresses the legacy of humanist exclusions of both human and nonhuman subjects. Furthermore, oceanic subjectivity invites reflection on the necessity of terraqueous thinking for planetary survival.

1. Introduction

This article examines the United Nations Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security (WPS) to demonstrate the current circumscribed frames of feminist law reform. I postulate a major shift for feminist legal approaches through attention to the ocean, feminist posthumanism, and critical ocean studies. Ten women, peace, and security (WPS) resolutions have been issued by the United Nations Security Council since 2000 and reflect a significant site of legal development that addresses women's security and gender justice at the United Nations (United Nations 2000, 2013, 2015, 2019; Bertotti et al. 2021, 17–37; Chinkin 2022, 19). The ten resolutions address women's participation in security and post-conflict, the prevention of gender violence during conflict and post-conflict periods, protection, and gender justice in relief and recovery post-conflict. The WPS resolutions are regarded as a landmark site of feminist

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law reform yet have attracted significant critiques for the role they play in legitimating the work of the Security Council, militarism, and state violence (Heathcote and Otto 2014; Bertotti et al. 2021). A posthuman feminist shift avoids legitimation of existing legal forms, refuses liberal categories of inclusion, and speaks to the urgency of climate change as implicated in security and insecurity. Jones's (2023) account of posthuman feminism articulates an approach to law unmoored from the legacy of humanist, anthropocentric, and settler-colonial logics that constrain international legal developments (also see Jones 2018; Arvidsson 2018; Arvidsson and Jones 2024). I argue for the ocean as a legal subject to challenge the propertied, landed privileges that infuse liberal legalism. My approach holds open the possibility of legal subjectivities that, in the words of Haraway, "bring together the human and non-human, the organic and the technological, carbon and silicon, freedom and structure, history and myth, the rich and poor, the state and the subject, diversity and depletion, modernity and postmodernity, and nature and culture in unexpected ways" (2003, 4). Furthermore, the ocean offers the women, peace, and security (WPS) project an unexpected encounter that challenges the repetitions of gendered forms in law, as well as the histories of militarism and capital reproduced in tandem with Western gender norms.

The article proceeds in the following manner. I commence with an account of posthuman feminism (Haraway 2003, 2016; Braidotti 2022). The emergence of posthuman feminist engagements with law, and international law in the work of Jones, shifts beyond the co-optation of feminist projects within legal agendas (Jones 2023). Posthuman feminisms, alongside a turn to maritime security, expand the epistemological frames of feminist legal possibilities. Feminist legal reforms—such as WPS—currently repeat the limitations of the institutions they engage with, thus indicating a need for a larger epistemological shift in feminist approaches to law. In section 3, I apply my approach to the WPS framework via attention to maritime security. Through inquiring how nonhuman subjectivity might reshape feminist legal approaches away from repetitions of militarism and harm, I argue for a shift in the knowledge structures that shape feminist approaches to law reform. The article closes, in section 4, with a call for decolonized law that addresses the future of the ocean as an intertwined feminist security agenda that starts in the ocean but has terraqueous potentialities (Roberts 2021). This is not a metaphor or a poetic device, as it is grounded in scholarship on wet ontologies, and more-than-wet ontologies that think with the ocean (Steinberg and Peters 2015; Peters and Steinberg 2019). A posthuman feminist turn to the ocean amounts to an epistemological shift that holds the possibility of legal change without succumbing to the repetition of existing legal forms (see Barad 2007). At the same time, the shift in feminist legal epistemology opens the text to hold multiple pasts and futures within view, including alternative knowledge of human–ocean relations from communities that have always known the ocean as subject and within a terraqueous worldview.

2. Posthuman feminism

The research stems from a dissatisfaction with the cyclical frame of law that promotes critique and reform in tandem (Lacey 2004; Kouvo and Pearson 2011) but arguably has minimal impact on the structural, symbolic, and direct nature of gendered violence (Hamzić 2017). The WPS agenda extends across ten UN Security Council resolutions, as well as countless reports, debates, and analysis, which commit to four pillars for action—participation, prevention, protection, and relief and recovery in post-conflict communities (Chinkin 2022, 15; also see: Reilly 2007; Aroussi 2021; Kirby and

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Shepherd 2021; Shepherd 2021). The ten resolutions have been developed and adapted over time, drawing in a large web of feminist, non-state and state actors (Heathcote and Otto 2014, Chinkin 2022, 183). The WPS agenda emerges as a space of feminist law reform and as a space of rigorous critique, with the critique often leading to reform, and each reform engendering new critiques (Heathcote 2018; Ní Aoláin 2015; Shepherd 2021; Henry 2021). Throughout the critiques, however, very little work—if any—examines the ways in which a specific feminist approach has become entrenched within the resolutions (Bertotti et al. 2021; Haastrup and Hagan 2021). In the following section, I describe that approach as centering narrow conceptions of (Western) liberal, radical, and cultural feminisms to produce legal change even if these might be contested fields. This is recognition of the ways in which law reforms have rendered complex feminist legal debates (and tensions) into caricatures of feminism that ultimately endorse the status quo rather than dismantling the violence of law. In this section, I outline the contours of a posthuman feminist legal approach, drawing in Braidotti's account of the limits of humanism and the necessity of feminist and queer thinking to address the shortcomings of posthumanism, or what Haraway describes as '[t]oo many posthumanists seem to have emigrated to the Anthropocene' (2016, 50). While Haraway shifts toward composting and companion species, Braidotti finesses an account of posthuman feminism that is not incompatible with Haraway's work and, in its commitment to diverse and queer feminist agendas, addresses the risk of human exceptionalism that Haraway seeks to avoid (2016, 13). A posthuman feminist approach offers a way to think differently about security and law. Through opening feminist legal work to think with diverse legal traditions and frames of knowledge, including Black feminist and Indigenous understandings of the oceans (Spillers 1987; Hau'ofa, 2008; Sharpe 2016), a simultaneous shift emerges toward working with decolonized, critical race, and Indigenous feminist approaches.

Braidotti's account of humanism provides the feminist legal theorist with an elegant understanding of why a loop between resistance and compliance (or critique and reform) complicates and ultimately circumvents any feminist pursuit of legal change. It is widely acknowledged by actors, both academic and in international institutions, that feminist legal reforms, including WPS, are circumscribed by the structures of the legal institutions and larger regulatory frames they are incorporated into (Heathcote and Otto 2014). For example, the women, peace, and security resolutions are charged with producing a binary understanding of women's lives, heteronormative, framed by sexual vulnerability, and essentialist in the failure to address differences across race, class, sexuality, disability, and religion (Heathcote 2018; Haastrup and Hagan 2021; Henry 2021). Consequently, the pursuit of feminist legal change requires a significant epistemological shift to challenge the ways in which spaces of feminist resistance to the legal status quo become folded in—and compliant with—the existing governance model when feminist legal change is enacted (Prügl 2015). For the WPS resolutions, despite their potential and origins in feminist organizing and resistance, the folding in of feminist agendas enacts the reassertion of the UN Security Council's military agenda, the consolidation of the agendas of powerful states, and the reification of global hierarchies.

A posthuman feminist approach, following Braidotti, starts from recognition that humanist law inscribes difference between humans and that the hierarchies reproduced are linked to the construction of the humanist (legal) subject as master over nature. Braidotti describes posthuman feminism as "offering a critique of humanism and anthropocentrism" (2022, 9), spanning feminist, queer, Indigenous, anti-racist, postcolonial, and ecological approaches, while the critique of the Anthropocene "details

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ecofeminism and Indigenous feminism as the precursors of the post-anthropocentric turn in feminist theory and a crucial building block of the posthuman feminist turn" (11). For legal feminisms to encounter posthuman feminism the twinned agenda of challenging histories of discrimination, harm, and violence within humanism *and* of challenging the nature–culture split requires a fundamental intellectual and legal shift. The ocean as a legal subject has the potential to undo the humanist framing of the state as the primary legal subject under international law and examines human–nonhuman dependencies as a matter of security.

I read Haraway and Braidotti's work as dialectical. Braidotti (2022) asserts plural feminist approaches to apprehend the limitations of posthumanism. Haraway shifts from the posthuman to critters, composting, and companion species (2016). Both read posthumanism with a feminist commitment to "understanding how things work, who is in action, what might be possible" (Haraway, 2003, 7) and with gender as a technique for reading and undoing categories rather than as a fixed identity or binary. Haraway's critique of posthumanist thought focuses on the posthumanist tendency to collapse back into Anthropocene forms. Haraway articulates her companion species manifesto to shift the figurations of thought, or ways of doing, and for dissolving human centrality (2003; 2016, 13). Her work on companion species is on land (2016, 9–29) and ocean-going (30–57): framing local, intimate encounters with the nonhuman. While thinking with Haraway, in centering the ocean I shift from her account of companion species to examine the unspoken terrain of humanist relations to land (see also Yusoff 2019) and acknowledge the ocean as integral to human and nonhuman survival. This interlocks with Haraway's appreciation of the need for holding histories of doing, of matter, and of thinking in the frame. Braidotti's posthuman feminism alters the ways in which WPS might be approached, while Haraway's method of making kin leads toward an inquiry of how to think with the ocean (2016, 99). Elsewhere, the Piddock Clam Collective (2022) identify the wrack as a space of land, ocean, and critters that refuses to disentangle the complex meanings and lives that draws Braidotti's and Haraway's work together, and which refuses an account of the ocean as Other but rather as helping "us develop new forms, processes and conversations" (Piddock Clam Collective 2022, 115). From these perspectives, the application of posthuman feminisms to WPS requires an epistemological overhaul of how feminist legal reform is rendered possible to address the structural constraints of the humanist legal status quo.

The WPS agenda has not engaged environmental issues or identified the ocean as a space of gendered security concerns, although the recognition of climate and environmental insecurity has increasingly encroached on traditional understandings of security within international institutions (Cohn and Duncanson 2022). Indeed, insecurity produced by climate change has thus far reinforced military responses to identifying threats and failed to apprehend the "crisis of a white western masculinist framing of the relation between humanity and nature," while simultaneously underscoring "the climate crisis as a security crisis [that] completely misdirects out attention" away from the "crisis of extractive capital" (Cohn and Duncanson 2022, n.p.). Given the complex manifestations of the climate emergency for all earth systems, land, air, oceans, species, and matter, a posthuman feminist response requires equally complex reimaginings. The assumption that posthuman feminisms might be forward-looking limits that complexity and, instead, is better understood through Braidotti's insistence on an "intergenerational and transversal" feminism (Braidotti 2022, 9). A transversal feminist approach pays heed to the shared knowledge between posthuman feminism and ecofeminist critiques of humanism, while underscoring that "it is about

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making affective connections across the ecological, the social, the technical and other domains" (103; also see Adams 1991; Plumwood 2002; Gaard 2011). At the same time, posthuman feminism offers an opportunity to incorporate and expand ecofeminist thinking through drawing in the complexity of gendered subjectivity. In the words of Braidotti, "[t]he challenge is to deal with both the technological revolution and the climate crisis: two internally contradictory phenomena. Ecofeminism, Indigenous feminism, technoscience and LGBTQ+ theories all contribute in different ways" (2022, 89).[1] A posthuman feminism invokes an intergenerational approach and thus has important antecedents in ecofeminist thinking (Plumwood 2002; Mallory 2010; Gaard 2011). This approach to a legal posthuman feminism traverses feminist dialogues addressing the ocean as legal subject through learning with (and listening to) Black feminist and Indigenous feminist invocations of human violence in and on the ocean (Perera 2013).

Haraway's invective that "[i]t matters what matters we use to think other matters with; it matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with" has resonance for feminist legal projects (2011, 4). Jones (2023) initiates a frame for feminist legal analysis of international law to become posthuman, arguing "not only can posthuman feminism embrace such dynamics of reciprocity, it also renders visible deeper, more complex levels of entanglement: humans and non-humans are situated in co-emergent relationalities" (162). Jones's writing, as with that of Arvidsson, at once works within international legal forms while consciously and actively undoing the frames of thinking which are assumed as all-embracing and constant (Arvidsson 2018; Jones 2018). The possibility for a posthuman feminist account of international law on security commences with the legal foothold constructed through the WPS agendas (Otto 2011) yet challenges the feminist thinking that has framed WPS as amenable to the existing legal and security apparatus.

The importance of maritime security has been acknowledged and debated in the UN Security Council (United Nations 2021) and yet has received insufficient feminist attention (Lirola-Delgado 2019). A posthuman feminist account of maritime security simultaneously acknowledges the constraints of feminist law-making, while challenging the feminist epistemologies that repeat the legal forms that they critique, through listening to the ocean, its relation to humans, and the possibility of leaving land to rethink human–nonhuman relations. Furthermore, in turning to the ocean contemporary work within critical ocean studies provides maps for thinking with the ocean (Blum 2015; Braverman and Johnson 2020), while Indigenous accounts of human-ocean subjectivity expose the specificity of humanisms unencumbered legal subject (Hau'ofa 2008; Genz 2016) to identify human-ocean frames that depart significantly from landed worldviews.

To think with these posthuman feminist approaches with a transversal and intergenerational range, while returning to security discourse and WPS, a maritime security that centers the nonhuman, acknowledging and naming the climate emergency as within the WPS agendas, is to enact a shift toward (and then away from) understanding the Western gaze that has been central to WPS. The forms of feminist knowledge production that emerge from communities with alternative understandings of the relationship between land and marine areas provide mechanisms for dislodging the primacy of feminist knowledge from the Global North to inform transnational feminist patterns of law reform. For example, Hamilton Faris offers an account of feminist decolonial critiques of the US's historical and ongoing presence and impact in Oceania through the work of Indigenous climate change activists that hold the ocean as framed through Indigenous practices of feminism (2022; also see DeLoughrey 2012).

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Gooptu's encounter with Andil Gosine's art draws out consideration of "the structures of power that regulate human relations with water that are embedded in legacies of (neo) colonial control" via the watery routes of indenture from India to the Caribbean (Gooptu 2022, 55). Likewise, Indonesian concepts of *tanah-air* think through the interface between ocean and land outside of humanist frames (Alverdian 2022) and Marshallese wave riders, also known as *ri-meto*, navigate Oceania (also known as the Pacific) through a recognition of the contours of the ocean, and the motion of waves, as a mechanism for knowing human–ocean relations and navigation without reference to land (Genz 2016, 4; also see Heathcote 2024). These frames of knowledge are integral to thought and being, matter and justice, across these communities and undermine the self-referential framing of European knowledge histories within international law. Far from the structures of global governance and the UN Security Council debates on either WPS or maritime security, these accounts of ocean lives and livelihoods reconceive security via frames that are amenable to posthuman feminisms. These oceanic approaches draw out the complex possibilities of the ocean as legal subject: not as novel or unthought but enacted and lived outside the ways in which feminisms are currently given voice within the UN Security Council.

3. Women, peace, and maritime security

An agenda for women, peace, and *maritime* security cannot be a new strand of the existing WPS framework applied to the oceans. Maritime security provides an opportunity to significantly shift the function of feminist legal interventions through embracing epistemologies distinct from those that align with dominant global laws. A posthuman feminist agenda for maritime security offers a global encounter that questions the assumptions of land-based jurisprudence beyond the preoccupations of sovereignty and landed property rights, creating capacity to think past their relationship to extractive capitalism, militarism, and the separation of humans from the non-human. The three dominant feminist legal reforms that emerge within the WPS framework—liberal, radical, and cultural feminisms—underscore the alignment with humanism that the ocean troubles and leading to an assertion of a feminist maritime security in a posthuman register.[2]

Women, peace, and security has, in many ways, emerged as an epistemic institution within both international law and within feminist scholarship that at once expands and yet contracts the range of knowledge that shapes gender security (Haastrup and Hagan 2021). The expansive nature of the knowledge developed within the broader discourse on WPS derives from the labor of transnational feminist networks and actors. Transnational feminist networks have used the footholds that WPS debates have opened to speak to power within their local contexts and to address the complex gendered realities of armed conflict and insecurity (Heathcote and Otto 2014; Shepherd 2021). At the same time, UN Security Council resolutions are more often drafted, and only voted on, by states, such that the texts of the resolutions ultimately become circumscribed by the agendas of states; which has kept specific feminist demands, for example, around reproductive and sexual health (De Vido 2020, 19; Oo and Davies 2021) or demilitarization (Heathcote and Otto 2014), out of the resolutions while maintaining the centrality of narrow feminist approaches: liberal, radical, cultural (Bertotti et al. 2021, 32). It is possible to imagine a more complex future for the WPS resolutions. The result would be tools drawn from diverse feminist knowledge, developing alternative conceptions of law to instrumentalize the WPS framework to transform security

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paradigms away from militarism and with responsiveness to global threats, including the climate emergency. However, alternative conceptions of law require an epistemic shift, in this case to incorporate posthuman feminist approaches while consciously pursuing—in Braidotti's terms, traversing—opportunities to learn with legal knowledge drawn from decolonial and Indigenous feminisms. The latter is presupposed by Braidotti's traversal and intergenerational posthuman feminist approach and acknowledges what Haraway describes as recognition of "passing on and receiving, making and unmaking, picking up threads and dropping them" (2016, 3) as a way of engaging the nonhuman, to recognize the "terms of telling, listening and playing have been relocated decisively" (87). To move towards and to incorporate a posthuman feminist approach, understanding the ways in which specific feminist approaches materialize within the WPS resolutions is useful.

To commence with the liberal feminist provisions within women, peace, and security, it is useful to identify how participation works as a cornerstone across the ten resolutions. The participation pillar of the WPS corpus of resolutions has mutated over the multiple decades and numerous resolutions and reports issued since UN Security Council resolution 1325. Nevertheless, the commitment to including women in decision-making bodies, consulting women's groups during peace processes, increasing the number of women in peacekeeping operations, and, by 2019, urging member states to provide "timely support to women to enhance their participation and capacity building" (United Nations 2019) is central to WPS. In 2019, the tenth resolution articulated the participation pillar with recognition that training and capacity building precedes inclusion, representing hard-fought gains of feminist activists across a myriad of spaces. In 2023, during the annual debate on women, peace, and security at the UN Security Council, the Executive Director of UN Women, Sima Bahous, centered women's participation, leadership, and representation in her address to the Council, stating: "we must set ambitious and measurable targets for women's direct and meaningful participation" as the first of five "transformative actions" going forward under the WPS agenda (United Nations 2023, 6). Nevertheless, despite 23 years of assertions and adaptions to the participation pillar of WPS, the 2023 debate also recognized "a picture of decline in several countries in the political space for women to participate in decision-making on peace and security — a decline at the very moment when women's leadership is needed most" (5).

Although it is not what I envisage in this research, it is possible to argue that a shift to recognize women, peace, and *maritime* security might begin with an application of the participation provisions in WPS to maritime security and demand that women's participation be the cornerstone of decision-making bodies and peace process (Lirola-Delgado 2019) on ocean governance, security, and environmental issues. Each of the former are sites where UN decision-making structures retain only *ad hoc* mechanisms for ensuring women's participation (Papanicolopulu 2019). This approach requires the existing components of the WPS agenda to be realized with respect to maritime security. The UN Security Council 2021 Open Debate on maritime security showed no such appreciation, despite the Council's own requirements within the WPS resolutions that a commitment to gender-balanced participation be integrated across all of the Council's work. That is, in paragraph 9(c) of UN Security Council resolution 2943 on women, peace, and security the Security Council asserts a commitment "continue mainstreaming a gender perspective in the Secretariat and United Nations agencies, including through the system-wide gender parity strategy" (United Nations 2019). However, in maritime security, as with security on land, counting the women, creating gender parity, and/or

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enhancing capacity building, does little to shift or address the underlying system that co-opts feminist agendas and reduces feminist critiques of law to amenable legal agendas. This critique of liberal feminist law reforms is well-established, as it is recognized that the call for inclusion of more women within institutions does not unsettle the commitment of the institution to a specific, restricted frame that champions individualism, a negative conception of freedom, the reproduction of a heteronormative gender binary, and a distinction between the public and private sphere (Lacey 2004, 21; Ferguson 2015), as well as an assumed hierarchy between humans and nonhumans. Liberal feminism slots into the larger humanist project that depends on gendered, racist, heteronormative, classed, and ableist frames disguised as neutral, objective, and reasonable, while underpinning the military-capital industrial complex (Braidotti 2022; Jones 2023).

The liberal feminist approach to participation within WPS might be rethought through the powerful interventions of feminist and queer posthuman encounters in the ocean, which Gooptu describes as "conceiving disruptive modes of transoceanic epistemology" (2022, 49). This is a maritime security agenda that holds the troubling routes of colonialism, slave ships, trade, and underwater cables overlaid on the ocean, such that "the chant of waterways is looped to represent the recurring migrations and journeys" (50). If existing WPS resolutions already hold the words to demand women's participation in the maritime security apparatus (Kitada et al. 2019), a women, peace, and *maritime* security agenda undoes the frames the words are contained within and asks how the ocean has been configured as primary in histories of legal expansion, violence, and inhuman practices (Tinsely 2008; Perera 2013). For posthuman feminisms, the ocean becomes the legal subject, reconfiguring the ways in which feminism approaches law and offering a distinct security agenda that thinks through insecurity from the perspective of human–nonhuman encounters in the ocean and the queer, ungendered possibilities a queerly feminist ocean produces. In this framing the pursuit of increased gender parity in participation and decision-making is superseded by a Black and queer feminist commitment to knowing the ocean as a site of harm and insecurity, for the nonhuman and for humans who have been excluded from the protections of humanist law (Tinsely 2008). Consequently, a women, peace, and maritime security approach might start with asking the ocean, hearing and listening to the ocean, a process that exists in Oceania (Pacific) communities (and other ocean, island, and coastal communities), that is written into critical race, and critical ocean studies, and which does not require the ocean to be Other to humans. The participation pillar of the WPS agenda cannot be reduced to adding women in this approach: instead, a relearning of how human and nonhuman encounters, listening and knowing, is required to address the ways in which diverse feminist and queer accounts already know the ocean.

The WPS resolutions also, importantly, frame a response to conflict-related sexual violence, with five resolutions addressing conflict-related sexual violence as a single issue and the five additional general resolutions containing reference to the need to "strengthen access to justice for women in conflict and post-conflict situations, including through the prompt investigation, prosecution and punishment of perpetrators of sexual and gender based violence, as well as reparation for victims as appropriate" (United Nations 2015, para. 14). The resolutions create mechanisms for imposing targeted sanctions on suspected perpetrators of conflict-related sexual violence, directives for reparations, agendas for the inclusion of survivors in peace processes, and recognition of the importance of the most serious crimes being tried through international criminal law institutions. Conflict-related sexual violence

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continues (Degefa 2022) and happens at sea (Becker-Weinberg 2019; Lirola-Delgado 2019), as do other forms of gender-based violence and harms. The WPS focus on conflict-related sexual violence, as the paradigm gendered harm during armed conflict, has attracted criticisms for the ways in which women in conflict zones are constructed through sexual vulnerability that undermine agency and produce a hyperfocus on women's (heteronormative) sexuality (Engle 2020). The critique emerges in response to the incipient US radical feminist approach to gender law reform which can be described as staying "with the analytic framework of sex rather than moving to gender" (Lacey 2004, 23) and risking "the trap of replaying images and assumptions that are very hard to distinguish from those of the patriarchal social order" (24). The US remains the penholder (that is author) for WPS resolutions on sexual violence in conflict and has significantly shaped the text of resolutions.[3] A women, peace, and maritime security agenda, again, might stay within this frame, tracing the sites of gendered vulnerability at sea, or it might deploy a posthuman feminist approach that seeks the nexus between human and nonhuman vulnerabilities to consider a shifting in how vulnerability is understood beyond humanist legal modes.

Human vulnerabilities at sea are at once gendered and include sexual violence, although an intersectional analysis demonstrates that poor, young, male-identifying, actors from the Global South are at the highest risk of recruitment into exploitative and dangerous labor situations that often see them trapped in conditions of slavery, far from shore, for unconscionable periods of time (Becker-Weinberg 2019). At sea interrogation of hegemonic masculinities is needed to fully apprehend the intersection of race, class, sexuality, and gender in the experience of vulnerability. The WPS resolutions have proved unreceptive to intersectional tools (Henry 2021) and recognition of conflict-related sexual violence against men has replicated the forms of law that construct female sexual vulnerability (Engle 2020). A posthuman feminist approach would, in contrast, pay attention to the relationship between human vulnerabilities at sea and the ocean itself. This is to acknowledge the ocean as vulnerable to the excesses of greed, capital, and ownership that extend through the history and present of liberal and neoliberal economies. The violent practices aboard fishing (Kirchner 2019) and migrant (Perera 2013) vessels at sea can be understood as intertwined with the failures of trade and other practices of ownership, and conquering, that have informed a mindset that accepts the pollution, the dumping, and the extraction of resources at sea. In centering the ocean as subject, the same practices which render humans vulnerable at sea are exposed as rendering humans and nonhumans vulnerable on a global scale due to climate change and the excesses of the Anthropocene. The WPS agenda, again, already provides the tools to think about the risks and harms humans inflict on other humans at sea, while maritime security agendas within the Security Council already extend this well beyond traditional military spaces to include fishing and other economic endeavors within blue spaces on global maps (Klein 2011). However, the international law of the sea and its jurisdictions abutting land, complemented by flag state jurisdiction on the high seas, have proven to offer weak legal tools for arresting maritime violence, suggesting that a maritime security agenda that rethinks vulnerability is urgent. The oceans' vulnerability is an entry point for seeing humans embedded in watery, nonhuman, and interspecies futures. This would disentangle the need within liberal, humanist, and Enlightenment frames to "save" the Other and articulate, instead, a legal subjectivity that addresses the Other, the ocean, as central to human encounters with the nonhuman.

The third contour of the existing WPS agenda is the framing, beyond a liberal feminist account of gender parity through women's participation or a radical feminist

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account of harms sprung from sexual difference, of cultural feminisms and difference feminist tropes within the UN Security Council resolutions (Lacey 2004, 25). While the terms cultural and difference feminisms refer to distinct US feminist traditions, their uptake in legal reform constructs a narrow, often combined, version of difference and cultural feminisms that pays lip service to calls for difference within feminist theories. Difference and cultural feminist agendas theorize women's diversity at an embodied level—different to men and different from each other—and at an epistemological level—through engagement with postmodern theories of difference and gender. Within the WPS agenda, the spectrum of difference and cultural feminist approaches manifests in narrow provisions for the allocation of resources to accommodate women's needs and women's experiences in the aftermath of conflict and through the small, but significant, references to women's diversity in some of the resolutions (United Nations 2013, para. 7(a); Heathcote 2018). Consequently, the rich feminist encounters that challenge the narrowness of these (largely US) approaches are ignored in law reforms including WPS resolutions. Difference and cultural feminist legal provisions not only essentialize women's experiences but also fail to address the ways that law plays a role in constructing and normalizing gender difference, whether between women—and thus reifying intersectional disadvantage rather than undoing it—or between women and men, reifying the heteronormative gender binary. Here the locus of the loop between critique and reform in legal developments emerges. That is, in naming women's difference within the law, the reform risks entrenching rather than dismantling stereotypes of how gender flows and moves: invoking an untroubled heteronormativity within Security Council agendas (Hagen 2016; Hamzić 2017). A posthuman feminism encounters difference as epistemology, embedded in oceanic history and no longer theorized through the vulnerability of the female body. As such, posthuman feminist epistemologies provide intersectional encounters across species, humans, and land and sea, rather than a fixation on a specifically heteronormative gendered subject. In a posthuman feminist frame, gender becomes an analytical tool for understanding, and rejecting, the excesses of Anthropocene man and the extractive capital that flows from his worldview.

The United Nations Security Council is designed to listen to and respond to the concerns of states. The WPS resolutions have been disruptive of that model and women and feminist voices have increasingly found their way into the Council. Nevertheless, the form and function of Council decision-making remains the domain of states and their representatives. In contrast, a posthuman feminist account of WPS commences with the recognition of the ocean as a legal subject. This is, of course, a subject that cannot verbalize its vulnerability, its agency, or its understanding of rights, law, or justice; at least not in the way legal practitioners require. Beyond a turn to the ocean as legal subject are a series of questions about processes and representations within legal and international institutions. The impossibility of ocean security needs to be sat with and listened to. I can only recall the women invited into the Security Council in 2000, as WPS was drafted and debated, knowing their way of thinking about security was at odds with the militarized, state-framed security that went on in the Security Council every other day. Reimagining security, as oceanic and posthuman seems, from this perspective, entirely possible or no more impossible than Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security (WPS) must have seemed before it was drafted, debated, and issued. The WPS agenda remains a triumph of feminist ingenuity and law-making. The gains and footholds produced in a mere two and a half decades illustrate the tremendous force and potential of feminist engagement within international legal institutions to

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produce enduring change, new patterns of law, and a language for challenging persistent harms and inequalities. At the same time, the WPS agenda is circumscribed by the institutional structures it operates within, as an epistemology that interlocks with the contours of legal liberalism and its humanist origins, while drawing from the waves of feminist legal theory that emerged within the Western academic context in the 1980s and 1990s (Helmreich 2017). The consequence is that vibrant, alternative feminist traditions are continually reshaped into a specific, narrow, political and legal tradition in the endeavor to be heard.

In the following section, I draw on various texts that offer a way of seeing and arriving at the ocean (Probyn 2016; Neimanis 2017; Gooptu 2022; Hamilton Faris 2022) no longer premised on *terra firma* as starting point, or ocean as outside the human sphere of reference, such that the blue spaces on political and legal maps are not voids to be filled but extensions of humanness. This raises a challenge to legal subjectivity that, first, places humans on land and, second, constructs a normative universe that places the ocean as ulterior, a second thought, or Other. I consider what an approach to both WPS and maritime security might look like if posthuman feminist commitments to understanding the embedded lives of humans within nonhuman environments and their relational frames informed global perceptions of threats to security.

4. Posthuman feminist apertures of unknowing and the flourishing of significant others

Haraway in her *Companion Species Manifesto* signals a commitment to the "flourishing of significant others" (2003, 3). Taking posthuman feminism as an invitation to think with the ocean as a nonhuman subject that is deeply relational and intertwined in human lives, I want to explore the additional knowledge paradigms that becomes significant when a feminist approach disregards its reproduction in humanist frames and Western feminist legal traditions. In Haraway's rendering, significant Others coexist "in vulnerable, on-the-ground work that cobbles together nonharmonious agencies and ways of living that are accountable both to their disparate inherited histories and to their barely possible but absolutely necessary joint futures" (2003, 7). However, while Haraway looks to companion species as significant Others, I want to entertain the possibility of the ocean as significant Other, separate, human, nonhuman, dynamic, teller of multiple histories, matter, and mattering. This draws on a commitment to feminist approaches that "in its refusal of typological thinking, binary dualisms, and both relativisms and universalism of many flavors, contributes a rich array of approaches to emergence, process, historicity, difference, specificity, co-habitation, co-constitution and contingency" (Haraway 2003, 6–7). International lawyer Parfitt explores a similar cacophony of method for undoing as she constructs her account of the reproduction of international law "as a shadow-box, which they [the reader] are free to walk around and view from different angles, and whose contents they are invited to move around and add to, using their own histories, their own knowledge and their own way of making sense of the world" (Parfitt 2020, 15). Borrowing Parfitt's imaginary of the lightbox, I understand posthuman feminism as exposing an aperture to the space outside the lightbox, or what Kapur understands as outside of the fishbowl of legal liberalism (2019) and the constraints it places on non-liberal (not illiberal) ways of encountering the world (Kapur 2019). To bring these approaches to WPS, in this section I draw out ways of thinking with the ocean differently and illustrate the ways in which

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security—and law—might be understood with multiple histories, registers, and undoings.

Feminist accounts of the ocean and critical ocean studies acknowledge a need to move beyond "normative Western perspective wherein our dominant experiences, our livelihoods and our social institutions are considered to be fundamentally terrestrial" (Peters and Steinberg 2019). Across these spaces of engagement there is, from critical ocean scholars, an understanding of the ocean as a "wet ontology" and establishing "more-than-wet-ontologies" (Steinberg and Peters 2015). A wet ontology opens toward knowledge that examines human–nonhuman relations and the shift that oceanic rather than terrestrial perspectives provide. Peters and Steinberg examine how "thinking from a perspective informed by the ocean's material and phenomenological distinctiveness can facilitate the reimagining and re-enlivening of a world and our being-in-the-world, providing a way of engaging with, and speaking to, a vibrancy" (2019, 294). From this work, I take the ocean as inviting feminist thinking to shift beyond humanism; acknowledging the ways in which binary and civilizing assumptions around gender are reproduced and sustained through violence enacted on and in the ocean (Spillers 1987; Perera 2013; Sharpe 2016; Neimanis 2019).

Distinct from mainstream Western feminism that re-emerges in the humanist frames of international law are the ocean encounters that render visible the violence of humanisms, transatlantic slavery, enduring racism, and the inequalities produced via extractive capital and militarism. Here the "myriad silences and ruptures in time, space, history, ethics, research, and method" (Sharpe 2016, 11) become feminist articulations of more-than-wet ontologies: unbreathing, ungendered, underwater, deep in the oceans, human and nonhuman, matter, solid, and fluid. Sharpe writes of all in the Middle Passage "who passed through the doors of no return [and] did not survive the holding and the sea, they, like us are alive in hydrogen, oxygen; in carbon, in phosphorus and iron, in sodium and chlorine. This is what we know about these Africans thrown, jumped, dumped in the Middle Passage, they are with us still, in the time of the wake, known as residence time" (2016, 18). Feminist posthumanism incorporates the possibility of recognizing the human and nonhuman violence that was (is) traced over the oceans through colonial trade routes and the trajectories of slave ships, now marked underwater with submarine cables and the trajectories of container ships. A women, peace, and maritime security agenda that acknowledges the legacy of ocean violences as central to humanism has the potential to begin to see what Sharpe names as "residence time"; that is, the material persistence of slavery in the ocean and in Black feminist encounters with governance, law, and security. Sharpe's words resonate as a long story of maritime (in)security, asking "[h]ow can we think (and rethink and rethink) care laterally, in the register of the intramural, in a different relation than that of the violence of the state?" (2016, 19). Here dominant feminist legal approaches, including WPS, are acknowledged as working in a register that is limited, in the gendered histories and violence it names and sees.

The deep histories of racialized feminist projects need to surface to make space for new modes of subjectivity, impelling feminisms into stark contrast with the propertied men who wrote the landed histories of knowledge in Europe, and the colonies, and who continue to script the discourses of violent intervention into post-conflict communities in the name of security and, increasingly, women, peace, and security. The complicity of feminist governance projects in the ways in which specific land territories are deemed porous and ungovernable highlights the continued colonial mindset and humanist Othering of non-western peoples that intertwines gender governance and law reform in

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those same histories. Spillers'S understanding of Black bodies as "ungendered" (1987) oceanic-bodies-not who bear witness to understanding of how "[t]he visual and historical evidence betrays the dominant discourse on the matter as incomplete" (Spillers 1987, 73) compels white feminisms to pay attention to the complicity of feminist governance and security discourse in the institutions with which they participate (Neimanis 2019; Heathcote and Kula 2023). I imagine a posthuman feminist encounter with law as an approach that understands mainstream feminism as incomplete and complicit in humanist projects. Simultaneous to the theorizing of law, governance, institutions, and security as incomplete, posthuman feminism heralds a need for knowing, doing, and being differently. The ocean articulates an unruly commons that through its dynamism disrupts our complacent maps of the world; this is not the global commons and common heritage of mankind enshrined in the laws of the land, of humanism, or enlightenment reason (Jones et al. 2024). This is a human, nonhuman, interspecies, soil, sub-soil, deep seabed, porous, and fluid commons that is impossible to describe or grasp and thus provides the impetuous to think anew, a "more-than" wet ontology.

Implicit in the drawing in and reading of Sharpe's and Spillers's scholarship is a need for white and mainstream feminist attention to its collaboration with humanist projects and the Othering of humans and nonhumans central to humanism. Neimanis commences such a project, reading Sharpe and thinking with Black feminist knowledge to question white feminism, asking "What happens if we go deeper?" (Neimanis 2019, 491). For Neimanis, the subjectivity that feminisms have interrogated, shaped through Western humanism and Western state projects, must also be re-remembered in the body of the ocean, which holds the histories of abjection, the trade routes of empire, and the emphatic arrogance of European explorers (Neimanis 2019). In this way, a feminist maritime security is sounded out through a siren song of human–nonhuman encounters in multiple registers and with the human subject immersed, wet, and dynamic. This is a space of law and justice that precedes Western feminisms, learns from the survivors of imperial violence, and the gaze of the explorer as he crossed oceans to own and name (Perera 2013).

In the Marshall Islands feminist protest interweaves with histories of nuclear explosions in the oceans (DeLoughrey 2012), that not-so-accidentally collide the story of the Anthropocene with the military greed that displaced and diseased Indigenous populations, infusing reproductive (ill-)health with the history of the ocean. Swimming and crossing Other oceans, Indigenous feminisms tell of saltwater swimmers (Stronach et al. 2019) and a recognition of the need for how "[r]estoration of ancestral knowledges continues to be an important part of enacting alternatives to settler colonial, capitalist enclosures" (Goodyear-Ka'opua 2017, 186). The importance of Island consciousness of land-sea epistemologies addresses, simultaneously, the extractive military-capital of displacement and environmental harm, as well as the reality of living with the consequences of climate change. DeLoughrey unpicks the relationship between the perception of islands as isolated and the nuclear laboratory that Pacific Islands, or Oceania, became during the Cold War; remembering Oceania epistemologies that have been voiced "against the colonial concept of isolated islands and brought our attention to a dynamic 'sea of islands' long connected by histories of migration, nuclear colonialism and globalization" (2012, 179). Elsewhere Hamilton-Faris (2022) examines "feminist hydro-ontologies engaging in relational Island Studies' turn toward the global climate,"

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further voiced in the poem "Rise" by Marshallese poet Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner and Inuk poet Aka Niviânas.[4] The resonance of Oceania epistemologies that hold nuclear histories and climate change futures in the present offers a significant challenge to land-based jurisprudence while being deeply connected to Oceania feminist knowledge; articulating a posthuman feminism that traverses land and ocean in a manner that knows, and lives, the reality of human exceptionalism and extractive capital. I draw these approaches on to the page, here, to tentatively consider a terraqueous encounter for posthuman feminisms, traversal and intergenerational, and for law, that constructs security through a human–nonhuman lens, and which also challenges the ecological insecurity implicit within Western military mindsets. Rethinking the human–ocean encounter provides a starting point to underscore the absence of security for both human and nonhumans in institutional security frames, including women, peace, and security.

A posthuman feminist approach to women, peace, and security might focus on creating spaces to hear, and to see, to smell, and breathe these complex ontologies, ways of being and knowing, of feminisms, plural, encounters that churn and hold and sink and float by, undoing the preoccupation with knowledge as fixed and landed. This epistemic swim cannot be singular, cannot ignore the bodies overboard, now and then, or the ways of knowing the oceans that are unfamiliar in the broken circle of chairs in the United Nations Security Council. Placing the ocean as a subject of law, immediately unknowable, requires patience, multiple routes and entry points, and a commitment to seeing below, while holding patience with the deceptive calm of the surface. These are not metaphors of oceanic love and lives (although I am not sure why poems cannot be read to the UN Security Council) but ways to undo the significance and stranglehold of "the appeal of humanism" (Braidotti 2022, 41) and its tentacular embrace of reason, objectivity, and individualism (Haraway 2016).

5. Posthuman feminist ocean/s

My advance toward the decolonized ocean learns from the intense and powerful oceanic and posthuman feminist thought that offers a shift of importance for feminist legal and feminist security scholarship (Blum 2015; Neimanis 2019; Braidotti 2022). The ocean infiltrates our imagination but in this scholarship the ocean is recognized as central to being human, where humanness is understood as in relation with the ocean. This happens across the microorganisms of the body and the interplay of global systems. The histories of humanist and Enlightenment thinking, which Braidotti links so succinctly with the excesses of the Anthropocene (2022), become histories of oceanic exploitation of humans, nonhumans, and of the ocean itself. There are other non-liberal ways of knowing the ocean, as Marshallese Islanders and their understanding of their own displacement, military insecurity, and the rising oceans, know and articulate: although we are not listening (or learning with). The turn to the ocean envisages an important rethink for feminist legal approaches, acknowledging existing avenues for legal change that works to transform the systems and histories that law functions through, rather than adding gendered subjects or gendered recognition. Watery ontologies render strange the account of the ocean viewed as a path to, a route across, a vessel for new forms of resource ownership, or for conquering: the decolonized oceans know the histories of colonial and settler violence and tell stories of the ocean as human and nonhuman in a relational encounter.

To think with decolonialized ocean approaches, I have drawn on posthuman feminism, noting tensions within the field and the circumscribed histories of the

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Anthropocene and humanism that posthumanism springs from; that Haraway thus rejects in favor of her companion species manifesto (2016). Braidotti's critical posthumanism, in contrast, is feminist and, in the work of Jones and others (Jones 2023; Arvidsson and Jones 2024) has seen application in legal contexts. Through drawing posthuman feminisms into dialogue with existing feminist law reform, in this case the WPS agenda within the UN Security Council, I have been able to think through the limitations of the resolutions. The pervasiveness of existing legal modes, however, creates a difficulty in moving beyond the status quo of law reform that tinkers only at the edges of existing legal systems. An oceanic shift towards nonhuman subjectivity that starts with alternative legal imaginaries offers a mechanism for unmooring law, gender, sexuality, and subjectivity through a posthuman maritime security.

To these reflections on the methodologies and possibilities of posthumanism feminisms, I add an account of posthuman feminisms to specifically think through the maritime environment. This reflects Neimanis and Walker's identification of a need for feminist responsiveness to climate change and ecological crisis within feminist epistemologies (2014). Posthuman feminisms draw in the intersectional and critiques of humanism to significantly shift the patterns of thinking, of knowing, and becoming at times of interspecies crisis. Within this scholarship, feminist writing on the oceans and water offers feminist mechanisms for approaching maritime security in a different register to past feminist interventions into international law and offer a means to broach environmental security that need not be frustrated via the continual violence of settler-colonialism, military frames, and capitalist modes of protection. This offers a means for feminist approaches to unmoor WPS from humanist law via a cacophony of feminist frames—or poems—or siren songs—holding prescient posthuman vulnerabilities and thinking anew security apparatus.

Posthuman feminisms incorporate feminist critiques of the understanding and theorizing of the relationship between watery lifeforms and human encounters, drawing in ecofeminist challenge to the humanist perceptions of academic traditions that center human knowledge as distinct from nature. Braidotti describes this as keeping "the emphasis on justice as social, trans-species and transnational" (2019, 9). The emergence of a specifically watery imagination of posthuman relations recalls water as human, humans as watery, the earth as watery, and retells the humanities through liquid frames and the trans-species dependencies that are never contained on land. For Probyn, this is understood through human–nonhuman digestion and the ocean's expulsion of human excess (2016). For Neimanis (2017), this is a phenomenology of bodies of water, bodies as water, water as body that reframes the human reader's anticipated encounter with the self to find herself not so distinct from water, such that water is human matter. Elsewhere Neimanis—like Braidotti—explores the convergence of the Anthropocene and racialized, classed, gendered bodies to consider a need for posthuman feminisms that examine how whiteness is drawn into the maintenance of the nature–culture dualism (2019). The complex nature/culture imaginaries that emerge understand the mechanisms through which humans are always in the ocean and the ocean in humans, in terms of biological dependencies, creative frames, philosophical, and human–nonhuman encounters.

Lest it is imagined that maritime security and ocean subjectivity is a blueprint for (only) watery (unlanded) futures, I want to close with a drawing in of contemporary ocean studies scholarship that engages the ocean as always already terraqueous. If land-

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based epistemologies imagine the ocean as Other, it is not unexpected that oceanic governance is understood as a terraqueous space: that is a way of knowing land and sea in a relational manner. Steinberg's reflections on the possibility of oceanic studies that commence with the ocean (rather than land), and as providing the starting point for engagement, describe an oceanography that imagines an ocean that is understood without fixed grids, drawing in the work of oceanographers, and offers one possibility for a reconceptualized legal subjectivity (2013). This would be a form of subjectivity that does not start with the human and does not center the human, with all its ordering and Othering, that emerges in existing and dominant legal cartographies. For international lawyers, the state as legal subject, that projects outward from land to accommodate the ocean through the fixed borders of land territories, must at once be seen as already terraqueous (Roberts 2021). Furthermore, the international law of the sea remains circumscribed by European cartographic forms, and the epistemology of seeing the world through the human, the state, property, hierarchies of belonging, and binarized thinking. If sovereign states and legal jurisdictions use land territories to provide the fixed points for mapping the ocean of European knowledge histories, a posthuman ocean is not only a wet form of subjectivity but one that is released toward motion, patterns, movement, and the terraqueous.

Maritime security is already a component of the agenda of the UN Security Council and enlarges the space of security discussions, not only from land to the sea, but through encompassing a range of new issues within the security agenda. Women, peace, and security, now in its third decade of debates, resolutions, and initiatives, is yet to address or speak to maritime security. It is possible to expand the frames of WPS to the ocean, and ocean governance and maritime security, and to simultaneously reconceive feminist interventions into international law so they become unmoored from the loop between resistance and compliance, critique and reform. Maritime security articulated as ocean security, with the ocean as legal subject and posthuman feminist perspectives, informs the contours of oceanic law, offering a future and history of the ocean, human and nonhuman lives, and security.

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Notes

1 I have not amended the acronym LGBTQ+ in the quote, LGBTQ2S+ is preferred incorporating and recognizing Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans*, Queer, Two Spirit plus, communities and individuals.

2 On the dominance of US liberal, radical, and cultural feminisms within feminist legal approaches, see further: Lacey 2004..

3 The United Nations Security Council nominates states as penholders to develop the draft of resolutions, for a long time the US and UK retained a dominant role in this process, however, this has come under scrutiny from other states more recently as being more-than authorship given the power over terms and terminologies that have legal meaning.

4 Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner and Aka Niviâna, "Rise: From one island to another" (2018) poem, available online at: 350.org.

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Gina Heathcote is Professor of Public International Law at Newcastle University (UK) and author of *Feminist Dialogues on International Law: successes, tensions, dialogues* (OUP 2019). Gina's current research examines ocean governance, the international law of the sea, and feminist legal methodologies.

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