1 TOWARD A DECOLONIAL FEMINIST UNIVERSALISM

Feminist critics of imperialism are often thought to be relativists.[1] Because many Western feminisms[2] set themselves up as "universal, morally correct," and "exhaust[ive] of how we imagine emancipatory possibilities and projects" (Khoja-Moolji 2017, 378), critiques seem, to use Shenila S. Khoja-Moolji's words, "regressive, backward, premodern and against the principles of human rights" (377).[3] Explicit disavowals of relativism have now become standard in decolonial, postcolonial, and transnational feminist writings—presumably to pre-empt such accusations.[4] But denying a commitment is not the same thing as not having it, and Western feminists have exploited this ambiguity to great effect. The anti-imperialist feminist tendency to use the terms "universalist" and "normative" pejoratively has inadvertently fueled the Western feminist worry.[5]

The universalism/relativism framing, I claim, makes it impossible for the normative claims in anti-imperialist feminisms to register as such. The notion that universalism itself causes imperialism (or, as some Western feminists would have it, causes what *appears* to be imperialism) produces a dilemma forecloses the possibility of anti-imperialist feminisms. According to this anti-imperialism/normativity dilemma, we can have a feminism that saves "other" women to Western culture or no feminism at all. But the dilemma only obtains if the only possible form of universalist moral argument is one that endorses Western values and conceives Western actors as a sort of moral vanguard.

I contend, however, that what makes feminisms complicit in imperialism is not primarily universalism, and that because of this, we can imagine what I call a "nonideal universalism" that is simultaneously feminist and anti-imperialist. The key to imagining such a position is to demonstrate that the commitments that cause

Western feminisms to become complicit in imperialism are not central to feminism's status as a normative doctrine. These objectionable commitments constitute a perspective I refer to as "missionary feminism"—a schematized perspective I think few feminists explicitly endorse, but whose commitments lie in the background of many feminist theorists' and activists' advocates about actual interventions. Missionary feminism, I argue, stems more from ethnocentrism, justice monism, and idealizing and moralizing ways of seeing that associate Western culture with morality (and thus prevent Western culture and Western intervention from becoming objects of normative scrutiny) than from universalist commitment to the value of gender justice. Ethnocentric justice monism is the view that it is only possible to actualize gender justice within one set of (Western) cultural forms. Idealizing and moralizing ways of seeing describe the world according to a false social ontology wherein the West's putative moral superiority derives from endogenous cultural factors and suggest that political actions are to be evaluated as expressions of moral judgments rather than negotiations of interests and power.

After distinguishing the imperialism-promoting commitments from the universalist ones feminists need, I sketch an alternative feminist normative framework that is responsive to the needs of transnational feminist praxis in a world characterized by historical and ongoing imperialism. According to it, feminism is opposition to sexist oppression, and transnational feminist politics requires visibilizing the effects of global structures on contemporary practices and acknowledging the practical character of many transnational feminist political judgments. I begin with an example of a real-world feminist political strategy that is complicit in imperialism and end with one that is more redemptive.

Two terminological points will be helpful in mapping out this argumentative terrain. First, I call the position that women's subjugation is acceptable because people believe it is, or because it is widespread in certain contexts, "moral relativism" because this matches the usage in the existing feminist debates. Admittedly, the substance of these allegations is better conceptually understood as sexist apologism than relativism, since the accusation against anti-imperialist feminists is often that they only value cultures,[6] not that they deny that anything has universal value. Second, unless otherwise specified, I use the term "universalism" to refer only to moral or normative universalism. Moral universalism is the notion that some things are better and worse for human beings across all contemporary contexts. By defending universalism, I do not mean to claim that all (or even familiar) universalist feminist views are correct or feminist. Instead, I mean to say that it takes much more than the universalist *form* of moral argument to drive imperialism, and that we can develop an anti-imperialist transnational feminist praxis by training our focus on these other elements.

Missionary Feminism and the Problem of Saving "To"

According to Uma Narayan (1997), many Western feminisms assume the "missionary position" by assuming that "only Westerners are capable of naming and challenging patriarchal atrocities against third-world women" (57). Since the easiest way to argue that Westerners are uniquely positioned to make feminist change is to claim that their form of life is the best one for everyone, it is unsurprising that missionary feminists are typically universalists. To get a more complete picture of the content of missionary feminism, its relationship to universalism, and anti-imperialist reasons for opposing it, I examine and abstract from the case-specific criticisms Lila Abu-Lughod makes in her influential essay "Do Muslim Women Need Saving?" In a particularly pithy and evocative phrase, Abu-Lughod (2002) argues that missionary feminisms save *to*: "When you save someone, you imply that you are saving her from something, you are also saving her *to* something" (789), she writes. Saving involves a sense of superiority by Westerners and a lack of reflection about "the violences entailed in . . . transformation[s]" (789). Missionary feminism, rather than being reducible to a view about the possibility of cross-cultural moral judgment, includes views about who can make change and about the form of life "other" cultures should ultimately be changed *to*.

Since Abu-Lughod's essay, like most anti-imperialist feminist work, responds to a particular event and context, reconstructing the general commitments of missionary feminism requires some theorizing. I take missionary feminism to comprise six overlapping commitments, which I will describe here. Abu-Lughod's original essay discusses the mobilization of feminist rhetoric in favor of the US invasion of Afghanistan (and, later, of Iraq). Because it has been fifteen years since Abu-Lughod's essay appeared, I will also draw from Sujatha Fernandes's (2017) work on the Afghan Women Writers' Project (AWWP) for examples of missionary feminism at work in Afghanistan.[7] To be clear, missionary feminism is a somewhat stylized position, designed to make sense of the patterns of Western feminist moral attention. It needs neither to be endorsed in its entirety, nor embraced explicitly, to be motivating Western feminist theory and politics.

The West as the Single Gender-Just Endpoint

According to Abu-Lughod, missionary feminists already know the details of what Afghan women will look like after "salvation." This improved society will be free of the cultural forms that mark Muslims in the Western imaginary; women will, for example, be free of veils of any kind. Western cultural forms *just are* the gender-just way of life. The AWWP audiences, who are Westerners listening to stories crafted by Afghan women about their experiences of war and reconstruction, take this assumption so far as to treat patriarchal elements of Western culture as liberatory. They discuss how lucky they are to live in a country where they can shop and wear makeup (Fernandes 2017, 658), and are fascinated by tales of Afghan women who long to go to the prom (655) or wear white dresses, rather than burqas, at their weddings (656). Of course, some of what the missionary feminists take to be desirable is genuinely worth having, such as access to education. But instead of asking directly about what would increase gender justice in other contexts, missionary feminists always already know that their own form of life constitutes it. The possibility of "other" forms of life being refigured to support gender justice and the possibility that Western culture is gender unjust do not register.

In other words, missionary feminists believe that there is one possible gender-just cultural form, and Western culture embodies it. They recognize no conceptual space between the idea that the situation of Afghan women is gender unjust and the idea that everyone should adopt Western culture; what "other" women need to be saved *to* is (an idealized) Western culture.

A Single Moral Vernacular

One part of the view that Western culture is the gender-just endpoint is worth discussing in its own right, because it receives so much attention in anti-imperialist feminisms. Abu-Lughod (2002) claims that missionary feminists cannot imagine that Afghan women might be "called to personhood, so to speak, in a different language" (788)—one in which they wish to retain forms of life with strong family ties or orient their lives toward religion. Abu-Lughod's implication is that missionary feminists believe that only one set of moral self-understandings is compatible with feminism. The typical candidate is the self-understanding offered by what I called Enlightenment liberalism in the introduction, a crude liberalism that opposes custom and values individual self-sufficiency.[8] Instead of asking questions, or opening up space for others to ask questions, about how moral vernaculars other than

Enlightenment liberalism contain emancipatory possibilities, missionary feminists suppose that other moral languages are bankrupt.

The Enlightenment Teleological Narrative

Abu-Lughod and Fernandes note that missionary feminists describe Muslim women as stuck in the past and Western culture and Western intervention as "other" women's future. Abu-Lughod (2002) reminds us that direct rule of Algeria was supported by the view that France, for the first time, was giving Algerian girls the ability to have "a share of this world" (785). A contemporary AWWP reader listens to an Afghan woman's description of freedom as the ability to veil from whomever she chooses and replies that covering the body is what Western women used to do in the 1920s (Fernandes 2017, 656–657). Embedded in this rhetoric is the sense that there is a single destiny for all societies, and that "others" currently inhabit the past of the West. This way of thinking has the effect of transforming cultural changes that would otherwise need justifying into part of inevitable historical progress.

This association of the West with the future of humanity can be traced to a common narrative about modernity that resonates with thought of many Enlightenment philosophers[9] and has been extensively theorized in decolonial and postcolonial thought.[10] According to it, the world is divided into "primitive" and "modern" societies, and all societies are naturally progressing toward modernity—some more quickly than others. Gender justice is a byproduct of modernity, which the West achieved more quickly because of its internal features. The narrative capitalizes on ambiguities in the terms "modern" and its companion term "civilized." Both terms seem to many to simply connote points in time; to live in the twenty-first century just is, at first blush, to be "modern." At the same time, however, both terms are normatively laden; being modern is a positive thing, associated with scientific and moral progress and, in particular, acting out of principle rather than custom. Yet one need only scratch the surface to see that the word "modern" (and thus morally advanced) is not applied equally to everyone living in the twentieth or twenty-first centuries. This distinction between *modern* and *primitive* functions as a de facto color line, separating the West from "others" (Razack 2008). The packing of Westernness, justice, and futurity into the single idea of modernity permits the view that the adoption of Western culture is inevitable and required for gender justice—and the view that the steps on the path to gender justice will be the same in every context.

Western Intervention as Women's Salvation

Missionary feminists see Western intervention as the preferred feminist solution partly because they ignore, and conduct their politics absent, contact with organizations led by "other" women. Abu-Lughod (2002) remarks that during the colonial period, direct rule was believed to be the only way of ending practices such as child marriage and the "tradition" of sati in India (785).[11] Fernandes shows how, contemporarily, Afghan women face Western incentives to frame their narratives in ways that support the notion that Western involvement is the solution to their problems. In one example, a woman who is reading her poem about the horrors of war precedes it with a discussion of how positive the effects of US intervention have been for Afghan women, feeling obligated to claim that exposing Afghan men to America is an important path to cultural change (Fernandes 2017, 662). The view that Western intervention is the feminist solution is a natural outgrowth of the Enlightenment teleology, which tells missionary feminists that "other" women are destined to adopt Western culture and that the backwardness of "others" is caused by endogenous factors. Who better to bring moral progress to others than representatives of the culture that embodies the height of human progress?

Invisibility of Costs of Intervention

Abu-Lughod (2002) argues that both the harms of war and the contributions of war to women's subordination are simply ignored in missionary feminist calculations about intervention. More broadly, feminisms that save *to* ignore the "violences entailed in . . . transformation" (789). The occlusion of the effects of war on Afghan women is evident in the forgetting of US responsibility for the ascent of the Taliban during the Cold War. More contemporarily, Fernandes argues that audiences of the AWWP ignore the extent to which war imposes gendered costs on women. AWWP participants write about war increasing poverty and vulnerability to rape (Fernandes 2017, 654–655)—both of which create incentives for early marriage. Yet the effects of war on early and forced marriage are simply ignored by the Western women who use these stories as opportunities to pontificate about their own good fortune in being able to choose marriage partners. To generalize these points, missionary feminists ignore the harms of Western intervention in the lives of "other" women.

Misplaced Priorities

Abu-Lughod observes that missionary feminist supporters of the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan seem more preoccupied with veiling (ranging from burqas to hijabs; recall George W. Bush's neologism "women of cover") than issues like starvation and women's health. She treats the invasion of Afghanistan as continuous with early twentieth-century colonial feminisms, which were preoccupied with unveiling Egyptian women but cared little about educating them—and were in fact supported by some who were vocal opponents of women's suffrage in England (Abu-Lughod 2002, 784). She also criticizes missionary feminists for failing to prioritize changing global structural contributors to "other" women's oppression. She asks not only why those who are worried about Afghan women's situation often fail to acknowledge the role of the US government in installing the Taliban,[12] but also why they are not focusing their political energy on fighting the structures that produce global poverty and inequality (789).

The charge Abu-Lughod is making is about misplaced political priorities, not just hypocrisy. Westerners intervene in the lives of "others" in ways that do not track what is genuinely morally urgent. A feminist politics that cares more about markers of cultural difference than starvation, violence, and lack of education and their gendered effects—and one that is unwilling to engage in politics that would reduce these harms by challenging global structures—is vulnerable to criticism for ignoring what is genuinely morally important.

Resort to the Cultural

Abu-Lughod criticizes missionary feminists for taking oppressive practices in Afghanistan to be caused by culture or religion—instead of by the history of the Cold War or the earlier European division of the Middle East. One example from the AWWP is particularly illustrative: a woman tells of having been engaged to her cousin since she was an infant and having fallen in love with him through speaking to him on the phone. Because of the need for patronage from a warlord to survive the war, her family forced her to marry a warlord instead in exchange for employment opportunities for the men in her tribe (Fernandes 2017, 654). Rather seeing the ways in which war can worsen women's vulnerability to this "cultural" practice, Western audiences lump the arranged and forced marriage together as belonging to an Afghan culture in which women lack choices.

The Western notion that unchanging "other" cultures, rather than global politics or internal power struggles, produce sexist practices has a long history (see Narayan 1997; Mohanty 1988). Abu-Lughod names this explanatory strategy "the resort to the cultural."

Is "Missionary" Another Word for "Universalist"?

Universalist commitments are straightforwardly linked to two of the missionary feminist views: the notion of the West as the gender-just endpoint and the idea of a single moral vernacular. But it is possible to reject these elements without rejecting universalism, and this is important for retaining feminism's status as a normative doctrine and grounding anti-imperialist feminist praxis.

Universalism: Part of the Problem Worth Retaining?

Since missionary feminism needs universalism to get off the ground, rejecting universalism may seem like the anti-imperialist fix. A logical point can help us see why rejecting missionary feminism does not require rejecting universalism: one needs to be a universalist to be a missionary feminist, but not the other way around. Nonetheless, the fact that we *can* retain universalism and be anti-imperialists does not mean that we should. Some important considerations militate in favor of decolonial, postcolonial, and transnational feminists embracing some type of universalism, however. One consideration is familiar; it is unclear how feminism can be a meaningful normative doctrine without universalist commitments.[13] Any plausible feminism will include the view that some things that happen to people because of their gender are genuinely wrong, and cross-contextually so. Lest the idea of cross-cultural validity seem unnecessary, it is worth remembering that it is difficult in the contemporary world to avoid encountering and judging the practices of "others." A parochial morality is not enough in a world characterized, not just by frequent cross-cultural interaction, but also by cross-border exercises of power—including the worsening of "other" women's oppression by imperialist forces. Universalist moralities have justified imperialism, but feminists cannot afford to forget that relativism, too, as Kiran Grewal (2012) puts it, "is often used to reinforce positions of privilege and power" (579). Allegations of Westernization that have been used to delegitimize feminists outside the West (see Narayan 1997), and allegations of whiteness that have been used to delegitimize women of color within the West (see Moraga, Anzaldua, and

Cade Bambara 1983), often depart from the idea that opposition to sexist oppression is a parochial value.

Another reason for feminists to retain universalist, or at least highly general, forms of normative theorizing is the increasing need for cross-border feminist politics brought about by geopolitical changes. Chandra Talpade Mohanty argues in recent work that new cross-border formations of power, such as an increasingly neoliberal global order, demand transnational organizing. Though Mohanty (2013) initially became known for emphasizing "historical and cultural specificity in understanding [third world women's] complex agency as situated subjects," she now cautions against seeing such forms of analysis as requiring the abandonment of "all forms of generalization" (967; see also Mohanty 2003). In fact, Mohanty argues, the view that cross-border analysis is totalizing plays directly into the hands of the forces of neoliberalism and white supremacy. The weakening of states, increasing militarism (including the militarization of domestic security forces), the transnational rise of patriarchal politicized religion, and global capitalism are creating new forms of gender injustice (Mohanty 2003, 231). Mohanty argues that cross-border similarities in the operations of multinational corporations and the economic policies they prefer states to adopt have resulted in the emergence of new forms of low-wage, gendered, and racialized manufacturing labor. Opposing such global systemic injustices requires seeing cross-contextual similarities and being able to draw consistent moral judgments about them.

Finally, it is unclear that rejecting universalism can yield coherent anti-imperialist positions. The logical tension between relativism and anti-imperialism is similar in structure to the tension between relativism and feminism, but it is deeper, since imperialism, by definition, is a border-crossing phenomenon. Imperialism typically involves cultural differences between the dominator and the dominated, and we want criticisms of imperialism to be able to show more than that imperialism *appears* wrong from the perspective of the dominated. Relativism also interferes with opposition to imperialism in another, related way: it precludes normative views originating from the colonized from having universal force—that is, from having moral purchase on Westerners. As Linda Zerilli (2009) describes the worry (though in the context of a different problem), if local ideas cannot become universal "There [can] be no place within local traditions from which to begin the political process of articulating a new universalism, because aside from . . . the (truly universal universals in non-Western Cultures), traditions are closed" (302; see also Connell 2015).[14] Of course, not all values need universal force to do their work. But if the harms of imperialism or gender injustice turn out to be traceable in some way to

Western (or other) values, cross-contextual rejection of those values will have to be possible.

Ethnocentrism and Justice Monism

If anti-imperialist feminists must be universalists, the path to avoiding the anti-imperialism/normativity dilemma has to be to reject some other elements of missionary feminism. In my view, the objectionable theoretical habits underlying the missionary feminist errors I described above are ethnocentrism, what I call "justice monism," and idealizing and moralizing nonnormative assumptions. Once we recognize these theoretical habits for what they are, it will become clear both that it is possible to have a universalist normative perspective without them and that missionary feminism cannot successfully be opposed by rejecting universalist forms of moral argument. Because missionary feminism combines a strange species of universalism with particular ways of construing nonnormative facts, opposing missionary feminism means changing both the structure of existing universalist moral ideals and ideological ways of seeing. Ethnocentrism, the first theoretical habit constitutive of missionary feminism, is judging "others" according to the moral standards of one's own culture. Ethnocentric judgments always run the risk of being morally arbitrary, because ethnocentrists refuse to raise questions about whether what is culturally familiar is genuinely morally important. Ethnocentrists typically make judgments about cases by assuming that what is familiar tracks what is genuinely morally important. The missionary feminist who believes that the true feminist gender protocol is one in which women wear makeup and white wedding dresses rather practice any form of veiling assumes that Western gender norms are the morally correct ones.

The idea that some cultural forms are *the* gender just ones bespeaks, not just ethnocentrism, but a theoretical commitment I name "justice monism." Justice monism is the view that only one type of social or cultural form can house gender justice. It is analogous to what Amartya Sen calls "transcendental institutionalism," the idea that there is one possible sort of just social arrangements.[15] Justice monism is the heart of the idea of saving *to*; if morally acceptable gender arrangements might take culturally multiple forms, the notion that some particular, culturally specific set of gender arrangements should replace existing ones requires much justification. If, on the other hand, one begins from the notion that gender justice has a single cultural form, and one is already an ethnocentrist, saving *to* just is what feminism requires. Neither the concept of universalism nor the demands of transnational praxis require the notion of a single gender-just cultural form. Justice monism is a specific, thick interpretation of universalism, not a logical entailment of it.

Idealization and the Idealized Global Social Ontology

Yet Abu-Lughod's article is clear that missionary feminism is more than a view about what would constitute gender justice. Saving *to* is saving, and saving rhetorically suggests that some people are in a special position to reveal moral truths to others. Instead of being based in a view about the normative content of feminism, the idea that some people are uniquely situated to bring about moral progress draws on a certain way of construing the *nonnormative* facts about the world. Indeed, one of the major contributions of decolonial, postcolonial, and transnational feminist theories has been to excavate the nonnormative (or not directly normative) ways of seeing that make imperialism seem legitimate, and even necessary. Missionary feminists take the West to be an agent of morality, and they preserve the deep psychological and ideological association between the West and morality by filtering away information that might reflect poorly on the West or its values. The strength of the ideological association between the West and morality ensures that criticisms of the West seem to be criticisms of values as such. The nonnormative ways of seeing that filter information to preserve this association are idealization and what I will call "moralism."

The theoretical practice known as idealization is at the root of the Enlightenment teleological narrative and the resort to the cultural. Onora O'Neill (1987) argues that idealization occurs when, in the process of abstraction required by theorizing, we represent objects in ways that distort them. The distortion usually occurs by falsely attributing (putatively) positive features to the object or by downplaying negative ones. As feminist philosophers have consistently argued, practices of abstracting about objects in order to theorize about them risk—under unjust background conditions, at least—not random forms of distortion but rather emphasizing attributes that are associated with the dominant or that justify domination.[16] As Charles Mills (2005) has summarized this idea: idealization can be ideological. Mills argues that a common object of idealization in moral and political theories is the ontology of society. Moral theories, though they claim to trade only in explicitly normative claims about what we should not do, cannot avoid being shaped by assumptions about what the objects to which prescriptions apply are like (168). Because Mills criticizes liberal theories of domestic justice, he focuses on the social ontology of separate, self-interested individual persons, whose fates are determined by their choices. The idealized social ontology relevant to missionary feminism is transnational, and its object is the global political and economic structure.

According to missionary feminist idealizations, the world is divided into two types of societies. Although one type, the civilized, modern type to which the West ostensibly belongs, is more advanced than the other, their origins are unified. The backward type of society is defined by hierarchy, adherence to custom, violence, and poverty, and the modern type is defined by affluence and adherence to moral principles, including respect for individual rights and the rule of law. The differentiation was brought about by endogenous factors, or natural evolutionary processes. This division of types of societies and the view that the Western form of life is the future for all is embodied in the Enlightenment teleological narrative that I claimed above was central to missionary feminism. The notion that endogenous factors are the cause of the backwardness of some and the "progress" of the West is the missionary feminist resort to the cultural.

Recognizing these elements of missionary feminism as forms of idealization clarifies just how the association between Westernness and moral authority is produced. The Enlightenment teleological narrative makes certain normative claims plausible while seeming only to present a relatively general account of geopolitics and world history. This is because, like all generalizing narratives (pernicious or not), the Enlightenment teleological narrative selects facts that count in favor of the generalization and facts that don't. Facts about the negative impacts of the West on "other" women are downplayed or omitted. Missionary feminist idealizations deny, as Mohanty (1992) famously puts it, that "a place on the map is a place in history." Rather than being randomly selected, the facts that are suppressed by the Enlightenment teleological narrative are those that would acknowledge historical Western responsibility for unjust situations "other" women are currently in. The suppressed facts concern the realities of settler and metropole colonialism, as well as of neoliberalism and militarism.[17]

This idealized global social ontology also helps explain why methodologically individualist interventions seem to missionary feminists like the right feminist political strategy.[18] If widespread Western responsibility for "other" women's oppression is impossible, then intervening in individual cases—rather than changing global structures—is what Westerners should do. Abu-Lughod (2002) notes that missionary feminists refuse to ask how Westerners might contribute to "making the world a more just place" (790), one in which their nations' policies are less harmful. If Westerners are the bearers of civilization or the discoverers of moral principles, and if the backwardness of "others" is endogenously caused, Western intervention in individual cases is likely to seem like the way to end women's subjugation. The Enlightenment teleological narrative, in other words, updates, and makes slightly less explicit, the notion of the "white man's burden."

To risk stating the obvious, the idealization of the global order also idealizes another object, Western culture, in ways that support ethnocentric justice-monist universalism. The ideas that Western culture is the site of gender justice and that Western culture is *uniquely* capable of harboring it seem, because of the idealization of history and global structures, to be empirically and historically supported. Missionary feminists take civilization, and concomitantly gender justice, to be defining features of Western culture and take the absence of these things to be defining features of "other" cultures. Their ability to see Western culture as *the* feminist solution has much to do with a strong association between it and moral rightness, one that is tenable because of the selective apprehension of facts about history and global structures.

Moralism

Refusal to see the costs of Western intervention, as well as an inability to take seriously the kinds of questions involved in real-world priority setting, stems from a distinct perceptual habit I will call "moralism." "Moralism," as I am using it here, involves treating political activities as though they merely express general moral judgments. Being a moralist is not the same thing as making moral judgments; the latter is something feminists cannot avoid. It is instead a way of refusing to consider the practical ramifications and context-specific meanings of political actions. Of course, political actions *can* express general moral judgments, but they also always have material and discursive effects and are often motivated by interests. Moralists treat transnational political action as a sort of theater for sweeping claims about right and wrong rather than a terrain in which practical considerations are at play and power is exercised.

Missionary feminist moralism is asymmetrical about whose actions can have moral rightness attach to them. That is, it reduces all political actions to abstract moral judgments but allows only Western ones to have the correct moral *content* and count as unmotivated by interests. Where the political actions of "others" are reduced to incorrect judgments about right and wrong, the idealization of the West as protector of civilization leads to an understanding of Western political acts as expressions of lofty goals. For the missionary feminist, whether invading Afghanistan would have caused death and poverty or increased women's vulnerability to forced marriage is less important than the notion that someone was standing against the Taliban. Evaluating Western interventions only as expressions of good moral judgments also helps explain the tendency of missionary feminists to prioritize markers of cultural difference over what is genuinely morally urgent. If the question is how to defend "civilized people throughout the world" (Abu-Lughod 2002, 784), rather than how to actually improve women's lives or reduce oppression, questions about the specific context and the merits and demerits of specific strategies become irrelevant.[19] The point here is deeper than that missionary feminism is pro-Western intervention; it is that missionary feminist ways of seeing rule out questions about strategy choice and costs of intervention in advance.

Asymmetrical moralism, in addition to influencing choices about feminist strategy, keeps missionary feminist idealizations intact. If Westerners never intervene for reasons that are immoral or self-interested, then there is no reason to treat Western values as potentially harmful. If the downsides of Western interventions are imperceptible (or, though I will not treat this view at length here, appear to be only contingently linked to Western culture), they cannot be traced to Western values. Abu-Lughod makes this point with an anecdote from Saba Mahmood. Mahmood, a scholar of Islamist movements in Egypt, is consistently asked to discuss the harms Islamism is wreaking in the world; "but there never seems to be a parallel demand for those who study secular humanism and its projects, despite the terrible violences that have been associated with it over the last couple of centuries, from world wars to colonialism, from genocides to slavery" (Abu-Lughod 2002, 788).[20] Asymmetrical moralism cuts off many possibilities for asking when and whether Western values promote harm. This is particularly problematic in a world in which Western intervention has actually caused much harm, and in which extensive literatures and movements originating in "other" women, associate Western values with justifications of that harm.

What Universalism/Relativism Framings Miss: Western Transcendence

Missionary feminism, according to my reconstruction, combines a certain brand of universalism with certain habits of construing nonnormative facts that inure Western culture and Western intervention to scrutiny. My reconstruction can help us see what construals of anti-imperialist feminisms as relativist get wrong. I have already argued that anti-imperialist feminist projects tend to have universalist presuppositions. Perhaps more importantly, calling the critics relativists misses the part of their aim that involves bringing *Western* values and interventions under the umbrella of what can be morally and politically criticized. Idealization and moralism are ways of seeing that protect Western culture and intervention from criticism, and revealing their role in missionary feminist judgments can help us see why missionary feminists do not bother asking whether support for universal values means support for Western ones. The ability of Western thought and values to escape criticism because they cannot be conceived by Westerners as potentially parochial is what decolonial thinkers call the "absent locus" of enunciation. As Walter Mignolo argues, colonial thought claims to speak about and from the perspective of humanity as such when it actually speaks from the perspective of the colonizer (Mignolo 2002; see also Giraldo 2016). The idea is not merely that Western views and activities are claimed to be universal or morally good; it is that the West disappears as a target of criticism because it so frequently attempts to align its own views with morality and humanity (and reason, but that is out of the scope of this chapter).

What anti-imperialist feminists want is for this question-begging approach to normative questions to stop; genuine normative inquiry about transnational projects requires asking whether some Western values and practices are parochial or harmful. To assert that we need values when the allegation is that certain *Western* ones are harmful, as Western feminists and philosophers so often do, is to ignore the substance of the allegation.[21] Imperialist idealizations and asymmetrical moralism exclude from consideration material that is absolutely relevant to debates about the universal desirability of Western values—that is, material about the actual effects of Western intervention. Of course, this information on its own would not resolve debates about which values to retain and which to criticize or jettison. Nor would it answer questions about which contexts parochial values might be acceptable in. But these facts do not justify simply omitting from normative debates information about the justificatory and constitutive roles Western values play in imperialism. After all, we can learn about the consequences of adopting certain values, their logical entailments, and alternative value systems by looking at the real-world effects of Western interventions in the lives of "others." The challenge for anti-imperialist feminist praxis is to stop letting associations driven by imperialist ways of seeing stand in for the hard work of normative judgment. For anti-imperialist feminist projects to proceed, Western values and interventions must cease to be treated as transcendent, in Abu-Lughod's

(2002) words, as issued from "outside the world looking down on the world, looking out over this sea of poor benighted people, living under the shadow—or veil—of oppressive cultures" (789). Western values and actions need to be brought back to earth.

Toward a Nonideal Universalism

Now that we have seen that critiques of missionary feminism are better understood as critiques of ethnocentric justice monism and of idealizing and moralizing associations between Westernness and gender justice, we can ask whether it is possible to imagine a feminist universalism differently. Some methodological cues for formulating an anti-imperialist universalism can be found in nonideal theory in political philosophy. Nonideal theorists, in the sense that I use the term here (following Elizabeth Anderson, Charles Mills, and, to some extent, Amartya Sen), claim that a desideratum for moral and political concepts is that they should help us diagnose and respond to existing injustices.[22] Anderson and Mills argue that one defect of ideal theories—that is, those that imagine a just world instead of offering directives about how to improve our unjust one—is their tendency to direct our evaluative gazes toward the wrong normative phenomena. Mills, as I have already noted, argues that the idea that the just society is one inhabited by equally positioned individuals, rather than by members of groups who have been subject to historical injustice, trains our evaluative focus on phenomena other than racism.[23]

If we think that what normative concepts encourage us to see and do is germane to developing them, as nonideal theorists do, the role anti-imperialist feminisms can play in developing new normative concepts become clearer. A better universalism will have to pay attention to the nonnormative assumptions held by those likely to adopt it and the effects normative concepts will produce if adopted under existing social conditions. Philosophers have tended to limit the scope of normative theorizing to prescriptions for behavior. Yet as Margaret Urban Walker (2007) argues, the expectation that responses to injustice come from "*within* a normative moral theory" misses the fact that our normative judgments about cases are driven largely by "the interpretations and associations" that have become "socially salient" to us (187). If we take blocking missionary feminist practices to be a goal in engineering a normative approach, we can begin to craft a universalism that is more responsive to imperialism concerns.

Opposition to Sexist Oppression against Ethnocentrism and Justice Monism

So far, I have cleared space for anti-imperialist universalisms. But not all universalisms are feminist. If feminism conceptually entails the values and ways of seeing constitutive of missionary feminism, the anti-imperialism/normativity dilemma will reappear. However, I think that one intuitive and widely held normative conception of feminism is neither ethnocentric nor justice monist. It is the conception, articulated in the early work of bell hooks, of feminism as opposition to sexist oppression (hooks 2000b). Oppression, according to Marilyn Frye (1983) is a social phenomenon wherein disadvantage systematically accrues to members of certain social groups relative to members of others. Systematicity and group-based disadvantage are necessary conditions for oppression. That a person confronts episodic disadvantages, such as being last in line at the supermarket on some occasions, is not enough to make her oppressed. Similarly, a society in which disadvantages are systemic but not attached to group membership, though it may be bad or unjust, is not oppressive. Sexist, or gender, oppression is systemic disadvantage that accrues to a person by virtue of membership, or perceived membership, in a gender[24]—or as a result of a system of gender.

I will say little in direct defense of this conception of feminism, except that I think most feminists will find themselves in it, and that it is consistent with the findings of the literature on transnational feminist movements. Valentine Moghadam (2000) argues in her empirical discussion of transnational feminist networks that they converge on the notion that "family, the polity, and cultural institutions" disadvantage women and that social change should aim at improving women's social status (60). Amrita Basu (2016, xiv) argues that Myra Max Ferree's understanding of feminism as the willingness to challenge gender subordination is a useful heuristic for identifying movements that are feminist. Differences in the actual priorities and concrete strategies of different movements can be understood as different specifications of how to reduce sexist oppression in different empirical situations. For example, contexts characterized by war and political repression have led certain women's movements to focus on violence against women and LGBTQ people, whereas contexts with existing democracies have sometimes (but not always) offered feminist movements more latitude to criticize economic inequality (Basu 2016, 24). The understanding of feminism as opposition to sexist oppression undoubtedly permits the conclusion that some women's movements are not feminist. However, this use of normative criteria is ineluctable—and feminist movements all over the world distinguish themselves from movements that are merely led by women (Basu 2016, xiii),[25] especially movements led by women that actively endorse sexist oppression. In fact, some women's movements in the global South have wanted to reintroduce the language of oppression precisely to distinguish themselves from women's groups that are gender-conservative or co-opted. For example, Isis Giraldo (2016, 167) describes the Latin American feminist Julia Paredes as arguing for *despatriarcalización*, because in her context, "gender" has become an apolitical term.

The conception of feminism as opposition to sexist oppression, unlike the ethnocentric monist one underlying missionary feminism, underdetermines how gender justice should be brought about in particular cases. Whereas the missionary feminist thinks there is a single recipe for feminist change that should be followed everywhere—one that happens to involve instituting Western cultural forms—the view that feminism is opposition to gender-based oppression does not on its own prescribe particular cultural forms as the solution. The fact that it does not supply context-specific prescriptions does not imply that it is not a normative vision; systematic gender-based disadvantage, wherever it is found, is bad. But the idea that feminism is opposition to sexist oppression is compatible with different judgments about the presence and causes of oppression in different cases, as well as with the employment of different practical strategies and different moral vernaculars in different cases.

Two features of the idea of feminism as opposition to sexist oppression cause it to underdetermine what should happen in transnational feminist praxis in any particular context. First, it gives a picture of what is wrong rather than a picture of what is right. It thus rejects justice monism by not stating what the endpoint of gender justice looks like and leaving opening the possibility that multiple culturally specific ways of living gender, could embody gender justice. Feminists continue to actively debate whether a gender-just society would eliminate gender roles altogether, proliferate them, or assign new forms of power to existing ones; the notion that feminism is opposition to sexist oppression suggests that feminists, at least in our contemporary world, do not need a single answer to these questions. Feminism's status as a normative doctrine does not depend on a vision of the single gender-just endpoint. Those who believe that the alternative to universally adopting Western (or any) cultural forms is the feminist answer to relativism suppose a view must be justice monist to be normative. But there is little reason to suppose they must be, and, as I have also argued elsewhere (Khader 2011), transnational feminist praxis might gain much from a normative vision that focuses on what is wrong without a culturally particular vision of what is right.

Second, the notion that feminism is opposition to gender-based oppression does not specify what the indicators of advantage and disadvantage are in any given context.[26] This feature is particularly helpful in combatting ethnocentrism, and its manifestation in the notion of a single moral vernacular. There are in fact two types of unspecificity about what constitutes disadvantage, and I will argue that one is worth embracing only moderately. The type we should embrace only moderately is unspecificity about which goods are constitutive of advantage and disadvantage. Indicators of advantage can, and certainly do, vary from context to context. The reason for variation is emphatically not that oppression is a subjective phenomenon; whether arrangements are oppressive is not defined by whether people see them as such.[27] It is instead that societies genuinely vary in their currencies of advantage. For example, the ability to produce food is especially likely to be a source of power and advantage in agrarian societies and is less likely to be one in cash-based ones. As is often noted in feminist writings on sub-Saharan Africa, the ability to produce food is, in many situations, historically feminized and culturally associated with meaningful political roles and bargaining power (see Zeleza 2005; Pala 2005; Mikell 1997).

But because there is value in retaining the view that some goods, such as food and freedom from violence, are universal, or at least highly general, markers of disadvantage, and anti-imperialist feminists should not completely embrace nonspecificity about indicators of advantage. Feminist movements around the world seem to converge on the importance of women's access to certain goods, such as freedom from violence and the ability to determine one's reproductive life (see Basu 2016). The current pace of geopolitical and economic change offers additional reasons to refuse to make the list of goods feminists care about *completely* relative to context. First, as I have already mentioned, transnational forms of gender injustice, such as neoliberalism and militarism, are difficult to recognize without the ability to see some things as gender-injustice-undermining across contexts. To be able to, in Mohanty's words, "reemphasize connections between local and universal," (Mohanty 2003, 226) some things need to register as oppressive across contexts. Second, being free from oppression in our contemporary world probably does require access to some goods that are valuable in contexts besides one's own. It is unlikely in the contemporary world that people will never leave their particular contexts or that their contexts will not change, and it can therefore be harmful to people to make them unable to operate outside very limited cultural contexts.

Discussions of literacy, a good that has occasionally been controversial, offer an example of this point. Even if there are contexts where, in the short term, literacy is not a source of advantage or necessary to secure basic goods, it is dangerous at this point in history to assume that people can do without literacy in the long term. It is often said that children and youth who lack literacy and formal education have been "deprived of a future."

So, there is a need for a list of universal indicators of advantage and disadvantage, but combating missionary feminism means that it should not be abstracted from a specific culture and should not be taken as exhaustive. This is the form of underdetermination of indicators of advantage and disadvantage that feminists should embrace. The indicators of advantage and disadvantage should be articulated vaguely enough to be capable of being instantiated in culturally and contextually distinct ways. Since one of the goals of an alternative conception is to avoid missionary feminist ethnocentrism, any list feminists use should have been cross-culturally deliberated on and open to cross-cultural deliberation.[28] The closest available thing is the list of basic human rights. The idea that the objects of human rights have a role to play in an anti-imperialist feminism will be surprising to some, given the fact human rights are sometimes seen as a vehicle for imperialism. Though I cannot treat this worry in depth here, I emphasize that we can understand gendered human rights deficits to constitute lacks of advantage without accepting the elements of human rights that have been most objectionable to anti-imperialist feminists.

Many objections to human rights concern, not their normative content, but rather the ways of seeing of many human rights practitioners. For example, Alison Jaggar and Theresa Weynand Tobin argue that women's human rights practitioners begin from a pre-established ethnocentric analysis of why gendered human rights violations happen that makes the search for rich descriptive information before deciding what to do in specific cases seem superfluous (Tobin and Jaggar 2013, 423–424; see also Tobin 2009). Similarly, Makau Matua's (2001) argument that human rights discourse causes Westerners to think of themselves as saviors of the savage is, like critiques of missionary feminism, largely an argument about the nonnormative assumptions surrounding Western transcendence I discussed earlier. Thinking the content of the list of human rights gives a useful, but nonexhaustive list of goods whose gender-unequal distribution counts as sexist oppression can be done without accepting missionary feminist nonnormative assumptions, especially if Western feminists are encouraged to actively criticize such nonnormative assumptions, as I will recommend below.[29]

Underdetermination of the gender-just endpoint and nonspecificity about indicators of advantage and disadvantage also work against ethnocentrism in another way; they make explicit that what matters for feminist political judgments about cases is whether *oppression* is present, not whether certain cultural vernaculars or practices are. One cannot know whether sexist oppression is present in a given case without knowing the overall effects of certain social practices, which in turn cannot be understood without rich contextual information. The missionary feminist who assumes that "other" women need to be saved to an idealized Western culture either has the task backward (thinks she knows without contextual information what produces gender-based disadvantage), or has a completely misguided understanding of what the task is (thinks what matters for feminism is ultimately whether a context has adopted Western cultural forms, to return to our earlier example). What matters to her is that women wear prom dresses instead of burqas, and she either denies that both forms of dress in their contexts belong to systems that disadvantage women or is only interested in conceiving the prom dress as the desirable destiny of the woman who wears a burqa. On the conception of feminism I am advocating, missionary feminists whose judgments track the presence or absence of Western cultural forms, instead of the presence or absence of sexist oppression, may not be feminists at all.

Before I turn to discussing how a universalist feminist normative framework can resist missionary feminist construals of nonnormative facts, I consider an important objection to my conception of feminism. It may seem to exclude opposing forms of oppression besides sexism, such as racism, capitalist oppression, and imperialism—or to suggest that sexism ought to be prioritized over them. Indeed, because of such concerns, hooks (2000a) later changed her definition of feminism from the one I have just endorsed to include opposition to all intersecting oppressions. However, taking the fact of intersectionality seriously, and opposing other oppressions, does not require building opposition to other oppressions into the concept of feminism (and, in fact, many intersectional feminists do not take intersectionality to be a definition of feminism). Something does not have to be part of the definition of feminism to be morally urgent. Moreover, there is a reason specific to the project of this book for not making opposition to imperialism and racism *definitional* for feminism. Incorporating opposition to imperialism into feminism defines away the possibility of conflict between feminist and anti-imperialist goals, a conflict that is endemic to transnational feminist praxis. Sometimes, for example, anti-imperialist concerns recommend very conservative criticism of a cultural practice, while opposition to sexism requires strident criticism, or vice versa. Or, as I discuss in chapter 2, anti-imperialist concerns might recommend maximal preservation of non-Western metaphysical worldviews, whereas feminism requires criticizing the subset of these views that are oppressive to women. Because of the tragic reality of such conflict, I think refusing to make anti-imperialism definitional for feminism can be construed as a way of responding to the fact that women face multiple oppressions; it illuminates conflicts where they exist, which is key to being able to navigate and move beyond them. Understanding the potential conflicts between opposing sexist oppression and other oppressions is responsive to the reality that third-world feminists are so often silenced by internal forces who share colonial marginalization but not gender marginalization, and to the fact that missionary feminists often ask "other" women to accept imperialism to advance their gender interests.

My view is emphatically not that other oppressions should not be opposed; it is instead that feminism need not furnish all of our moral commitments. We should want to see how feminist moral commitments can be reconciled with opposition to imperialism. It is undoubtedly true that transnational feminist praxis will fail to apprehend many real-world situations if it refuses to avail itself of the intersectional insight that it is difficult, and sometimes impossible, to disentangle the effects of sexism and those of racism or imperialism in actual lives. According to Kimberle Crenshaw's (1989) famous analogy, a person who is hit by two cars at an intersection will sustain injuries that cannot easily be traced to one of the cars. The elements of Afghan women's lack of access to education that are caused by poverty and militarism and those caused by sexism are probably impossible to pull apart, and the best strategies for improving Afghan women's lives will require responding to both. Consistent with this element of intersectional feminist theory, the epistemic prescriptions described next will often recommend strategies that visibilize intersections between sexism and imperialism.

Epistemic Prescriptions against Idealization and Moralism

Because missionary feminism includes nonnormative ways of seeing, any articulation of the normative content of feminism can only go so far in displacing it. Since missionary precommitments filter information about the world in ways that associate the West with moral progress and gender justice, it is improbable that they would abandon projects of saving *to* just because they thought of feminism as opposition to sexist oppression. After all, the idea that Western culture is uniquely capable of housing gender justice and bringing moral progress to "others" may seem to them to have been arrived at through empirical observation. The only way for Western feminists to break out of the thrall of missionary feminist precommitments is to actively try to change what they see. I thus submit that an anti-imperialist feminist normative framework should include two epistemic prescriptions in addition to the idea of feminism as opposition to sexist oppression.

Call the first epistemic prescription the "imperialism-visibilizing prescription." It states that Western feminists, when attempting political engagement with "other" women, should seek information about the role global structures might have played in causing the contemporary oppression of "other" women. The relevant structures are both historical and contemporary, and they include colonialism in its settler and metropole forms, as well as militarism and neoliberalism. To be clear, recommending that feminists seek this information does not imply that imperialism is always a cause, or the main cause, of "other" women's oppression. Instead, in cases in which imperialism does play a role, the role is likely to be concealed by missionary feminists' existing epistemic habits; actively looking for noncultural causes is a way of understanding these cases more clearly. In other words, the imperialism-visibilizing prescription takes on the nonideal theoretical task of working against the idealizations that obscure imperialism, especially the idealized social ontology generated by the Enlightenment teleological narrative.

Attention to the role Northern and Western actors have played in causing "other" women's oppression can also combat the moralist tendency to take Western political actions as disinterested moral judgments whose effects are not themselves worthy of normative scrutiny. Rather than being an actor that "stands outside the world," the imperialism-visibilizing directive calls the West to come back to earth and realize its own role in creating and shaping the world it makes moral pronouncements about. Questions about remedial responsibility and a reordering of Western feminist moral priorities arise more easily when Western innocence is not the unquestioned starting point. Asking about Western causation of harm to "other" women allows reducing or eliminating harm to register as an option to be considered in the weighing of Western feminist moral priorities. When Western and Northern policies play causal roles, concerns about efficacy alone may suggest reasons to change these policies rather than intervene in local contexts. Additionally, as Alison Jaggar (2005) argues, deontological considerations, such as the idea that one bears special responsibility for repairing harm one has caused, present strong reasons for Western feminists to focus on changing transnational structures (72).

The potential costs of contemporary Western interventions are also more likely come under scrutiny if Western feminists pay explicit attention to colonial legacies and contemporary global structures. Many cases in which Westerners caused harm undoubtedly involved Westerners intending, or claiming to intend, to help “other” women, but such intentions neither necessarily justify intervention nor justify the forms of intervention that have been preferred. Once it is revealed, for example, that military intervention to save Afghan women leads to vulnerability to new types of forced marriage, the idea that all that is needed is for Western feminists to take a stand becomes less and less plausible. The ability to perceive negative effects of Western interventions can also work against idealization and moralism by revealing the extent to which those interventions have been interest-driven, rather than noble. Missionary feminists, as moralists, see the world in ways that purify Western political activity. The Enlightenment teleological narrative, according to which the West is an agent of natural progress, rather than an agent that benefits from “others’ ” subjugation, will likely not survive attention to the realities of contemporary neoliberalism and militarism. It is difficult to maintain about the Afghanistan case, for example, that a history of self-interested action by the United States is irrelevant to the contemporary oppression of Afghan women.

Call the second epistemic prescription in the normative framework I propose the “justice-enhancement prescription.” According to it, feminists should remember that strategy choices in specific contexts are partly case-specific judgments about how to improve conditions. I borrow the term justice enhancement from Sen (2009), who contrasts it with justice achievement; the former aims at making the world better, and the latter aims at making it ideal.[30] Remembering that feminist praxis aims at justice enhancement means recognizing that strategy choice is rightly shaped by, and can be criticized for failing to take account of, concerns about context and effectiveness. It does not require a highly specific end goal (as the ethnocentric justice monist believes), and strategies should not be evaluated only or primarily as statements about what would achieve ultimate gender justice. Whereas the Enlightenment teleological narrative suggests that the same strategies will bring about feminist change in every case (because “others” are in the past of the West), and moralism discourages taking the costs of change into account, the justice-enhancement prescription calls for rich and longitudinal empirical attention to contexts and asking case-specific questions about what will make a difference. The strategies that will make a difference are usually different from those that involve just “doing something" about gender injustice, and they can rarely be identified without context-specific knowledge.

Indeed, contrary to missionary feminist assumptions, a focus on justice-enhancement suggests that context variation in feminist strategy choices is not merely to be expected; it should be affirmed as part of the shared feminist goal of opposing sexist oppression. The missionary feminist assumption that all forms of veiling in Afghanistan must stop immediately, for example, refuses to countenance questions relevant justice-enhancement: such as about the compatibilities of values in the local moral vernacular that could be interpreted in ways compatible with feminism (such as, for example, the possibility of a reconstruction of Islam that places the same modesty requirements on women and men) and the possibilities for strategies based on incremental change.

Remembering that strategy choices concern justice enhancement can also counteract the moralist tendency to treat Western intervention as the feminist solution. Whereas it and the Enlightenment teleological narrative provide reasons for Westerners to think that their knowledge about "other" contexts is sufficient, thinking that feminist praxis is about justice enhancement makes clear that many of the types of knowledge necessary for feminist change are not ones Westerners can easily access. A role for context-specific knowledge and authority displaces the claim by missionary feminists that Westerners are uniquely positioned to make change. In other words, once transnational feminist praxis appears to be about justice enhancement, the case for feminist activism "from below" becomes very clear—and clear in a way that is fully compatible with universalism.

Beyond Missionary Feminism: The Freedom without Fear Platform UK

I have tried to open conceptual space for a feminism that is universalist but not missionary—and to describe a nonideal universalist framework fits within this space. Since I began with a picture of missionary feminism in practice, I end with a sketch of what political strategies motivated by nonideal universalism might look like. After the much-publicized 2012 gang rape, torture, and death of Jyoti Singh Pandey (popularly known as Nirbhaya), activists in India organized the Bekaouf Azadi (Freedom without Fear) movement. Thousands marched in the streets, and teach-ins and advocacy efforts aimed to influence the government-appointed Verma Committee to reject victim-blaming and honor-focused responses to sexual assault (Singh 2012–2013; Carty and

Mohanty 2015; Krishnan and Wilson 2013). A solidarity movement led by Black and South Asian women in the United Kingdom, the Freedom without Fear Platform UK, will be my focus here. A point of departure for the UK activists was recognition of the ways the rape in India would be used opportunistically by the UK government to highlight contrasts between a "backward" India and a civilized Britain, despite the UK government's drastic cutting of resources from efforts aimed at reducing violence against women (Freedom without Fear Platform 2013).

Whereas missionary feminists begin from idealizations of global structures that portray the West as gender-just and associations that presume the West is an agent of morality, the Freedom without Fear Platform foregrounded similarities in the government responses to gender violence in India and the United Kingdom. Kavita Krishnan, an Indian activist, describes having been bombarded with questions from the Western media, friends, and relatives along the lines of " 'we are concerned about you because you live in such an unsafe place, how bad is it in India, it must be terrible in Delhi' etc. When I would tell them that rape culture and the kinds of things we were raising show up in different forms in different countries, then there would be this response, 'yes but, it's worse in India isn't it?, it must be worse there' " (Krishnan and Wilson 2013). To offset the imperialism-legitimizing effects of such notions, the UK activists highlighted the prevalence of rape culture in United Kingdom and agitated against the government's withdrawal of financial support and community-led resources for women victims of violence. They publicly drew attention to a concomitant shift toward racializing violence against women. The government's focus on forced marriage and incarcerating its supporters was a way of stigmatizing minorities more than it was a way of demonstrating support for violence against women, they argued (Freedom without Fear Platform 2013).

The Freedom without Fear Platform's approach to discussing the similarities in rape culture in both countries can be understood as involving a focus on sexist oppression rather than an ethnocentric monist idealizing and moralizing approach, as well as a recognition that contextual information is important to determining which strategies would be justice enhancing. In this case, contextual differences in indicators of advantage and disadvantage did not come into play, since the platform and the Indian activists agreed that patriarchal violence against women was an urgent border-crossing feminist issue, one that could not be understood in either context without an analysis of patriarchal control over women's bodies (Press Trust of India 2013). At the same time, the activists were attentive to contextual differences in the ways sexual victimization harmed and disadvantaged women, often through context-specific intersections with race and class. In India, it was important to draw attention to the ways in which the rape of Dalit girls and women was a tool of caste violence (Freedom without Fear Platform 2014) and in which discourses about rape that articulated its wrongness as a symptom of men's inadequate ability to control women (Krishnan and Wilson 2013). In the United Kingdom, in contrast, it was important to mobilize against the ways in which criminalization and the gutting of the refugee regime were reducing women's (and LGBTQ people's) access to services to protect them from patriarchal violence (Kumar 2014).

Central to the platform's work have been strategies consistent with the justice-enhancing and imperialism-visibilizing prescriptions. Much of its activism focused on debunking attempts by UK actors to depict themselves as on the right side of morality by publicly denouncing violence elsewhere, and violence committed by Muslims internally. Against the moralizing idea that such denunciations were correct or sufficient, and consistent with the justice-enhancement prescription, the platform drew public attention to inconsistencies between this grandstanding and allocations of the kinds of resources that would actually contribute to decreasing gender violence. Existing resource allocations and the increasing criminalization of forced marriage, in their view, more clearly demonstrated commitments to treating gender-based violence as caused by "others" than they did any genuine feminist commitments. I have already mentioned that activists organized around the UK government's withdrawal of support from refugee and immigrant women and the ways in which the focus on violence against women by brown and Black men was a way of appearing to take a stance against violence while actually withdrawing resources from it. In another effort, the UK activists organized a write-in campaign and a protest against a government poster that featured a black hand over a white mouth to draw attention to child sexual abuse (Freedom without Fear Platform 2015b).

The Freedom without Fear Platform also acted consistently with the imperialism-visibilizing prescription by organizing against UK contributions to violence against women in India. One of the things they did was to organize forums on the ways neoliberalism exposed Indian women to rape and rendered them vulnerable to dowry violence. For example, multinational mining companies used rape to silence Adivasi women who resisted their incursion (Wilson 2013) and recruited women to do exploitative factory work with the promise of a one-time dowry payment at the end of the job (Krishnan and Wilson 2013). They also gave a platform to Indian activists who argued that the perception of women as men's property in India was a result of colonial law (Krishnan and Wilson 2013). Additionally, in response to calls from Indian activists, they protested the visit of India's Prime Minister Modi to the United Kingdom. The rationale was that in hosting him, the UK government was legitimizing the types of religious fundamentalism that fueled violence against women, such as the use of rape as a tool of control in Kashmir and in the attacks on thousands of Gujarati Muslims (India Tomorrow 2015; Wilson 2015). The Freedom without Fear Platform was also part of a team that issued a public open letter, signed by UK organizations, to Modi about these facts, as well as the fact that sexual assault cases were pending against many members of Modi's cabinet (Wilson 2015). They also pressured local Members of Parliament who had provided financial support to celebrate Modi's visit to withdraw their support (Freedom without Fear Platform 2015a).

Conclusion

Missionary feminists suppose that there is a single endpoint of gender justice embodied by the West and employ idealizing and moralizing schemas that preserve the notion that the West is primarily or exclusively an agent of moral progress. Underlying their point of view is a cluster of associations between the West and moral rightness. The idea that anti-imperialist feminisms oppose universalism conveniently, and sometimes perversely, protects these associations. My aim has been to undermine the missionary feminists' perceived monopoly on morality by showing that anti-imperialist feminisms need not be conceived as opposed to universalism. The core concerns raised by missionary feminism's opponents can be addressed through a new type of universalist feminism, a nonideal universalism that recognizes that sexist oppression is the central feminist normative concern, encourages Western feminists to add historical and structural explanations to their repertoire of explanations of "other" women's oppression, and that considers transnational feminist praxis to be about justice enhancement rather than moralist grandstanding. Anti-imperialist universalist feminisms are possible, I have argued, because missionary feminism is not driven by universalism per se; it is driven by universalism combined with an excessively thick and culturally specific notion of gender justice joined with ideological ways of construing nonnormative information.

Yet recognizing the possibility of redeeming universalism is only the beginning of a conversation. Whereas the universalism/relativism framing of debates about transnational feminisms forces anti-imperialist feminists into a corner, I hope the possibility of anti-imperialist universalisms opens the door to discussing of the moral merits of specific values, histories, and interventions. One question to which we must turn our attention if anti-imperialist universalist feminisms are to be possible is that of which values feminists who wish to also oppose imperialism should endorse. Which values are central to conceiving and practicing opposition to sexist oppression, and which are not? How and when do “other” women’s movements and criticisms of Western values illuminate reasons to revise them, recognize their parochiality or context-specific applicability, or abandon them altogether? When values that seem central to transnational feminist praxis also seem to be vehicles for imperialism, can such conflicts be avoided or overcome? These are the questions I take on in the rest of this book.