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U.S. third world feminism

The theory and method of oppositional consciousness in the postmodern world[1]

Chela Sandoval

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The enigma that is U.S. third world feminism has yet to be fully confronted by theorists of social change. To these late twentieth-century analysts it has remained inconceivable that U.S. third world feminism might represent a form of historical consciousness whose very structure lies outside the conditions of possibility which regulate the oppositional expressions of dominant feminism. In enacting this new form of historical consciousness, U.S. third world feminism provides access to a different way of conceptualizing not only U.S. feminist consciousness but oppositional activity in general; it comprises a formulation capable of aligning such movements for social justice with what have been identified as world-wide movements of decolonization.

Both in spite of and yet because they represent varying internally colonized communities, U.S. third world feminists have generated a common speech, a theoretical structure which, however, remained just outside the purview of the dominant feminist theory emerging in the 1970s, functioning within it—but only as the unimaginable. Even though this unimaginable presence arose to reinvigorate and refocus the politics and priorities of dominant feminist theory during the 1980s, what remains is an uneasy alliance between what appear on the surface to be two different understandings of domination, subordination, and the nature of effective resistance—a shot-gun arrangement at best between what literary critic Gayatri Spivak characterizes as a "hegemonic feminist theory"[2] on the one side and what I have been naming "U.S. third world feminism" on the other.[3] I do not mean to suggest here, however, that the perplexing situation that exists between U.S. third world and hegemonic feminisms should be understood merely in binary terms. On the contrary, what this investigation reveals is the way in which the new theory of oppositional consciousness considered here and enacted by U.S. third world feminism is at least partially contained, though made deeply invisible by the manner of its appropriation, in the terms of what has become a hegemonic feminist theory.

U.S. third world feminism arose out of the matrix of the very discourses denying, permitting, and producing difference. Out of the imperatives born of necessity arose a mobility of identity that generated the activities of a new citizen-subject, and which reveals yet another model for the self-conscious production of political opposition. In this essay I will lay out U.S. third world feminism as the design for oppositional political activity and consciousness in the United States. In mapping this new design, a model is revealed by which social actors can chart the points through which differing oppositional ideologies can meet, in spite of their varying trajectories. This knowledge becomes important when one begins to wonder, along with late twentieth-century cultural critics such as Fredric Jameson, how organized oppositional activity and consciousness can be made possible under the co-opting nature of the so-called "postmodern" cultural condition.[4]

The ideas put forth in this essay are my rearticulation of the theories embedded in the great oppositional practices of the latter half of this century especially in the United States—the Civil Rights movement, the women's movement, and ethnic, race, and gender liberation movements. During this period of great social activity, it became clear to many of us that oppositional social movements which were weakening from internal divisions over strategies, tactics, and aims would benefit by examining philosopher Louis Althusser's theory of "ideology and the ideological state apparatuses."[5] In this now fundamental essay, Althusser lays out the principles by which humans are called into being as citizen-subjects who act—even when in resistance—in order to sustain and reinforce the dominant social order. In this sense, for Althusser, all citizens endure ideological subjection.[6] Althusser's postulations begin to suggest, however, that "means and occasions"[7] do become generated whereby individuals and groups in opposition are able to effectively challenge and transform the current hierarchical nature of the social order, but he does not specify how or on what terms such challenges are mounted.

In supplementing Althusser's propositions, I want to apply his general theory of ideology to the particular cultural concerns raised within North American liberation movements and develop a new theory of ideology which considers consciousness not only in its subordinated and resistant yet appropriated versions—the subject of Althusser's theory of ideology—but in its more effective and persistent oppositional manifestations. In practical terms, this theory focuses on identifying forms of consciousness in opposition, which can be generated and coordinated by those classes self-consciously seeking affective oppositional stances in relation to the dominant social order. The idea here, that the subject-citizen can learn to identify, develop, and control the means of ideology, that is, marshal the knowledge necessary to "break with ideology" while also speaking in and from within ideology, is an idea which lays the philosophical foundations enabling us to make the vital connections between the seemingly disparate social and political aims which drive yet ultimately divide liberation movements from within. From Althusser's point of view, then, the theory I am proposing would be considered a "science of oppositional ideology."

This study identifies five principal categories by which "oppositional consciousness" is organized, and which are politically effective means for changing the dominant order of power. I characterize them as "equal rights," "revolutionary," "supremacist," "separatist," and "differential" ideological forms. All these forms of consciousness are kaleidoscoped into view when the fifth form is utilized as a theoretical model which retroactively clarifies and gives new meaning to the others. Differential consciousness represents the strategy of another form of oppositional ideology that functions on an altogether different register. Its power can be thought of as mobile—not nomadic but rather cinematographic: a kinetic motion that maneuvers, poetically transfigures, and orchestrates while demanding alienation, perversion, and reformation in both spectators and practitioners. Differential consciousness is the expression of the new subject position called for by Althusser—it permits functioning within yet beyond the demands of dominant ideology. This differential form of oppositional consciousness has been enacted in the practice of U.S. third world feminism since the 1960s.

This essay also investigates the forms of oppositional consciousness that were generated within one of the great oppositional movements of the late twentieth century, the second wave of the women's movement. What emerges in this discussion is an outline of the oppositional ideological forms which worked against one another to divide the movement from within. I trace these ideological forms as they are manifested in the critical writings of some of the prominent hegemonic feminist theorists of the 1980s. In their attempts to identify a feminist history of consciousness, many of these thinkers believe they detect four fundamentally distinct phases through which feminists have passed in their quest to end the subordination of women. But viewed in terms of another paradigm, "differential consciousness," here made available for study through the activity of U.S. third world feminism, these four historical phases are revealed as sublimated versions of the very forms of consciousness in opposition which were also conceived within post-1950s U.S. liberation movements.

These earlier movements were involved in seeking effective forms of resistance outside of those determined by the social order itself. My contention is that hegemonic feminist forms of resistance represent only other versions of the forms of oppositional consciousness expressed within all liberation movements active in the United States during the later half of the twentieth century. What I want to do here is

systematize in theoretical form a theory of oppositional consciousness as it comes embedded but hidden within U.S. hegemonic feminist theoretical tracts. At the end of this essay, I present the outline of a corresponding theory which engages with these hegemonic feminist theoretical forms while at the same time going beyond them to produce a more general theory and method of oppositional consciousness.

The often discussed race and class conflict between white and third world feminists in the United States allows us a clear view of these forms of consciousness in action. The history of the relationship between first and third world feminists has been tense and rife with antagonisms. My thesis is that at the root of these conflicts is the refusal of U.S. third world feminism to buckle under, to submit to sublimation or assimilation within hegemonic feminist praxis. This refusal is based, in large part, upon loyalty to the differential mode of consciousness and activity outlined in this essay but which has remained largely unaccounted for within the structure of the hegemonic feminist theories of the 1980s.

Differential consciousness is not yet fully theorized by most contemporary analysts of culture, but its understanding is crucial for the shaping of effective and ongoing oppositional struggle in the United States. Moreover, the recognition of differential consciousness is vital to the generation of a next "third wave" women's movement and provides grounds for alliance with other decolonizing movements for emancipation. My answer to the perennial question asked by hegemonic feminist theorists throughout the 1980s is that yes, there *is* a specific U.S. third world feminism: it is that which provides the theoretical and methodological approach, the "standpoint" if you will, from which this evocation of a theory of oppositional consciousness is summoned.

A BRIEF HISTORY

From the beginning of what has been known as the second wave of the women's movement, U.S. third world feminists have claimed a feminism at odds with that being developed by U.S. white women. Already in 1970 with the publication of *Sisterhood Is Powerful*, black feminist Francis Beal was naming the second wave of U.S. feminism as a "white women's movement" because it insisted on organizing along the binary gender division male/female alone.[8] U.S. third world feminists, however, have long understood that one's race, culture, or class often denies comfortable or easy access to either category, that the interactions between social categories produce other genders within the social hierarchy. As far back as the middle of the last century, Sojourner Truth found it necessary to remind a convention of white suffragettes of her female gender with the rhetorical question "ar'n't I a woman?"[9] American Indian Paula Gunn Allen has written of Native women that "the place we live now is an idea, because whiteman took all the rest."[10] In 1971, Toni Morrison went so far as to write of U.S. third world women that "there is something inside us that makes us different from other people. It is not like men and it is not like white women."[11] That same year Chicana Velia Hancock continued: "Unfortunately, many white women focus on the maleness of our present social system as though, by implication, a female dominated white America would have taken a more reasonable course" for people of color of either sex.[12]

These signs of a lived experience of difference from white female experience in the United States repeatedly appear throughout U.S. third world feminist writings. Such expressions imply the existence of at least one other category of gender which is reflected in the very titles of books written by U.S. feminists of color such as *All the Blacks Are Men, All the Women Are White, But Some of Us Are Brave*[13] or *This Bridge Called My Back*,[14] titles which imply that women of color somehow exist in the interstices between the legitimated categories of the social order. Moreover, in the title of bell hooks' 1981 book, the question "Ain't I a Woman" is transformed into a defiant statement,[15] while Amy Ling's feminist analysis of Asian American writings, *Between Worlds*,[16] or the title of the journal for U.S. third world feminist writings, *The Third Woman*,[17] also calls for the recognition of a new category for social identity. This in-between space, this third gender category, is also explored in the writings of such well-known authors as Maxine Hong Kingston, Gloria Anzaldua, Audre Lorde, Alice Walker, and Cherrie Moraga, all of whom argue that U.S. third world feminists represent a different kind of human—new "mestizas,"[18] "Woman Warriors" who live and are gendered "between and among" the lines,[19] "Sister Outsiders"[20] who inhabit a new psychic terrain which Anzaldua calls "the Borderlands," "la nueva Frontera." In 1980, Audre Lorde summarized the U.S. white women's movement by saying that "today, there is a pretense to a homogeneity of experience covered by

the word SISTERHOOD in the white women's movement. When white feminists call for 'unity,' they are mis-naming a deeper and real need for homogeneity." We began the 1980s, she says, with "white women" agreeing "to focus upon their oppression as women" while continuing "to ignore difference." Chicana sociologist Maxine Baca Zinn rearticulated this position in a 1986 essay in *Signs*, saying that "there now exists in women's studies an increased awareness of the variability of womanhood" yet for U.S. feminists of color "such work is often tacked on, its significance for feminist knowledge still unrecognized and unregarded."[21]

How has the hegemonic feminism of the 1980s responded to this other kind of feminist theoretical activity? The publication of *This Bridge Called My Back* in 1981 made the presence of U.S. third world feminism impossible to ignore on the same terms as it had been throughout the 1970s. But soon the writings and theoretical challenges of U.S. third world feminists were marginalized into the category of what Allison Jaggar characterized in 1983 as mere "description,"[22] and their essays deferred to what Hester Eisenstein in 1985 called "the special force of poetry,"[23] while the shift in paradigm I earlier referred to as "differential consciousness," and which is represented in the praxis of U.S. third world feminism, has been bypassed and ignored. If, during the 1980s, U.S. third world feminism had become a theoretical problem, an inescapable mystery to be solved for hegemonic feminism, then perhaps a theory of difference—but imported from Europe—could subsume if not solve it. I would like to provide an example of how this systematic repression of the theoretical implications of U.S. third world feminism occurs.

THE GREAT HEGEMONIC MODEL

During the 1980s, hegemonic feminist scholars produced the histories of feminist consciousness which they believed to typify the modes of exchange operating within the oppositional spaces of the women's movement. These feminist histories of consciousness are often presented as typologies, systematic classifications of all possible forms of feminist praxis. These constructed typologies have fast become the official stories by which the white women's movement understands itself and its interventions in history. In what follows I decode these stories and their relations to one another from the perspective of U.S. third world feminism, where they are revealed as sets of imaginary spaces, socially constructed to severely delimit what is possible within the boundaries of their separate narratives. Together, they legitimize certain modes of culture and consciousness only to systematically curtail the forms of experiential and theoretical articulations permitted U.S. third world feminism. I want to demonstrate how the constructed relationships adhering between the various types of hegemonic feminist theory and consciousness are unified at a deeper level into a great metastructure which sets up and reveals the logic of an exclusionary U.S. hegemonic feminism.

The logic of hegemonic feminism is dependent upon a common code that shapes the work of such a diverse group of thinkers as Julia Kristeva, Toril Moi, Gerda Lerna, Cora Kaplan, Lydia Sargent, Alice Jardine, or Judith Kegan Gardiner. Here I follow its traces through the 1985 writings of the well-known literary critic Elaine Showalter;[24] the now classic set of essays published in 1985 and edited by Hester Eisenstein and Alice Jardine on *The Future of Difference* in the "women's movement"; Gale Greene and Coppelia Kahn's 1985 introductory essay in the collection *Making a Difference: Feminist Literary Criticism*;[25] and the great self-conscious prototype of hegemonic feminist thought encoded in Allison Jaggar's massive dictionary of feminist consciousness, *Feminist Politics and Human Nature*, published in 1983.

Showalter's well-known essay "Towards a Feminist Poetics" develops what she believes to be a three-phase "taxonomy, if not a poetics, of feminist criticism."[26] For Showalter, these three stages represent succeedingly higher levels of women's historical, moral, political, and aesthetic development.

For example, according to Showalter, critics can identify a first phase "feminine" consciousness when they detect, she says, women writing "in an effort to equal the cultural achievement of the male culture." In another place, feminist theorist Hester Eisenstein concurs when she writes that the movement's early stages were characterized by feminist activists organizing to prove "that differences between women and men were exaggerated, and that they could be reduced" to a common denominator of sameness.[27] So, too, do historians Gayle Greene and Coppelia Kahn also claim the discovery of a similar first-phase feminism in their essay on "Feminist Scholarship and the Social Construction of Woman."[28] In its first stage,

they write, feminist theory organized itself "according to the standards of the male public world and, appending women to history" as it has already been defined, left "unchallenged the existing paradigm." Matters are similar in political scientist Allison Jaggar's book *Feminist Politics and Human Nature*. Within her construction of four "genera" of feminist consciousness which are "fundamentally incompatible with each other" though related by a metatheoretical schema, the first phase of "liberal feminism" is fundamentally concerned with "demonstrating that women are as fully human as men."[29]

In the second phase of this typology, shared across the text of hegemonic feminist theory, Showalter claims that female writers turn away from the logics of the "feminine" first phase. Under the influence of a second "feminist" phase, she states, writers work to "reject" the accommodation of "male culture," and instead use literature to "dramatize wronged womanhood."[30] Elsewhere, Eisenstein also insists that first-phase feminism reached a conclusion. No longer were women the same as men, but, rather, "women's lives WERE different from men, and . . . it was precisely this difference that required illumination."[31] In Greene and Kahn's view, feminist scholars turned away from the "traditional paradigm" of first-phase feminism, and "soon extended their enquiries to the majority of women unaccounted for by traditional historiography, 'in search of the actual *experiences* of women in the past,'" asking questions about "the quality of their daily lives, the conditions in which they lived and worked, the ages at which they married and bore children; about their work, their role in the family, their class and relations to other women; their perception of their place in the world; their relation to wars and revolutions."[32] If women were not like men, but fundamentally different, then the values of a patriarchal society had to be transformed in order to accommodate those differences. Jaggar argued that it was during this second phase that feminists undermined "first-phase liberal feminism" by turning toward Marxism as a way of restructuring a new society incapable of subordinating women.[33]

In Showalter's third and, for her, final "female" phase of what I see as a feminist history of consciousness, Showalter argues that "the movement rejected both earlier stages as forms of dependency" on men, or on their culture and instead turned "toward female experience as a source of a new, autonomous art."[34] It is in this third phase, Eisenstein asserts, that "female differences originally seen as a source of oppression appear as a source of enrichment."[35] Under the influence of this third-phase feminism, women seek to uncover the unique expression of the essence of "woman" which lies underneath the multiplicity of her experiences. Eisenstein reminds us that this feminism is "woman-centered," a transformation within which "maleness"—not female-ness—becomes "the difference" that matters: now, she says, "men were the Other."[36] Greene and Kahn also perceive this same third-phase feminism within which "some historians of women posit the existence of a separate woman's culture, even going so far as to suggest that women and men within the same society may have different experiences of the universe."[37] Jaggar's typology characterizes her third-phase feminism as an "unmistakably twentieth century phenomenon" which is the first approach to conceptualizing human nature, social reality, and politics "to take the subordination of women as its central concern." Her third-phase feminism contends that "women naturally know much of which men are ignorant," and takes as "one of its main tasks . . . to explain why this is so." Jaggar understands this third phase as generating either "Radical" or "Cultural" feminisms.[38]

Now, throughout what can clearly be viewed as a three-phase feminist history of consciousness, as white feminist Lydia Sargent comments in her 1981 collection of essays on *Women and Revolution*, "racism, while part of the discussion, was never successfully integrated into feminist theory and practice." This resulted, she writes, in powerful protests by women of color at each of these three phases of hegemonic feminist praxis "against the racism (and classism) implicit in a white feminist movement, theory and practice."[39] The recognition that hegemonic feminist theory was not incorporating the content of U.S. third world feminist "protests" throughout the 1970s suggests a structural deficiency within hegemonic feminism which prompted certain hegemonic theorists to construct a fourth and for them a final and "antiracist" phase of feminism.

The fourth category of this taxonomy always represents the unachieved category of possibility where the differences represented by race and class can be (simply) accounted for, and it is most often characterized as "socialist feminism." Eisenstein approaches her version of fourth-phase feminism this way: "as the women's movement grew more diverse, it became *forced* [presumably by U.S. feminists of color]

to confront and to debate issues of difference—most notably those of race and class."[40] Jaggar laments that first-phase liberal feminism "has tended to ignore or minimize all these differences" while second-phase Marxist feminism "has tended to recognize only differences of class," and the third-phase "political theory of radical feminism has tended to recognize only differences of age and sex, to understand these in universal terms, and often to view them as determined biologically." By contrast, she asserts, a fourth-phase "socialist feminism" should recognize differences among women "as constituent parts of contemporary human nature." This means that the "central project of socialist feminism" will be "the development of a political theory and practice that will synthesize the best insights" of the second- and third-phase feminisms, those of the "radical and Marxist traditions," while hopefully escaping "the problems associated with each." Within Jaggar's metatheoretical schema socialist feminism represents the fourth, ultimate, and "most appropriate interpretation of what it is for a theory to be impartial, objective, comprehensive, verifiable and useful."[41]

Socialist feminist theorist Cora Kaplan agrees with Jaggar and indicts the previous three forms of hegemonic feminism—liberal, Marxist, and radical—for failing to incorporate an analysis of power relations, beyond gender relations, in their rationality. Most dominant feminist comprehensions of gender, she believes, insofar as they seek a unified female subject, construct a "fictional landscape." Whether this landscape is then examined from liberal, psychoanalytic, or semiotic feminist perspectives, she argues, "the other structuring relations of society fade and disappear, leaving us with the naked drama of sexual difference as the only scenario that matters." For Kaplan, differences among women will only be accounted for by a new socialist feminist criticism which understands the necessity of transforming society by coming "to grips with the relationship between female subjectivity and class identity."[42] Unfortunately, however, socialist feminism has yet to develop and utilize a theory and method capable of achieving this goal, or of coming to terms with race or culture, and of thus coming "to grips" with the differences existing between female subjects. Though continuing to claim socialist feminism as "the most comprehensive" of feminist theories, Jaggar allows that socialist feminism has made only "limited progress" toward such goals. Rather, she regretfully confesses, socialist feminism remains a "commitment to the development" of "an analysis and political practice" that will account for differences among and between women, rather than a commitment to a theory and practice "which already exists."[43] Finally, Jaggar grudgingly admits that insofar as socialist feminism stubbornly "fails to theorize the experiences of women of color, it cannot be accepted as complete."[44]

We have just charted our way through what I hope to have demonstrated is a commonly cited four-phase feminist history of consciousness consisting of "liberal," "Marxist," "radical/cultural," and "socialist" feminisms, and which I schematize as "women are the same as men," "women are different from men," "women are superior," and the fourth catchall category, "women are a racially divided class." I contend that this comprehension of feminist consciousness is hegemonically unified, framed, and buttressed with the result that the expression of a unique form of U.S. third world feminism, active over the last thirty years, has become invisible outside of its all-knowing logic. Jaggar states this position quite clearly in her dictionary of hegemonic feminist consciousness when she writes that the contributions of feminists of color (such as Paula Gunn Allen, Audre Lorde, Nellie Wong, Gloria Anzaldua, Cherrie Moraga, Toni Morrison, Mitsuye Yamada, bell hooks, the third world contributors to *Sisterhood Is Powerful*, or the contributors to *This Bridge*, for example) operate "mainly at the level of description," while those that are theoretical have yet to contribute to any "unique or distinctive and comprehensive theory of women's liberation."[45] For these reasons, she writes, U.S. third world feminism has not been "omitted from this book" but rather assimilated into one of the "four genera" of hegemonic feminism I have outlined earlier.

U.S. third world feminism, however, functions just outside the rationality of the four-phase hegemonic structure we have just identified. Its recognition will require of hegemonic feminism a paradigm shift which is capable of rescuing its theoretical and practical expressions from their exclusionary and racist forms. I am going to introduce this shift in paradigm by proposing a new kind of taxonomy which I believe prepares the ground for a new theory and method of oppositional consciousness. The recognition of this new taxonomy should also bring into view a new set of alterities and another way of understanding "otherness" in general, for it demands that oppositional actors

claim new grounds for generating identity, ethics, and political activity.

Meanwhile, U.S. third world feminism has been sublimated, both denied yet spoken about incessantly, or, as black literary critic Sheila Radford Hill put it in 1986, U.S. third world feminism is "used" within hegemonic feminism only as a "rhetorical platform" which allows white feminist scholars to "launch arguments for or against" the same four basic configurations of hegemonic feminism.[46] It is not surprising, therefore, that the writings of feminist third world theorists are laced through with bitterness. For, according to bell hooks in 1982, the sublimation of U.S. third world feminist writing is linked to racist "exclusionary practices" which have made it "practically impossible" for any new feminist paradigms to emerge. Two years before Jaggar's *Feminist Politics and Human Nature*, hooks wrote that although "feminist theory is the guiding set of beliefs and principles that become the basis for action," the development of feminist theory is a task permitted only within the "hegemonic dominance" and approval "of white academic women."[47] Four years later Gayatri Spivak stated that "the emergent perspective" of hegemonic "feminist criticism" tenaciously reproduces "the axioms of imperialism." Clearly, the theoretical structure of hegemonic feminism has produced enlightening and new feminist intellectual spaces, but these coalesce in what Spivak characterizes as a "high feminist norm" which culminates in reinforcing the "basically isolationist" and narcissistic "admiration" of hegemonic feminist thinkers "for the literature of the female subject in Europe and Anglo America."[48]

We have just charted our way through a four-phase hegemonic typology which I have argued is commonly utilized and cited—self-consciously or not—by feminist theorists as the way to understand oppositional feminist praxis. I believe that this four-phase typology comprises the mental map of the given time, place, and cultural condition we call the U.S. white women's movement. From the perspective of U.S. third world feminism this four-category structure of consciousness as presently enacted interlocks into a symbolic container which sets limits on how the history of feminist activity can be conceptualized, while obstructing what can be perceived or even imagined by agents thinking within its constraints. Each category of this typology along with the overriding rationality that relates the categories one to the other is socially constructed, the structure and the network of possibilities it generates are seen by feminists of color as, above all, *imaginary* spaces which, when understood and enacted as if self-contained, rigidly circumscribe what is possible for feminists and their relations across their differences. Hegemonic feminist theoreticians and activists are trapped within the rationality of this structure, which sublimates or disperses the theoretical specificity of U.S. third world feminism.

Despite the fundamental shift in political objectives and critical methods which is represented by hegemonic feminism, there remains in its articulations a limited and traditional reliance on what are previous, *modernist* modes of understanding oppositional forms of activity and consciousness. The recognition of a specific U.S. third world feminism demands that feminist scholars extend their critical and political objectives even further. During the 1970s, U.S. feminists of color identified common grounds upon which they made coalitions across profound cultural, racial, class, and gender differences. The insights perceived during this period reinforced the common culture across difference comprised of the skills, values, and ethics generated by subordinated citizenry compelled to live within similar realms of marginality. During the 1970s, this common culture was reidentified and claimed by U.S. feminists of color, who then came to recognize one another as countrywomen—and men—of the same psychic terrain. It is the methodology and theory of U.S. third world feminism that permit the following rearticulation of hegemonic feminism, on its own terms, and beyond them.

TOWARD A THEORY OF OPPOSITIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Let me suggest, then, another kind of typology, this one generated from the insights born of oppositional activity beyond the inclusive scope of the hegemonic women's movement. It is important to remember that the form of U.S. third world feminism it represents and enacts has been influenced not only by struggles against gender domination, but by the struggles against race, class, and cultural hierarchies which mark the twentieth century in the United States. It is a mapping of consciousness in opposition to the dominant social order which charts the white and hegemonic feminist histories of consciousness we have just surveyed, while also making visible the different ground from which a specific U.S. third world feminism rises. It is important

to understand that this typology is not necessarily "feminist" in nature, but is rather a history of oppositional consciousness. Let me explain what I mean by this.

I propose that the hegemonic feminist structure of oppositional consciousness be recognized for what it is, reconceptualized, and replaced by the structure which follows. This new structure is best thought of not as a typology, but as a "*topography*" of consciousness in opposition, from the Greek word "topos" or place, insofar as it represents the charting of realities that occupy a specific kind of cultural region. The following topography delineates the set of critical points around which individuals and groups seeking to transform oppressive powers constitute themselves as resistant and oppositional subjects. These points are orientations deployed by those subordinated classes which have sought subjective forms of resistance other than those forms determined by the social order itself. They provide repositories within which subjugated citizens can either occupy or throw off subjectivities in a process that at once both enacts and yet decolonizes their various relations to their real conditions of existence. This kind of kinetic and self-conscious mobility of consciousness is utilized by U.S. third world feminists as they identify oppositional subject positions and enact them *differentially*.

What hegemonic feminist theory has identified are only other versions of what I contend are the various modes of consciousness which have been most effective in opposition under modes of capitalist production before the postmodern period, but in their "feminist" incarnations. Hegemonic feminism appears incapable of making the connections between its own expressions of resistance and opposition and the expressions of consciousness in opposition enacted amongst other racial, ethnic, cultural, or gender liberation movements. Thus, I argue that the following topography of consciousness is not necessarily "feminist" in nature, but represents a history of oppositional consciousness.

Any social order which is hierarchically organized into relations of domination and subordination creates particular subject positions within which the subordinated can legitimately function.[49] These subject positions, once self-consciously recognized by their inhabitants, can become transformed into more effective sites of resistance to the current ordering of power relations. From the perspective of a differential U.S. third world feminism, the histories of consciousness produced by U.S. white feminists are, above all, only other examples of subordinated consciousness in opposition. In order to make U.S. third world feminism visible within U.S. feminist theory, I suggest a topography of consciousness which identifies nothing more and nothing less than the modes the subordinated of the United States (of any gender, race, or class) claim as politicized and oppositional stances in resistance to domination. The topography that follows, unlike its hegemonic feminist version, is not historically organized, no enactment is privileged over any other, and the recognition that each site is as potentially effective in opposition as any other makes possible another mode of consciousness which is particularly effective under late capitalist and postmodern cultural conditions in the United States. I call this mode of consciousness "differential"—it is the ideological mode enacted by U.S. third world feminists over the last thirty years.

The first four enactments of consciousness that I describe next reveal hegemonic feminist political strategies as the forms of oppositional consciousness most often utilized in resistance under earlier (modern, if you will) modes of capitalist production. The following topography, however, does not simply replace previous lists of feminist consciousness with a new set of categories, because the fifth and differential method of oppositional consciousness has a mobile, retroactive, and transformative effect on the previous four forms (the "equal rights," "revolutionary," "supremacist," and "separatist" forms) setting them into new processual relationships. Moreover, this topography compasses the perimeters for a new theory of consciousness in opposition as it gathers up the modes of ideology-praxis represented within previous liberation movements into the fifth, differential, and postmodern paradigm.[50] This paradigm can, among other things, make clear the vital connections that exist between feminist theory in general and other theoretical modes concerned with issues of social hierarchy, race marginality, and resistance. U.S. third world feminism, considered as an enabling theory and method of differential consciousness, brings the following oppositional ideological forms into view:

1 Under an "equal rights" mode of consciousness in opposition, the subordinated group argue that their differences—for which they have been assigned inferior status—are only in appearance, not reality. Behind their exterior physical difference, they argue,

is an essence the same as the essence of the human already in power. On the basis that all individuals are created equal, subscribers to this particular ideological tactic will demand that their own humanity be legitimated, recognized as the same under the law, and assimilated into the most favored form of the human in power. The expression of this mode of political behavior and identity politics can be traced throughout the writings generated from within U.S. liberation movements of the post-World War II era, Hegemonic feminist theorists have claimed this oppositional expression of resistance to social inequality as "liberal feminism."

2 Under the second ideological tactic generated in response to social hierarchy, which I call "revolutionary," the subordinated group claim their *differences* from those in power and call for a social transformation that will accommodate and legitimate those differences, by force if necessary. Unlike the previous tactic, which insists on the similarity between social, racial, and gender classes across their differences, there is no desire for assimilation within the present traditions and values of the social order. Rather, this tactic of revolutionary ideology seeks to affirm subordinated differences through a radical societal reformation. The hope is to produce a new culture beyond the domination/subordination power axis. This second revolutionary mode of consciousness was enacted within the white women's movement under the rubric of either "socialist" or "Marxist" feminisms.

3 In "supremacism," the third ideological tactic, not only do the oppressed claim their differences, but they also assert that those very differences have provided them access to a superior evolutionary level than those currently in power. Whether their differences are of biological or social origin is of little practical concern; of more importance is the result. The belief is that this group has evolved to a higher stage of social and psychological existence than those currently holding power; moreover, their differences now comprise the essence of what is good in human existence. Their mission is to provide the social order with a higher ethical and moral vision and consequently a more effective leadership. Within the hegemonic feminist schema "radical" and "cultural" feminisms are organized under these precepts.

4 "Separatism" is the final of the most commonly utilized tactics of opposition organized under previous modes of capitalist development. As in the previous three forms, practitioners of this form of resistance also recognize that their differences have been branded as inferior with respect to the category of the most human. Under this mode of thought and activity, however, the subordinated do not desire an "equal rights" type of integration with the dominant order, nor do they seek its leadership or revolutionary transformation. Instead, this form of political resistance is organized to protect and nurture the differences that define it through complete separation from the dominant social order. A Utopian landscape beckons these practitioners . . . their hope has inspired the multiple visions of the other forms of consciousness as well.

In the post-World War II period in the United States, we have witnessed how the maturation of a resistance movement means not only that four such ideological positions emerge in response to dominating powers, but that these positions become more and more clearly articulated. Unfortunately, however, as we were able to witness in the late 1970s white women's movement, such ideological positions eventually divide the movement of resistance from within, for each of these sites tend to generate sets of tactics, strategies, and identities which historically have appeared to be mutually exclusive under modernist oppositional practices. What remains all the more profound, however, is that the differential practice of U.S. third world feminism undermines the appearance of the mutual exclusivity of oppositional strategies of consciousness; moreover, it is U.S. third world feminism which allows their reconceptualization on the new terms just proposed. U.S. feminists of color, insofar as they involved themselves with the 1970s white women's liberation movement, were also enacting one or more of the ideological positionings just outlined, but rarely for long, and rarely adopting the kind of fervid belief systems and identity politics that tend to accompany their construction under hegemonic understanding. This unusual affiliation with the movement was variously interpreted as disloyalty, betrayal, absence, or lack: "When they were there, they were rarely there for long" went the usual complaint, or "they seemed to shift from one type of women's group to another." They were the mobile (yet ever present in their "absence") members of this particular liberation movement. It is precisely the significance of

this mobility which most inventories of oppositional ideology cannot register.

It is in the activity of weaving "between and among" oppositional ideologies as conceived in this new topological space where another and fifth mode of oppositional consciousness and activity can be found.[51] I have named this activity of consciousness "differential" insofar as it enables movement "between and among" the other equal rights, revolutionary, supremacist, and separatist modes of oppositional consciousness considered as variables, in order to disclose the distinctions among them. In this sense the differential mode of consciousness operates like the clutch of an automobile: the mechanism that permits the driver to select, engage, and disengage gears in a system for the transmission of power.[52] Differential consciousness represents the variant, emerging out of correlations, intensities, junctures, crises. What is differential functions through hierarchy, location, and value—enacting the recovery, revenge, or reparation; its processes produce justice. For analytic purposes I place this mode of differential consciousness in the fifth position, even though it functions as the medium through which the "equal rights," "revolutionary," "supremacist," and "separatist" modes of oppositional consciousness became effectively transformed out of their hegemonic versions. Each is now ideological and tactical weaponry for confronting the shifting currents of power.

The differences between this five-location and processual topography of consciousness in opposition, and the previous typology of hegemonic feminism, have been made available for analysis through the praxis of U.S. third world feminism understood as a differential method for understanding oppositional political consciousness and activity. U.S. third world feminism represents a central locus of possibility, an insurgent movement which shatters the construction of any one of the collective ideologies as the single most correct site where truth can be represented. Without making this move beyond each of the four modes of oppositional ideology outlined above, any liberation movement is destined to repeat the oppressive authoritarianism from which it is attempting to free itself and become trapped inside a drive for truth which can only end in producing its own brand of dominations. What U.S. third world feminism demands is a new subjectivity, a political revision that denies any one ideology as the final answer, while instead positing a *tactical subjectivity* with the capacity to recenter depending upon the kinds of oppression to be confronted. This is what the shift from hegemonic oppositional theory and practice to a U.S. third world theory and method of oppositional consciousness requires.

Chicana theorist Aida Hurtado explains the importance of differential consciousness to effective oppositional praxis this way: "by the time women of color reach adulthood, we have developed informal political skills to deal with State intervention. The political skills required by women of color are neither the political skills of the White power structure that White liberal feminists have adopted nor the free spirited experimentation followed by the radical feminists." Rather, "women of color are more like urban guerrillas trained through everyday battle with the state apparatus." As such, "women of color's fighting capabilities are often neither understood by white middle-class feminists" nor leftist activists in general, and up until now, these fighting capabilities have "not been codified anywhere for them to learn."[53] Cherrie Moraga defines U.S. third world feminist "guerrilla warfare" as a way of life: "Our strategy is how we cope" on an everyday basis, she says, "how we measure and weigh what is to be said and when, what is to be done and how, and to whom . . . daily deciding/risking who it is we can call an ally, call a friend (whatever that person's skin, sex, or sexuality)." Feminists of color are "women without a line. We are women who contradict each other."[54]

In 1981, Anzaldua identified the growing coalition between U.S. feminists of color as one of women who do not have the same culture, language, race, or "ideology, nor do we derive similar solutions" to the problems of oppression. For U.S. third world feminism enacted as a differential mode of oppositional consciousness, however, these differences do not become "opposed to each other."[55] Instead, writes Lorde in 1979, ideological differences must be seen as "a fund of necessary polarities between which our creativities spark like a dialectic. Only within that interdependence," each ideological position "acknowledged and equal, can the power to seek new ways of being in the world generate, as well as the courage and sustenance to act where there are no charters."[56] This movement between ideologies along with the concurrent desire for ideological commitment are necessary for enacting differential consciousness. Differential consciousness makes the second topography of consciousness in opposition visible as a new theory and method for

comprehending oppositional subjectivities and social movements in the United States.

The differential mode of oppositional consciousness depends upon the ability to read the current situation of power and to self-consciously choose and adopt the ideological form best suited to push against its configurations, a survival skill well known to oppressed peoples.[57] Differential consciousness requires grace, flexibility, and strength: enough strength to confidently commit to a well-defined structure of identity for one hour, day, week, month, year; enough flexibility to self-consciously transform that identity according to the requisites of another oppositional ideological tactic if readings of power's formation require it; enough grace to recognize alliance with others committed to egalitarian social relations and race, gender, and class justice, when their readings of power call for alternative oppositional stands. Within the realm of differential consciousness, oppositional ideological positions, unlike their incarnations under hegemonic feminist comprehension, are tactics—not strategies. Self-conscious agents of differential consciousness recognize one another as allies, country-women and men of the same psychic terrain. As the clutch of a car provides the driver the ability to shift gears, differential consciousness permits the practitioner to choose tactical positions, that is, to self-consciously break and reform ties to ideology, activities which are imperative for the psychological and political practices that permit the achievement of coalition across differences. Differential consciousness occurs within the only possible space where, in the words of third world feminist philosopher Maria Lugones, "cross-cultural and cross-racial loving" can take place, through the ability of the self to shift its identities in an activity she calls "world traveling."[58]

Perhaps we can now better understand the overarching Utopian content contained in definitions of U.S. third world feminism, as in this statement made by black literary critic Barbara Christian in 1985, who, writing to other U.S. feminists of color, said: "The struggle is not won. Our vision is still seen, even by many progressives, as secondary, our words trivialized as minority issues," our oppositional stances "characterized by others as divisive. But there is a deep philosophical reordering that is occurring" among us "that is already having its effects on so many of us whose lives and expressions are an increasing revelation of the INTIMATE face of universal struggle."[59] This "philosophical reordering," referred to by Christian, the "different strategy, a different foundation" called for by hooks are, in the words of Audre Lorde, part of "a whole other structure of opposition that touches every aspect of our existence at the same time that we are resisting." I contend that this structure is the recognition of a five-mode theory and method of oppositional consciousness, made visible through one mode in particular, differential consciousness, or U.S. third world feminism, what Gloria Anzaldua has recently named "la conciencia de la mestiza" and what Alice Walker calls "womanism."[60] For Barbara Smith, the recognition of this fundamentally different paradigm can "alter life as we know it" for oppositional actors[61] In 1981, Merle Woo insisted that U.S. third world feminism represents a "new framework which will not support repression, hatred, exploitation and isolation, but will be a human and beautiful framework, created in a community, bonded not by color, sex or class, but by love and the common goal for the liberation of mind, heart, and spirit."[62] It has been the praxis of a differential form of oppositional consciousness which has stubbornly called up Utopian visions such as these.

In this essay I have identified the hegemonic structure within which U.S. feminist theory and practice are trapped. This structure of consciousness stands out in relief against the praxis of U.S. third world feminism, which has evolved to center the differences of U.S. third world feminists across their varying languages, cultures, ethnicities, races, classes, and genders. I have suggested that the "philosophical reordering" referred to by Christian is imaginable only through a new theory and method of oppositional consciousness, a theory only visible when U.S. third world feminist praxis is recognized. U.S. third world feminism represents a new condition of possibility, another kind of gender, race and class consciousness which has allowed us to recognize and define differential consciousness. Differential consciousness was utilized by feminists of color within the white women's movement; yet it is also a form of consciousness in resistance well utilized among subordinated subjects under various conditions of domination and subordination. The acknowledgment of this consciousness and praxis, this thought and action, carves out the space wherein hegemonic feminism may become aligned with different spheres of theoretical and practical activity which are also concerned with issues of marginality. Moreover, differential consciousness makes more clearly visible the equal rights, revolutionary, supremacist, and

separatist forms of oppositional consciousness, which when kaleidoscoped together comprise a new paradigm for understanding oppositional activity in general.

The praxis of U.S. third world feminism represented by the differential form of oppositional consciousness is threaded throughout the experience of social marginality. As such it is also being woven into the fabric of experiences belonging to more and more citizens who are caught in the crisis of late capitalist conditions and expressed in the cultural angst most often referred to as the postmodern dilemma. The juncture I am proposing, therefore, is extreme. It is a location wherein the praxis of U.S. third world feminism links with the aims of white feminism, studies of race, ethnicity, and marginality, and with postmodern theories of culture as they crosscut and join together in new relationships through a shared comprehension of an emerging theory and method of oppositional consciousness.

NOTES

1 This is an early version of a chapter from my book in progress on "Oppositional Consciousness in the Postmodern World." A debt of gratitude is owed the friends, teachers, and politically committed scholars who made the publication of this essay possible, especially Hayden White, Donna Haraway, James Clifford, Ronaldo Balderrama, Ruth Frankenberg, Lata Mani (who coerced me into publishing this now), Rosa Maria Villafahe-Sisolak, A. Pearl Sandoval, Mary John, Vivian Sobchak, Helene Moglan, T. de Lauretis, Audre Lorde, Traci Chapman and the Student of Color Coalition. Haraway's own commitments to social, gender, race, and class justice are embodied in the fact that she discusses and cites an earlier version of this essay in her own work. See especially her 1985 essay where she defines an oppositional postmodern consciousness grounded in multiple identities in her "A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s," *Socialist Review*, no. 80 (March 1985). At a time when theoretical work by women of color is so frequently dismissed, Haraway's recognition and discussion of my work on oppositional consciousness have allowed it to receive wide critical visibility, as reflected in references to the manuscript that appear in the works of authors such as Sandra Harding, Nancy Hartsock, Biddy Martin, and Katherine Hayles. I am happy that my work has also received attention from Caren Kaplan, Katie King, Gloria Anzaldua, Teresa de Lauretis, Chandra Mohanty, and Yvonne Yarboro-Bejarano. Thanks also are due Fredric Jameson, who in 1979 recognized a theory of "oppositional consciousness" in my work. It was he who encouraged its further development.

This manuscript was first presented publicly at the 1981 National Women's Studies Association conference. In the ten years following, five other versions have been circulated. I could not resist the temptation to collapse sections from these earlier manuscripts here in the footnotes; any resulting awkwardness is not due to the vigilance of my editors. This essay is published now to honor the political, intellectual, and personal aspirations of Rosa Maria Villafane-Sisolak, "West Indian Princess," who died April 20, 1990. Ro's compassion, her sharp intellectual prowess and honesty, and her unwavering commitment to social justice continue to inspire, guide, and support many of us. To her, to those named here, and to all new generations of U.S. third world feminists, this work is dedicated.

2 Gayatri Spivak, "The Rani of Sirmur," in *Europe and Its Others*, ed. F. Barker, vol. 1 (Essex: University of Essex, 1985), 147.

3 Here, U.S. third world feminism represents the political alliance made during the 1960s and 1970s between a generation of U.S. feminists of color who were separated by culture, race, class, or gender identifications but united through similar responses to the experience of race oppression.

The theory and method of oppositional consciousness outlined in this essay are visible in the activities of the recent political unity variously named "U.S. third world feminist," "feminist women of color," and "womanist." This unity has coalesced across differences in race, class, language, ideology, culture, and color. These differences are painfully manifest: materially marked physiologically or in language, socially value laden, and shot through with power. They confront each feminist of color in any gathering where they serve as constant reminders of their undeniability. These constantly speaking differences stand at the crux of another, mutant unity, for this unity does not occur in the name of all "women," nor in the name of race, class, culture, or "humanity" in general. Instead, as many U.S. third world feminists have pointed out, it is unity mobilized in a location heretofore unrecognized. As Cherrie Moraga argues, this unity mobilizes "between the seemingly irreconcilable lines—class lines, politically correct lines, the daily lines we run to each other to keep difference and desire at a distance,"

it is between these lines "that the truth of our connection lies." This connection is a mobile unity, constantly weaving and reweaving an interaction of differences into coalition. In what follows I demonstrate how it is that inside this coalition, differences are viewed as varying survival tactics constructed in response to recognizable power dynamics. See Cherrie Moraga, "Between the Lines: On Culture, Class and Homophobia," in *This Bridge Called My Back, A Collection of Writings by Radical Women of Color*, ed. Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldua (Watertown, MA: Persephone Press, 1981), 106.

During the national conference of the Women's Studies Association in 1981, three hundred feminists of color met to agree that "it is white men who have access to the greatest amount of freedom from necessity in this culture, with women as their 'helpmates' and chattels, and people of color as their women's servants. People of color form a striated social formation which allow men of color to call upon the circuits of power which charge the category of 'male' with its privileges, leaving women of color as the final chattel, the ultimate servant in a racist and sexist class hierarchy. U.S. third world feminists seek to undo this hierarchy by reconceptualizing the notion of 'freedom' and who may inhabit its realm." See Sandoval, "The Struggle Within: A Report on the 1981 NWSA Conference," published by the Center for Third World Organizing, 1982, reprinted by Gloria Anzaldua in *Making Faces Making Soul, Haciendo Caras* (San Francisco: Spinsters/Aunt Lute, 1990), 55–71. See also "Comment on Krieger's *The Mirror Dance*," a U.S. third world feminist perspective, in *Signs* 9, no. 4 (Summer 1984): 725.

4 See Fredric Jameson's "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," *New Left Review* 146 (July–August 1984). Also, note 50, this chapter.

5 Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)," in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (London: New Left Books, 1970), 123–73.

6 In another essay I have identified the forms of consciousness encouraged within subordinated classes which are resistant—but not self-consciously in political *opposition*—to the dominant order. In Althusser's terms, the repressive state apparatus and the ideological state apparatus all conspire to create subordinated forms of *resistant* consciousness that I characterize as "human," "pet," "game," and "wild." The value of each of these subject positions is measured by its proximity to the category of the most-human; each position delimits its own kinds of freedoms, privileges, and resistances. Whatever freedoms or resistances, however, their ultimate outcome can only be to support the social order as it already functions. This four-category schema stems from the work of the anthropologist Edmund Leach, who demonstrates through his examples of English and Tibeto-Burman language categories that human societies tend to organize individual identity according to perceived distance from a male self and then into relationships of exchange Leach characterizes as those of the "sister," "cousin," or "stranger." He suggests that these relationships of value and distance are replicated over and over again throughout many cultures and serve to support and further the beliefs, aims, and traditions of whatever social order is dominant. Edmund Leach, "Anthropological Aspects of Language: Animal Categories and Verbal Abuse," in *New Directions in the Study of Language*, ed. Eric Lenneberg (Cambridge: MIT, 1964), 62.

7 Althusser, "Ideology," 147.

8 Francis Beal, "Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female," in *Sisterhood Is Powerful: An Anthology of Writings from the Women's Liberation Movement*, ed. Robin Morgan (New York: Random House, 1970), 136.

9 Sojourner Truth, "Ain't I a Woman?" in The *Norton Anthology of Literature by Women* (New York: Norton, 1985), 252.

10 Paula Gunn Allen, "Some Like Indians Endure," in *Living the Spirit* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), 9.

11 Toni Morrison, in Bettye J. Parker, "Complexity: Toni Morrison's Women—an Interview Essay," in *Sturdy Black Bridges: Visions of Black Women in Literature*, ed. Roseanne Bell, Bettye Parker, and Beverly Guy-Sheftall (New York: Anchor/Doubleday, 1979).

12 Velia Hancock, "La Chicana, Chicano Movement and Women's Liberation," *Chicano Studies Newsletter* (February–March 1971).

The sense that people of color occupy an "in-between/outsider" status is a frequent theme among third world liberationists who write both in and outside of the United States. Rev. Desmond Mpilo Tutu, on receiving the Nobel Prize, said he faces a "rough passage" as intermediary between ideological factions, for he has long considered himself "detribalized." Rosa Maria Villafane-Sisolak, a West Indian from the Island of St. Croix, has written: "I am from an island whose history is steeped in the abuses of Western imperialism, whose people still suffer the deformities caused by Euro-American colonialism, old and new. Unlike many third world liberationists, however, I cannot claim to be descendent of any particular strain, noble or ignoble. I am, however, 'purely bred,'—descendent of all the

parties involved in that cataclysmic epoch. I . . . despair, for the various parts of me cry out for retribution at having been brutally uprooted and transplanted to fulfill the profit-cy of 'white' righteousness and dominance. My soul moans that part of me that was destroyed by that callous righteousness. My heart weeps for that part of me that was the instrument . . . the gun, the whip, the book. My mind echoes with the screams of disruption, desecration, destruction." Alice Walker, in a controversial letter to an African-American friend, told him she believes that "we are the African and the trader. We are the Indian and the Settler. We are oppressor and oppressed . . . we are the mestizos of North America. We are black, yes, but we are 'white,' too, and we are red. To attempt to function as only one, when you are really two or three, leads, I believe, to psychic illness: 'white' people have shown us the madness of that." And Gloria Anzaldua, "You say my name is Ambivalence: Not so. Only your labels split me." Desmond Tutu, as reported by Richard N. Osting, "Searching for New Worlds," *Time Magazine*, October 29, 1984. Rosa Maria Villafane-Sisolak, from a 1983 journal entry cited in *Haciendo Caras, Making Face Making Soul*, ed. Gloria Anzaldua; Alice Walker, "In the Closet of the Soul: A Letter to an African-American Friend," *Ms. Magazine* 15 (November 1986): 32–5; Gloria Anzaldua, "La Prieta," *This Bridge Called My Back: A Collection of Writings by Radical Women of Color* (Watertown, MA: Persephone Press, 1981), 198–209.

13 Gloria Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith, *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women's Studies* (New York: Feminist Press, 1982).

14 Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldua, *This Bridge Called My Back: A Collection of Writings by Radical Women of Color* (Watertown, MA: Persephone Press, 1981).

15 bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (Boston: South End Press, 1981).

16 Amy Ling, *Between Worlds* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1990).

17 Norma Alarcon, ed., *The Third Woman* (Bloomington, IN: Third Woman Press, 1981).

18 See Alice Walker, "Letter to an Afro-American Friend," *Ms. Magazine*, 1986. Also Gloria Anzaldua, *Borderlands, La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Spinsters/Aunt Lute, 1987).

19 Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior* (New York: Vintage Books, 1977); Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldua, *The Bridge Called My Back: A Collection of Writings by Radical Women of Color*.

20 Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider* (New York: The Crossing Press, 1984).

21 Maxine Baca Zinn, Lynn Weber Cannon, Elizabeth Higginbotham, and Bonnie Thornton Dill, "The Costs of Exclusionary Practices in Women's Studies," in *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 11, no. 2 (Winter 1986): 296.

22 Alison Jaggar, "Feminist Politics and Human Nature," uncorrected proof (New York: Rowman and Allanheld, 1983), 11.

23 Hester Eisenstein, *The Future of Difference* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1985), xxi.

24 Elaine Showalter, ed., *The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature and Theory* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985). See especially the following essays: "Introduction: The Feminist Critical Revolution," "Toward a Feminist Poetics," and "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness," 3–18, 125–43, and 243–70.

25 Gayle Greene and Copelia Kahn, eds., *Making a Difference: Feminist Literary Criticism* (New York: Methuen, 1985). See their chapter "Feminist Scholarship and the Social Construction of Woman," 1–36.

26 Showalter, *The New Feminist Criticism*, 128.

27 Eisenstein, *The Future of Difference*, xvi.

28 Gayle Greene and Copelia Kahn, eds., *Making a Difference: Feminist Literary Criticism* (New York: Methuen, 1985), 13.

29 Jaggar, *Feminist Politics*, 37.

30 Showalter, *The New Feminist Criticism*, 138.

31 Eisenstein, *The Future of Difference*, xviii.

32 Greene and Kahn, *Making a Difference*, 13.

33 Jaggar, *Feminist Politics*, 52.

34 Showalter, *The New Feminist Criticism*, 139.

35 Eisenstein, *The Future of Difference*, xviii.

36 Ibid., xix.

37 Greene and Kahn, *Making a Difference*, 14.

38 Jaggar, *Feminist Politics*, 88.

Like U.S. hegemonic feminism, European feminism replicates this same basic structure of feminist consciousness. For example, Toril Moi and Julia Kristeva argue that feminism has produced "three main strategies" for constructing identity and oppositional politics. They represent feminist consciousness as a hierarchically organized historical and political struggle which they schematically summarize like this:

1 Women demand equal access to the symbolic order. Liberal feminism. Equality.
2 Women reject the male symbolic order in the name of difference. Radical feminism. Femininity extolled.

3 (This is Kristeva's own position.) Women reject the dichotomy between masculine and feminine as metaphysical.

Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* (New York: Methuen, 1985), 12. Note that the second category here combines the second and third categories of U.S. feminism, and the third category dissolves "the dichotomy between masculine and feminine" altogether. Luce Irigaray is considered a "radical feminist" according to this schema.

39 Lydia Sargent, *Women and Revolution: A Discussion of the Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism* (Boston: South End Press, 1981), xx.

Indeed we can see how these "protests" pressed hegemonic feminist theory into recentering from its one "phase" to the next. This hegemonic typology of feminist consciousness, that women are the same as men, that women are different from men, and that women are superior, was challenged at its every level by U.S. third world feminists. If women were seen as the same as men—differing only in form, not in content—then feminists of color challenged white women for striving to represent themselves as versions of the male, and especially of the dominant version of the "successful" white male. When the class of women *recognized and claimed* their differences from men, then, as feminists of color pointed out, these differences were understood, valued, and ranked according to the codes and values of the dominant class, race, culture, and female gender. The response to this challenge is the third phase, which sees any feminist expression as as valid as any other as long as it is an expression of a higher moral and spiritual position, that of "woman." But U.S. feminists of color did not feel at ease with the essence of "woman" that was being formulated. If ethical and political leadership should arise only from that particular location, then for U.S. feminists of color, who did not see themselves easily identifying with any legitimized form of female subject, Sojourner Truth's lingering question "Ain't I a woman?" rang all the more loudly. This schema of forms does not provide the opportunity to recognize the existence of another kind of woman—to imagine another, aberrant form of feminism. We could go so far as to say that each hegemonic feminist expression generates equivalent forms of racist ideology.

40 Eisenstein, *The Future of Difference*, xix (emphasis mine).

41 Jaggar, *Feminist Politics*, 9.

42 Cora Kaplan, "Pandora's Box: Subjectivity, Class and Sexuality in Socialist Feminist Criticism," in *Making a Difference, Feminist Literary Criticism*, ed. Gayle Greene and Copelia Kahn (New York: Methuen, 1985), 148–51.

43 Jaggar, *Feminist Politics*, 123.

44 Ibid., 11.

45 Ibid.

46 Sheila Radford-Hall, "Considering Feminism as a Model for Social Change," in *Feminist Studies/Critical Studies*, ed. Teresa de Lauretis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 160.

47 bell hooks, *Feminist Theory from Margin to Center* (Boston: South End Press, 1984), 9.

48 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism," *Critical Inquiry* 12 (Autumn 1985): 243–61.

49 In another essay I characterize such legitimated idioms of subordination as "human," "pet," "game," and "wild."

50 The connection between feminist theory and decolonial discourse studies occurs within a contested space claimed but only superficially colonized by first world theorists of the term "postmodernism." Within this zone, it is generally agreed that Western culture has undergone a cultural mutation unique to what Frederic Jameson calls "the cultural logic of late capital." There is, however, profound *disagreement* over whether the new cultural dominant should be opposed or welcomed. Jameson's essay on postmodernism, for example, is a warning which points out how the new cultural dominant creates a citizen who is incapable of any real oppositional activity, for all novelty, including opposition, is welcomed by its order. Forms of oppositional consciousness, he argues, the "critical distance" available to the unitary subjectivities of a Van Gogh or a Picasso under previous modernist conditions, are no longer available to a postmodern subject. The critical distance by which a unitary subjectivity could separate itself from the culture it lived within, and which made parodic aesthetic expression possible, has become erased, replaced by an "exhiliratory" superficial affect, "schizophrenic" in function, which turns all aesthetic representations into only other examples of the plethora of difference available under advanced capital social formations. Given these conditions, Jameson can only see the first world citizen as a tragic subject whose only hope is to develop a new form of opposition capable of confronting the new cultural conditions of postmodernism. For Jameson, however, the catch is this: "There may be historical situations in which it is not possible at all to break through the net of ideological constructs" that make us subjects in culture and this is "our situation in the current crises." Jameson's own attempt to propose a new

form of "cognitive mapping" capable of negotiating postmodern cultural dynamics dissipates under the weight of his hopelessness, and, in my view, his essay coalesces into a eulogy to passing modes of Western consciousness.

What Jameson's essay does not take into account, however, is the legacy of decolonial discourse which is also permeating the cultural moment first world subjects now inherit. In the intersections between the critical study of decolonial discourse and feminist theory is a form of consciousness in opposition once only necessary to the socially marginalized citizen, but which postmodern cultural dynamics now make available to all first world citizens. The content of this form of oppositional consciousness is rather naively celebrated and welcomed by other (primarily white, male) first world theorists of postmodernism. But whether welcoming or rejecting the variously construed meanings of the new cultural dominant, both camps share the longing for a regenerated hope and new identity capable of negotiating the crumbling traditions, values, and cultural institutions of the West; in the first example by celebrating a passing modernist form of unitary subjectivity, in the second by celebrating an identity form whose contours are comparable to the fragmenting status of present Western cultural forms.

Interesting to certain third world scholars is the coalescing relationship between these theories of postmodernism (especially between those which celebrate the fragmentations of consciousness postmodernism demands) and the form of differential oppositional consciousness which has been most clearly articulated by the marginalized and which I am outlining here. The juncture I am analyzing in this essay is that which connects the disoriented first world subject, who longs for the postmodern cultural aesthetic as a key to a new sense of identity and redemption, and the form of differential oppositional consciousness developed by subordinated and marginalized Western or colonized subjects, who have been forced to experience the aesthetics of a "postmodernism" as a requisite for survival. It is this constituency who are most familiar with what citizenship in this realm requires and makes possible.

The juncture between all of these interests is comprised of the differential form of oppositional consciousness which postmodern cultural conditions are making available to all of its citizenry in an historically unique democratization of oppression which crosses class, race, and gender identifications. Its practice contains the possibility for the emergence of a new historical moment—a new citizen—and a new arena for unity between peoples. See Jameson, "Postmodernism," 53–92.

51 Gloria Anzaldua writes that she lives "between and among" cultures in "La Prieta," *This Bridge Called My Back*, 209.

52 Differential consciousness functioning like a "car clutch" is a metaphor suggested by Yves Labissiere in a personal conversation.

53 Aida Hurtado, "Reflections on White Feminism: A Perspective from a Woman of Color" (1985), 25, from an unpublished manuscript. Another version of this quotation appears in Hurtado's essay, "Relating to Privilege: Seduction and Rejection in the Subordination of White Women and Women of Color," in *Signs* (Summer 1989): 833–55.

54 Moraga and Anzaldua, xix. Also see the beautiful passage from Margaret Walker's *Jubilee* which enacts this mobile mode of consciousness from the viewpoint of the female protagonist. See the Bantam Books edition (New York, 1985), 404–7.

55 Gloria Anzaldua, "La Prieta," *This Bridge Called My Back*, 209.

56 Audre Lorde, "Comments at the Personal and the Political Panel," Second Sex Conference, New York, September 1979. Published in *This Bridge Called My Back*, 98. Also see "The Uses of the Erotic" in *Sister Outsider*, 58–63, which calls for challenging and undoing authority in order to enter a Utopian realm only accessible through a processual form of consciousness which she names the "erotic."

57 Anzaldua refers to this survival skill as "la facultad, the capacity to see in surface phenomena the meaning of deeper realities" in *Borderlands, La Frontera*, 38.

The consciousness which typifies la facultad is not naive to the moves of power: it is constantly surveying and negotiating its moves. Often dismissed as "intuition," this kind of "perceptiveness," "sensitivity," consciousness if you will, is not determined by race, sex, or any other genetic status, neither does its activity belong solely to the "proletariat," the "feminist," nor to the oppressed, if the oppressed is considered a unitary category, but it is a learned emotional and intellectual skill which is developed amidst hegemonic powers. It is the recognization of "la facultad" which moves Lorde to say that it is marginality, "whatever its nature . . . which is also the source of our greatest strength," for the cultivation of la facultad creates the opportunity for a particularly effective form of opposition to the dominant

culture within which it is formed. The skills required by la facultad are capable of disrupting the dominations and subordinations that scar U.S. culture. But it is not enough to utilize them on an individual and situational basis. Through an ethical and political commitment, U.S. third world feminism requires the development of la facultad to a methodological level capable of generating a political strategy and identity politics from which a new citizenry arises.

Movements of resistance have always relied upon the ability to read below the surfaces—a way of mobilizing—to resee reality and call it by different names. This form of la facultad inspires new visions and strategies for action. But there is always the danger that even the most revolutionary of readings can become bankrupt as a form of resistance when it becomes reified, unchanging. The tendency of la facultad to end in frozen, privileged "readings" is the most divisive dynamic inside of any liberation movement. In order for this survival skill to provide the basis for a differential and unifying methodology, it must be remembered that la facultad is a process. Answers located may be only temporarily effective, so that wedded to the process of la facultad is a flexibility that continually woos change.

58 Maria Lugones, "Playfulness, World-Traveling, and Loving Perception," from *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy* 2, no. 2 (1987).

Differential consciousness is comprised of seeming contradictions and difference, which then serve as tactical interventions in the other mobility that is power. Entrance into the realm "between and amongst" the others demands a mode of consciousness once relegated to the province of intuition and psychic phenomena, but which now must be recognized as a specific practice. I define differential consciousness as a kind of anarchic activity (but with method), a form of ideological guerrilla warfare, and a new kind of ethical activity which is being privileged here as the way in which opposition to oppressive authorities is achieved in a highly technologized and disciplinized society. Inside this realm resides the only possible grounds of unity across differences. Entrance into this new order requires an emotional commitment within which one experiences the violent shattering of the unitary sense of self, as the skill which allows a mobile identity to form takes hold. As Bernice Reagon has written, "most of the time you feel threatened to the core and if you don't, you're not really doing no coalescing." Citizenship in this political realm is comprised of strategy and risk. Within the realm of differential consciousness there are no ultimate answers, no terminal Utopia (though the imagination of Utopias can motivate its tactics), no predictable final outcomes. Its practice is not biologically determined, restricted to any class or group, nor must it become static. The fact that it is a process capable of freezing into a repressive order—or of disintegrating into relativism—should not shadow its radical activity.

To name the theory and method made possible by the recognition of differential consciousness "oppositional" refers only to the ideological effects its activity can have under present cultural conditions. It is a naming which signifies a realm with constantly shifting boundaries which serve to delimit, for differential consciousness participates in its own dissolution even as it is in action. Differential consciousness under postmodern conditions is not possible without the creation of another ethics, a new morality, which will bring about a new subject of history. Movement into this realm is heralded by the claims of U.S. third world feminists, a movement which makes manifest the possibility of ideological warfare in the form of a theory and method, a praxis of oppositional consciousness. But to think of the activities of U.S. third world feminism thus is only a metaphorical avenue which allows one conceptual access to the threshold of this other realm, a realm accessible to all people.

59 Barbara Christian, "Creating a Universal Literature: Afro-American Women Writers," *KPFA Folio*, Special African History Month Edition, February 1983, front page. Reissued in *Black Feminist Criticism: Perspectives on Black Women Writers* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1985), 163.

60 Alice Walker coined the neologism "womanist" as one of many attempts by feminists of color to find a name which could signal their commitment to egalitarian social relations, a commitment which the name "feminism" had seemingly betrayed. See Walker, *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens: Womanist Prose* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983), xi–xiii. Anzaldua, *Borderlands, La Nueva Frontera*.

61 bell hooks, "Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center," 9; Audre Lorde, "An Interview: Audre Lorde and Adrienne Rich," held in August 1979, *Signs* 6, no. 4 (Summer 1981); and Barbara Smith, *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology*, xxv.

62 Merle Woo, *This Bridge Called My Back*, 147.