Toni Morrison's *Paradise* (1997) seeks to re-imagine agency as a function of coalition processes that are communal and caring in impulse. In so doing, *Paradise* addresses issues of coalition in ways that complicate and finally gesture away from dominant conceptualizations of coalition in the United States in the wake of the Civil Rights and New Left Movements. Although both of these movements championed coalition politics, commonly understood as the combining of "human and material resources to effect a specific change" that cannot be brought about "independently" (Brown 3), as a means of achieving equality, they operated on models of coalition that in the end retained hierarchy, retained the notion of a centered, stable subject that was male and gained dominance through processes of othering.¹

That the prevailing conception of coalition politics has been masculinized is evident not only in its various enactments within the abovementioned activist movements but also in the ways in which coalition itself has been theorized in the West. Since the early 1960s, the disciplines of history, economics, political science, and psychology in the West have tended to discuss and theorize coalition in terms that privilege mathematical and market models and that unquestioningly assume maximizing power and winning as the goals of coalition building. For example, William H. Riker's groundbreaking *The Theory of Political Coalitions* (1962), which is cited in almost all texts that succeed it, privileges "abstract reasoning" as the mechanism by which "political science" can "rise above the level of wisdom literature" and "join economics and psychology in the creation of genuine sciences of human behavior" (viii), and he constructs a model of coalition-building that assumes that "rational man wants . . . to win," "to maximize power" (21-22). Consequently, the dominant versions of coalition processes privilege an individualistic and agonistic model, complete with hierarchy and exploitation, and both devalue and efface other modes of coalition. R. Radhakrishnan is one of the few scholars who has argued that there exists a need "for the creation of non-aggressive, non-coercive, and generous space where different and multiple constituencies may meet collectively" (323). Although the work of W. Edward Vinacke, in the area of psychology, describes the differing behaviors of men ("exploitative") and women ("accommodative") when placed in controlled experimental situations that necessitate coalition-building, he does not analyze the consequences of his findings for existing models of coalition that have tended to privilege those behaviors associated with men ("Accommodative" 511).² While Jerome Chertkoff notes Vinacke's findings, he argues that "these sex differences are not terribly damaging to the existing theories"
thus demonstrating the widespread tendency to foreclose on any exploration of coalition that revises established, dominant, male-centered notions of coalition.

In contrast, Morrison's Paradise explores coalition processes that are more accommodative, caring, and loving, rather than exploitative, and that are aimed principally at survival and at moving toward a new, alternative form of non-hierarchical justice, rather than at maximizing power and winning. Such a reformulation of coalition necessarily entails a particular conception of justice, as articulated within recent discussions of justice that have emphasized how “justice is inseparable from social practices” and thus “cannot be examined ahistorically, for it changes in relation to changes in power” (Garth 1, 11); how “it is artificial and inappropriate to separate the concept of justice from that of power or ideology” (Fineman 81); and how “conceptions of justice are historical constructions” and thus “power is implicated in the construction of justice” (Eurick 37). All of these conceptualizations of justice share an understanding that justice is both fluid and socially constructed and that any claims to universality must be understood as “perspectival universality,” in the sense that “society provides the perspective from which justice is done” and from which “‘principles of justice’ are formulated” (Fisk 227-28). Moreover, if justice is understood as inseparable from its socio-historical context, then by extension injustice is also a function of socio-historical context; indeed, justice “is framed by the claim of injustice” within a particular historical context (Hartog 167). For example, given the centrality of the notion of individualism in the West at least since the Enlightenment, Western notions of justice are arguably heavily individualistic and, most often, take the form of a rhetoric of equal rights. Furthermore, the notion of equal rights is difficult to sever from its association with white men, as a result of the ongoing battles in Western “democracies” to claim equal rights for women and non-whites. As Fred Dallmayr asserts, “From the beginning, individualism carried overtones of segregation and willful arrogance” and “a domineering impulse,” especially “human mastery” over “nature” and “the powerless” (9). Inevitably, then, conceptualizations of justice in the West remain inseparable from historically specific, inequitable power relations. My claim is that the relationship between justice and social practices is a central concern of Morrison’s Paradise, both in its critique of dominant modes of justice and social practices and in its sketching of a reconceptualized form of justice based on more caring, accommodative social practices.

Some feminist scholars have worked to counter the dominant conception of justice by delineating an ethics of care that they claim is more common to the women they interview and that emphasizes “connection, not hurting; care and response” rather than “justice” and “rights.” By locating an alternative mechanism for “moral thinking” in “the process of coming to know others” through “care and connection,” scholars like Carol Gilligan offer a means of beginning to rethink issues of justice (“Remapping” 482-85). However, while Gilligan makes clear that the “differences” she delineates between men’s ethics of justice and women’s ethics of care “arise in a social context” (Different 2), setting up these two ethics in binary terms can limit a full exploration and reconceptualization of justice. As John Broughton argues, “Gilligan’s separation and sharp contrast of ‘male’ and ‘female’ normative ethics and metaethics seems, in her own terms, extremely ‘masculine’ in its emphasis on difference and boundary” (135). My particular interest in Morrison’s Paradise is that it jettisons such a duality in its depiction of the convent women, positing an ethics of justice that interweaves care with equality and fairness. The conception of care offered by Paradise comes closer to Alison Jaggar’s notion of “a feminist
rather than feminine form of care” that is simultaneously “critical” and “nurturant” (132), a notion that recasts “care, friendship, and love” as “critical rather than sentimental emotions” (138). In Paradise, caring surfaces as a function of coalition processes, as a collective endeavor with activist claims, as a mechanism for “address[ing] social and political inequalities” (Jaggar 132).

Moreover, Paradise’s reformulation of coalition entails a more radical infusion of certain attributes of community, namely the emphasis on empathy and ideas of the common good, particularly in terms of survival and justice. At the same time, the notion of community itself undergoes an alteration in that, within Morrison’s novel, community emerges as constructed, dynamic, and necessarily a function of coalition work among the different people that make up the community, so that even ideas of the common good are never a given but must be constructed. Individual interests are always in dialogue with group interests within communities (whether that dialogue is acknowledged or not), and communities are always shifting as members enter and leave and as the interests of individual members change. Thus, the novel re-imagines community as having the potential of creating a space for difference. In other words, Paradise addresses what the Miami Theory Collective calls the West’s “demonstrable paucity of ways to think community” (ix) by asserting and exploring the interconnections between coalition and community. Although, according to Iris Young, Western representations of “ideal community” typically “privilege unity over difference” and “sympathy over recognition of the limits of one’s understanding of others from their point of view” and thus tend “to suppress differences” (300), Dallmayr makes a good case for rethinking “community” as not “imply[ing] a simple juxtaposition of supposedly independent agents” or a unity but, rather, as fostering a “communitarian mode [that] cultivates diversity” (142). I am thus arguing that collective agency in the name of justice requires both coalition and community, which cannot be separated if community is acknowledged as always in the process of construction and as “a strategically organized set of relationships” (Scott 42). Coalitions aimed at survival and justice cannot depend solely on an individualistic, agonistic model; and progressive activism cannot depend on naturalized, fixed, and/or exclusivist notions of community. As feminists of all stripes have insisted, “agency” is always necessarily “coproduced” (Messer-Davidow 29); and, as Chantal Mouffe has more recently argued, “collective, public action” requires “the construction of a ‘we’ in the context of diversity of conflict” (“Democratic” 78).

My location of feminism as offering a means of thinking about coalition in other than dominant modes is not arbitrary. Consciousness raising as developed during the Women’s Movement in the 1960s and 1970s reflects a tradition of coalition work that has been effaced from or simply ignored by dominant conceptualizations of coalition. Catherine A. MacKinnon describes consciousness raising as a “feminist method and practice” that involves “a face-to-face social experience that strikes at the fabric of meaning of social relations between and among women and men by calling their givenness into question and reconstituting their meaning in a transformed and critical way” (171). While varying significantly in member makeup and group dynamics, consciousness-raising groups tended to “value nonhierarchical organization and a commitment to confronting sources of inequality” (166). In addition, consciousness raising involved using participants’ “own feelings and experiences as women” (Sarachild 490) as the means to explore social inequities. Feminist consciousness raising thus conceptualized coalition in terms of a form of communal critique that was not purely abstract but rather was
heavily dependent on material experiences and the realm of emotions. The potential weaknesses of consciousness raising, however, included a tendency to homogenize the group members, to look solely at sexual inequities—rather than examine the interconnectedness of sex, race, class, sexual orientation, and age—and to over-focus on individual growth—thus reinforcing the Western emphasis on individualism and, by association, the accompanying structures of domination. In response to these problems, more recent feminist scholarship emphasizes a “response through coalition” that is based on “affinity, not identity” and thus emerges “out of otherness, difference, and specificity” while remaining “fully political” (Haraway 155)—i.e., engaging culture and the power relations that create and are perpetuated by the various systems that make up a culture. In slightly different terms, Mouffe argues that “political identity” is always “something to be constructed, not empirically given” and thus based in “commonality,” in “an ethico-political bond that creates linkages among the participants” (“Democratic” 75-76).

Indeed, the idea of coalition is in the process of being reconfigured by many feminist scholars in terms of “what we want to achieve” rather than “in terms of ‘who’ we are,” a move that creates space for differences while not losing the idea of a “common political stance” (Yuval-Davis 4).

Moreover, other forms of coalition traditions besides predominantly white feminist ones have been left out of dominant conceptualizations of coalition, including the historical practices of “othermothering and community othermothering” that Stanlie James argues “have been critical to the survival of Black communities” in America (51). African-American communities have been forced to develop other means of survival given the leg-acy of slavery and continuing racism, both of which have contributed to the disruption of African-American families and communities and a lack of accessibility to the dominant forms of power. One of these mechanisms of survival has entailed the development of othermothering, a form of “cultural work” (44) and communal “intervention” (51) that engages nurturing as a vital means of addressing specific needs resulting from concrete social, political, and economic inequities. Nurturing and caring activities, usually associated with biological mothering and the private sphere, thus become transformed into larger social practices with socio-political implications. As cultural work, othermothering does not simply take place within an already existing, static African-American community but, rather, involves the ongoing construction through localized coalition processes of an African-American community that makes possible and values othermothering.

With an eye to such other traditions of coalition, Morrison’s Paradise depicts women characters acting collaboratively on the basis of particular, temporary, intersecting subject positions connected to a common history of oppression in order to resist and/or move beyond specific forms of injustices perpetrated by an exploitative racist and sexist American culture. Morrison’s text constructs women characters who are enabled through active acknowledgments of the subject positions they share, but without ignoring those they do not share. As a result, these characters can move beyond certain oppressive subject positions to create new, more liberating and active (although always unstable) subject positions as well as (temporary) grounds for agency. Although these coalitions are local and temporary, they nevertheless lead to concrete acts that affect the characters’ material,
lived existence. A form of collective agency thus results that depends on neither fixed subjectivity, nor hierarchical structures, nor totalizing meta-narratives.

Indeed, the novel offers figurations of women with different pasts, races, classes, and ages actively constructing communal spaces and identities (even if they are temporary and unstable) that allow them not only to survive (at least temporarily) in the face of injustices but also to reach toward a new, alternative, non-hierarchical sense of justice that emphasizes both equality and nurturing. Identity and agency are reconfigured as decentered, multivocal, and always in-process but, nevertheless, as constructive. Morrison's *Paradise* thus re-imagines the bases from which coalitions are formed in ways that highlight the importance of coalition building in terms of a non-hierarchically based form of justice, while nevertheless retaining sight and sites of differences. Coalitions remain neither static nor unproblematic in Morrison's text, in the sense that they are presented as dynamic, ever-changing processes that must perpetually negotiate the "differences" between its actors or participants but that, at the same time, result in at least temporary physical and/or psychic survival for some of the women characters. In a utopian gesture, *Paradise* thus depicts an alternative community of women actualized through coalition processes; at the same time, however, the novel examines the ways in which this group of women threatens the dominant societal structures that remain patriarchal and hierarchical. Moreover, Morrison's novel questions rigid separatism as ultimately destructive of coalitions that depend on forms of justice which remain grounded in inequitable power relations, particularly if the separatism functions on a patriarchal, hierarchical model; however, the text also explores the possibilities and even necessity of temporary forms of separatism in the formation of coalitions.

*Paradise* explicitly foregrounds its engagement with issues of coalition by weaving the Civil Rights Movement into its text through its presentation of the character of Reverend Misner. A relatively recent arrival in the town of Ruby and thus not a descendent of the original town founders, Misner attempts to raise the consciousness of the young people to a national movement in the face of their fathers and grandfathers, who established first Haven and then Ruby on racist, separatist grounds and who strive to protect this separatism at all costs. As a case in point, Stewart Morgan, one of the twins who function as the present-generation senior patriarchs, had "outspoken contempt for the schoolchildren sitting in that drugstore in Oklahoma City," wrote "a hateful letter to the women who organized the students," and "called Thurgood Marshall a 'stir-up' Negro." (82). Men like Stewart are deeply suspicious of Misner, whose past experience "floated behind him" in hints of "covert meetings to stir folks up[,] confrontations with rather than end runs around white law," and who thus "could encourage strange behavior" (56). Morrison's text thus approaches the issue of coalition and the Civil Rights Movement by focusing on the splits, the racism, and the patriarchal structures within the African-American community itself.

The novel carefully delineates the history of this town as one created by former slave men who had been discriminated against not only by whites but also by "Negro towns" (13) and who in response chose a separatism that became discrimination against all others.4 The freedmen became a tight band of wayfarers bound by the enormity of what had happened to them. Their horror of whites was convulsive but abstract. They saved the clarity of their hatred for the [black] men who had insulted them in ways too confounding for language: first by excluding them, then by offering them staples to exist in that very exclusion. (189)
That this exclusion by other "Negroes" is grounded in skin color, in "light-skinned against black," is a revelation to the "8-rock males." They immediately understand the "serious consequences" of this racial "difference" in terms of patriarchal power: "Serious enough that their daughters would be shunned as brides; their sons chosen last" (194). Their response to this insulting rebuff by "fair-skinned colored men. Blue-eyed, gray-eyed yellowmen" (195) is to found their own "all-black" (5) town, Haven (and later Ruby, after Haven withers), grounded in dogmatic racist and patriarchal terms that simply reverse the hierarchy of the racism they themselves suffered by excluding all who are not so dark as themselves.

In Haven and then Ruby, the "Fathers" (6) rule and the darkest "8-rock" (194), coal-black skin is privileged; others are driven away or marginalized. Holding onto the "logic of hierarchical opposition," the town must continually enforce its borders, given that defining "an identity, a closed totality, always depends on excluding some elements" (Young 303). As Pat Best recognizes, "People get chosen and ranked" based upon "skin color" in Ruby (216). For example, the community forces Menus to "return the woman he brought home to marry. The pretty sandy-haired girl from Virginia" (195) and marginalizes Roger Best's wife (Delia), daughter (Pat), and granddaughter (Billie Delia) for their "sunlight skin" (196), which marks them as other. Marginalization functions as a form of violence when Delia dies because no one will get her the medical help she needs. The "fastest girl in town" (59) label accentuates and casts a deprecatory shadow onto Billie Delia's racial otherness, and she eventually leaves Ruby. That these examples are all women is not surprising, given that the town patriarchs consolidate their power through an unspoken but extremely tight control over reproduction and thus over women. As Pat recognizes, "Everything that worries them must come from women," in that "the generations had to be not only racially untampered with but free of adultery too" (217) in order to ensure racial purity. Billie Delia recognizes that the rumors and verbal battles between the men that ensue when Arnette is found pregnant out of wedlock and then loses the baby have to do with "disobedience, which meant, of course, the stallions were fighting about who controlled the mares and their foals" (150).

The town patriarchs' suspicion and fear of the women living in the Convent on the outskirts of the town is also a function of their desire to retain control over their (always precarious) separatist enclave, grounded in racial purity and enforced through a patriarchal and racist ideology allowing for no dissenting views. Indeed, the novel traces the trajectory of this unforgiving and dogmatic separatism, and the patriarchal power attached to it, to its logical murderous conclusion, given that "neither the founders of Haven nor their descendants could tolerate anybody but themselves" (13). As Pat puts it, the men resort to violence to rid the Convent of its women residents not only because they see the women as "impure" and "unholy" but mainly "because they could—which is what being an 8-rock meant to them" (297). Power and violence are interlaced for the town's patriarchs, given that their source of power depends on absolute power over women and their reproductive capacities.

Although clearly offering a critique of the town's racist, patriarchal, separatist structure and ideology as incompatible with any kind of coalition work that seeks to re-imagine justice not only as fair but also as nurturing and non-hierarchical, Paradise nevertheless indicates the necessity at times of separatism for survival and the (limited) possibilities of coalition within a separatist structure. Indeed, when first founded, the town of Haven does operate in the spirit of coalition, in the basic sense that its citizens help each other...
survive: Its “residents refused each other nothing, were vigilant to any need or shortage” (109). Having been rebuffed from all sides, they regroup and found their own thriving town. However, this caring coalition is so rigidly circumscribed, operating only with respect to the chosen families and excluding outsiders on the basis of skin color, that it cannot survive. A place in which “outsider” and “enemy” “mean the same thing” (212) and in which the “Fathers” rule with absolute power cannot sustain the spirit of coalition.6 Predictably, Haven collapses, with too many offspring choosing to desert. However, the sons of the original founders and fathers regroup and move elsewhere to start the experiment all over again, founding the town of Ruby and believing once again that they were “on their way to Paradise” (202). The problem is that Ruby replicates Haven in all ways and is thus doomed to repeat its failures: It thrives while it is being constructed in the spirit of coalition but slowly evolves into a fascist enclave when keeping its own in and others out becomes its primary means of ensuring its identity and survival at all costs.

Although the novel presents the ideals of the Civil Rights Movement as a means of getting past the dead end that Haven and then Ruby represent, Paradise also engages in a critique of the patriarchal aspects of the Movement and the limitations that result as a consequence of these aspects. The novel’s presentation of Misner as working to bring battling factions in the town together to negotiate truces and to give voice to the young people of the town illustrates the possibilities of the Civil Rights Movement’s ideal of participatory democracy in moving away from a power dynamic that gives power to the few and functions through the threat of violence. For example, Misner attempts to teach the young people “strategies of defense. Not aggression. Defense.” However, his work is made difficult by their inability to “know the difference” (208), as Pat points out to him, given that their world view has been constructed within an extreme hierarchical, patriarchal context that does not flinch from resorting to violence to insure its dominance. Indeed, Misner himself remains caught within a tightly woven patriarchal structure that seriously limits the possibilities for change that he wishes to promote. As a male preacher, Misner inherently holds power in a town and culture that privilege men and fathers as well as a religious structure that is itself deeply patriarchal. Indeed, Misner’s Baptist church boasts “the largest congregation in town as well as the most powerful” (56-57), so that even the most powerful town patriarchs, Deacon and Stewart Morgan, are forced to reign in their suspicions of the man and at times bend to his will. Although Misner’s authority as a Baptist minister allows him to bring together the various interested parties after the altercation between Arnette and K.D. in an attempt to put into practice the ideals of participatory democracy and non-violence, the attempt remains seriously flawed in its exclusion of women. Ideally, participatory democracy involves “extensive and active engagement of citizens in the self-governing process,” in a direct fashion “day in and day out, in all matters that affect them in their common lives” (Barber 921), and thus involves “collective deliberation” and “ongoing accommodation” (Guinier 252). However, Arnette is glaringly absent from the meeting of “those concerned,” as is her mother, whereas K.D. is present along with “his uncles Deek and Stewart, Reverend Misner, Arnette’s father and brother” (54).

Misner’s meeting thus reinforces the dogmatic patriarchal structure of the town, in which women are denied a voice and, indeed, remain possessions of men that must be negotiated by men. Although the men pay lip service to the influence of women, as when Arnette’s father Jeff claims that “my wife’s the key” and Deacon
Morgan agrees that “women always the key,” the men essentially silence and exclude the women from negotiations and decisions. Morrison’s novel foregrounds this exclusion when Misner closes the meeting with a prayer and the men hear “the tippy-tap steps of women who were nowhere to be seen” (61). Misner’s actions are emblematic of the Civil Rights Movement’s patriarchal structure, in which officers of the leading organizations were male African-American ministers who did not allow women into their ranks even though women were not only very active but also highly influential within the day-to-day running of these organizations as well as in setting the agenda for the Movement and constructing a model of participatory democracy. Moreover, that Misner organizes an all-male meeting indicates a sexist “assumption of male superiority” that women within the Movement complained about and that was most fully exemplified by Stokely Carmichael’s now infamous comment that “the only position for women in SNCC is prone” (Evans 234, 87). Even as he participates in excluding women from the coalition work he promotes, however, Misner has inklings of the exclusions of many from official versions of the Movement; he reflects that “all sorts of people will claim pivotal, controlling, defining positions in the rights movement,” that “a few would be justified,” but that “the ordinary folk” “would be forgotten” even though “they were the ones who formed the spine on which the televised ones stood” (212). The character of Misner thus serves multiple functions as a means of presenting both the complexities and limitations of the Civil Rights Movement.

However, Morrison’s Paradise moves beyond while retaining the ideals of the Movement, as evidenced by the centrality to the novel of the community of women living in the Convent. Indeed, Paradise positions the convent women as the best hope for moving past racism and patriarchal structures, which the novel presents as interrelated, and toward an alternative, non-hierarchically based form of justice that emphasizes coalition and community: coalition in the sense of joining forces to strive for specific goals, and community in the sense of a communitarian space. Moreover, the novel explores the interdependence of coalition and community as means of reconfiguring a communal form of agency. The Convent provides a space that not only ensures temporary survival to all those who find their way there—regardless of race, class, age, or past history—but also validates “ordinary” women and “their small stories” (212) to the extent that collectively they can construct subject positions for themselves that include positions other than that of subjugation. On one level, survival entails a loving mutual, cooperative nurturing within the framework of this community; each woman is nurtured by, at the same time that she provides nurturing to, the others. Moreover, although the community appears separatist in its geographical marginality as well as its exclusively female membership, the novel presents the community of women living in the Convent at the edge of Ruby as able to negotiate a separatism that is merely temporary, that is constructive and inclusive, that reconceptualizes power as power with rather than power over, and that depends on dynamic coalition practices. As Jane Mansbridge argues, “power with” envisions “power not only as dominance but also as energy, capacity, and effectiveness” (149). Indeed, the notion of power with reinvigorates the conception of coalition through a rejection of stable hierarchical structures—particularly patriarchal ones that depend on the threat of violence and violence itself (power over)—and a reframing of power as derived from dynamic, collective, caring interactions. Although the Civil Rights and New Left Movements’ practices and notions of coalition included an ethics of care, especially in the emphasis on non-violence, care inevitably became
subsumed and devalued within structures that continued to build "on a competitive intellectual style" that assumed that "intellectual work," as well as leadership, "was primarily a male task" (Evans 108-11). Movement leaders thus remained caught within a power over framework, even as they attempted to push the ideal of power with. The Convent community in Morrison's Paradise more fully embodies a reformulation of power as power with.

The building that the town refers to as the "Convent" itself serves as a metaphor for the dynamism and possibilities that the novel attaches to the community of women who live there. Although originally built in "1922" (169) as "an embezzler's folly" (3), the building is later transformed by "Sisters Devoted to Indian and Colored People" into "an asylum/boarding school for Indian girls," "CHRIST THE KING SCHOOL FOR NATIVE GIRLS," run by "Mary Magna" (223-24). Once the order closes the school and all but Mary Magna and her protégé Consolata are left, the building seems to be overlooked by the authorities and organically becomes a kind of safe, regenerative haven for women who find their way there. In all of its incarnations, the building stands geographically separate from the society and culture of its time, "a big stone house in the middle of nothing" (169). Even when in "1954" the town of Ruby is built "some seventeen miles south of Christ the King" (225), the house remains effectively alone in the Oklahoma countryside. Moreover, "against all reason, the students, the state officials and those they encountered in town called it the Convent" (224), which not only reinforces the house's geographical separation but also imbues it with an ideological separation in the sense that convents traditionally have functioned as places of overt retreat from the various cultural, economic, and historic structures at work in the social, secular world. Having internalized, at least in part, the entrenched Puritan heritage of white America, Ruby views the Convent skeptically at best, even though its official ties to Catholicism have long been severed. In addition, because Ruby's male leaders are unable to see the parallels that exist between the patriarchal structures of their town and of Catholicism, they view with suspicion the idea of convents and nuns and, in particular, the idea of women who have chosen deliberately to abstain from sexual relations with men and thus to forgo reproduction; they cannot make the connection between their own and Catholicism's maintenance of power precisely through the regulation of women's sexualities and reproductive capacities. In effect, the town of Ruby actively sets up the Convent as a dangerous separatist space in order to keep the convent women outside its own boundaries. However, the real dogmatic, separatist enclave is Ruby itself, whose leaders work hard to construct the Convent in binary opposition to itself.

Indeed, in its various guises the house has never truly engaged in any absolute or dogmatic form of separatism. The embezzler built the elaborate mansion as a direct consequence of his participation within a vital, thriving economic system, even if his mode of participation was illicit. Furthermore, his choosing to decorate his house with the most ornate artifacts of Western culture—such as "bisque and rose-tone marble floors," "ornate bathroom fixtures," "Flemish candelabra," and "nympha" carved in "niches" (3-4)—marks the mansion as existing very much within rather than outside of the social context of his time. As a school for Indian girls, the building is very much engaged with an America that has steadily pushed aside the native inhabitants of the land it has usurped. Its mission and attempts to provide a Catholic education first to "Arapaho girls" (10) and later to "wards of the state" (227) are impossible to sever from the culture within which it is interceding. The later incarnation of
the house, as a now-secular place of retreat and rejuvenation for women, is similarly difficult to denote as separatist given its inclination to accept openly women of all stripes who drift in and out of its doors. Moreover, the nuns, and later the women who live in the house, engage their neighbors within a shared economic sphere by advertising and selling “produce, barbecue sauce, good bread and the hottest peppers in the world” (11). Geographic separateness thus does not necessarily translate to absolute separatism; in all its guises, and particularly the latter two, the house continues to engage and participate in the world outside its borders.

Although the convent community could be charged with separatism based on gender, given that the building houses only women in the cases of the school and the subsequent group living there, the question is whether or not this constitutes a problematic form of separatism. I would argue that on one level the community of women does function as a separatist space, but a rather complex and in the end constructive one. For one thing, this separatism is for the most part imposed onto the community by the patriarchs of Ruby, who view the convent women with deep suspicion and, consequently, designate the Convent as separate from and in opposition to Ruby. However, the convent women make use of this separatist designation as a means of readying themselves to face and combat the structures that seek to marginalize them. In bell hook’s terms, the convent community refashions its “marginality” into “a site of resistance, as location of radical openness and possibility” (22). Indeed, the novel presents the convent women as a separatist community that functions as a temporary nurturing space but cannot become the end-all if survival is the goal. As the activist Bernice Johnson Reagon firmly argues, “There is no chance that you can survive by staying inside,” within “a space that is ‘yours only’ ”; at the same time, however, she advocates using the space “while it lasts” to “act out community,” “to construct within yourself and within your community who you would be if you were running society” (357-58). 

Paradise goes one step further in presenting a community of women within a space that functions as a separatist nurturing space and, yet, is simultaneously in the process of construction. Morrison’s novel not only urges isolated communities to give up their insularity to engage in coalition work with the express aim of survival but also offers communities themselves as products of coalition. Given the multitude of subject positions negotiated by individuals, communities are never natural, self-evident; their formation and upkeep are necessarily a function of active, ongoing coalition work. The inhabitants of Ruby, for example, choose to consolidate their group identity around their dark skin and their rejection by others on the basis of that skin color. Other subject positions continually intrude upon and challenge that stable community identity, however, so that the town must forever be re-consolidating itself; eventually, Ruby’s patriarchs resort to fascist mechanisms of consolidation as the only means of ensuring its identity. In contrast, the convent community accepts a more fluid notion of identity that enables ongoing, accommodative coalition work.

The group of women who find themselves at the Convent possess one common subject position: Each has sought escape for a variety of reasons from the dominant patriarchal and materialist culture and has found refuge in the Convent, a place marginalized from both white American culture and the local African-American community. The commonalities stop here. The women’s physical attributes, life circumstances, and personalities remain quite distinct, and they must continuously negotiate the different subject positions they hold. To begin with, although most of the women are African-American, one is white (two if
one counts Mary Magna, who dies before many of the women arrive), and one is clearly of mixed race. Although *Paradise* leaves hazy which of the women is white, the first line of the novel asserts that, when Ruby’s men arrive to rid the Convent of its inhabitants, “they shoot the white girl first” (3). This lack of certainty as to the identity of “the white girl” marks skin color as in and of itself not of primary importance within the context of the convent community, a marked contrast to the community of Ruby, where skin color dominates its identity. The novel does not in any way signal race as unimportant culturally but, rather, offers a community that accepts racial diversity and does not construct its identity solely in terms of race. Indeed, the character of Consolata, the senior convent woman after the death of Mary Magna, embodies all that threatens Ruby’s stable identity: Originally from South America, she has “green eyes,” “tea colored hair,” and “smoky, sundown skin” (223). Not only is Consolata of mixed race, but she asserts that the white Catholic nun Mary Magna “is my mother” (48), thus rejecting blood ties as inherent to mothering, to family: “When Mary Magna died, Consolata, fifty-four years old, was orphaned in a way she was not as a street baby” (247).

The women also have very different class and personal backgrounds. The spectrum includes Consolata, who was abandoned in “the street garbage” (223) as a child and then raised by a nun and who had a brief but intense love affair with Ruby’s Deacon Morgan. In contrast, Pallas grew up as the only daughter of affluent divorced parents—arriving for a “visit” to the Convent in “a limousine” with “three suitcases” in tow (261)—and ran away with the young school janitor, only to have him fall for her artist mother. Between these two extremes lies Mavis, who unwittingly killed her twin infants by allowing them to suffocate “in a hot car with the windows closed” while she was buying groceries (23); Seneca, who was tossed between foster homes and fondled by many a boy and who now mutilates herself by cutting “short streets, lanes, alleys into her arms” (261); and Gigi, whose “mother was unlocatable” and “father [was] on death row” (257) and who witnessed “a neat little black boy” shot dead by the police in a demonstration (170). Moreover, the women’s ages run from Pallas’s sixteen to Consolata’s seventy-odd years at the novel’s conclusion. Not only are the convent women a diverse group, but that diversity is continuously re-infused as Ruby’s women seek them out and, at times, even stay with them for brief intervals in order to renew themselves before once again facing the heavily patriarchal culture of their town.

Indeed, the novel offers the Convent as a diverse and dynamic space that functions on the basis not only of intersecting subject positions, positioned in tension with the dominant, male-centered culture, but also of a locally developed ethos of mutual caregiving, in both a physical and psychic sense. However, this ethos of care remains in-process and is never naturalized or severed from the socio-historical context of the women’s lives. Caregiving becomes an active and activist response to the diverse social inequities the women have suffered. Casting aside the conventional Western split between mind and body, the Convent offers a space that recognizes the interconnections of physical and psychic pain or imbalances and that allows experiments in ways to face up to and move past these pains or imbalances. For example, reflecting upon her own experience and the distressing tension in her life between Catholicism and sexuality, Consolata advises the women to “never break them [‘body’ and ‘spirit’] in two. Never put one over the other” (263). When Consolata leads Mavis, Gigi, Seneca, and Pallas in a communal healing ritual by making them lie “unspeaking,” “naked in candlelight,” and unmoving in a painted, fixed outline of their bodies on the cold...
“cellar floor” (263), the women’s ability to communicate to each other their harsh pasts is a direct function of their immediate shared experience of the unnatural confinement of their bodies on that floor, which reflects the parallel confinement of their bodies by the dominant patriarchal culture at large: “In spite of or because their bodies ache, they step easily into the dreamer’s tale” (264). Although Consolata gets the ritual started and thus could be viewed as holding a position of power over the other women, her role is primarily facilitative, and she quickly becomes one of the participants; a kind of “discursive equality” is achieved as all the women mutually encourage “a process of dialogue” driven by “sympathy,” “encouragement,” and “concern” (Jaggar 131-32). As the senior woman at the Convent, both in terms of age and years spent there, Consolata does hold a position of power at the Convent. However, the power she yields is inextricable from caregiving and functions as a means of encouraging the construction of a community that depends on coalition processes of combining resources to achieve specific aims and that operates through caring and accepting each other’s differences; Consolata’s power is thus not “fundamentally oppositional and hierarchical” (Guinier 292). Indeed, the other women care for her as much as she cares for them.

The healing ritual involves the women telling each other their stories in the form of “loud dreaming,” which is described as “no different from a shriek” (264) and is thus physical in nature—given that producing and hearing a shriek involve both physiological and psychic triggers and responses. By willingly sharing and experiencing each other’s painful stories, histories, and dreams with their bodies and psyches simultaneously, they provide for each other unmatched nurturing support. To borrow Gilligan’s terms, the women engage in a “process of coming to know others” through “a joining of stories” (“Remapping” 483). Moreover, this “knowing” is potentially transformative in that it “brings into being new sympathies, new affects as well as new cognitions and new forms of intersubjectivity” (Bartky 179). The painful storytelling creates a multi-vocal, dialogic space that embraces both the physical and psychic and that functions as a form of extremely difficult but productive coalition work and community agency. More specifically, this experience exemplifies coalition work in that it entails the coming together of women with different pasts, interests, and resources in order to articulate and, subsequently, create possibilities for moving past the hurts that have to a certain extent paralyzed each of these women, making them unable to seize any kind of agency individually in the culture at large. The collective healing ritual thus embodies what bell hooks calls a “space where one is able to redeem and reclaim the past, legacies of pain, suffering, and triumph in ways that transform present reality” and that “move us into a different mode of articulation” (147); such a movement is made possible through an “empathy” that is constructed from “shared sensibilities which cross the boundaries of class, gender, race, etc.” and that can “serve as a base for solidarity and coalition” (27). Communal caring does not homogenize the women, however, who remain distinct from each other and who at times demonstrate overt dislike for each other: Mavis and Gigi even come to physical blows at one point, their “bodies roiling in the dust and crushing weeds” (168). In spite of the differences between them, the process of joining together and shrieking their stories becomes cathartic for the women in that “accusations directed at the dead and long gone are undone by murmurs of love” (264); finally, “the Convent women were no longer haunted” (266) by and thus could survive their hurtful pasts. This experiment with a specific, locally developed form of mutual, caring, nurturing, unconditional love as an...
activist response to past inequities not only makes healing possible for each individual woman but also functions simultaneously as both a condition and a result of coalition work within the women’s particular socio-historical context.

On an immediate material level, the convent community offers food, shelter, and/or herbal remedies to the women who find their way there; however, the physical healing remains interconnected to psychic healing. Indeed, the preparation and sharing of meals, whose descriptions are filled with concrete sensual details, function in the novel as an instance of a kind of community that is dependent on coalition processes and that is firmly grounded in the body, in the realm of the material, rather than merely in abstract coalition ideals and theories. After the physical fight between Mavis and Gigi, for example, all of the women unite over food: “The fear, the bickering, the nausea, the awful dirt fight, the tears in the dark—all of the day’s unruly drama dissipated in the pleasure of chewing food” together (179). Antagonisms and hierarchies rather than differences dissipate through the process of caring for their bodies and psyches communally. Healthy, nourished bodies have a better shot at survival; and carefully, lovingly prepared food satisfies not only physical needs but also psychic ones. Even Ruby’s women seek out the convent women for the specialty foods they produce, the herbal remedies they prepare, and the loving kindness they dispense indiscriminately—which highlights the cracks in Ruby’s identity as separatist and self-sustaining. In contrast to the closed community of Ruby, the Convent invites all to join in continuously (re)creating its dynamic, diverse community. Over the course of “more than twenty years,” “crying women, staring women, scowling, lip-biting women or women just plain lost” made the trek “back and forth” between Ruby and the Convent (270); “early reports were of kindness and very good food” (11). “. . . revolted by the work of her womb,” Arnette seeks shelter there to deliver the baby that she has been unable to abort with a “mop handle” (250) and that dies shortly after birth. Soane Morgan depends on a “tonic . . . One of Connie’s [Consolata’s] preparations” to help her keep at bay the depression, the “thinning” air, that began when both her sons were killed in Vietnam (100). After a fight with her mother, Billie Delia seeks refuge at the Convent; and her memories of her stay there demonstrate how intertwined physical and psychic healing are:

They had treated her so well, not embarrassed her with sympathy, had just given her sunny kindness. Looking at her bruised face and swollen eyes, they sliced cucumber for her lids after making her drink a glass of wine. No one insisted on hearing what drove her there, but she could tell they would listen if she wanted them to. (308)

While the women treat her physical injuries with practical remedies, they also offer her a caring, loving, non-intrusive, inclusive environment based on mutual respect.

The women who find their way to the Convent for stays of varying lengths find renewal through being cared for and caring for other women in a non-judgmental, non-hierarchical, non-patriarchal atmosphere. They are included in the community and have a voice in how they will participate in it. Billie Delia describes the convent community as “a place where you can stay for a while. No questions” and where “you can collect yourself” and “think things through, with nothing or nobody bothering you all the time. They’ll take care of you or leave you alone—whichever way you want it” (175-76). When a mute Pallas first appears at the Convent, for example, the women initially care only for her immediate physical needs but otherwise leave her alone for a few days, recognizing that “the pain was down too far.” Eventually, however, Consolata’s “magic” enables Pallas to
tell her “story”: “She just stretched out her hand and Pallas went to her, sat on her lap, talk-crying” in a “backward and punctured and incomplete” manner (172-73). Although Pallas is technically a complete stranger to Consolata, this scene of patient, unconditional, loving attention demonstrates the warm empathy that Consolata feels for other women hurt by a cruel world, an “empathy” that can “serve as a base for solidarity and coalition” (hooks 27). Across their overt differences with respect to age, class, race, and past experiences, nurturing coalition work takes place on the basis of a matrix of historically specific, intersecting subject positions connected to pain endured within a male-dominated culture. The women’s healing is made possible in great part by the “blessed malelessness” of the house, “like a protected domain, free of hunters” (177)—at least temporarily. Given that the dominant American culture and the nearby town of Ruby are heavily male-centered and that both envision and enact power as power over women, the malelessness of the house makes possible the reconceptualization of power in more collective and just terms, as power with. Moreover, this maleless community allows the women not only to work through their pain but also to begin (re)constructing non-subjugated identities for themselves.

Given that individual identity is to a degree always a function of the culture within which the individual exists, the convent community becomes for the women an alternative to white America and Ruby both in its malelessness and in its emphasis on collective agency, on a form of “agency” that is “coproduced” (Messer-Davidow 29) and thus no longer grounded in individualism. The difficult, dialogic coalition work in which the women engage as they create this alternative community enables them in turn to fashion new, more dynamic identities for themselves. The process of each woman speaking the painful experiences of her past and, at the same time, listening to the different, individual past hurts of the other women creates a caring, communal space for each woman to (re)construct an identity with greater possibilities for agency. For example, Mavis feels “elated” when she begins to feel that “the old Mavis was dead. The one who couldn’t defend herself” and “couldn’t figure out or manage a simple meal” (171). Similarly, after having lived for a number of years in an alcoholic haze following the death of Mary Magna, Consolata reshapes herself into an energetic, “revised Reverend Mother” (265)—catholic but not Catholic, whom the other women at first “do not recognize” (262) but who proceeds to lead the women living in the house through an active, communal process of healing. Through the process of negotiating strategic alliances across their differences to heal themselves from the consequences of the injustices they have been made to suffer, the convent women create a nurturing, dialogic space from which their own refashioned subjectivities emerge, subjectivities that, collectively, can not only survive a racist and sexist culture but work to resist and redress its injustices.

Although the healing ritual in which the convent women participate is reminiscent in form and spirit of the 1970s’ feminist practice of consciousness raising, the healing ritual that Paradise offers rejects the kind of identity politics that characterized consciousness raising, and actively participates in the contemporary reconceptualization of identity, subjectivity, and agency that radically destabilizes the individualistic basis of identity politics. Morrison’s novel moves toward the kind of notion of identity that Mouffe describes as “an ensemble of ‘subject positions’ that can never be totally fixed in a closed system” and that remain “always contingent and precarious, temporarily fixed at the intersection of those subject position”; moreover, Mouffe argues that these points at which subject positions meet or
intersect function as “nodal points, partial fixations,” as “precarious forms of identification” that have the potential of constructing “forms of unity and common action” that do not depend on centered subjects or on pre-existing identities or unities” (“Feminism” 372, 381). Morrison’s *Paradise* simultaneously undercuts any notion of a stable, centered, fixed self and illustrates possibilities for constructively fashioning—within the context of a nurturing community that is itself always in the process of construction through coalition work—more dynamic selves that are not completely constrained by the dominant culture or by communities, like Ruby, that have internalized certain dominant values and, thus, can function collectively as agents.

As a diverse and dynamic community, however, the Convent functions outside of and comes into conflict with the patriarchal structures that dominate the nearby town of Ruby. Indeed, that the local town’s African-American men eventually find it necessary to destroy the community of women and literally kill them highlights the threat that any reconceptualization of identity and agency as decentered and multivocal has for a status quo dependent on patriarchal, hierarchical structures and whose way of life depends on having “nothing at the edge” (9) that they “couldn’t control” (279). There is no room for unmarried “women who chose themselves for company” (276) in a town in which women’s “identity rested on the men they married” (187) or the fathers to whom they were born; consequently, Ruby’s patriarchs can only interpret the convent community in demonic terms, in terms of a witch’s “coven” (276). In order to retain their identity as a separatist, patriarchal, all-black town, Ruby’s men must get rid of the human “detritus” (4) on its edge; they must “make sure” that “nothing inside or out rots the one all-black town worth the pain” (5). The convent women become scapegoats for all the town’s problems, as the men assert that “everybody who goes near them [the convent women] is maimed somehow and the mess is seeping back into our homes, our families” (276). In order to justify their violent actions, Ruby’s men dehumanize and demonize the convent women as “female malice” (4) incarnate, “strays” (114), “bitches. More like witches,” “heifers,” and “sluts” (276). The extent of not only their hatred but also their fear of the women is reflected in the weaponry they carry on their raid of the Convent; nine men arrive with “rope,” “handcuffs, Mace,” and “clean, handsome guns” (3) to oust five non-armed women—an absurdity the men fail to recognize. As Billie Delia puts it, Ruby is “a backward no place ruled by men whose power to control was out of control and who had the nerve to say who could live and who not and where; who had seen in lively, free, unarmed females the mutiny of the mare and so got rid of them” (308). The patriarchal and racist separatism that grounds Ruby’s identity allows for no other response than hate and violence to the threat that the convent community poses to that identity. In contrast to the convent women, Ruby’s patriarchs “did not think to fix it [the town’s problems] by extending a hand in fellowship or love” (275). That Ruby’s own women (and even some men) occasionally seek out the convent community for renewal indicates that some of the town’s citizens, particularly those with little power, at times feel confined by Ruby’s separatism, grounded in hierarchy, hate, and violence. This attraction to the Convent for some of Ruby’s inhabitants points not only to cracks within Ruby’s positioning of itself in binary opposition to the Convent but also to a recognition of the potential of versions of separatism that are non-hierarchical and grounded in caring.

Separatism thus functions quite differently in Ruby and in the Convent, even if its impetus is survival in both cases. In Ruby, separatism aims to keep everything and everyone it does not claim outside its borders and is
enforced by the town patriarchs through the threat of violence or, at times, violence itself. For example, Ruby defines itself explicitly in binary opposition to the Convent. In contrast, the separatism of the Convent is in part imposed upon it (by geography and by the town of Ruby) and aims to lovingly nurture and strengthen, within a communal setting, women who have been hurt in different ways by a violent, male-centered culture so that they may once again face the world at large. The combination of a patriarchal structure and a racist agenda makes Ruby into a doomed but nevertheless dangerous separatist entity. As horrendous as the murderous assault on the convent women is, however, it does produce a wake-up call for the town, which opens the door for moving past the hatred and violence. As Reverend Misner recognizes near the end of the novel, Ruby’s men “think they have outfoxed the whiteman [through their separatist town] when in fact they imitate him” (306). After the massacre of the convent women, the whole town wonders “how” Ruby’s “so clean and blessed a mission [could] devours itself and become the world they had escaped?” (292). Earlier, Lone DuPres—whose position as Ruby’s midwife has marginalized her in a town where men control everything and everyone, since the midwife is “the one giving orders” during the birthing process and who possesses a “secret skill” upon which the men must depend (272) and which thus threatens their patriarchal power—manages to round up many of Ruby’s inhabitants to go stop the men from harming the convent women; they arrive too late, however. Ruby’s citizens thus do not condone the hatred and violence that the massacre embodies; as one man asks the murderous group, “What manner of evil is in you?” Even Deacon Morgan, one of the chief patriarchs and one of the nine men involved in the assault, acknowledges after the fact that “this is our doing. Ours alone. And we bear the responsibility” (291) and feels remorse for having become, along with the others, “the kind of man who set himself up to judge, rout and even destroy the needy, the defenseless, the different” (302). Given his earlier love affair with Consolata, the novel presents Deacon as having already not only transgressed the boundaries of Ruby but also questioned on some level the limitations of Ruby’s insularity and the kind of power that regulates. Indeed, the power structure of Ruby changes in a concrete way when Deacon disassociates himself from his twin brother Stewart—“It was as if he had looked in his brother’s face and did not like himself any more” (300)—and, instead, aligns himself with the progressive Misner. The novel thus does not end without hope, since this realignment gestures at a change away from the separatist, violent racism that Stewart Morgan continues to champion and toward a Civil Rights-inspired vision of non-violent change, racial unity, and participatory democracy. What this realignment leaves intact, though, is Ruby’s patriarchal structure.

However, hope surfaces at the novel’s conclusion in another shape that does indicate a continuing challenge to patriarchal structures and the threat of violence toward women that ensures the survival of such structures—for example, K.D. “beat up Arnette” (195) and “smacked” (256) Gigi at different times to get them to mind him. Subsequent to the massacre at the Convent, the townspeople all head home, and Roger Best is called to go pick up the bodies in his "ambulance/hearse"; when he gets there, however, he finds “no bodies. Nothing. Even the Cadillac was gone” (292). Although the bodies of the shot women disappear, the women reappear in other contexts. It remains unclear whether they have survived in the flesh or in some sort of ghost-like form—the latter being the more likely since they seem to haunt those who have hurt them in the past, but the convent women nevertheless continue to embody hope. On one level, the disap-
pearance of their bodies functions as a rejection of conventional closure and a refusal to be coopted; they will not neatly and properly be buried within the patriarchal enclosure of Ruby. Moreover, that their bodies are somewhere “out there” imbues the convent women with a mythical power that provides hope. Indeed, Billie Delia “hoped with all her heart that the women were out there, darkly burnished, biding their time, brass-metaling their nails, filing their incisors—but out there” and wonders, “When will they return? When will they reappear, with blazing eyes, war paint and huge hands to rip up and stomp down this prison calling itself a town?” (308). The disappearance of the murdered bodies thus further positions the convent women, or rather the idea of them, as indestructible in the sense that their engagement in such a dynamic, alternative coalition process grounded in caring and intersecting subject posi-

1. See Evans, and Crawford, Rouse, and Woods for excellent discussions of the ways in which women were invaluable and influential contributors to the day-to-day running of the Civil Rights and New Left Movements but were consistently marginalized from positions of leadership within and later from studies and overviews of these movements.

2. Particularly noteworthy are Vinacke’s findings when he examines the behavior of both sexes at different ages and finds that, while girls “at all three age levels [7-8 years, 14-16 years, 18-22 years] display the characteristics of accommodative strategy,” boys “appear to change drastically from behavior quite similar to that of the girls to the contrasting strategy which we have called ‘exploitative’” (“Age” 1229). These findings are striking in that they raise the possibility that male-centered institutions and social processes intercede to promote and institutionalize a particular version of coalition processes that privileges hierarchy and exploitation.

3. Although I agree with Young’s critique of the “ideal of community,” I do not want to give up on community but rather to reconceptualize it in other terms.

4. Hine describes how scores of former slaves “moved west to establish new black towns and settlements in Kansas and Oklahoma in the closing decades of the nineteenth century” in a “quest” for “freedom and equality of opportunity” (127). Nell Irvin Painter further emphasizes that these former slaves’ westward movement as a means of “seeking their fortune” was a means of participating in the American Dream, in that it replicated the movement of “other immigrants to the United States” (ix). See Philip Page for a more extensive discussion of the conflict between slavery and the American concept of “the frontier” as embodying “freedom” (1).

5. hooks argues that “racism and sexism are interlocking systems of domination which uphold and sustain one another” (59).

6. Burwell notes that “a fear of contamination” can be one of the “conservative aspects of the utopian impulse” (204).

7. As Rowbotham stresses, “Participatory democracy only works if everyone accepts a certain give and take, a respect for one another’s experience, a desire and need to remain connected” (76).

8. See Crawford, Rouse, and Wood. hooks also notes that “sexism has diminished the power of all black liberation movements” (16).
9. Reagon asserts that the aim of coalition work is to "stay alive" (357), which reinforces my argument that coalition work needs to be rethought in terms of survival and justice rather than in terms of "winning." Similarly, Lisa Albrecht and Rose M. Brewer argue that "working in a coalition is about survival" (3).

10. Albrecht and Brewer similarly call for "alliance building" that would emphasize "power-with, rather than power-over" (4-5).

11. Laclau asserts that "all identity—all social identity—is constructed" (1), and Angela McRobbie argues that "identity . . . is predicated on social identity, on social groups or populations with some sense of shared experience and history" (58).

12. Ackelsberg reinforces this point when she characterizes "coalition-building as a process through which we not only act together with others but develop and change our own identities at the same time" (8).

13. Schrag notes "the emerging subjectivity" within the "space opened up by communicative praxis," "a subject transfigured and transformed" (11).

Works Cited


