to reconstruct "what Strauss might say" when confronted with Levinas's messianic claims for philosophy (p. 42). Yet she never performs the thought experiment in reverse—she never reconstructs a Levinasian critique of Strauss. Although she reads Levinas against the grain, exposing unwitting implications of his thought, she takes Strauss's claims at face value, accepting his monolithic and reductionist categories (e.g., Jewish revelation, *the* theologico-political predicament) without hesitation.

This curious refusal to interrogate Strauss leads Batnitzky to inflate his significance for modern Jewish thought and, more importantly, to overlook political liabilities of his skepticism. She repeatedly asserts the (unspecified) political dangers of Levinas's confidence in philosophy, dangers from which Strauss's skepticism ostensibly insulates him. But in the one instance where she adduces concrete evidence of Levinas's political failings—the case of his "fanatical" Zionism—it is unclear whether Straussian skepticism guarantees more palatable results (p. 141). Batnitzky insists that Levinas's notorious comments about the Palestinians are not, as most have argued, inconsistent with his political theory, but rather represent its logical culmination—for Levinas's conflation of politics with ethics licenses a religious understanding of the State of Israel: "Zionism became for Levinas not a political solution but a *religious* enterprise" (p. 152). By contrast, Batnitzky trusts that Strauss's pragmatic political Zionism (which asserts the importance of a Jewish homeland but denies that a Jewish state can solve the Jewish problem in any ultimate sense) proves more hospitable to Palestinians: "Ironically, Strauss's moderate politics, which seeks the common good and practices moderation, may have greater potential to recognize 'the other' than does Levinas's" (p. 162). But, as Israeli history demonstrates, political moderation need not produce an embrace of the Other—it can just as easily justify "pragmatic" measures (like the security fence) that further disenfranchise the Other. Indeed, throughout the history of Zionism, messianic aspirations and security concerns have coincided to justify expansionist policies that oppress the Other.

When it comes to concrete political questions, it is not clear whether the skeptical Strauss is any less dangerous than the dogmatic Levinas (or the dogmatic Strauss, for that matter).

Communities of Memory: On Witness, Identity, and Justice. By W. James Booth. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006. 264p. $42.50.
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— George Shulman, *New York University*

W. James Booth has written a profound book about memory in relation to identity and justice in politics. On the one hand, he analyzes the central place of memory in the constitution of identity: A sense of continuity over time, the basis and sign of personal or collective identity, depends on memory. On the other hand, he explores the central place of memory in doing justice: Justice requires "a subject of attribution" who can take responsibility or be held accountable for conduct over time, who also can remember injury and demand redress. But investment in the past and memory of injustice, Booth shows, also run against the grain of core elements in democratic life. Partly, emphasis on the constitutive weight of the past seems in tension with democratic norms deriving identity from will or consent, not inheritance or descent. Partly, any "thick" collective identity, forged by a *particularizing* past, seems in tension with democratic aspirations to universality, and with the globalizing reality of pluralized and hybridized attachment. Moreover, efforts to redress past injustices seem impossible to separate from resentment, binding people to the past and its wounds. Booth's book is important, then, because it eloquently explores the necessity and value—but also the costs and dangers—of memory and identity in politics, especially around the issue of justice. The book is profound because it evocatively dramatizes tensions it does not resolve.

Booth situates his work between two ideal-typical alternatives. In one, "identity is rooted in some (usually nonpolitical) notion of autochthony and shared traits (ethnicity, culture, language) and territory. Such an identity easily absorbs the long duration of a community's existence," but erects "very high barriers to admission, and is typically exclusionary in its conception and practice of belonging." In contrast to ethnic nationalism or a "thick" identity politics, he depicts a "hyper-liberal belonging in which the only morally relevant form of sharing is a roster of rights, universal in scope and thus available, at least in principle, to every human *as* human." This view not only finds "blood and soil" types of identity "meaningless and repugnant" but also suspects any "embedded identity markers other than those derived from a table of rights" (p. 55).

In his analysis of what he calls "memory-identity," Booth thus enters debates about identity politics. In his view, "while the recent period has witnessed a proliferation of memory work and its kindred identity politics, it remains broadly true that modernity, and liberal modernity in particular, is suspicious of the social role of memory" (p. 165). Critics of memory-identity bespeak a liberal modernity whose deep commitment is "to unseat the past, and memory as its bearer," as "the fountainhead of legitimacy" for the sake of "chosen, elective, or contractual political community" governed "by reasons and not memory or tradition"(p. 169). The problem with substantialized identity is that "the fated, often almost involuntary character of the presence of the past" seems antithetical to freedom, and the "deeply particularizing" character of memory seems to jeopardize aspirations to universality. But by emphasizing willful choice and universality, liberalism devalues attachment to specific places and to concrete rather than

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generalized others. The result is a "rootless and memory-less" present and political communities unable to address past injustice (pp. 55–56).

In "constitutional patriotism," Booth finds a "middle path" between these two alternatives, a political conception that at once allows and dramatizes the "friction" and "perplexities" that "arise as the boundaries of memory, the particularizing presence of the past, and its attendant ethics encounter the universalist, open aspirations of a functioning liberal democratic society" (p. 58). Indeed, the "fundamental ambiguities" of "continuity and responsibility" in politics are not so much theorized as enacted by Jürgen Habermas (p. 58). Habermas rejects the identity politics of German nationalism because political liberty and modern diversity depend on endorsing what Booth calls "a constitutional-patriotic pattern of identity and belonging" based on individual rights and universalist norms. Booth claims that rather than "jettison the past in the name of a secure post-national political identity," Habermas embraces memory of the past "in the face of the amnesiac seductions of the 'normalizers' of German history, to underscore that it is ours, something for which we are responsible and no one else." In Booth's words, Habermas insists "on the burden of the past, and on the imprescriptible nature of the Holocaust within it" as a constitutive legacy "to be sheltered from the erosion of time, forgetting, and normalization" (pp. 60–62).

Partly, Booth seeks our acknowledgment of the constitutive power of the past beneath any form of subjectivity. Partly, he shows how "memory" is an inescapably reconstructive and creative—political—practice, but he also shows the haunting power of the history that memory bespeaks or ignores, and not only reworks. Partly, he values the "enduringness" without which identity is impossible, but he values identity especially for the sake of political accountability. He seeks not only a tragic and a genealogical but also a "moral" approach to the past. He means moral not in a Kantian sense that binds guilt to authorship but in Hannah Arendt's sense of "collective responsibility."

Booth repeatedly invokes Nazi genocide, American slavery, and political repression to justify the necessity of sustaining national subjects that can claim a past and take responsibility for it. He sees danger in constituting nations as subjects: "the political memory-identity of a nation-state tends to 'nationalize' collective memory and banish the group memories of minorities, immigrants, and the powerless generally" (p. 175). But "insurgent politics of memory-identity" can "disrupt a unitary, all-absorbing official story of the past," whether "to restore a collective memory suppressed under dictatorship" or "insist on the plurality of memory groups as against a homogenizing national narrative" (p. 176). Booth values "the flourishing of memory and narrative writing in formerly marginal groups" and "the recasting of national narratives in the wake of large-scale immigration" (p. 176). Still, he invests in the "memory-identity" of national political communities because political accountability depends on it.

Booth urgently and passionately voices the injustices suffered by those Toni Morrison calls "the dis-remembered and unaccounted for." He values memory to bear witness to their experience, and to foster their formation as subjects who demand that injustice be acknowledged, not disavowed—but by whom? By communities complicit in their subjugation or annihilation. For "communities exist in time and are responsible in time," and "our" membership in them is largely unchosen, a fatality (p. 181). Choice appears only in how "we" understand and rework such inherited attachments, and in how "we" understand their history and do justice to it: "Whether the issue is the Holocaust, the truth about Bloody Sunday, an apology to Japanese Americans interned during World War II, reparations for slavery, the fate of the personnel of the former apartheid regime in South Africa, or the leaders of the dirty war in Argentina . . . democracies old and new have a choice with respect to how to assume responsibility for their past" (p. 182). For Booth, then, freedom rests in "whether and how we bear witness to the past which is ours."

This "our" remains the central term—and problem—in his reading of memory, identity, and justice. At issue is positioning: He voices the injustice suffered by others, but they make claims on "us," claims that "we" need to acknowledge by virtue of our (enfranchised) membership in a community that can be held responsible. Staging the tension between amnesia and amnesty in terms of a regime coming to terms with the past and people it disavows, he speaks acutely to white Americans generally, or to immigrants who say that they did not enslave anyone! But he does not address as well dilemmas of continuity and responsibility in subaltern (and immigrant) struggles over the need to forget and the need to remember, and over whether to orient by each other as a community, rather than by the regime that disavows them. At the same time, his account of memory makes this subaltern "we" too centered and particularized, whereas memory-identity could be hybrid, fractured, and unstable if it re-members the other within, the strange(r) at home, the foreign in the native. Booth means to de-center national identity by bringing the memories of the excluded to bear on it, but his account leaves them undisturbed by difference within, and by their implication with those from whom they only seem to stand apart.

In sum, I would complicate how he relates (subordinated) parts to (enfranchised) wholes, and how he conceives parts as wholes. Still, he is surely correct that justice requires communities to act as subjects of attribution who take responsibility for past and future, even as the injustices entailed by their formation also require voice and redress. Anyone who thinks about race in American history, about nationalism, counternationalism, and diasporic

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identity, or about the politics in coming to terms with any past, will recognize the dilemmas that his book both eloquently analyzes and inescapably embodies. In both regards, it really matters.

Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire. By Wendy Brown. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006. 282p. $29.95.
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— Alfonso J. Damico, *University of Iowa*

Globalization, population migration, multiculturalism, identity politics, 9/11, and the war on terror—if one thinks of tolerance as an art for reconciling differences, then the need for it would seem to be greater than ever. However, tolerance, as T. M. Scanlon argues (*The Difficulty of Tolerance,* 2003), is never easy. At the very least, it means acknowledging that other people whom I dislike are entitled to the same legal protections as I am and should be equally free to decide how to live their lives. Asking me to avert my eyes or look away from those beliefs and ways of life that I find repugnant may mean that tolerance comes close to being an "impossible virtue" (Bernard Williams, "Toleration: An Impossible Virtue?" in David Heyd, ed., *Toleration: An Elusive Virtue,* 1996), but the alternative—intolerance—seems a nonstarter. So for many of us the choice between tolerance and intolerance seems easy. Indeed, many liberals assume that tolerance is a defining feature of any decent society.

Wendy Brown has written a smart, edgy, and provocative book that challenges almost every one of the preceding observations. *Regulating Aversion* opens with an indictment of tolerance as part of a complicated matrix of discourses that "articulate identity and difference, belonging and marginality, and civilization and barbarism" in ways that invariably serve "hegemonic social or political powers" (p. 10). Asking people to tolerate their differences, she clearly suggests, is much easier than confronting the question of how and why some identities are produced and marked as needing to be tolerated. Too often the effect is to substitute tolerance for equality in ways that transform a "justice project" into "sensitivity training," a failing that she argues is especially egregious in the exhibits and programs housed in the Simon Wiesenthal Museum of Tolerance. Even though Brown is ready to grant that tolerance is better than intolerance, she has plenty of tough arguments about the ways in which tolerance discourse generates its own intolerant outlook. *Regulating Aversion* does not argue that less tolerance would make for a more decent society; however, it does argue that liberals are wrong to imagine that *more* tolerance always does so.

Brown is highly effective at asking obvious questions to which our first reaction is to notice that there is no obvious answer. For example, she asks why "popular political discourse treats heterosexual women as candidates for equality, while lesbian women are candidates for tolerance" (p. 75). In an interesting analysis of the byplay between tolerance and wider cultural norms, Brown highlights the extent to which heterosexual women can be incorporated into the public sphere as equals without disturbing the hegemony of the norms operative in the family and the economy that secure male advantages. In contrast, the recognition of lesbian women as equals would force a confrontation with those ruling norms. Tolerance avoids the confrontation. (One is reminded of the military policy of "don't ask, don't tell.") Brown argues that this pattern repeats itself over and over. Political and civic tolerance is thought to matter most "when a group difference that poses a challenge to the definition of binding features of the whole must be incorporated but must also be sustained as a difference: regulated, managed, controlled" (p. 71). Tolerance then effectively forestalls any historical, political, or other analysis of how the very identities that are in need of management were produced in the first place. "When heterosexuals are urged to tolerate homosexuals, when schoolchildren are instructed to tolerate another's race or ethnicity, the powers producing these 'differences,' marking them as significant and organizing them as sites of inequality, exclusion, deviance, or marginalization, are ideologically vanquished" (pp. 89–90).

Brown's most disquieting and likely inflammatory argument comes in the last half of her book where quotations from President Bush are frequently paired with others from leading liberal political theorists. Tolerance discourse and liberalism more generally, she charges, are implicated in some of the government's worst behavior in the war on terror. All too briefly and crudely put, the argument runs as follows: As a "civilizational discourse," tolerance rests upon a Lockean-Kantian-Rawlsian image of individuals as rational, individuated, and autonomous. This liberal self creates its opposing Other in the form of those whose religion or culture trumps their individuality, making them incapable of rationality or autonomy. This naturalizing of difference encourages the belief that given *who they are* they are intolerable. "Tolerance in a liberal idiom . . . does not merely serve as the *sign* of the civilized and the free: it configures the *right* of the civilized against a barbaric opposite that is both internally oppressive and externally dangerous, neither tolerant nor tolerable" (p. 204). Though I am inclined to see President Bush's more lawless actions as expressions of naked nationalism punctuated by hypocrisy, Brown here cashes out the value of tolerance as the "coin of liberal imperialism" (p. 204).

It has been over 40 years since Herbert Marcuse similarly argued that tolerance *is* repression and that true freedom requires intolerance of freedom's enemies ("Repressive Tolerance," in Robert Paul Wolff, Barrington Moore, Jr., and Herbert Marcuse, *A Critique of Pure Tolerance,* 1965). Brown acknowledges Marcuse's essay but does not discuss whether or how much it informs her own work. It does

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