theories and methodologies

The Tragic Vision in Postcolonial Time

DAVID SCOTT

But they stride to their fierce disasters in the grip of truths more intense than knowledge.

—George Steiner

[I]

I HAVE BEEN ARGUING, OVER SOME YEARS, THAT THINKING ABOUT THE POSTCOLONIAL CONDITION IN RELATION TO TRAGEDY OR, RATHER, through a critical perspective informed by the idea of the tragic is especially useful in a historical conjuncture in which the triumphalist narratives of national liberation, anti-imperialism, and socialism have become exhausted, if not extinct (Scott, *Conscripts* and *Omens*). Romance, it seems to me, is the predominant mode of emplotment of the anticolonial and radical postcolonial imaginaries. This is because the salient questions animating the critique of the colonial past have turned, understandably enough, on the identification of the disabling repressive harms of colonial power and the construction of the justificatory narrative of resistance that, at length, overcomes the perceived obstacles to a postcolonial state without these sources of (moral, political, cultural, economic) dissatisfaction. These are narratives of longing and vindication that link past, present, and future in a steady rhythm of progressive (sometimes righteously exultant) redemption. But what if the futures anticipated in this story form come to be fundamentally thrown into doubt so that they lose the self-evidence that so long sustained them as an effective horizon of political desire and political action? What if the futures anticipated by the past are now themselves a part of the past?[1] I have been arguing that, as a consequence of the collapse of the great social and political hopes that went into the anticolonial imagining and postcolonial making of national sovereignties, we do indeed inhabit a postcolonial present marked by such an irreversible transformation. I have been arguing that the problem about the former colonial worlds for the present is not the superficial one of finding better answers to existing questions but the more fundamental one of altering the questions concerning the relation

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PMLA 129.4 (2014), published by the Modern Language Association of America

https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2014.129.4.799 Published online by Cambridge University Press

between past and present that have organized our expectations of possible futures.

To my mind it is in this emerging problem-space, in which old certainties have become repeatable platitudes, in which old answers have congealed into clichés supporting normative doctrines and powers, that a tragic perspective acquires suggestive revisionary potential as a way of counteracting the drives embodied in progressivist accounts of the past in the present. A tragic perspective aims to offer, among other things, a strong doubt about teleologies of history in which heroic subjects of rational self-determination and committed resolve realize their moral and political destinies, and it does so in part by urging an attunement to the contingencies that can afflict human action in time and therefore a sensitivity to the constraints of human finitude, the pervasive, ineliminable proximity of collision and failure, of catastrophe and death. In the tragic we are given a picture of human undertakings that end in irreparable misery and colossal suffering, not because this is all that human life amounts to but because there is a keen moral insight concerning our limits and our excellences to be had in starting off with the recognition that well-intended human purposes often have unintended consequences, are never invulnerable to chance, and are sometimes undermined by forces (from within or without) over which we have little conscious control.

In this essay I offer, in an admittedly compressed way, one approach to thinking about the question of colonialism and postcolonialism with and through a sensibility for the tragic. It will be clear, I hope, that my aim here is not to be comprehensive or systematic. Indeed, it may even be suggested that the thought of the tragic does not easily or productively lend itself to consoling comprehensiveness or to guarantees of systematicity but permits only tentative, exploratory, and provisional reflections—*intimations*, perhaps, more than assurances.

[II]

In his 1955 lecture "The Future of Tragedy," Albert Camus asks whether modern tragedy is possible. What are the historical conditions in which great tragic art has appeared in the world? And will some such conditions reappear in the present so as to reanimate this exalted dramatic form? These are profound and (in variously inflected articulations) often recurrent questions—they hover around Georg Lukács's early essay "The Metaphysics of Tragedy," George Steiner made a great deal of them in his stern book *The Death of Tragedy*, Lucien Goldmann certainly worried about them in *The Hidden God*, and Raymond Williams offered his own militant response in *Modern Tragedy*. These are questions freighted with anguish, with doubt, and—not least, from my perspective—with *conceit*. For essentially they are questions that repeat, with wearisome unreflexiveness, a familiar story about the unique sources and character of Western civilization and the place in it of a literary genre that has seemed rare and precious, that penetrates to the very heart of the human condition. Be that as it may, I want to make use of Camus's essay as a way into my topic on the pertinence of tragedy for a criticism of the postcolonial present. I am not interested in whether authentic tragedies can now be written (the question that motivated the playwright in Camus). Nor am I interested in the wider question to which this is tacitly connected—namely, whether tragedy is a universal or a culturally specific dramatic form. Thus, I won't, for example, be concerned with the identification of the difference that might be said to constitute *postcolonial* tragedies.[2] I can see, of course, the virtue of preoccupations such as these, which turn on an Aristotelian focus on the poetics of tragedy, but what interests me here is the more Hegelian concern with the tragic as a dimension of human experience and therefore as a perspective from which to think crit-

https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2014.129.4.799 Published online by Cambridge University Press

ically about human action, especially conflict in human action (Szondi).[3]

Indeed, Camus's reflections form a useful starting point because they are (however implicitly) structured precisely by this Hegelian theme of tragic conflict. At least two dimensions of the problem of conflict are at work here. The first concerns the sense in which a tragic sensibility or tragic vision appears preeminently in moments of collision of incommensurable historical forces—when, as Hamlet put it in his anguished cry, "the time is out of joint." Not surprisingly, Camus sees this process in purely conventional terms, as the clash between forces of "glory" and "menace" in the evolution of European civilization. In this well-worn story, there are two cataclysmic turning points in the production of authentic tragedy: the ancient Greece of Aeschylus and, above all, Sophocles and the early modern Europe of Shakespeare and Racine. After the latter, alas, genuine tragedies seem to vanish from the world. What Camus finds distinctive about these periods of transformation is that they are partial and paradoxical rather than comprehensive and consistent. An old way has come to an end, but a new way has not yet fully formed itself or succeeded in becoming completely hegemonic. A tragic vision, then, is preeminently a product of historical periods of *interregnum*.[4] For Camus, needless to say, the whole point of his exercise was to suggest that perhaps his own conjuncture, marked by the catastrophe of the European war of 1939–45, might be another period of the kind of rupturing change that could inspire the reemergence of tragedy—and indeed his own work (*Caligula*, for instance) could well be offered in evidence.[5] Perhaps, but just as pertinently one could consider not only what Europe had done to itself but also what it had done world-historically to others. Thus, in my view, the making and unmaking of modern colonial worlds are exemplary of moments of great historical rupture when old social and political formations and their corresponding frameworks of value are being discordantly displaced by new ones. Certainly, the restructuring of the lives of non-European peoples by modern colonial power, as well as the partial destruction of the contexts of old sensibilities, values, and ways of life and their partial replacement with new authoritative ones, produced conditions in which colonized subjects were obliged to inhabit contradictory social locations and incommensurable cultural identities that pulled them in discrepant and self-alienating directions (Scott, *Conscripts*). I would also suggest, moreover, that the historical event of decolonization (unfolding right before Camus's eyes) was yet another moment of violent collision of opposing forces (colonialism and nationalism) in which horizons of expectation and idioms and frameworks of experience were often tragically at odds with each other—producing exactly the kinds of conjuncture that Camus describes, in which "man, consciously or not, frees himself from an older form of civilization and finds that he has broken away from it without finding a new form that satisfies him" ("Future" 298). Thus, far from being a period of seamless succession or transition, decolonization might well be thought of as a disorienting, inconclusive moment of rupture especially conducive to tragic consciousness.

The second aspect of the Hegelian theme of conflict concerns less the historicity of social transformations than the temporality of human actions. Interesting here is that Camus can see that tragedy involves a distinctive kind of conflict, one that distinguishes it from melodrama, for example. Whereas in melodrama, he says, only one of the contending forces has validity, in tragedy the forces confronting each other are equally legitimate, equally justified. (Clearly Camus has in mind here Hegel's famous argument in *Phenomenology of Spirit* and *Lectures on Aesthetics* concerning Sophocles's *Antigone*: what brought about the tragic suffering in the collision between Creon and Antigone was

https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2014.129.4.799 Published online by Cambridge University Press

that *both* had right on their side.) What Camus does not emphasize, however, is another dimension of Hegel's conception of tragic conflict: its constitutive relation to *action*. It is action that generates conflict; without action there is no conflict. As the great Hegelian critic A. C. Bradley underlined, conflict is an inevitable consequence of the contingency and plurality and instability of human action: though we may, with the best intentions, determined will, and clear-sighted reason, initiate a course of action, we can never be fully in control of its outcomes or consequences (*Shakespearean Tragedy* and "Hegel's Theory"). For Bradley this was a simple tragic fact.[6] In a historical conjuncture such as ours, marked by the exhaustion or collapse of the narratives of emancipation that framed the postcolonial project, an attunement to this register of the Hegelian theme of conflict in human action is particularly salutary. This is because such a perspective can help, from one side, to unsettle our confidence in that consoling image of human agency as self-sufficient and self-determining and, from the other, to give pause to our inclination to see ourselves as merely determined by forces larger than ourselves. From a tragic perspective we are both authors and authored, but it is never self-evident when we are more one than the other.

[III]

With such considerations of the idea of tragic conflict in view, one might reread the great historical moment of decolonization, the supposed transition from colonial subjection to postcolonial political sovereignty, in a way more attuned to finitude and catastrophe, to forms of human action not mapped as a progressive and steadily rising curve that, however thwarted the journey, is assuredly heading beyond the gloom and misery of the colonial past.

Let us take Orlando Patterson's first novel, *The Children of Sisyphus*, and consider briefly aspects of what I would like to think of as its tragic vision. Often criticized for what appears to be its bleak, even disabling, pessimism, this novel is to my mind a generative literary site where postcolonial themes (concerning, for example, the ambitions and ambiguities of political sovereignty and national identity and belonging) and tragic themes (concerning action and conflict and finitude and catastrophe) come together in an especially poignant and illuminating way.[7] *The Children of Sisyphus* was published in 1964 and is set in the first years of Jamaica's political independence from Britain (gained in August 1962). The country had been a British colony for 307 years, 183 of them as a plantation slave colony of extreme dehumanizing brutality. This whole catastrophic historical experience is inscribed (implicitly and explicitly) in the fictive texture of the novel, in the "social realism" through which the mocking presence of the past is made to haunt its sense of dire hopelessness.[8] Thus, to begin with, *The Children of Sisyphus* has to be read as a meditation on—and a meditation through—the political but also moral-psychological transition in 1962 of Jamaica from colony to sovereign nationhood. The novel is burdened by this moment, when the old context of colonial values has been formally abandoned but the new order of promised postcolonial emancipation has yet to be inaugurated—and may in fact have already been betrayed by the new (neocolonial) powers. If the ideological conceit of the nationalist rhetoric of decolonization was that the coming dispensation of sovereignty would overcome the harms and ill effects of colonial power, redeem the suffering of the colonized, and open before them a bright horizon of personal and political possibility, *The Children of Sisyphus* raises fundamental questions about the narrative of progressive temporality that undergirds and drives this expectation. It asks us to give up the comforting assumption that self-realization is guaranteed by the rational agency and moral commitment of the new

https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2014.129.4.799 Published online by Cambridge University Press

postcolonial subject, or that an existential space of belonging is guaranteed by the new postcolonial state.

In this way, notably, *The Children of Sisyphus* significantly distances itself from the sentimental populism of Roger Mais's *Brother Man*, a novel, by contrast, much idealized by cultural nationalists of rival perspectives.[9] Mais's novel was published a decade earlier than Patterson's—in 1954, as the nationalist movement sought to assemble the literary and cultural idiom by which to orient the nation to come—and thematically portrays a similar urban landscape of social and economic deprivation, but the two novels diverge in their modes of emplotment and in the generic energies that drive them. Where in *Brother Man* the protagonist passes through the flame of persecution and victimization to find, in the end, a redemptive compensation, the radiant (perhaps quasi-Christian) prospect of repair and justice, in *The Children of Sisyphus* we are invited to engage the bitter possibility that human action cannot be shielded entirely from collisions and their consequences by an ideological horizon of longing for harmonious concordance. We are obliged to bear witness to occasions on which, once initiated, the action cannot be reversed, undone. The longed-for salvation will not come. As George Steiner puts it grimly, Oedipus does not get his eyes back (8).

Now, in an obvious way Patterson's novel is inspired by Camus's literary-philosophical essay *The Myth of Sisyphus*. Memorably, within the singular economy of this profound little work Camus describes the landscape of a form of human experience in which the desire for clarity and meaning is confronted with the mocking, unreasonable silence of the world. For him the dissonant gap that opens between the questing, questioning heart and the world's eloquent indifference registers the experience of the *absurd*. There follows, for Camus, ultimate questions about human existence: not merely how to judge the value of this or that life but whether life as such has value and, if not, what to do with it. In one direction lies hope, the beleaguered determination to live in spite of the absurd; in another direction lies suicide, the final decision, however it is made, that life is not worth the effort. Thus, in Camus's thought the theme of anticipation is essential. What can one hope for? This is the question at the center of his essay. Is it possible to live without appeal, to refuse hope? And this is the theme that saturates Patterson's novel. But it is not always remembered that for Camus there is a special relation between the absurd and the *tragic*. This relation inheres, he suggests, in the moment of *awakening* consciousness when Sisyphus, having reached the summit of the hill and released his burdensome boulder, turns to make his way back down in order to start over again. In this temporal transition, Camus suggests, lies the calm clarity of Sisyphus's dawning knowledge of his finitude and fate: not only have the consequences of his past actions borne irreversible fruit, but he is also unavoidably *aware* of it. He now knows that the price has been paid and that no appeal can alter the outcome, which must simply be endured—*suffered*. As Camus writes, "From the moment [Sisyphus] knows, his tragedy begins" (109). This moment of tragic self-consciousness of the absurd is what haunts Patterson's novel.

In *The Children of Sisyphus*, Patterson explores the relation between the absurd and the tragic through two contrasting but equally compelling characters—Brother Solomon, a Rastafarian, and Dinah, a prostitute—who inhabit the absolute margins of postcolonial Jamaica, a place called Dungle, a garbage dump on the (literal and metaphoric) edge of urban Kingston. These characters are to be read as *emblematic*, not merely realistic or sociological. They are allegorical figurations of dread and extremity, of abandonment and catastrophe. Brother Solomon and Dinah are not normative *citizens* of the new nation, in

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any conceivable sense of that term. They do not inhabit—much less represent—its will or its promise. They are, rather, its embodied *negations*, its barely remembered refuse, the new nation's internal others. In a pronounced way, in other words, Brother Solomon and Dinah are compressed figurations of abject, estranged, and humiliated life, visible traces or remainders of a past that persists in the present—a past that refuses to become the past.

Brother Solomon is an evidently complicated man, an organic intellectual from lowly origins who comes to Rastafari by way of a traumatic relation to Anglican Christianity (an institution historically associated in Jamaica with white supremacy and complicity with the violence of the colonial state). This trauma takes the sexual form of a humiliating seduction by the idealized white (mothering) wife of the white parson in whose household he was raised—in a menial position, undoubtedly. And in the violence of this encounter, in which are played out his racialized desire and revulsion, his domination as well as his shame and subjection, he loses his ability to believe in the god of the Church of England but gains at the same time a shuddering glimpse into the eloquent void of the absurd—into the abject futility of the existence of his fellow poor and black Jamaicans. Like his Rastafarian brethren in Dungle, Brother Solomon has a "humiliated" consciousness (Camus, *Myth* 24), but while they live in perpetual anticipation of the redeeming hand of almighty God, Jah Rastafari (who has promised to release them from their suffering and oppression), *he* aims to embrace the logic of the absurd and to live "without appeal." His moral-psychological insight (into human experience generally, but Rastafarian eschatology specifically) is that fulfillment is always ephemeral, whereas anticipation is a permanent condition. But this insight is paid for with the ambiguous coin of *pride*. Brother Solomon conceives a perverse plan to deceive his Rastafarian brethren into believing that he has been vouchsafed information that the day of their deliverance (their long-awaited repatriation to Ethiopia) is near, so as to offer them one concentrated experience of *absolute* anticipation, one paroxysm of undiluted expectation of final release from their historical suffering, their Babylonian bondage. It is a sly cheat. But it is also perhaps a tragic gift, a wickedly poisoned balm with which to anoint their unhealing moral-psychological wounds. For Brother Solomon knows that his Rastafarian brethren, their luminously blank faces turned expectantly toward the sea's empty horizon, are unable to recognize the absurdity of their situation; they are doomed to mere *repetition*. This, indeed, is their beauty, but also their poverty. Still, for Brother Solomon the accomplishment of his dark trick is at the same time the moment of the exposure of his fraud, and therefore the moment of his fall. It is the end of the line. His tragic consciousness of the absurd condition of Rastafarian suffering has driven him into an impasse from which, in his vanity and hubris, he has only one escape: suicide.

In contrast with Brother Solomon, Dinah comes late to a tragic consciousness of the absurdity of her abject condition, too late to be saved from the crushing force of her action's implications. Unlike Brother Solomon, Dinah is no organic intellectual, but she too has lived in permanent anticipation of release from her worldly burdens, and she will wager everything she is, she knows, she has to throw them off. Dinah is a prostitute whose life has been one of hardship and humiliation, and though she now lives with a respected Rastafarian fisherman, Cyrus, this is not enough for her dignity—or pride. Her longing and her ambition are to escape Dungle *altogether* and to rise completely above her social and economic circumstances. A wise old woman, recognizing in Dinah a familiar overreaching haughtiness, warns her that there is in fact *no* escape from Dungle and that those who dare to defy their fate by trying to leave will inevitably return to die where they started. But Di-

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nah is single-mindedly determined to cheat this unreasonable fate. One after another, she seizes every narrow opportunity presented to her to improve her dismal lot, including, at length, the barely conceivable opportunity to leave Jamaica entirely for the Queen's England, the pinnacle of colonial desire. But here, alas, the Sisyphean rock has arrived at its summit and is about to begin its unaided journey back down the hill. Up to this point, a series of ominous collisions mark Dinah's surprising rise, principally with women who, envious of her ambition and (to them) unjustified success, are bent on her destruction. But Dinah's strong personality is also characterized by a certain will to *self*-destruction. If she is haunted by the suspicion that she is being pulled back to Dungle by the evil machinations of people who wish her ill, she is also anguished by her own sense of inadequacy, by a doubt about the fragility of her social position, and by a resented and undermining fear of exposure of her social origins. Nonetheless, however assailed by moments of uncertainty, Dinah has her eyes resolutely fixed on the only horizon that matters to her. She cannot see the forest for the trees—until it is too late, when her doom is already sealed by the final collision. On the eve of her triumphant departure from Jamaica, she is framed for the murder of her new lover and savior, Shepherd, and set upon by a murderous crowd who see her as a cunning intruder come to deprive them of their leader. Beaten half to death, Dinah escapes and flees back to Dungle, her unhomely home—the only place she knows, she is, she has—to die in the arms of her abandoned but loyal Rastaman, Cyrus.

Whether this is *literature* (and how that is to be determined) I am unwilling to comment. But on my reading these two fictive lives have an *ethical-political* import. Brother Solomon and Dinah are tragic figures navigating the barely supportable landscape of early postcolonial Jamaica. The novel's depiction of their tragic consciousness of the absurdity of their inhuman condition is luminously instructive for the dead end of our postcolonial present, a present denuded of emancipationist energies. For it does not show them as heroic figures acting out a normative progressive script of subaltern resistance and overcoming but instead focuses our attention on the tragic facticity of their finitude. It shows them acting with rational self-determination, of course, but also as capriciously driven by inner demons—acting with calculated self-interest but also afflicted by self-division and a wanton will to self-mutilation. We see them not as potential agents of postcolonial identity and belonging but as *outcasts* of the new postcolonial state with no hope of inclusion—not as potential creators of a new world of sovereign possibilities but as historical subjects repeatedly overwhelmed by a world shockingly indifferent to their plight, to the pervasive debasement of their basic humanity, a world blind and deaf to their simplest appeals. *The Children of Sisyphus* is, I think, a kind of fictive exemplification of M. G. Smith's tragic anthropology of social-cultural pluralism.[10] Unlike some of his near contemporaries—Kamau Brathwaite, for example—who read the postcolonial condition as allowing subaltern cultural agency the possibility of overcoming the debilitating legacies of colonialism, Smith offers a darker, more somber vision of the intractable powers by which such agency is sometimes constrained, thwarted, subverted.[11] As in the historical picture of colonial and postcolonial Jamaica constructed in this anthropology, the fictive world of Patterson's "realist" novel is structured as a relatively closed and static totality of antagonistic and mutually unintelligible social-cultural sections tenuously held together less by any will to civic engagement or shared system of values than by the sheer cynicism of interpersonal relations and the coercive violence of the state. The world of the novel is, in effect, a structure of anomic, Sisyphean repetition, a world of endemic conflict in which the

https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2014.129.4.799 Published online by Cambridge University Press

meagerness of meaning and the poverty of economic resources strip social and psychological life down to the real and metaphoric bone and so leave human action especially exposed to the vagaries of irreversible contingency and vulnerable to the unpredictable machinations of moral evil. In such a world it is scarcely possible *not* to choose badly, no matter what the context of choice. To my mind, certainly on looking back from the aftermaths of their disasters, neither the liberal-nationalist narrative of social cohesion nor the revolutionary narrative of class emancipation captures adequately the paradoxes of promise and betrayal, expectation and dissolution, that distort the nightmare postcolonial world with which Brother Solomon and Dinah sought—and *failed*—to cope.

[IV]

To sum up, my argument about the pertinence of the tragic for thinking about, and thinking through, the aftermaths of colonialism turns in part on a certain picture of the postcolonial present—a picture of the exhaustion or dead end of the old emancipationist stories (nationalist ones, socialist ones) driven by longing for the total overcoming of the past. Therefore, the question of the tragic for criticism is clearly a *strategic* one; the aim is not to offer a new transcendental key with which to unlock some final postcolonial truth but to revise the questions about the present in the light of the conventional answers by which we have hitherto been defined, *conscripted*. There is, in other words, no aspiration to merely valorize an ethos of tragedy. As a critical strategy, attention to the tragic is a provisional *wager* we make with hope against despair (as Lucien Goldmann might have said). It is a mode of attunement to dimensions of the temporality of human action often obscured in contemporary modes of investigation focused on the social construction of historical agency—in particular, the senses in which human action, in its plurality and contingency, is pervasively susceptible to conflict (between individuals, between individual and community, between form and life, between subject and object) and sometimes to unavoidable and irreversible collisions, which may have catastrophic effects. Moreover, a strategic attention to the tragic urges us to think about these features of human action especially in historical moments of flux or rupture or transformation when acting in the world is most exposed and therefore most vulnerable to factors beyond the realms of reason and will. The historical moment of decolonization is one such sea change worth rethinking precisely because it has, almost invariably, been cast as a watershed transitional event in a progressivist story of moral and political transformation—marking the official end of colonialism and the formal beginning of independent statehood. So much has been at stake in it as a turning point because in a certain problem-space the postcolonial nation-state, imagined as a redemptive home, has been an integral aspect of a world-historical answer to the moral-political question about the harms of colonialism. This answer may no longer be worth pursuing; indeed, the whole teleological historicity of transition from the evils of colonialism to the promised virtues of the sovereign nation-state it embodies may be not so much mistaken or wrong as exhausted, played out, in the sense that it no longer offers much critical energy for refiguring the renewal of futurities. And if this is so, if the nation-state can no longer be imagined as a moral-political horizon that shelters the varied—even rival—prospects for postcolonial freedoms, then what is at stake in the present in our readings of, say, the texts of decolonization might also be open to question and perhaps *revision*. So it may well be, on this account, that Orlando Patterson's *The Children of Sisyphus* is not a pessimistic or misanthropic novel of inescapable postcolonial misery (as the cultural nationalists imagine) but rather a fictive space of early

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postcoloniality that invites us to curtail or suspend the teleological drive long enough to explore the implications of our vulnerability to tragic collisions for revising our critical concerns about the past in the present.

Notes

1. For these formulations, I owe a debt to the work of White; Yack; and Koselleck.

2. Whether, e.g., Aimé Césaire's *Une saison au Congo* or Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* is a postcolonial tragedy is not my question. On postcolonial tragedies, see Reiss.

3. Hegel is undoubtedly a figure of immense if not uncontroversial importance for thinking about tragedy. Compare, e.g., Gellrich with George.

4. Marxist literary critics of Shakespeare have, of course, been interested in this aspect of early modern European tragedy (e.g., Kiernan; James).

5. Karl Jaspers, in *Tragedy Is Not Enough*, writing shortly before Camus but in the wake of the same event, offered a similar view of tragedy's relation to historical ruptures.

6. In ch. 1 of *Omens* (33–65) I suggest the connections between this view of action and tragedy and Hannah Arendt's in *The Human Condition*.

7. It is curious that there is relatively little critical literature on *The Children of Sisyphus*, in spite of its being one of the first postindependence novels by a Jamaican novelist and the winner of the fiction prize in the 1966 World Festival of Negro Arts in Dakar. One telling index of this neglect is the lack of an entry for Orlando Patterson and of significant discussion of any of his novels in the recent compendium edited by Bucknor and Donnell, *Routledge Companion to Anglophone Caribbean Literature*. See, however, work by Jones ("Orlando Patterson" and "Some French Influences"); McKenzie; and Francis. Part of the reason for the neglect, I suspect, is that Patterson's fiction did not conform to the literary models held in esteem by the "right" and "left" cultural-nationalist literary critics. Some of the former dismissed Patterson's fiction on literary grounds (e.g., Hearne, "Novel"); some of the latter dismissed it on cultural-political grounds (e.g., Brathwaite, "Timehri").

8. Indeed, this is hardly surprising since at the time of writing the novel Patterson was completing a doctoral thesis at the London School of Economics on the social-psychological effects of New World slavery on colonial Jamaica (*Sociology*). Patterson has since been associated with a catastrophist conception of the history of the Caribbean (and the African Americas generally [Scott, "Paradox"]).

9. Chief among the cultural-nationalist critics who established the place of *Brother Man* in the postcolonial imagination was Brathwaite ("Jazz"). And, again, for a sense of the paradoxical similarity of rival wings of literary-cultural nationalism, see also Hearne, "Roger Mais."

10. Partly my aim here, in calling Smith's anthropology "tragic," is to place his work in a dialogue with the tragic sociology of Georg Simmel. See Patterson, "Ras Tafari," for his social-psychological reading of Rastafari.

11. I am alluding here to the contrast between Smith's pluralism and Brathwaite's theory of "creolization." Brathwaite argued that the theory of pluralism neglected to see process and dynamism—and therefore the continuous possibility of change in Caribbean social and cultural structures (esp. *Contradictory Omens*).

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https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2014.129.4.799 Published online by Cambridge University Press