

To Fall from High or Low Estate?

Tragedy and Social Class in Historical Perspective

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In a famous essay, the agnostic Bertrand Russell hailed tragedy as the highest instantiation of human freedom. Tragedy results from human beings' persistence in the conscious imaginative representation of the plight of humanity within the inhumane universe. Tragedy 'builds its shining citadel in the very centre of the enemy's country, on the very summit of his highest mountain; within its walls the free life continues, while the legions of Death and Pain and Despair, and all the servile captains of tyrant Fate, afford the burghers of that dauntless city new spectacles of beauty.'" Here Russell's 'servile captains of tyrant Fate' are the instruments by which metaphysical compulsion tortures humans—Death and Pain and Despair. Man, instead of allowing himself to be terrorized as 'the slave of Fate', creates tragedy in order 'to preserve a mind free from the wanton tyranny that rules his outward life.' By transforming the human condition into tragic art, humans create their own world of resistance in which they can be the truly free 'burghers' of a dauntless new city-state of the mind.

Russell was hardly the first thinker to couch his thoughts on fate and tragic drama in the language of social class—of slaves, tyrants, burghers and freedom. Tragic destiny and social class have always, it seems, been intimate bedfellows. The ancient Greek word for metaphysical compulsion or necessity is *ananke*. *Ananke*, a feminine abstract noun often personified in poetry as a supernatural female, could mean the inescapable destiny which gods might inflict on mortals. Some poets said that even

the gods were subordinate to Ananke themselves: a primordial cosmic entity, she had appeared in the universe before the gods, simultaneously with Time. Cosmic Ananke symbolizes everything that neither humans nor gods have any power to change. The Aeschylean Prometheus, an immortal, laments that, against Ananke, every skill, technology, or stratagem (*techne*) is unavailing (*PV* 512). But Ananke has a transitive aspect. She can characterize the relationship between one agent and another. Ananke is often what the French call *force majeure*—it is what makes a superior power able, at will, to make an inferior one act or suffer with hope of resistance. This meant that *ananke*, or a word cognate with *ananke*, frequently denoted the power a tyrant or despot held over his subjects, or a superior officer over a common soldier. The ancient Greeks already imagined their relationship of humans to the unseen forces which run the universe as the equivalent of relationships between people of different rank and social class.

More specifically, cosmic Ananke was like a tyrannical slave owner with total power over her slaves. She had the right to coerce them into hard of labour and inflict torments upon them: *ananke* could denote the physical application of torture, violence, punishment, or mechanical force. It could also mean the capacity of physical pain or emotional distress to produce involuntary screams. The agonizing blows might come at any time, since tyrants act unpredictably and without rationales discernible to their victims; there is no possibility of resistance to their arbitrary whims. To articulate the deified Ananke's unknowability as well as her ferocity, the Corinthians built a sanctuary for her, which she shared with *Bia* (Violence), but which (most unusually) custom prohibited people from entering at all (Pausanias 2.4.7).

My own definition of tragic theatre is that it is a dramatized enactment of human suffering—physical or psychological—which enquires into the causes of that suffering.² Suffering is self-evidently a universal human experience and not confined to any one social class—indeed, we might *a priori* expect people lower down the social scale to be more at risk from certain kinds of suffering, such as hunger, persecution or lack of freedom. Tragic theatre today often portrays the suffering of people born working-class or financially distressed. Plays often identify, as a cause of their suffering, their exposure to an exploitative higher class, or to socio-economic pressures (decreed by Market Forces rather than cosmic Force), which they can no more evade than Oedipus the King could evade what Apollo had decreed. Yet tragedy was not so egalitarian in antiquity. Ancient tragic heroes and heroines never suffer because they are born to lower-class or impoverished parents.

In Euripides' *Trojan Women*, regarded in antiquity as one of the most emotionally affecting of all tragedies, the totality of the suffering caused by the Trojan War achieves dramatic crystallization in the violent death of a tiny child. Astyanax is torn from his mother Andromache's arms, cast by the Greeks from the walls of Troy, and prepared for burial by his grandmother Hecuba. The play enquires into the causes of the suffering it stages and makes its audience feel vicariously; several are proposed—Hecuba suggests Ananke, or Random Chance (*Tyche*); others consider the hatred of 'the gods' or a god (Zeus, Hera, Athena and Ares are all suggested); further candidates are Paris/Alexander, Helen of Troy and the Greeks' capacity for barbarism. That is, the three possible causes of the suffering which the audience is invited to consider are metaphysical forces quite beyond human control, individual human error, and human vice.

In Edward Bond's *Saved*, which was initially refused a licence for public enactment in 1965 because it was deemed so shocking, the totality of the suffering of the British working class achieves dramatic crystallization in the violent death of a tiny child. Pam leaves her baby in a park with some semi-delinquent young men who may include the baby's father; the men stone the baby to death. The play enquires into the causes of the suffering it both stages and makes its audience feel vicariously. Several different possible causes are proposed, including individual human error and human vice. But instead of cosmic Necessity or Zeus or 'The Gods', the chief cause of the baby's death is unequivocally identified as the social alienation and economic deprivation endured by the British working class. The human error (committed by Pam) and vice (practised by the gang led by Fred, the likely father) are direct expressions and results of the adults' sordid and boring life experience and concomitant absence of cooperative ethical values.

The tragic household in this play, the home of the middle-aged couple Harry and Mary, already has a dead child in its past. The psychological misery which the boy's death caused, it is implied, has driven Harry and Mary apart (they live side by side but hardly ever speak to one another). It has also contributed towards their daughter Pam's inability to bond with her own newborn illegitimate child. The implication is that she is suffering from undiagnosed postnatal depression—she takes mysterious medications and is often unwell—but nobody helps her with the daily drudgery of looking after the baby, who is often left to scream for hours on end.

The portrayal of working-class life, against the acoustic backdrop of the incessantly wailing infant, is unremittingly grim. The few characters in paid

employment resent their work, and the characters dependent upon them financially have no personal freedom to choose with whom they live. The gangmen clustered round the villainous anti-hero, Fred, spend their days hanging out in parks and cafes. Class hierarchies are never explicitly discussed, but their corrosive presence is expressed in dark asides (Pam handles the boat's rudder on the lake in the park 'like a duchess 'andles a navy's prick'). And the play portrays a world with no metaphysical consciousness whatsoever. Traditional religion is referenced just twice, and both times insultingly: in prison, says Fred, he urinated in the Padre's tea; the local pick-up joint where sex workers find clients is called the 'church'. Religion, *Saved* argues, is irrelevant to these lives. Bond himself stressed this in a discussion of the play.³

The influence on subsequent drama of the baby-stoning scene in *Saved* has been extensive. In socially committed tragic theatre and cinema, the death of a baby has become a preferred trope of authors desiring to reveal the depths to which human depravity can sink in the absence of a perceived purpose in life, of an adequate livelihood, or of a sense of being valued by the community: the horrific nadir of Danny Boyle's grim movie *Trainspotting* (1996), set amongst the lowlife of contemporary Edinburgh, is reached when the baby daughter of the heroin-addicted Allison dies of neglect.⁴ Darrell, the working-class lead of Neil LaBute's *The Distance from Here* (2002), stuns audiences into silence when he kills the already sick and neglected baby of his stepsister Shari, who is on benefits and can't afford a pediatrician. Although the influence of *Saved* on *The Distance from Here* is palpable, it is probably no coincidence that LaBute had previously written two plays about dead children inspired by Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis* and *Medea*, his *Iphigenia in Orem* and *Medea Redux*. Two of the three plays constituting his trilogy of one-act dramas *Bash: Latterday Plays*

(2001), they relocate the child-killing ancient aristocrats to the lower echelons of society. LaBute's filicidal Agamemnon (Eldard) is a Utah sales manager; his Medea is a blue-collar, Midwestern chain-smoker who has had a desultory affair with her teacher. Similarly, Frank McGuinness's searing monologue *The Match Box* (2012) is recounted by Sal, a working-class woman from Merseyside, who takes vengeance on the family responsible for the death of her child—a modern transposition to a working-class context of the myth dramatized by Euripides in his *Hecuba*.

The suffering and annihilation of a helpless small child, as Euripides knew well, is the most potent possible symbol of humankind's cosmic predicament. Neither Astyanax nor Pam's child, in the absence of an adult able or willing to protect him or her, can do anything to ward off harm. S/he cannot survive unless factors quite beyond his/her control allow it. The helplessness of the human infant is one of the reasons why the Sophoclean Oedipus has been such a perennial favourite of the tragic imagination: the play graphically reminds us that, even when a tiny baby, passed from hand to hand in Thebes, on Cithaeron, and in Corinth, he could do nothing either to annul the Delphic oracle which foretold his dire destiny, nor to ensure that he died on Cithaeron as his parents intended. Every human who suffers unfairly, and without another human to blame justifiably, relives Oedipus's experience as the doomed baby who, through no fault of his own, survived to suffer unspeakable distress. No wonder dead babies—whether in the womb, newborn, toddling or a few years old—have been so intimately bound up with the history of tragic heroes and heroines: consider Euripides' Medea, Shakespeare's Macbeths and Macduffs, or Goethe's Gretchen in *Faust Part I*.

Yet there is a crucial difference between Oedipus and Pam's baby in *Saved* or between Astyanax and Shari's newborn in *The Distance from Here*: it lies in their social class. Oedipus and Astyanax were the most important babies in the Trojan and Theban kingdoms respectively, born into their royal families. The proletarian babies of Pam and Shari, on the other hand, live briefly and die cruelly on almost the lowest rung of the class system—I say 'almost' because both Bond and LaBute carefully point out that as white children, the babies at least doesn't face the same racial prejudices, articulated by the adult white characters, as confront babies born to poor working-class parents of ethnic minorities.

In the mid-fourth century BC Aristotle surveyed the history of tragedy in order to prescribe how to write an effective example. He recommended that the tragic hero whose mistake brings about his reversal of fortune should be 'the sort of man who has great fame and prosperity, such as Oedipus and Thyestes and the distinguished men who come from that kind of family line' (*Poetics* 1453a 10-11). It took until 1731, and George Lillo's *The London Merchant; or, the History of George Barnwell*, for a tragedy to be composed with a bourgeois as opposed to royal or aristocratic protagonist; it took another century for a tragedy with a working-class hero to be written, Georg Büchner's *Woyzeck*, left incomplete at the time of Büchner's death in 1837. Franz Woyzeck is a soldier of the lowest rank, oppressed almost beyond endurance by his Captain, who beats him and makes him perform demeaning tasks. To earn enough money to survive, Woyzeck also hires himself out to a doctor, who conducts humiliating experiments on him, including requiring that he eats a diet consisting solely of peas. Woyzeck has always been unconventional (he has not married his lover Marie because he thinks it is 'natural' for men and women to be together) and prone

to asking philosophical questions. But he begins to experience strange terrors and visions. He achieves some kind of affirmation of his human autonomy only by savagely murdering Marie, the unfaithful mother of his little son. She has betrayed Woyzeck with a soldier of Officer rank—a Trumpet Major. Büchner shows how the tragic suffering of Woyzeck and Marie, and their small child, left orphaned at the conclusion, is inseparable from their poverty and low social status.⁵

Yet this astoundingly innovative work, by anticipating later sociological and philosophical ideas, appeared well before its time. It preceded by several decades the working-class protagonists of the path-breaking tragic novels by Zola (*Thérèse Raquin*, 1867; *Germinal*, 1885) and Hardy (*Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, 1891; *Jude the Obscure*, 1895). When Büchner was writing *Woyzeck*, Dickens still felt that the virtuous workhouse boy-hero of *Oliver Twist* (which began to be published serially in 1837) needed, ultimately, to be shown to have been born into the upper middle class. Nothing could contrast more with Büchner's searing dialogue between Woyzeck and his narrow-minded Captain on whether moral virtue is exclusive to people with money and bourgeois morality. *Woyzeck* was not published until 1879, six years after *Thérèse Raquin* had first been performed as a stage play; Büchner's masterpiece then languished, unappreciated, until its profound originality was discovered by socialist thinkers in the early 20th century.⁶ They were no doubt emboldened by such courageous attempts to write proletarian tragedies as Gerhart Hauptmann's *The Weavers* (1892), and indeed by Hauptmann's own stated admiration for Büchner's plays. But even Hauptmann's sympathetic portrayal of the Silesian weavers' doomed uprising stopped short of identifying an individual tragic hero amongst them: the

'protagonist' is the collective weaving class, which soon develops into a destructive mob.

Woyzeck, complete with its philosophizing soldier protagonist, finally achieved its first performance, directed by Max Reinhardt, in Munich in 1913. Thereafter, in tandem with the Russian revolution and the great Depression, working-class heroes and heroines began to appear more regularly in serious theatre of all kinds, not only in productions explicitly labelled 'tragedy'. Alban Berg's *Wozzeck* (1925) introduced opera audiences to Büchner's plebeian tragic hero, and Brecht peopled *Saint Joan of the Stockyards* (1931) with penniless meat-packing factory workers. By 1936, the 5th Earl of Listowel, an Anglo-Irish aristocrat who supported the British Labour Party (and later served as a Minister in the Labour Government under Clement Attlee), could write with approval about tragic drama:

...contemporary dramatists have swept aside the last of those artificial barriers that divide men up according to the size of their incomes or the purity of their pedigree, and quite regardless of their intrinsic value. The peasant tilling the soil, the skilled artisan in the workshop, even dwellers in the fetid slums or congested tenements of our drab industrial cities, have now been summoned, from the obscure corners where history would pass them by, to join the small but intrepid band of heroes that rouses anew the faith, the pity, the admiration, the exultant delight, of each successive generation of men.⁷

Although J.B. Priestley's searing indictment of the exploitation of the working class in *An Inspector Calls* failed to secure a British performance venue in 1946, and so premiered instead in the Soviet Union, working-class tragic heroes really came into their own in the west shortly afterwards. Two of the most memorable, and with the greatest stamina in the repertoire, were created at that time by Arthur Miller: Willy Loman in *Death of a Salesman* (1949) and Eddie Carbone in *A View from the Bridge* (1955). It therefore seems to me extraordinary that the addition of working-class heroes to the tragic repertoire (as so eloquently approved by the enlightened Earl of Listowel) has *still* not found universal acceptance. In the 21st century there are still critics and writers who prefer their tragic heroes to fall from high estate, and question whether the 'Tragic' and the Proletarian can ever be reconciled.

The British novelist Howard Jacobson, for example, recently described his quite different reactions to four men whom he encountered, all on the same day, on pavements in the centre of London. A vagrant begging for small change. A man whimpering in his sleep in a cardboard box. 'And there's a third, raging the length of Shaftesbury Avenue, looking like Poor Tom from King Lear, houseless and unfed, biding the pelting of the pitiless storm.' Jacobson wonders why he feels no compassion for this contemporary 'Poor Tom,' before describing a fourth man 'sitting in silent anguish in a doorway in Leicester Square...He isn't a refugee from the elements. He isn't unaccommodated man. From the cut of him you would say he has a comfortable house in Islington or even Hampstead. A publisher, maybe.' Jacobson asks himself whether he is so shocked at the sight of this well-to-do individual looking so sad 'only because his fall is temporary... Am I a grief snob?' And Jacobson continues to say that he is 'hardly the first to feel the poignancy of a man's fall from high estate to

low. However communitical we may be, Lear the king moves us more than Poor Tom the beggar.' Jacobson decides that the fourth man, who is well-dressed, must have had his heart romantically broken and that not 'all the poverty and suffering in the third or fourth or however many words can touch me as the story of tormented love touches me.'⁸

Not everyone, of course, would react to denizens of the London streets in the same way as Jacobson. Compassion stirs in different people for varying psychological reasons. Jacobson's own honesty about his 'grief snobbery', albeit refreshing, fails to explain it. Nor does his reference to Poor Tom clarify the class issue. Poor Tom in *King Lear* is the wholly aristocratic Edgar in disguise; the audience is well aware that in Act III scene 4 he temporarily *impersonates* a mad and destitute servant. For the comparison with Jacobson's street men to hold good, Shakespeare would have had to write a quite different role, in which an *actual* serving-class madman was put through similar betrayal by daughters as Lear, and awarded the same developed psychological subjectivity. Such a role is not inconceivable, but two more centuries elapsed before Büchner achieved it in *Woyzeck*. Jacobson might more fruitfully ask whether the suffering of the plebeian Woyzeck and Marie would move him less than the suffering of Othello, aristocratic general, and Desdemona, the daughter of a Venetian Senator. Büchner based his play, loosely, on the real-life tragedy of Johann Christian Woyzeck, a Leipzig wigmaker who in 1821 murdered the widow with whom he had been living, before being convicted and publicly executed. But several scenes are demonstrably informed by Shakespeare's archetypal tragedy of sexual jealousy.⁹

Aristotle's recommendations were one factor in the notable delay, between *Othello* and *Woyzeck*, in the entrance onto the western stage of plebeian tragic heroes. His account of the class profile of the tragic hero also retrospectively fits the evidence for classical tragedy as it had evolved before him and as it developed subsequently. In Greek and Roman tragedy, the principal characters—the ones whose sufferings make the play tragic—are invariably of the highest social class: they are members of royal families. One of the mutually defining generic differences between the earliest surviving tragedies and comedies is the social class of the leading characters. Just as Oliver Twist, despite spending his boyhood with the criminal under-class, is shown to have authentic middle-class blood, so the heroes and heroines whose suffering and even enslavement we watch in the plays of Aeschylus, Euripides and Sophocles, are by birth, without exception, members of royal households. But the leading characters in the plays of Aristophanes are almost all born into ordinary citizen families of Athens. They are not even from the upper sub-divisions within the citizen body, but relatively poor, and critical of the richer classes (Strepsiades in *Clouds*, Trygaeus in *Peace*, Praxagora in *Ecclesiazusae*). The distinction between 'noble' tragic heroes and the non-aristocratic peasants and burghers of comedy remained conventional throughout the history of performances in the Hellenistic and Imperial ancient theatre.

One objection still voiced against working-class heroes in tragedy is aesthetic; the voices and verbal registers of the ill-educated were until recently deemed inimical to the tragic effect. Today it seems incongruous how the factory girl Eva Smith (played by Jane Wenham), in the famous film of Priestley's *An Inspector Calls*, directed by Guy Hamilton (1954), speaks in accents as refined as her those of the Midlands industrialists who oppress her. It is as though the movie's audience could not fully

sympathise with her plight if she had spoken in the strong Birmingham accent possessed by real-life Evas. Fifty years later, George Steiner still described the ‘idiom’ or ‘idiolect’ particular to tragedy thus:

The resort to complex, meta-musical verse forms and a modified epic vocabulary in Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides is no technical accident or auxiliary. It is primary. The discourse of gods and furies, of sovereigns and heroes, is that of a grammar and cadence under extreme upward pressure. Its formal elevation, its prodigal economy, its metaphoric reach tell of a conflictual world, of an often fatal dialectic (dialogue) removed from the waste motions, from the hybrid tonalities, from the hit-and-miss unbending of the vulgate.

Steiner is incorrect about the idiom of classical Athenian tragedy, in which *all* characters, of whatever class, express themselves in the iambic metre. Aristotle said this verse form closely corresponded to everyday spoken Greek. In ancient tragedy there was no humble ‘vulgate’ prose reserved for rude mechanicals. But there *were* conventions by which the dramatists distinguished their royal characters’ voices from those of their subjects and slaves. With only one exception, slave characters do not sing lyrics; tragic choruses, composed of lower-ranking people, did not even sing in the same musical modes as the aristocratic heroes ([Aristotle], *Problems* 19.48).¹⁰ Other conventions distinguished slaves from free, including the (almost) invariable practice of not giving slaves individual names. Class differences were probably

indicated by differences in masking and costumes, too. But *why* was it a generic requirement that the suffering tragedy portrayed was undergone by individuals of high status?

One reason is that the ancients, like Jacobson, measured the degree of the suffering undergone by heroes as commensurate with the height from which they fell. Many tragic characters articulate this principle, especially when they lose aristocratic status and become slaves. This fate is regarded in the tragic universe as particularly hard to bear (see e.g. *Trojan Women* 302-3). But there is a distinction to be drawn here. The heartbreaking descriptions of life under slavery delivered by tragic characters virtually all relate to those once noble and free who have lost their freedom. This seems to have been regarded as more 'tragic' than to have been born into servitude.

Another factor is the pervasive ancient equation, despite the challenges raised by democratic thought, of moral virtue with good breeding and looks: the words for 'good' and 'beautiful' and 'excellence' and their cognates (*kaloi, agathoi, arete* etc.) notoriously weld together notions of superiority dependent on lineage and appearance with those dependent on moral stature. Real aristocrats in real-life Athens still had influence; wealthy families still held a near-monopoly on higher offices of state.

A third factor is that all the surviving Greek tragedies were produced under the Athenian democracy; Athenian democrats enjoyed watching the autocratic rulers of cities long ago, and (with a few exceptions) far away, in cities such as Argos and Thebes, having their prosperity and reputation destroyed. This experience offered a degree of *Schadenfreude*, similar to the pleasure the public today feels, reading in

celebrity magazines about the divorces and plastic surgery of the super-rich. But it also offered a confirmation of the propriety of the political system which had replaced monarchy and tyranny in democratic Athens itself.

The royalty of classical tragedy also operated at a degree of abstraction from social reality, encoding the new freedoms and aspirations of ordinary men in the metonymic language of pre-democratic hierarchies. These ruling-class figures might be 'referred' or displaced democratic subjectivities.¹¹ They contribute to what Easterling has called Greek tragedy's 'heroic vagueness', the special idiom which 'enabled problematic questions to be addressed without overt divisiveness'.¹² Every citizen, free and autonomous, joint holder of the sovereign power under the democracy, and subject to no other single individual, saw himself in some sense as a monarch: 'princes and princesses may be wish-fulfilment dreams as well as social facts'.¹³ The Athenian citizen liked to imagine his tragic self through the depiction of aristocrats suffering the blows of ineluctable destiny. So did theatregoers until the 19th century: high social status and the role of representing the community in its imaginary 'being, in ancient Greece, in Elizabethan-Jacobean England, in the Europe of the ancient régime, a virtually self-evident, unexamined correlative.'¹⁴

The writers who still prefer their tragic heroes to fall from high estate use two arguments. The first, Jacobson's argument, is affective. For whatever ill-defined reason, he claims, 'we' (and he does, objectionably, use the hegemonic 'we') just don't care as much about the suffering of a working-class protagonist as 'we' do about an eminent individual—an argument ultimately descended from the ancient perception that falls from greater heights hurt more. Yet the 'fall from high estate' can be

satisfactorily replaced with other types of loss. Impoverished heroes are capable of remembering or imagining perfect happiness, and of expressing their pain at their inability to gain or regain it. In a beautiful scene in *Woyzeck*, before the hero's relationship with Marie breaks down, he takes her and their child to enjoy the delights of the fair. In *Saved*, Harry remembers how, long ago, he and Mary had enjoyed a great sex life. In *The Distance from Here*, Shari and Darrell remember playing together on their mother's verandah, building makeshift tents on summer days. Falls can occur from states of grace as well as from high estates.

The sole valid question raised by admitting working-class characters to tragedy concerns its metaphysical dimension. Working-class people can of course be represented in the same cosmic predicament as aristocrats: the human condition is shared by all humankind. Moreover, no social reform, no utopian state, no human *techne*, will ever be able to prevent suffering caused by natural catastrophe, mechanical accidents, human error or the random presentation in society of violent psychopathologies. All humans are also capable of articulating the obvious truth that human lives are lived in Death's waiting room. I do not understand Steiner's claim that despite 'the claims of egalitarianism, of "political correctness"...the perception of the metaphysical, of the agonistic relation to being as these are made explicit and functional in tragedy, is not given to everyman.'¹⁵

Yet a tragedy which made material and economic forces the *exclusive* causes of the suffering enacted would no longer be a tragedy: it would be left-wing agit-prop. Steiner asks, along similar lines, whether an *atheist* tragedy is possible: is 'a tragic vision of the world from which the possibility of God (or the gods) has been excised,

feasible?"¹⁶ Another way of putting it would be to ask whether a tragedy which explains the world in terms of Marxist materialism is possible. To take away the random and unfair element from the human experience—Hecuba's Necessity and Chance—and replace them entirely with Market Forces, running amok under the rule of multinational corporations, would be to place inappropriate restrictions on the scope of tragic theatre. Yet why need a sensitivity to the economic and social pressures on human beings preclude a metaphysical confrontation of humanity's cosmic predicament? Some spine-tingling moments in the most socially critical of plays occur when it is implied that some supernatural force may be at work: consider the climax of Priestley's *An Inspector Calls* when the Birling family, collectively responsible for the suicide of the pregnant working-class Eva Smith, discover that there is in reality no such person as the Inspector Goole who has called to tell them Eva's story. He has inexplicably disappeared, leaving his rocking chair empty.

The interrogatory potential of tragedy has been immeasurably enriched since *Woyzeck* by adding poverty and class oppression to the metaphysical and ethical causes of tragic suffering previously deemed suitable—metaphysical and ethical. Let Jacobson hold on to his 'snobbery of grief', and Steiner deny the apprehension of the metaphysical to *Everyman*. Tragedy can *only* continue to speak to us in the 21st century because it has so successfully expanded its scope to include the suffering caused to humanity by economic and social oppression.

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¹Russell (1903).

²Hall (2010).

³Bond (1977) 'Author's Note'.

⁴The film was based on the novel of the same name by Irvine Walsh.

⁵The manuscript left by Büchner does not specify how Woyzeck died. He may have intended to write scenes corresponding to a trial and execution; the outstanding film version directed by Werner Herzog and starring Klaus Kinski (1979) implies that he drowns himself in the pond near the place where he killed Marie.

⁶Hauch (1929).

⁷Listowel (1936) 73-4

⁸Jacobson (2011) 76-8.

⁹Stodder (1974).

¹⁰Hall (2006) ch. 10.

¹¹Hall (2009).

¹²Easterling (1997) 25.

¹³Frye (1965) 146.

¹⁴Steiner (2004) 10.

¹⁵Steiner (2004) 10

¹⁶Steiner (2004) 7.