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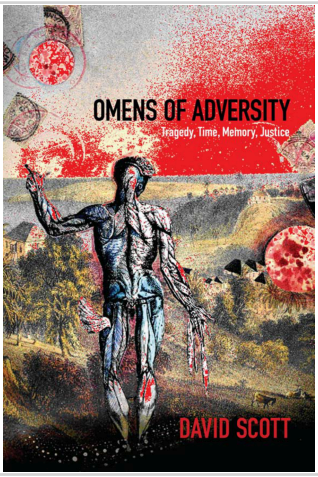

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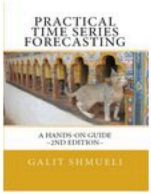

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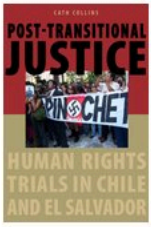

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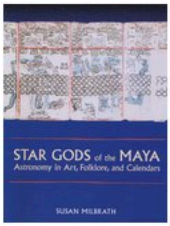

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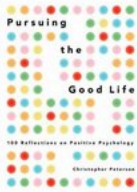

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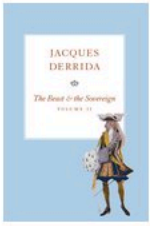

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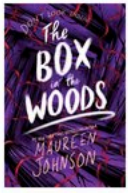

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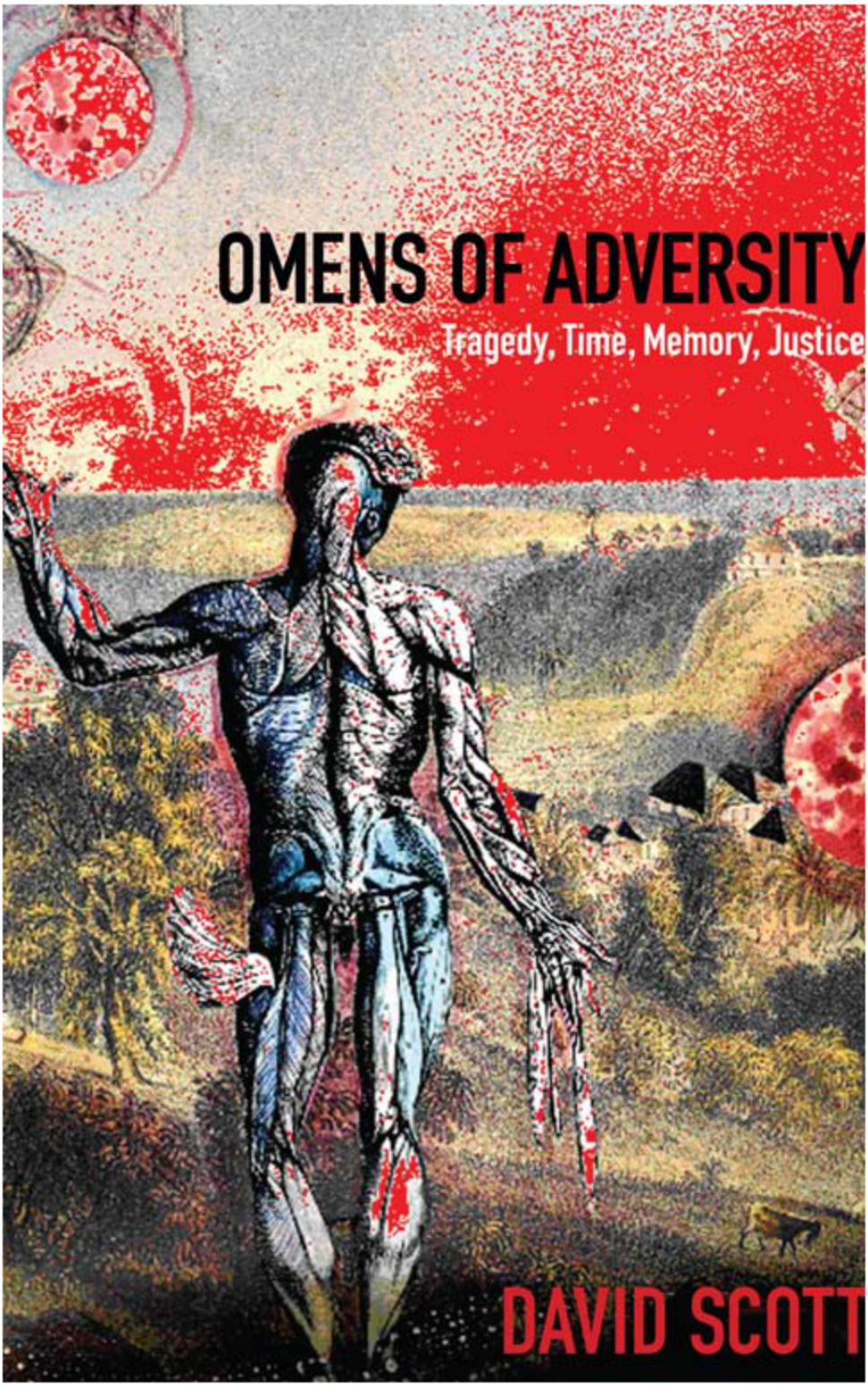
OMENS OF ADVERSITY
Tragedy, Time, Memory, Justice
DAVID SCOTT

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David Scott

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For Anju
and the generations of her time

CONTENTS

PROLOGUE | Aftermaths 1

PART I | **Tragedy, Time**

CHAPTER 1 | Revolution's Tragic Ends: Temporal Dimensions of Political Action 33

CHAPTER 2 | Stranded in the Present: The Ruins of Time 67

PART II | **Memory, Justice**

CHAPTER 3 | Generations of Memory: The Work of Mourning 99

CHAPTER 4 | Evading Truths: The Rhetoric of Transitional Justice 127

EPILOGUE | The Temporality of Forgiving 165

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS | 173

NOTES | 177

INDEX | 215

PROLOGUE

AFTERMATHS

> The future diminishes as the past grows, until the future has completely gone and everything is past.
> —SAINT AUGUSTINE, *Confessions*

At one level, my central concern in *Omens of Adversity* is with time or, rather, with *temporality*, with the lived experience of time passing—the social relation, more precisely, between past (the time of memory), present (the time of conscious awareness), and future (the time of anticipation). It seems to me that, though in a still inchoate way, a new time-consciousness is emerging everywhere in contemporary theory.[1] Not surprisingly, perhaps, a fresh resonance has attached itself to Augustine and his perplexed anguish in the face of the unyielding *aporias* of temporal experience—the nonexistence of the past, the not-yet of the future, the fleeting instant of the present—by contrast with the divine transparency and constancy of eternity. In the memorably obsessive reflections that comprise book eleven of the *Confessions*, which trace his motivated and exacting path of existential self-questioning, these aporias constitute for him the immeasurable and ineliminable paradox of the being and nonbeing of time. And, of course, at least in the picture he draws of the soul's temporal distention (*distentio animi*) across the three dimensions of presentness—the presence of the past, the presence of the present, and the presence of the future—Augustine does not so much re-