Sunday, 8 December 2013

5:00 – 7:00 pm • UNC Institute for the Arts and Humanities • Hyde Hall

JOHN WHEATLEY WHITE
(University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill & Duke University)

The French Revolution as the Historical Revelation of Nature in Georg Büchner’s Dantons Tod

Georg Büchner’s Dantons Tod (1835) presents a paradox: despite that Georges Danton becomes a victim of the reign of terror which he himself has helped to initiate, an “erotic utopia” seems to emerge. The presentation analyzes this development by focusing on the shifting representation of nature. At the outset of the revolution, nature is apprehended as a guarantor of rights and claimed as a means of legitimation. But this notion is unable to accommodate the new horrific reality which the revolution has engendered. Instead, a more complex conception of nature emerges, which is manifested erotically; rather than being sociopolitical, it is corporeal. History consequently supersedes nature, for it is the former which reveals the deep complexity of the latter.

JOHN WHEATLEY WHITE is a third-year PhD student in the Carolina-Duke Graduate Program in German Studies. He is interested in the relationship between history, German literature, and political thought.

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