Büchner, *Danton’s Death* (1835)

starts almost at the fourth act of the Terror
political left is split into an array of factions
Danton forced back to a moderate position that appears to the right
hence Lucile’s performance as a royalist at end

Theatrical technique

Shakespearean episodes, but doesn’t do exit lines,
or always alternate scene & character
is that good or bad?
language is great, & some fine, very theatrical moments
Saint-Just’s first entrance in the dark (30)
Lucille’s scream (79)
first traces of a literature of silence?
how to give expression to unsaid, how end the need to speak?
see Danton’s pause in the country in II, iv (42)
Act I: the shifting sands, the theatre of appearances of the Revolution
Act II: up to the arrest of Danton
Act III: prison and trial
Act IV: the fast, slow final descent

scenes even shorter & yet a sense of slowed tempo internally?

Play begins self-referentially, scene of libertine philosophizing
Danton & Julie (Hamlet w/ his head in Ophelia’s lap) watch their friends “play” at cards (9)
if even lovers cannot be transparent to each other, how trust?
as with Sellars’ Così, philosophical issue of trust in love becomes emblematic of trust/betrayal in political issues
Camille’s desire for state to be a woman in transparent robes both an appreciation of sensuous, the right to pleasure & an ideal which is bound to fail (11)
see Danton’s scepticism of the word “and” between politicians “and” people (12)
As play continues, Rousseau’s promise of nature as un-self-divided, self-sufficient ideal revealed as bankrupt
no getting outside history or society’s deep interconnectedness
Nature becomes a woman of oceanic longing (cf. Marion in I, v, p. 23)
or nature becomes eternal creation, flies mating on our hands

In an atheistic world, creating itself anew, still the past and self-division
Revolution a self-conscious performance, an echo of Romans & others
3 famous moments (among others) of self-referential theatricality
  a) I, ii: the Young Man who saves himself by playing defiance
  b) 2 Gentlemen returning from the play of Babylon (39)
  c) IV, vii (78): crowd waiting for the show
In this maelstrom of nothingness, where to find values?
  while Büchner sceptical about possibility of revolution & political rhetoric, doesn’t abandon struggle? Art’s affirmativeness?
Anti-capital punishment; Lucille “everything has the right to live” (77)
  against Robespierre’s equality that only means sameness (49)
For next time: Marx, *The German Ideology*

notice that Marx is frequently a satirist, not an iconic dry saint
some of his targets

Hegelianism and the Idea of Absolute Spirit

a kind of secular theology that sees history progressing
teleologically to Absolute Consciousness of Itself
through the mechanism of dialectical self-opposition

Ludwig Feuerbach

critical of Christianity as an illusion, a human
projection, although his materialism stops short of
Marx’s vocabulary of capital

check out all Marx’s metaphors to describe capital and materialist view