

Law&Society@UBC

presents

“Unforeseen Readings, Unexpected Speech: Law, Literature and Biopolitics”

Thursday, February 16th, 2012

5:00 pm – 6:30 pm

Green College Coach House

http://www.maps.ubc.ca/PROD/index_detail.php?locat1=412

L&S calendar: www.greencollege.ubc.ca & www.law.ubc.ca/seminars/law_society.html

In a short essay entitled “Refusal” written in 1959, in opposition to Charles De Gaulle’s denigration of democratic citizenship in France, Maurice Blanchot observed that refusal was a means of exposing the perversion of democracy that was being carried out. He noted that: “Those who refuse and who are bound by the force of refusal know that they are not yet together. The time of common affirmation is precisely what has been taken away from them”. Such a refusal is also a refusal to be constructed as an identity to be managed by the state. The refusal to be formed as an object of governance by the State constitutes an important mode of resistance to biopower. In this talk I examine the relationship between modes of refusal and their representation in writing through a reading of J.M. Coetzee’s 1983 novel *Life and Times of Michael K*. Coetzee’s unforeseen readings and *detournements* of accepted understandings provide a basis for my exploration of the relationship between law, literature and biopolitics.



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Patrick Hanafin is Professor of Law and Assistant Dean for Research at Birkbeck Law School, University of London, where he also directs the Law School’s Centre for Law and the Humanities. He has been a Visiting Professor at the School of Law at the University of Porto, Portugal and at the Law Faculty at the University of Pretoria in South Africa. He has held research fellowships at the European University Institute in Florence and at the Human Rights Program at Harvard Law School. He has authored and coauthored several books.



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