Shakespeare’s Testamentary Performance

Abstract: Professor Watt draws on many years’ experience delivering rhetoric workshops for the Royal Shakespeare Company to show that Shakespeare is playful with legal technicality rather than obedient to it. He demonstrates how Shakespeare transformed lawyers’ manual book rhetoric into powerful drama through a stirring combination of word, metre, movement and physical stage material, producing a mode of performance that was truly testamentary in its power to engage the witnessing public. Building on monographs on law and literature, law and dress, and the co-edited collection Shakespeare and the Law, Professor Watt offers thoughts from Shakespeare’s Act of Will: Law, Testament and Properties of Performance which will be published by Bloomsbury (The Arden Shakespeare) in 2016 on the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare’s will.

Biography:
Gary Watt is Professor of Law at The University of Warwick.

He is the co-founding editor of the journal, Law and Humanities, and his books on law and literature include Equity Stirring: The Story of Justice Beyond Law (Oxford: Hart, 2009) and the collection Shakespeare and the Law (Oxford: Hart, 2008, co-edited with P. Raffield). He has also written for the Times Literary Supplement and BBC Radio 3.