

LAW, LITERATURE AND FILM SYMPOSIUM

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In 2005 Hugo de Rijke introduced a new module to the Law programme, entitled 'Law, Literature and Film.' The stated aims of the module are to explore our cultural preoccupation with lawyers and the law, through literature and film; to examine how legal/fictional narratives call into question the ideals and values associated with the law; to identify the cultural impact of law upon literature and film; and to assess the cultural and transformative effect of literature and film upon law.

Many compelling themes and issues arise from the interconnections between law, literature and film. Unsurprisingly, a large number relate to law portrayed *in* literature and film, such as representations of truth, (in)justice, advocacy, lawyers, jurors, judges, sentencing and the death penalty – which have a profound effect upon society's perspective and often lead to important changes in the law. At a more mundane but practical level, extracts from film and literature are often used as pedagogical aids to illustrate legal concepts in the classroom. Another interesting approach is the critical examination of legal judgments and transcripts of trials as literature, in the sense that these are also examples of story-telling and rhetoric, which often in turn inspire other narratives (the BBC drama *Garrow's Law* is a current example). Yet another significant interconnection is the legal regulation, censorship and classification of literature and film, through libel and obscenity law and the activities of such organisations as the British Board of Film Classification and the Internet Watch Foundation. Increasing awareness of the interrelationships between law and culture has led in recent years to many books, journal articles and international conferences.

This year Hugo organised (with Dr Helen Thomas of University College Falmouth) a Law, Literature and Film Symposium, held at the University of Plymouth on 4 September in the Roland Levinsky Building. This jointly funded event attracted 15 distinguished academics and postgraduate students specialising in Law, English Literature and Film Studies at universities around the UK and was attended by 40 delegates. The keynote speech was delivered by Melanie Williams, Professor of Jurisprudence at Exeter University. The diversity of the papers speak for themselves – from vigilante justice, sinister strangers and death penalty narratives through to science fiction, genetics and teaching law to the Facebook generation! (Please see the attached document for details of the speakers and abstracts.) The symposium was a great success – thoroughly enjoyed by all – and a number of the

papers are due to be published in *The Journal of Entertainment and Sports Law* next year.

[Programme and Abstracts.](#)