the "tree" of the small number of cases that make to the court. For readers who are primarily interested in China's environmental pollution problems rather than its legal remedies, the book can be a good starting point, but it is by no means a comprehensive picture. Shifting the sites of research from courts to rural villages and urban neighborhoods would generate richer empirical findings and perhaps different theoretical insights regarding China's daunting tasks of environment protection.

For students of China's legal system, however, this book presents a great example of using a concrete legal issue to tell a much larger story of how judges, lawyers, litigants, and other actors in the legal system work in practice. This rich and compelling story begins with the micro social construction of environmental cases, proceeds to macrostructural analyses of different actors in the political-legal field, and ends with visions for the future of rights activism and political change in China. The concept of political ambivalence nicely ties the whole book together and reminds the readers that the author is a political scientist above all.

In addition to the author's extensive data collection through interviews, observation, and archival research, the book draws on a large number of social science studies on Chinese law and politics. It strikes a good balance between primary and secondary data, as well as between empirical findings and theoretical innovations. Focusing on litigation, this pioneering study opens up many questions regarding the prospects of China's environmental protection and the rule of law. For instance, a comparison between the legal and administrative channels of environmental dispute resolution would lead to a better understanding of how law and politics interact in the Chinese context. A more systematic comparison between environmental law and other areas of law, such as criminal law or commercial law, would also enable the author to further develop the theory of political ambivalence in China and beyond.

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The Humanities and Public Life. By Peter Brooks (ed.) with Hilary Jewett. New York: Fordham Univ. Press, 2014. 172 pp. $18.00 paper.

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The Humanities and Public Life is the ambitious beginning of a much-needed conversation on the practice of ethical reading, and the

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contributions of this practice to public life and law. The impetus for the book, Peter Brooks explains, was the unfathomable *mis*reading at work in the "Torture Memos" issued by the Office of Legal Counsel in August of 2002. Indeed, one needs only look at the distortive and bad-faith interpretations of the Convention Against Torture and accompanying provisions of the U.S. Legal Code to be reminded of the critical role of reflexive, contextualized, and critical reading to legal practice (Cole 2009).

To this end, Brooks has curated a collection of essays that reflect on the humanities' contribution to disciplined and interpretive acts of reading. The structure of the book reflects the organization of the spring 2012 symposium at Princeton from which it emerged. The symposium, like the book, consisted of three sections: "Is there an ethics of reading?," "The ethics of reading and the professions," and "The humanities and human rights." An essay by Judith Butler sets the conversation in motion, as she explores the humanities' contribution to public life, and the issue of why the humanities should be defended against assessments of its value that take its instrumentality or "impact" as key metrics (p. 12).

Central to Butler's argument, and to the reflections that follow, is the humanities' role in facilitating ethical reading. For legal scholars like Patricia Williams, this ethics takes the form of sensitivity toward individuals who may be objectified or transformed by readings of *them* (p. 78). For scholars in the humanities including Butler and Charles Larmore, ethical reading demands "critical judgment" on the part of readers (p. 30) as well as consideration of an author's intentions (p. 52). And contributors in high-level administrative positions including Ralph Hexter and Michael Roth emphasize a practice of reading attentive to the students and faculty *for whom* they read (pp. 83, 95).

The book's thematic division into sections that examine spaces of literary analysis, professionalization, and human rights discourse as sites for ethical reflection offers a useful, organizing framework. But a more rewarding reading takes each section as enactments of ethical reading on the part of its contributors, who thoughtfully engage with each other's writing while making their own practices of reading explicit. Indeed, during these moments, *The Humanities and Public Life* is at its best.

Two examples of ethical reading highlight the relevance of this book for interdisciplinary legal scholars. First, Williams' reflection on three photographs taken in the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake in Haiti shows the ability of captions to not only transform *what* we see but also transform our ability to see *justly*. To illustrate this point, she discusses an image of the silhouette of a young woman with outstretched arms and upturned hands. At first glance, Williams' law students interpreted this picture as an act of

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supplication that elicited a compassionate response. But when Williams attached the caption "Looter" to the photograph, students perceived the woman differently. The subject of the image became a figure of criminality and greed (pp. 75–78). This exercise offers a powerful window into the interpretive possibilities that inhabit textual, visual—and, indeed, *living* scenes. It is left to the reader to seek contexts outside the frame to avoid the unethical bracketing of human suffering. Here, the lessons of the Torture Memos return: though distorted legal readings can authorize violence, unethical readings often start by distancing and objectifying people.

Paul Kahn later reminds us, however, that interpretations are always met by new interpretations. To this end, Kim Scheppele shows us how the space of interpretation itself can be a site of resistance against repressive regimes. Armed with the "humanistic tactics" of irony, mimesis, and the possibility of multiple meanings, people can engage in "self-authorship"—a capacity that Scheppele associates with the dignitary values underlying human rights law. As one example, Scheppele describes a feminist rock group called Zuby Nehty or "Tooth and Nail"—the only all-female band in what was then Czechoslovakia. Knowing the State would censor lyrics that undermined the regime, Zuby Nehty submitted the chorus: "Let us rejoice and let us make merry/Let our joy be eternal/Let our joy be forever," which they knew would be met with approval. When the song was released, however, it was set to dark, funeral music. Much like Williams' image, the song came with a ready-made textual framing—or caption. But the context and ironic effect of the song's melodic and textual dissonance offered fertile ground for imaginative, and just, interpretation.

The book might have been strengthened by embracing its applicability to fields outside of the humanities. This critique is aptly framed by one of its contributors, anthropologist Didier Fassin, who reminds us that the burden of articulating and defending ethical practice is not left to the humanities alone (pp. 119–120, 140). Following Fassin, contributors could have refrained from drawing a sharp line between the methodological and ethical commitments of the humanities and social sciences. I would contest Jonathan Lear's assumption, for example, that the humanities are uniquely positioned to capture the devastation experienced by the Crow Indians. The slow and long-term process of gaining the trust of his interlocutors that he narrates would feel familiar to cultural anthropologists and qualitative sociologists, both of whom engage in ethically reflexive research practices.

The book ends with a call for greater sensitivity to the consequences of our reading. Despite the possible threat posed to the humanities by evaluative criteria, Peter Brooks leaves his readers with reason to be hopeful. Perhaps, he suggests, it is time we subject

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the word "measure" *itself* to a more ethical interpretation—one rescued by its poetic origins and imaginative possibility (p. 174). *The Humanities and Public Life* thus stands as both a "model of" and a "model for" ethical reading (Geertz 1973). And invites us to respond to misreadings with rereadings.

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Public Law, Private Practice: Politics, Profit, and the Legal Profession in Nineteenth Century Japan. By Darryl E. Flaherty. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Asia Center, 2013. 335 pp. $35.38 hardcover.

Reviewed by John O. Haley, Vanderbilt Law School

Darryl Flaherty's *Public Law, Private Practice* is an elegantly written, exhaustively researched, and profoundly insightful study of Japan's legal profession as it evolved through the nineteenth century. Anyone with serious interest in comparative perspectives on legal profession and law and development—not to mention those simply interested in Japan's legal transformation from the late Tokugawa period to the end of the Meiji era—will discover new, provocative insights.

A few readers of this review may wonder how a study on the Japanese legal profession in the nineteenth century could possibly have much significance or attract any interest beyond a handful of legal historians concerned with a culturally distinctive and therefore largely irrelevant country on the fringe of continental Asia. Keep in mind, however, that the same might have been said for the United Kingdom and the relevance of the English or North American legal professions in the nineteenth century. The United Kingdom and its North American colonies uniquely benefited from a combination of factors, not the least of which was the advent of a handful of immigrants to remote and largely inhospitable locations north of the extraordinarily wealthy and culturally advanced Castilian domains to the south.

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