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Law's Stories: Narrative and Rhetoric in the Law

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The law is full of stories, ranging from the competing narratives presented at trials to the Olympian historical narratives set forth in Supreme Court opinions. How those stories are told and listened to makes a crucial difference to those whose lives are reworked in legal storytelling. The public at large has increasingly been drawn to law as an area where vivid human stories are played out with distinctively high stakes. And scholars in several fields have recently come to recognize that law's stories need to be studied critically. This notable volume-inspired by a symposium held at Yale Law School-brings together an exceptional group of well-known figures in law and literary studies to take a probing look at how and why stories are told in the law and how they are constructed and made effective. Why is it that some stories-confessions, victim impact statements-can be excluded from decisionmakers' hearing? How do judges claim the authority by which they impose certain stories on reality? Law's Stories opens new perspectives on the law, as narrative exchange, performance, explanation. It provides a compelling encounter of law and literature, seen as two wary but necessary interlocutors.

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