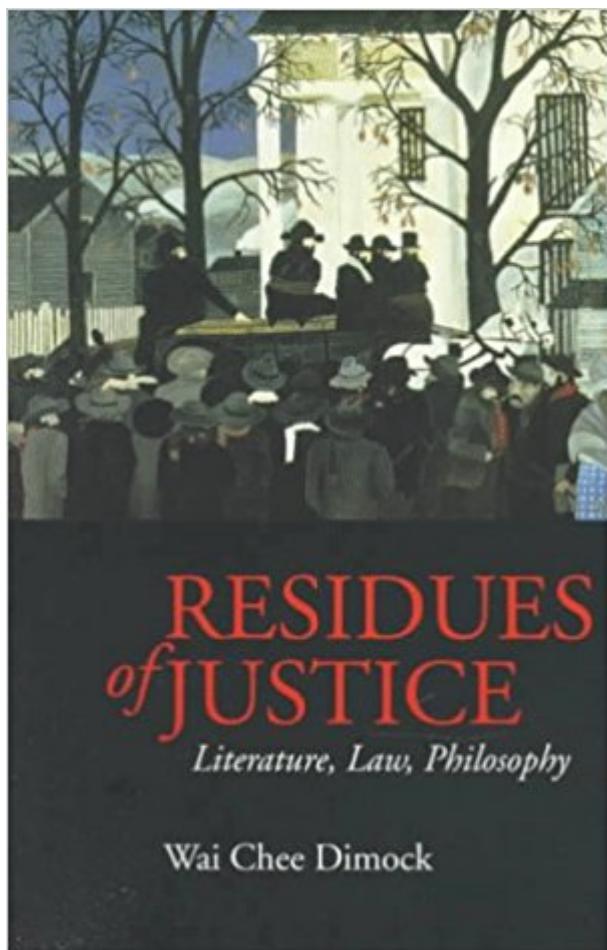


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# Residues Of Justice: Literature, Law, Philosophy



## **Synopsis**

In this arresting book, Wai Chee Dimock takes on the philosophical tradition from Kant to Rawls, challenging its conception of justice as foundational, self-evident, and all-encompassing. The idea of justice is based on the premise that the world can be resolved into commensurate terms: punishment equal to the crime, redress equal to the injury, benefit equal to the desert. Dimock focuses, however, on what remains unexhausted, unrecovered, and noncorresponding in the exercise of justice. To honor these "residues," she turns to literature, which, in its linguistic density, transposes the clean abstractions of law and philosophy into persistent shadows, the abiding presence of the incommensurate. Justice can only be a partial answer to the phenomenon of human conflict. In arguing for justice as an incomplete virtue, Dimock draws upon legal history, political philosophy, linguistics, theology, and feminist theory; she discusses Aristotle and Augustine, Locke and Luther, Marx and Durkheim, Michael Sandel and Carol Gilligan, Noam Chomsky and Mary Ann Glendon. She also examines an unusual configuration of nineteenth-century American authors, pairing figures such as Herman Melville and Rebecca Harding Davis, Walt Whitman and Susan Warner. The result is a book both passionate and scholarly. It invites us to rethink the meanings of literature, law, and philosophy, and to imagine a language of community more supple and more nuanced than the language of justice.

## **Book Information**

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"This is a masterpiece overflowing with insight, argument, scholarship, and passion. This book will be much discussed, reviewed, and I would predict quickly acknowledged as a 'standard-setter' for

interdisciplinary 'law and humanities' studies."<sup>151</sup>Robin L. West, Georgetown University Law Center" Wai Chee Dimock's brilliant book brings literature, law, and moral philosophy into kaleidoscopic interaction in order to examine concepts fundamental to all three. Stunningly clear in style yet full of unexpected turns of thought, this book will make readers think hard about the idea of justice<sup>151</sup>; and it will urge them to reread the texts and traditions Dimock moves among so commandingly,"<sup>151</sup>Richard H. Brodhead, English, Yale University"Dimock's scholarship has long impressed me. Her new book only deepens my appreciation of the breadth of her scholarship, the probing and insightful nature of her analysis. *Residues of Justice* exemplifies the best in the new cultural studies. It fuses political philosophy and critical legal theory, literature and history without confusing distinctions between these fields<sup>151</sup>; or the reader. It brilliantly grounds traditional western understandings of the nature of justice in a detailed understanding of the history and culture in which those understandings took form and then problematizes all by counterposing legal theory to literary texts. Her counterposing of Beccaria and James Fenimore Cooper, Marx and Melville, Chomsky and Whitman is dazzling. All interested in the new cultural studies, in critical legal theory, in the history of American culture will find *Residues of Justice* pathbreaking and invaluable."<sup>151</sup>Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, Department of History, University of Pennsylvania

"This is a masterpiece overflowing with insight, argument, scholarship, and passion. This book will be much discussed, reviewed, and I would predict quickly acknowledged as a 'standard-setter' for interdisciplinary 'law and humanities' studies." (Robin L. West, Georgetown University Law Center)  
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