Much feminist scholarship has grappled with the concept of love in its many forms. Modern love has been understood as a manifestation of harmful patriarchal values, a "curse" that confines women to rigid gender norms of femininity and passivity. However, love has been reclaimed and reconceptualised by some feminists as a powerful force for resisting these patriarchal norms and encouraging self-realization among women, men, and others. David A.J. Richards's Why Love Leads to Justice makes a valiant effort on the latter understanding. His thesis is simple: love leads to justice. In particular, love that is transgressive, which crosses the boundaries of the "Love Laws," leads to justice. He uses Love Laws to refer broadly to law aimed at criminalizing and otherwise prohibiting sexual and loving relations between certain classes of people. The book narrows in on two kinds of transgressive love: adultery and gay and lesbian love. Using the intimate stories of prominent artists and social activists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Richards draws on the linkages between their personal and public lives to demonstrate a reciprocal empowerment between the two domains. Life in love across legal boundaries is shown to be an act of resistance to patriarchal injustice. At the same time, the stories demonstrate how transgressive love has allowed for the healing of moral injury done to the protagonists by Love Laws designed to suppress and marginalize them. Groundwork is laid for these ideas in the first chapter by looking at the adulterous relationships between George Henry Lewes and Marian Evans—known widely by her penname, George Eliot—as well as Harriet Taylor and John Stuart Mill.

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