In the early 1870s, as Anthony Comstock consolidated his censoring power through state and national legislation, a journal of extreme dissent appeared in Massachusetts. Called simply *The Word*, this paper was a forerunner of *Lucifer, the Light Bearer*. Published by Ezra Hervey Heywood with the assistance of his wife, Angela Tilton Heywood, the paper at first concerned itself mostly with the anarchistic labor-reform ideas of Ezra Heywood, but in the late 1870s the question of sexual reform came to dominate its pages. Although different in style from Harman’s *Lucifer, The Word* focused with an uncommon directness on primary issues of sexual freedom, and this helped to pave the way for *Lucifer*’s efforts. *Lucifer*’s “awful letters” and its exposés of oro-genital sex, coming as they did near the end of Heywood’s career, marked the passing of the vanguard’s torch from Heywood to Harman. In its candid and occasionally hedonistic treatment of sexuality, *The Word* achieved a liberation from the Victorian ethos that neither *Lucifer* nor any other American reform periodical could match.

Born in 1829, Ezra Heywood spent most of his life in the village of Princeton, Massachusetts. His scholarly interests developed at Brown University, where in 1856 he received a Master of Arts degree and, the same year, entered the Divinity School. He planned a career as a Congregational minister, and he preached at several Rhode Island churches during the period 1855 to 1858, but the rampant reform spirit of the times finally led him away from his youthful religious and political orthodoxy. The writings of Theodore Parker convinced Heywood that he should leave the
church and devote himself to social reform, while William Lloyd Garrison's influence steered him toward abolition.¹ Heywood first heard Garrison speak when he was a student at Brown; later, in February 1858, at Garrison's home in Boston, Heywood pledged his full-time efforts to the abolition of slavery, and gave up the ministry.²

But Heywood's introduction to radicalism had come, not from Garrison, but from a woman—Phebe Jackson—whom he had met at his boardinghouse table near Brown. Heywood described her as “an adult, Baptist, maiden-lady” and a girlfriend of Garrison's wife, Helen Benson. Their discussions, he wrote, influenced him “more than all the books and learned Professors in College. . . . Till then I was conservative; she made me a radical, gave me to read Garrison's *Liberator*, the 'craziest' newspaper of that day, started me on the line of Anti-slavery, Woman's Rights and Peace.”

Another woman, a grammar-school teacher who attended the Sunday School class that Heywood taught at the Broad Street Church in Providence, started Heywood on his free-love quest. Anne Whitney, “an interrogative young lady, put questions that 'God's Word' did not answer; among others, this:—'If Love worketh no ill, why does human law interfere to hinder its evolution?'” For several sessions they searched for the answer through the New Testament and their “mutual wits,” Heywood remembered, and “the result was that, then, I became a Free Lover, theoretically.”

Twenty years later, Heywood claimed, her question led him to write his inquiry into marriage, *Cupid's Yokes*. He visited Miss Whitney in 1887 and good-naturedly asked her if she realized that her inquisitiveness had ultimately caused his term in Dedham jail.

“Do you know what a horrid conservative you were then?” she retorted, referring to his Sunday School days. “One Sunday when I quoted Mr. Garrison you put on a long face and solemnly said 'such infidels as he ought not to be mentioned here.'”³ The initial mid-century flowering of the American free-love movement had touched Heywood directly.

Heywood left Brown to become a traveling lecturer for the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society. He and a few other radical abolitionists such as Adin Ballou and Parker Pillsbury stood firm as pacifists when the specter of the Civil War appeared. In con-
Comstock's Yokes

Contrast, Garrison and most former “peace men” gave at least limited support to the war as a method of ending slavery. Severely critical of the war stance of such “occasional” nonresisters as William Graham Sumner and Wendell Phillips, Heywood felt a greater shock when Garrison compromised his earlier positions toward the government, the war, and the draft.

Recalling the war days from his prison cell in 1891, Heywood wrote Moses Harman:

After Wendell Phillips surrendered to war and subjugation, April 16, 1861, the first Sunday I got leave to preach in Music Hall, I confronted the breakneck, furious frenzy of martial violence, and urged peace, States-rights, liberty by evolution, rather than by the sword. The nub of my speech was this: “It is a graver crime to kill a man than it is to enslave him; if you kill him you take life and liberty; if you enslave him, you allow life with the possibility that he may throw you over, and regain his liberty.”

Boston papers carried Heywood’s speech, and Garrison, with characteristic generosity toward Heywood, planned to print the text in Liberator. But first he brought the proof to Heywood, “calling my attention,” Heywood wrote, “to the above, the main point of the sermon.” Garrison asked if Heywood had not better leave that statement out.

“Is it not true, Mr. Garrison?” queried Heywood.

“Yes, but I guess I would not say it now,” said Garrison.

Heywood was crushed: “I was amazed, astounded; this man whom I had revered as a god had lost his faith in truth and in human nature to example it! I replied, ‘You can leave out all the rest but the passage!’” The Liberator published the article intact.4

As the war progressed, so did Heywood’s denunciation of it. In time he stood largely alone among wartime abolitionists in his extreme adherence to earlier “Garrisonian” principles. He likened the draft law to the fugitive-slave law and said that such state coercion, “plainly in conflict with the divine law,” should be “disobeyed and trod under foot.” Not only did he reprimand Garrison for his double standard of judging violence and coercion, he later went so far as to blame the war on abolitionists who had bent their principles so that slavery was ended by government coercion and military necessity rather than by principle. Garrison,
Sumner, and their followers had lost faith in human nature, had ceased to be men, and had become "only Abolitionists." They "let slip the dogs of internecine conflict, pretending that 'the end justifies the means,' that evil can be overcome by evil, and sacrificed a million men to the bloody Moloch of 'philanthropic' violence." The blacks may have been freed, Heywood wrote, but "we are all negro slaves now," coerced by a government whose powers were increased and centralized by the war.

For his determined antiwar role during the civil strife, Henry Richard, secretary of the London Peace Society, called Heywood the bravest man in the American Union. In his history of pacifism, Merle Curti judged Heywood the "most uncompromising" pacifist abolitionist because of his bold and tightly reasoned writings in the Liberator. Like Moses Harman, Ezra Heywood retained the spirit of extreme abolition all his life, and when the war ceased, he applied himself to other areas of social reform. His no-government principles had prepared a fertile field for the individual anarchist doctrines of Josiah Warren, whom Heywood first met in 1863. This timely encounter with the originator of American anarchism influenced the rest of Heywood's life.

In 1877, looking back over twenty years of reform work, Heywood catalogued his reform interests as "negro emancipation, peace, woman's enfranchisement, temperance, labor and love reform." If this list closely followed the chronological development of Heywood's career, it also revealed the interrelated roots. The last item, "love reform," came to be the most spectacular cause that he espoused and the one that brought down on him official repression—that ticket to reformers' glory which none of his other causes had fully furnished him. At first he appeared not to seek actively after martyrdom, hoping instead to achieve change through the rational arguments contained in his writings. Having martyrdom thrust upon him, however, he showed a talent for exploiting the new strategy of reform. His very life became a demonstration of the contradictions of a "free" nation; his adversary Comstock was no abstract paradigm of the evils of government, but a living villain, one that could stimulate people as no logical exercise could—or so Heywood hoped.

The Heywoods, who were married in 1865, began monthly publication of The Word in 1872. They dedicated the journal equally
to the "abolition of speculative income, of Woman's slavery, and the war government." The direction that The Word was to take, however, was portended in an 1873 pamphlet, Uncivil Liberty, written by Ezra with Angela's help. This tract called for woman suffrage and argued that political enfranchisement of women would lead to the social emancipation of both sexes. The Heywoods distributed eighty thousand copies of the pamphlet from their press in Princeton. 8

The Heywoods attracted enough interested radicals for them to establish the Mountain Home in Princeton as a lodge for these kindred spirits. The New England Free Love League began there in 1873 as a companion organization of the anarchistic New England Labor Reform League, which Heywood had begun when he lived briefly in Worcester. The Free Love League, which provided an audience for speakers such as Victoria Woodhull and Lois Waisbrooker, borrowed a calendar page from the freethinkers' Era of Man chronology; they regarded the year of the founding of their free-love league as Year One of the Year of Love, or Y.L., as it came to appear on the masthead of The Word. 9

Fittingly, Heywood served as principal in both the Labor Reform and the Free Love leagues. He viewed the two causes as inseparable "twin brothers." Labor reform, to Heywood, rested on Josiah Warren's theory of labor value, which held that the cost of production alone should determine the selling price of goods and services, and on Warren's doctrine that the individual should be absolutely sovereign over his own person, time, and property. Like Warren, he believed that individual sovereignty required an amount of private property, but only that amount which represented the product of one's own labor. Since labor was the determinant of value, nothing had any value in exchange unless it had a person's "service impressed upon it." Natural resources and land, therefore, should be freely and commonly available. Heywood sought "the extinction of interest, rent, dividends, and profit, except as they represent work done." 10

Heywood extended Warren's theories to include a new critique of rent and a theory of "free money," and he considerably surpassed Warren in the extremity of his social radicalism. Warren objected to some of Heywood's strong language in his attacks on government and on land ownership, but Warren most strongly
objected to Heywood’s involvement in the sex question. Warren felt that raising the question of sexual freedom and women’s rights would only confuse efforts toward arriving at an equitable economy.\textsuperscript{11}

At “Social Freedom Conventions,” such as the one called by Moses Hull and Mattie Sawyer in 1875, the Heywoods set out a clear record of what they meant by love reform. The Boston affair took place on February 28 and March 1; and according to participants’ reports, it enjoyed the attendance of “large numbers and animated interest throughout.” Boston papers responded predictably. “A feast of madness and a flow of filth,” grumped the \textit{Boston Globe}. “The concentrated essence of distilled nastiness,” wailed the \textit{Boston News}. “They lie,” shot back Heywood at the journals. He and Moses Hull dominated the six sessions of the convention with their separate but supporting sets of resolutions.

Heywood told the assembled free lovers that just as he had once left the church to save his soul, he now had come to the convention to find Christ. (“Christ is not here but is expected this afternoon—” piped a voice from the audience. Free lovers, fond of contention, appreciated the confounding power of wit.) Heywood explained that he sought the spirit of love and justice contained in the example of Christ. “As a reformer, a philosopher, a medium, a free-lover, Jesus Christ is of some use,” Heywood continued, “but as a God he is not a success.” In a more serious vein, he offered his seven resolutions. To the Jeffersonian enumeration of inalienable rights he added “the liberty of the sexes to cohabit, for reproduction, health, economy, pleasure or other purposes they deem proper.” This liberty preceded all governments and religions and hence all the man-made ordinances that limited “the natural right of people to make and dissolve their own sexual contracts in obedience to reason, love and the best interests of themselves and their offspring.”

A primary cause of prostitution and “secret vice” (the nineteenth century euphemism for masturbation), he claimed, was the denial by society of these natural rights of sexual relationship. He called for repeal of all marriage laws, asserting that the “nobility of sexual love, individual health, social purity and harmony” would be promoted thereby. He took to task those cultured Christians who sought to keep woman in her restricted domestic sphere
by the “insinuating assertion that girls and women cannot associate
and do business with men without having sexual intercourse with
them.” Women deserved all the rights of activity that men had; only
the lewdness inherent in “conventional” morality could
create such a myth of woman’s unfitness.

The purpose of the free-love movement, according to Heywood,
was to apply to domestic life those principles of liberty that Amer­
icans theoretically enjoyed in the political and religious spheres.
He believed, as many free lovers did not, that the franchise for
women would abolish male supremacy in the family. All agreed
that the larger problem of emancipation of both sexes would only
come through abolition of the institution of marriage. Heywood
concluded with an appeal to all progressive minds to unite in the
assault upon the nemesis of labor- and love-reformers, the state.
His indictment was broad: the state was “that fruitful source of
incontinence, usurpation, disorder and war.”

Although Ezra Heywood’s voice had spoken the resolutions,
Angela Heywood had provided much of the inspiration. Had it
not been for his wife, he perhaps would never have been at the
convention at all. Early in their marriage, Angela had apparently
awakened Ezra to the immensity of the social discrimination
against women. The Heywoods’ first feminist tract, Uncivil Lib­
erty, argued for woman’s moral superiority and for the primacy
of natural law over civic law. If women had the vote, their in­
herent morality would cause humane and libertarian reformers to
be voted into office; as things presently stood, woman had no duty
to obey any civic laws, since she had not made them. Marriage
came under attack as a major institution which could not stand
the test of reason, since it thwarted individual liberty.

This criticism of institutional marriage eventually became the
main thrust of the Heywoods’ feminist efforts. Cupid’s Yokes, first
published in January 1876, represented the grand marshaling of
their antimarriage arguments. Subtitled “The Binding Forces of
Conjugal Life: An Essay to Consider Some Moral and Physio­
logical Phases of Love and Marriage, Wherein Is Asserted the
Natural Right and Necessity of Sexual Self-Government,” the
twenty-three-page essay had a wide distribution, variously esti­
inated from fifty thousand to two hundred thousand. It played an
important role in promoting sex radicalism, in disseminating
information about birth control, and in writing obscenity laws.\textsuperscript{13}

As an attempt to rationalize the sexual relations, \textit{Cupid's Yokes} has few peers. Heywood and, to a lesser degree, other sex radicals sought to remove sexuality from the thrall of instinct and to bring it under the control of reason, and perhaps in the process to sterilize the messy business connected with human sexuality. "My object in writing \textit{Cupid's Yokes}," Heywood once said, "was to promote discretion and purity in love by bringing sexuality within the domain of reason and moral obligation." Of course partisans of free love knew how to assume an air of superior morality in their assault upon convention, but for Heywood such assertions were more than merely tactical. He believed his ideas to be the consummation of Enlightenment; through Reason he uncovered the Natural Law that purified and reformed a last institutional holdout of error—marriage and the social relationship between the sexes.\textsuperscript{14}

He wished to end the confusions surrounding the subject of free love; popular distortion had it that free love was unbridled licentiousness which sought to "open the flood-gates of passion and remove all barriers in its desolating course." But free love meant just the opposite, he proclaimed: "It means the expulsion of animalism, and the entrance of reason, knowledge, and continence." It meant freedom \textit{from} personal invasion, not freedom \textit{to} give reign to sexual instincts. "The sexual instinct shall no longer be a savage, uncontrollable usurper," he continued, "but be subject to thought and civilization."\textsuperscript{15}

Heywood's free love rested upon an integrated view of the nature of love. Love, "this mingled sense of esteem, benevolence, and pas­sional attraction," necessarily involved the sexual association of men and women. This association could not be factored into spiritual and physical, aesthetic and pas­sional elements; it existed whole, and as a unity, it naturally strived for some sort of genital expression. By its nature, love could not be exclusive, since "a man cannot love even one woman truly unless he is free to love what is lovable in all other women," an idea that he seemed to have picked up from Austin Kent's \textit{Free Love} (1857). In practice, however, love did create a "natural privacy" which separated a couple from the rest of the world; in fact, a lovers' union created a gestalt, "a collective third personality, superior, in some re-
pects, to either constituent factor.” This “mystical confluence” did not, however, excuse the lovers from acting according to reason. With reason controlling mystery, practical monogamists such as the Heywoods could be consistent free lovers.16

The true “bonds of affection,” therefore, or “Cupid’s yokes” should be substituted for the enslaving statutes of marriage. One should not worry about the effect of free love upon the social cement, since, after all, the strongest bond of social union was love. Moreover, altruism—“the impulse to defer self and partial interests to the welfare of being loved”—characterized the bonds of Cupid, while selfishness characterized institutional marriage.17 To Heywood the dragon tamer, the institution of marriage was a cage that provisionally held uncivilized sex at bay. But by imprisoning the sexual appetite, men and women had only imprisoned themselves. This confinement perverted the sexual relationship since, to mollify the imprisoned ones, a concession of license within marriage had to be made.

But Heywood did not believe, as pietists did, that the sexual impulse was depraved, nor like some freethinkers, did he believe that it was uncontrollable; indeed both views had sheltered sex from the illumination of reason and from the jurisdiction of moral obligation. Consequently the subject of sex existed as “an Ethiopia, an unexplored tract of human experience.” No doubt existed in Heywood’s mind that the “lovers’ exchange” in all its phases could be subjected to rational choice, “entered upon, or refrained from, as the mutual interests of both, or the separated good of either, requires.” This notion reflected the continence doctrines of John Humphrey Noyes, whom Heywood cited in support of his theses, although Heywood rejected the sectarian and communistic elements in Noyes’s work. While Noyes sought a practical integration of two “mysteries,” the physical and spiritual heaven, Cupid’s Yokes undertook the more earthly task of reforming present marriage, an institution that was imperfect and unfinished, “a device to be amended, or abolished, as enlightened moral sense may require.”18

The struggle of reason versus passion occurred on every page of Cupid’s Yokes. “In entering the ecstatic state of love,” Heywood wrote, “we cannot, if we would, leave reason, or the inevitable sequences of cause and effect, behind.” In practical terms this
meant that partners should "not allow themselves to gravitate to the propagative limit" even during the "safe" nonovulatory period that he carefully outlined. If, however, intercourse escaped control and went on to climax, compensating punishments occurred, which seemed to please Heywood's mechanistic concept of reason: climactic sex "exhausts both persons, admonishing them to keep within the associative limit, which is highly invigorating." If the weak-willed failed to cultivate habits of continence, nature would crash the fools' paradise: "she confronts them with a child, which effectually tames and matures both parents." 19

In his vision of controlled sex, nonclimactic intercourse between lovers would occur often and be unrepressed within its limits, thereby relieving pressures that led to incontinence. In contrast to the moral and spiritual inclinations of the female, Heywood saw priapism as the male's ruling impulse. Through intelligent love, however, man's passional heat would be transformed into a force that would make him a "genial, civil, and serviceable being." Later enlarged by Henry M. Parkhurst and Elmina Slenker into a theory called Dianaism, Heywood's vision of continence looked forward to a perfect application, when "a lady and gentleman can as innocently and properly occupy one room at night as they can now dine together." 20

Rational sex would cure the common sexual abuses of masturbation, celibate abstinence, involuntary emission, and illicit intercourse or prostitution. One might expect Heywood to decry prostitution, with its attendant venereal hazards, as the most dangerous of these abuses, but he considered the first three abuses, in combination, to "engender more disease and death than all other causes combined." Celibacy, intentional or not, caused self-destruction and outright suicide, while masturbation and involuntary emission presented the greatest dangers of all; he spoke of their culminations as a "fatal drain." Illicit intercourse could be "extremely hurtful," but only because it was usually "undisciplined and excessive." Since Heywood believed that venereal diseases could be spread by casual kissing, he considered that prostitution presented no singular health danger. 21

When free lovers such as Heywood spoke of the prostitution problem they primarily had in mind the "prostitution" of the wife in conventional marriage. In Heywood's particular analysis,
the male-dominated profit system had reduced woman to a dependent socioeconomic position, so that she faced the choice of selling her labor at a very cheap rate or selling her body (for a night as a whore, for a lifetime as a wife) in exchange for the necessities of life. *Cupid's Yokes* proclaimed a link between the prevailing economic and sexual frustrations: “The usury system enables capitalists to control and consume property which they never earned, laborers being defrauded to an equal extent; this injustice creates intemperate and reckless desires in both classes.” The remedy, then, seemed obvious: “But when power to accumulate property without work is abolished, the habits of industry, which both men and women must acquire, will promote sexual temperance.” But the Heywoods did not believe that an economic revolution must necessarily precede the sexual one, indeed so interrelated were the “twin relics of barbarism”—the marriage system and the profit system—that to destroy one would be to destroy the other. Just as their doctrine of free love encompassed the liberation of woman from the dominance of man in society, so would free love liberate the wage slaves. The delight and morality of free love was only the gilding on this powerful lever for social change.22

The new society could not be realized without sex education. When one discovered the true relationship of the sexes, then, “ideas [would] rule and bodies obey the brain”; this true relationship could be discovered, he believed, in “principles of Nature derived from a careful study of essential liberty and equity.” As things presently existed, systematic miseducation prevailed: “We were all trained in the school of repression, and taught that, to love otherwise than by established rules, is sinful.” With other sexual libertarians, the Heywoods were outraged that Comstock legislation should block their attempts to find and broadcast sexual truths. This “established ignorance” particularly hurt young people in their innocence and their susceptibility to error.23

Sex education to Heywood meant more than the imparting of information about the reproductive organs. When young people became pubescent they normally faced four alternatives, all unsatisfactory and, to Heywood, all “abuses”: illicit intercourse, “secret Vice,” conventional marriage, or celibacy. More than mere physiology lessons and a sexual outlet, they needed the “education of
sexual desire and expression," the rational control of will that only
the practice of free love could offer. *Cupid's Yokes* did not elab-
orate on the practical problems of applying free-love and sex
education to young people, but the task would later be approached
in *The Word*.

In a very underplayed way the pamphlet included some im-
portant and concrete items of birth-control information. This
aspect of *Cupid's Yokes* was overshadowed at the time, however,
by the resurgence of interest in the work of an earlier Masachu-
setts physician and pamphleteer, Charles Knowlton. His *Fruits of
Philosophy*, published in 1832, remained obscure until 1877, the
very year that the legal furor arose over *Cupid's Yokes*. Two Eng-
lish reformers, Charles Bradlaugh and Annie Besant, went on trial
in that year for promoting the birth-control pamphlet. The trial
caused immense publicity and wide distribution for *Fruits of
Philosophy*.

Heywood did not know of Knowlton's book at the time that he
wrote *Cupid's Yokes*, although he did cite Robert Dale Owen's
*Moral Physiology* (1831). On the larger problem of regulating
and improving human offspring, the scholarly Heywood consulted,
among others, John Stuart Mill, Charles Darwin, Francis Galton,
R. T. Trall, John Humphrey Noyes, Diocletian Lewis, Thomas L.
Nichols, and George Drysdale. Heywood believed that economic,
medical, and eugenic reasons required that married people be
aware of contraceptive methods; he personally advocated male
continence and what would today be called the rhythm method,
and he explained how one could determine the safe period of
intercourse.

George Drysdale's ideas on birth-control practices influenced
Heywood greatly, and he eventually offered a vaginal-douche
syringe for sale in his literature. Heywood disapproved of con-
doms and coitus interruptus as being "injurious," "disgusting,"
and "unnatural" contraceptive methods—an opinion adapted
from Drysdale's *Elements of Social Science* (1854)—but in a foot-
note quotation from Drysdale he informed the readers of *Cupid's
Yokes* about the practices:

> Various unnatural means are employed to prevent the seminal fluid
from entering the womb, thus preventing the union of the sperm and
germ cell which is the essential part of impregnation; among these means are withdrawal before emission; the use of safes, or sheathes; the introduction of a piece of sponge so as to guard the mouth of the womb, and the injection of tepid water into the vagina immediately after coition. But these methods, except the latter, are injurious and disgusting.

In a later edition of his book, Drysdale sanctioned both douching and the vaginal sponge.26

Comstock could hardly allow such an affront to proper sensibilities and to the federal regulations that he had helped to institute. Under the false name of E. Edgewell, Squan Village, New Jersey, Comstock dispatched decoy letters to Heywood, requesting a copy of Cupid’s Yokes. Ironically, in October 1877 Heywood printed as genuine one of the letters from “Edgewell” in The Word: “Press on [Comstock wrote] as you are going, and be sure in the end justice will be done you. It is a long lane that has no turn. You have labored hard, but many eyes have followed your efforts.”

Comstock’s double meaning became all too clear when, on a blustery Boston night in early November, the vice hound from New York surprised Heywood backstage at a convention of the New England Free Love Society. Heywood, chairman of the meeting, had gone backstage temporarily as his wife, Angela, held forth at the lectern. “A stranger sprang upon me,” Heywood recalled, “and refusing to read a warrant or even give his name, hurried me into a hack, drove swiftly through the streets on a dark, rainy night, and lodged me in jail as a ‘United States prisoner.’” Heywood learned the next morning that he had been arrested for mailing Cupid’s Yokes and R. T. Trall’s Sexual Physiology and that the “rude stranger” who had arrested him was Anthony Comstock.27

In a chapter devoted mostly to the Heywoods in his own Traps for the Young, Comstock also described the arrest. Armed with a warrant, Comstock attended the free-love meeting unrecognized. “I looked over the audience of about 250 men and boys. I could see lust in every face,” he reported. Soon Angela took the lectern. She “delivered the foulest address I ever heard,” Comstock wrote, “she seemed lost to all shame. The audience cheered and applauded. It was too vile; I had to go out.” Once outside, and
braced by the fresh air, he resolved anew to halt the “exhibition of nastiness.” Unsuccessful in finding a policeman to help in the arrest, he called on God.

“I returned to the hall,” he continued, where the “chieftain’s wife continued her offensive tirade against common decency. Occasionally she referred to ‘that Comstock.’ Her husband presided with great self-complacency. You would have thought he was the champion of some majestic cause instead of a mob of free-lusters.” When it seemed that Comstock could no longer endure “the stream of filth,” Heywood went backstage, affording Comstock a chance for a discreet arrest. He collared Heywood, and as Angela raised the alarm to the crowd, Comstock sped off with his prey. “Thus, reader,” chuckled the vice hunter, “the devil’s trapper was trapped.”

Comstock may have been especially perturbed at Cupid’s Yokes because it contained a scorching criticism of his work and tactics. In the pamphlet, Heywood pictured Comstock as a grand inquisitor, “a religious monomaniac, whom the mistaken will of Congress and the lascivious fanaticism of the Young Men’s Christian Association have empowered to use the Federal Courts to suppress free inquiry.” At any rate, Comstock seemed determined to stop all distribution of Cupid’s Yokes. The next year he moved determinedly against D. M. Bennett, an important free-thought publisher, and, with the aid of decoy letters, arrested him for mailing Cupid’s Yokes. The Bennett and the Heywood cases brought Cupid’s Yokes to national attention through the involvement of the famous infidel Robert Ingersoll and of the president of the United States. It split the National Liberal League, caused significant public outcry on both sides, and condemned Bennett and Heywood to agonizing prison terms. Most importantly, however, the Cupid’s Yokes case wrote new obscenity law when for the first time in an important case the English “Hicklin standard” as a test for obscenity came to be applied in American law in U.S. v. Bennett, 1879.

The background of De Robigne Mortimer Bennett (1818–1882) makes an interesting contrast to that of Ezra Heywood. A former Shaker and “practical” physician, Bennett used his knowledge of botanicals to set himself up during the middle years of the century in a lucrative business in Cincinnati, selling such nostrums as Dr.
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Bennett's Quick Cure, Golden Liniment, Worm Lozenges, and Root and Plant Pills. Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason* converted him to free thought, and he eventually dedicated himself full-time to anticlericalism. Like Moses Harman, he began his radical publishing endeavor late in life. In 1873, when he was in his mid fifties, he launched the *Truth Seeker* in Paris, Illinois, and in a matter of months he moved it to New York.

Being an experienced publicist, he eventually put the periodical on a solid financial footing. His techniques were openly and puckishly iconoclastic, confounding the clergy in their own contradictions and human failings, while at the same time devoting a fair amount of exposition to earthy portions of the Bible. The *Truth Seeker* provided free-thought ammunition for a widely scattered constituency. One biographer has called Bennett's journal "the organ of village infidels scattered far and wide." In contrast to Heywood the scholar, anarchist, and sex radical, Bennett worked principally as a crusading freethinker. He saw the Comstock laws as a threat to liberty of conscience, and he helped to mount the repeal effort that netted over fifty thousand signatures on a protest petition which was presented to Congress. As a popularizer of free thought, he deserves to be ranked with Robert G. Ingersoll, whose books often appeared under Bennett's imprint.

If Heywood and Bennett held Comstock and his deeds in contempt, the vice hunter returned the sentiment with interest. Comstock labeled Heywood "the chief creature of this vile creed" of free love—a creed so offensive that "we must go to a sewer that has been closed, where the accumulations of filth have for years collected, to find a striking resemblance to its true character." Of Bennett, he wrote: "He is everything vile in Blasphemy and Infidelism." Comstock began his campaign against the two within a ten-day period in November 1877.

After first arresting Heywood for *Cupid's Yokes* in Boston, Comstock descended upon Bennett's *Truth Seeker* offices in New York and arrested him on charges of blasphemy as well as obscenity for mailing a scientific pamphlet, *How Do Marsupials Propagate*, by H. B. Bradford, and a tract written by Bennett, *An Open Letter to Jesus Christ*. As usual, Comstock had used a decoy letter to create the charges. Dr. Edward Bliss Foote paid Bennett's bond of fifteen hundred dollars and put his influence to work to
get the case dropped. Ingersoll’s protest to the postmaster general and other Washington officials succeeded, and the government dismissed the charges against Bennett.\textsuperscript{32}

Shortly after Bennett achieved this victory, Heywood went on trial for mailing *Cupid's Yokes*. Found guilty, Heywood received a fine and a two-year prison sentence. Comstock must have been cheered at the early outcome of the case; it appeared that *Cupid's Yokes* would surely be stamped out. Under state Comstock laws, local officials arrested some freethinkers who were selling *Cupid's Yokes* at a meeting of the New York State Freethinkers Association in Watkins Glen, New York. One of the sellers who were arrested happened to be D. M. Bennett. Seeing Comstock as the vile culprit behind this new trouble, Bennett threw down the gauntlet in *Truth Seeker*, pledging a crusade for his right to distribute *Cupid's Yokes*. Comstock responded with a decoy request; as “G. Brackett, Granville, New York,” he wrote a semiliterate letter, ordering some pamphlets and “that Heywood book you advertise Cupid's something or other.” Comstock again arrested Bennett, and this time he won a conviction against the editor. Judge Samuel Blatchford, who wrote the landmark decision, fined Bennett three hundred dollars and awarded him a thirteen-month sentence.\textsuperscript{33}

For more than a half-century, Blatchford's decision on *Cupid's Yokes* would be the basis of obscenity law in the United States. Even before the 1879 decision, however, lower courts had been aware of the English “*Hicklin* standard” as a formula for determining obscenity. Lord Chief Justice Cockburn had announced in *Queen v. Hicklin* (1868) that “I think the test is this, whether the tendency of the matter charged as obscenity is to deprave and corrupt those whose minds are open to immoral influences, and into whose hands a publication of this sort may fall.” The *Bennett* case in 1879 provided the first opportunity for an American appellate court to issue a studied application of this standard. Both the English and American courts erred in assuming that the *Hicklin* standard merely followed common law; common law had never defined obscenity.\textsuperscript{34}

The *Hicklin* case carried other important terms which affected obscenity law. A work was to be judged according to certain isolated passages, not by its general import. If a jury found
obscenity in any part, regardless of the nature of the work as a whole, the work must be judged illicit. The tendency "to deprave and corrupt," which was crucial to the standard, did not refer to entreatments to actual misconduct but only to the ability of the questionable matter to arouse sexual thoughts in those minds which comprised the lowest denominator of sophistication—the "young and inexperienced." The law considered that all works offered to the general public would fall into these susceptible hands.

Blatchford's decision affirmed the precedent that an indictment for obscenity did not have to set out in haec verba, or to put literally upon the court records, the alleged obscenity, provided that a claim of its offensiveness was made in the indictment and provided that the work was sufficiently identified that the defendant knew what it was. Blatchford answered the question of the constitutionality of the Comstock Act by referring to the Supreme Court's obiter opinion in Ex parte Jackson (1877), which sustained the power of Congress to regulate the content of the mails. Although the hasty decision concerned lottery materials in the mails, the Jackson opinion specifically referred to the Comstock Act as an example of congressional power over the mails, and it implied a confirmation of the obscenity statute. Blatchford also forbade as extraneous the comparison of indicted matter with similar passages from "standard literature," and he emphasized that the purposes for using obscene words were not to be considered.

Blatchford's opinion drew substantially from Heywood's Cupid's Yokes trial a year earlier. Before Judge Daniel Clark of the United States Circuit Court in Boston, the prosecution had held Cupid's Yokes to be too obscene to be placed upon the records of the court. The judge allowed this, thus influencing the jury toward the prosecutor's opinion regarding the obscenity of Cupid's Yokes as a condition of the trial. The court prohibited Heywood from arguing the issues of obscenity—that was to be decided without defense argument by the jury in the jury room, when, for the first time, members of the jury would have access to the allegedly obscene passages. The court also forbade any explanation of the purposes of Cupid's Yokes, its possible merits, or the intent of its author. The ruling prevented the old free-thought
tactic of comparing alleged obscenity with certain sections from the Bible; it also disallowed any discussion of the medical and scientific sources that Heywood had drawn upon in *Cupid's Yokes*. In short, the case for the defense was limited to whether *Cupid's Yokes* had been placed in the mail. The court even forbade Heywood to call character witnesses. In his charge to the jury, Judge Clark asserted that Heywood's ideas, if put into practice, would turn Massachusetts into a brothel. It was for this offense that Heywood drew a two-year sentence in the Dedham jail and a fine of $100.

Friends rallied to help Heywood. Parker Pillsbury, using the copy of *Cupid's Yokes* that had been marked by the prosecuting attorney, issued a pamphlet comparing coarse passages in the Bible with the so-called obscene language of Heywood's pamphlet. Benjamin Tucker took over editorial duties at *The Word*, and he and the newly formed free-speech organization, the National Defense Association, called for a support rally for Heywood in Faneuil Hall. A surprising number, six thousand, turned out for the affair, which was chaired by Elizur Wright. As an outcome of the meeting, the National Defense Association sent the veteran female radical Laura Cuppy Kendrick to Washington with a request for Heywood's pardon. President Hayes granted the pardon in December 1878, after Heywood had served six months. Notably, United States Attorney General Charles Devins declared that *Cupid's Yokes* was not obscene and that it was not obscene to advocate the abolition of marriage. This decision caused embarrassment for President Hayes later when Ingersoll called upon him to pardon Bennett.

Somewhat vindicated if not actually victorious in his bout over *Cupid's Yokes*, Heywood returned energetically to his sex-reform activities at Princeton, Massachusetts. Comstock seethed; the President had fouled his snares, and once more the menace of free love endangered the nation. His office blotter records his woe:

The Pres. pardons this man on the petition of Infidels and liberals, free lovers and Smutt dealers, in the face of a solemn protest signed by the officers of our Soc. and an affidavit setting forth the fact that Heywood was openly defying the law through his friends, and by their selling his book while he was in Jail. This action of Pres. Hayes practically licenses the sale of *Cupid's Yokes*, and is a strong encourage-
ment for others to violate the law, as well as a great hindrance to the
further enforcement of the law. 38

Comstock’s despair turned to jubilation when, in March after
Heywood had been freed in December, Judge Blatchford an­
nounced his important decision in the Cupid’s Yokes case of D. M.
Bennett. Elderly and in ill health, Bennett faced a thirteen-month
sentence. Bennett’s supporters once more appealed to Robert
Ingersoll for help. Ingersoll did not approve of the free-love
contents of Cupid’s Yokes, nor for that matter, Bennett claimed,
did he; but both were convinced that Heywood’s pamphlet was not
obscene, and both believed that Comstock was using the issue in
order to persecute Bennett for his anticlericalism.

Ingersoll took the case to President Hayes. In several audiences
with the president, he pointed out the aspects of doubtful legality
that were involved in Bennett’s obscenity trial and asked for a
pardon. Since Hayes had pardoned Heywood, the very author of
Cupid’s Yokes, Ingersoll appeared confident that Hayes would
pardon Bennett. Moreover the orator felt certain that Hayes did
not believe the tract to be obscene. Church and “purity” forces,
who had strongly protested the pardon of Heywood, now brought
a great deal of pressure to bear upon the president and his wife, a
WCTU matron who eliminated liquor from White House func­
tions, where, according to one report, during the Hayes Admin­
istration “the water flowed like wine.” The prospect of the leading
infidel and the leading infidel publisher being vindicated by the
president did not sit well with the religionists. The president
seemed inclined to make no move.

The situation reached the proportions of a tawdry melodrama
as Comstock, at this crucial stage, produced some letters that
Bennett had allegedly written to a woman who was not his wife.
The letters made Bennett appear deceptive in his public attitude
toward free love, a situation that effectively estranged Ingersoll
from Bennett. Ingersoll withdrew from the case. Despite a peti­
tion campaign by the National Defense Association which claimed
two hundred thousand signatures for a presidential pardon, the
old man endured his term in prison. Following the initial reverse
in his contest with Heywood, Anthony Comstock savored Bennett’s
punishment for Cupid’s Yokes. After being released from prison
in the spring of 1880, Bennett traveled around the world with money raised by his supporters and served as a delegate to an international free-thought convention in Brussels before his health finally gave way in December 1882.39

Encouraged by his victory over Bennett, Comstock continued to pursue Heywood. He arrested the sex reformer in 1882, again charging him with obscenity for mailing *Cupid's Yokes*; in addition, Comstock charged Heywood with distributing two of Whitman's poems from *Leaves of Grass*, and for advertising a vaginal douching syringe which Heywood had waggishly dubbed the “Comstock syringe.” Before a judge who allowed him to argue the broad issues of the case—free speech, freedom of conscience, and the imperatives of a higher morality—Heywood convinced the jury of his innocence. Comstock, doggedly arrested him again a short time later on a state obscenity charge for distributing a tract written by Angela Heywood. The pamphlet advocated woman's right to prevent conception and spoke of the sexual organs in very direct language. Heywood's Princeton neighbors protested the arrest and induced local officials to drop charges. Comstock again collared Heywood in an 1887 arrest, charging him as usual with obscenity. But the case never was prosecuted; the United States district attorney, a Democrat, “vetoed the obscenist plot,” in Heywood's terms. After four defeats, Comstock withdrew and lay in wait for some more opportune time to belay the “devil's trapper,” a time that he must have felt would surely come.40

A singular woman among a remarkable group, Angela Heywood managed to transcend the Victorian consciousness of the period to a greater degree than any other sex radical. If Ezra sometimes intoned praises to the joys of love and sex, Angela exploded in melodies, filling *The Word* with flowing columns of impressionistic prose that enlisted the intellect to the service of the emotions. She did much to give *The Word* its characteristic style. One anarchist reader, comparing *The Word* to *Lucifer*, saw only a superficial similarity in the two journals which was based on a common preference for direct words: "Looking deeper, we find *The Word* phallic and angelically voluptuous while *Lucifer* is rather ascetic and Malthusian," wrote M. "Edgeworth" Lazarus; continuing his play on words, he praised *The Word*'s "Angelical
teacher" on the essential goodness of amative pleasure. The facts about Angela's life are more obscure than those about her husband's. Stephen Pearl Andrews and Lucien V. Pinney each wrote a short article in *The Word* on the Heywoods, and these articles shed some light on her history. Light-hearted but dedicated to radicalism, she probably produced her articles for *The Word* in spontaneous flurries. “She has visions,” wrote Pinney, "hears voices, and dreams dreams, and she is at times a whirlpool of words, delivered with startling effect. She is naturally musical, and instinctively dramatic, loves the lights, colors and rhythmic sounds of the theatre, loves Art in action . . . but she is in nothing frivolous.”

Her husband sometimes edited her effusions to make them more readable, but he did not alter her directness of language, and he did not affect her style very much. Pinney said of this combination: “He is the sententious writer of resolutions, butchering her beauties of song to expose the bare bones of an idea.” Those who knew them agreed that it was she who provided not only many of the ideas that Ezra worked for but also the psychic push, the energy that characterized his work. When Ezra died, *The Word* and the headline-grabbing radicalism of the pair died also, suggesting a gestalt of force which came only from a combination of the two.

Her prose style was heavily larded with poetic personifications and was flavored with the rhetoric of New England transcendentalism. A romantic, she seemed to regard inspiration and intellect as one, and she identified herself with the common man rather than with upper-class intellectuals. Angela's extreme feminism viewed the liberation of men as an integral part of the liberation of women, a problem that required a basic readjustment of sexual expression in society. Sex and love could not be free—nor be freeing forces—until sexuality was first recognized with a level of candor and naturalness that befitted the "profoundest relation in Life.”

Society's debasement of sex completely astounded her: “Verily, how hath Natural Modesty forgotten herself if the Penis and Womb [her word for vagina] be not elegant organs of the Human Body, equal in ability to entertain us with eye and tongue.” Entertainment figured importantly in her vision of sex, as did her enthrallment with the graphic aspects of sex. While others, in-
The Sex Radicals

cluding free lovers, assigned somber and homiletic purposes to coitus, she announced that physical fun was as important a function of sex as was the creation of new life. "Sexuality is a divine ordinance," she wrote, "elegantly natural from an eye-glance to the vital action of the penis and womb, in personal exhilaration or for reproductive uses." She elevated intercourse beyond the merely worthwhile: "The Penis and Womb, the Outer and Inner are sublimely worthy peers in body faculty; their attentions, purposes, capacities, demands, supplies,—moved by Brain and Heart are the pith and glory of Being."44

She abhored prudishness and particularly the myths of femininity that deprived woman of sexual enjoyment. "We are related sexually; let us face the glad fact with all its ineffable joys." A woman might pretend that she wanted nothing of man, but "her lady-nature knows it is the very great everything she wants to do with man." If a woman "duly gives to man who cometh in unto her, as freely, as equally, as well as he gives her, how shall she be abashed or ashamed of the innermost?" And, she wrote in the same essay, "Lady Nature can put Madame Intellect behind the door, further than you can think while she revels with a man to her hearts content."45

Early in life, Angela came by her interests in physical sex. Her mother, Lucy M. Tilton, taught her children about sex in direct ways. Ezra, in one of his letters to Moses Harman, related how the Tilton children had once observed the mating of a stallion with a mare: "Mrs. Tilton arranged chairs at the window for all her little ones to witness the spectacle, and stood beside them explaining to them carefully what had occurred. So you see, Mrs. Heywood and her sisters went to school young in these matters."46

Her essay "The Ethics of Sexuality," an 1881 article in The Word, contained much of her thought and feeling about sex. Essentially, free love rested upon integrity. "One is not a Free Lover," she explained, "because she cohabits with one or more men, or with none at all, but rather by the import and tone of Association." Free love required "sincere thought and true action" and, above all, personal responsibility rather than "third party, arrogant intermeddlement" of what she termed "the physical force code of domestic, commercial, educational, church-and-state heisms." This personal, moral responsibility that each person had
for his own actions must be the decisive factor in each sexual
counter. Lady Nature may take over in a frenzy from Madame
Intellect, but Temperance and what was called "the balanced use
of persons" must be considered before a sexual act is agreed to.
She noted that women could have no respect for men who evaded
the personal and moral implications of their sexual encounters
through claiming a weakness-of-the-flesh defense. This popular
tory theory of male sexual necessity, which justified prostitution and
the double standard of sexual interaction, would be eliminated by
the ethics of free love. But Angela reserved her special scorn for
the man who claimed virtue through impotence, who piously
"attempt[ed] to hide behind the inability of his penis to have
an erection!"

Some passages in her writings collided with others, but often
these oppositions could be taken as a statement of paradox about
the human sexual condition rather than as simple contradiction.
In drawing the line between love and passion, she recalled, "I
used to think Passion was something bad, and was taught, by those
who did not know, that Lust is the opposite of Love; I was mis­
taken, for the antithesis of Love is hate; while Lust means full,
glowing, healthy animal heat." Passion, or lust, existed as a
"source of beneficent power" that was quite different from love.
A man might love a woman but have no passion for her, or he
might feel passion for her but feel no love. In another place, how­
ever, she related that "when a man gives his Passion to a woman
she feels he must love her; else he could not yield it to her. . . .
Can he be otherwise than dear to her?"

Unintentionally she raised an important consideration in the
question of sexual freedom—the fact of the interrelation of love
with sexual connection. Although Angela represented a romantic,
Western view of love, there is no denying the legitimacy of the
connection that she pointed out between intimate physical union
and the transcendent attraction called love. Sexual freedom, in
asserting itself, called constraining forces into play. Voluntary
sexual experimentation opened greater possibilities for exclusive
love, or at least such was the case for women, Angela intimated.
This effect, incidentally, seemed to be borne out by the experience
of the Oneida Community, where, in theory, each member could
enjoy the privileges of marriage with every other member of the
opposite sex in the community. The fact that couples frequently fell in love—an act of “selfish love” that was specifically forbidden—presented one of the greatest problems of complex marriage. In “The Ethics of Sexuality,” all of Angela’s references to the differences between passion and love are to these differences in man, not in woman. She seemed to imply, in fact, that passion and love are an identity in woman.

She reveled in the ideal of sexual difference and liked the idea of sex-determined cultural roles, although this did not mean that women should be passive or that they should be treated unequally. Sexual attraction, she believed, depended upon sexual differences: “Let truth now speak, we like men because they are men; you like us because we are not men,” she told her male readers. The term “wife” had fallen into disfavor among some feminists who claimed it had a disgraceful etymology, but on this point Angela demurred. She felt that the term expressed a relationship “of the most candid order twixt a woman and a man.” The words “husband” and “wife” simply designated the masculine and feminine sides of the “plural unity.” She felt that the term and act of being a wife announced an “equality with man in the realm of Service; never did I feel demeaned by so accepting the term wife, or the fact wifehood.” No doubt she felt that husband and wife should serve each other, and she had an appropriately Puritan concept of service as one’s duty to human kind: “We ... are here ... with all our capacities for Work to transcend tragic evil in ecstatic good. ‘The spirit of Culture does not exist/ Where thought of Service does not persist.’”

Her tone became more defensive as she discussed the service aspect of wifehood in greater detail. Some women might consider wifehood slavish rather than a “self-adjusted service,” but Angela asserted that “such bondage is foreign to my girl and woman ideas; while Serving I always felt to be royally worthy.” One may speculate about whether this idea of service became too concrete in her own home, especially since a friend once commented in a sketch of the Heywoods that Angela “dwells with rare fortitude in the ‘cellar basement’ of experience—a hard working housewife doing as an artist the work of a ‘scrub.’” She bore four children—Psyche, Angelo, Vesta, and Hermes—and she and Ezra apparently shared
a long, monogamous, and devoted relationship—a not uncommon circumstance among free lovers. 48

Neither Angela Heywood nor her husband bridled at the word "fuck." In fact, their campaign for the use of the word in their aptly named *The Word* helped to put Ezra in prison a final time. The couple believed that speech could not be free until the direct, common words for things could be freely uttered. "In discussing ideas, doctrines, physiology, morals, names of body organs and actions were needed," Heywood recalled in later years. "Mrs. Heywood, coming on the lecture platform, in Boston, to talk to and tame male mobs . . . coined the term, 'generative sexual intercourse,' which was sufficiently roundabout, was it not? Three words, twenty-seven letters to define a given action commonly spoken in one word of four letters that everybody knows the meaning of." 49

In 1880 the influence of Stephen Pearl Andrews and other radicals caused the Heywoods to make an important decision: "We came to see the utter stupidity, nonsense and villainy of evasion and cowardice in this serious business." The trouble, reasoned Heywood, did not inhere in words, "simply letters in line, sociated in sentences"; instead, the offense resided in "dirty thought, unclean habit, dishonest action relative to body forces." He could not help asking: "Is it obscene to be sired and born? Are judges and district attorneys immaculate conceptions?" He argued for a simple integrity of language: "The sex organs and their associative uses have fit, proper, explicit, expressive English names; why not have character enough to use them and no longer be ashamed of your own creative use and destiny?" Heywood seemed to believe that by naming the unnamable, as in some archetypal myth, the dark spell of ignorance would be broken. Then man's sexuality could finally be "brought under control, and within the jurisdiction of moral obligation." 50

Angela defended direct language practically and ingenuously: "Such graceful terms as hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting, fucking, throbbing, kissing, and kin words, are telephone expressions, lighthouses of intercourse centrally immutable to the situation; their aptness, euphony and serviceable persistence make it as impossible and undesirable to put them out of pure use as it would be to take oxygen out of air." 51
If the embroidery of such terms as "penis" and "fuck" in Angela's writings appeared natural and innocent, Ezra's use of such terms was often humorous and biting. He jabbed at the prudish, but he also kidded fellow radicals. His cryptic prose sometimes obscured his humor, however. In an 1889 issue of *The Word* there appeared, without introduction, a fantastic allegory by Ezra concerning something he half-seriously called the Fucking Trust. The piece was a marriage of the semantic and social consciousness of the Heywoods, compounded by zaniness. In earlier articles he had termed marriage a "penis trust," using "trust" in its economic sense as a legal, monopolistic form of exploitation. Now he sought to redeem the word from its negative connotations by proposing the Fucking Trust, a tongue-in-cheek "collective effort to bring the moral, social & physical uses of sex-meeting into the domain of reason and moral obligation." As a crowning touch, he deadpanned, Elmina Slenker had been made president of the trust. An elderly female sex reformer, Slenker had for years preached a method of sexual continence called Dianaism.52

One of the Heywood's most daring efforts came in a contribution to the letters column in the March 1890 number of *The Word*. "Letter from a Mother," by an anonymous New York mother, presented a straightforward approach to the question of childhood sex education. "The other day," related the mother, "my little girl who is in her twelfth year, came to me and said, 'Mama, what does "fuck" mean?'" The mother asked where she had heard the word. "Why, today at school, Willie ——— said to me, 'Mamie, won't you fuck me?"' replied the daughter. The mother took this as a cue to explain the sexual facts of life to her daughter. The mother herself, the letter revealed, had been initiated into sexual intercourse at age twelve ("in my inexperience, I was fascinated with it," she commented), but the writer cautioned that this age was generally too young. Intercourse for females should come only after transition of puberty had been completed. The mother advised parents to let a daughter "look forward to the time when she will become a woman as the time when she will taste of its pleasures." The writer never alluded to marriage. As Dora Forster would suggest some fourteen years later in her "Sex Radicalism" essays published in *Lucifer*, this mother urged that a youngster's first sexual experience be with a
trusted adult who knew "what ought to be done and just how to do it."$^{53}$

In the same issue of *The Word*, Ezra announced a crowning act of defiance against Comstock: he promised that the succeeding issue of *The Word* would reprint O'Neill's letter from *Lucifer*, the exposé of oro-genitalism for which Harman had recently been arrested while in the midst of his Markland-letter trial. "We will see what lewd official or citizen dare touch us," taunted Heywood. Ezra's old antagonist, Anthony Comstock, surprised no one when he took the bait.

The local postmaster at Princeton, who had recently been appointed by Postmaster General John Wanamaker, had been charged by his superiors in Washington to review each issue of *The Word* and to reject for mailing, or to pass on to Washington for judgment, any issues with opinions or style that he found offensive. Without informing Heywood, the Princeton official thus held up the March and April issues of *The Word*. In May a United States deputy marshal arrested Heywood, and within a week a federal grand jury in Boston returned a three-count indictment against Heywood for obscenity.$^{54}$

The O'Neill letter, printed as announced in the April issue, constituted the first count; the "Letter from a Mother" the second; and "Natural Modesty," an 1889 reprint of an article that Angela had originally published in 1883, the final count. Besides some candid praises of the flesh, "Natural Modesty" contained a well-aimed slam at Comstock. Angela believed that the birth-control proscriptions of the 1873 law discriminated against women and had in effect installed Comstock as the policeman of the American woman's genitals. She satirized Comstock's powers in an interesting fantasy: every male would have his penis tied up by a length of wire and, upon occasion, would be inspected by a female Comstock; any offending males who had removed the constriction would be tried before a court of twelve women who would have the power to imprison a man for ten years. Understandably, Angela could not understand why Comstock never arrested her—only her husband.$^{55}$

Two weeks after the grand jury's indictment, Heywood stood his final trial. There appeared to be a great unity of effort between Comstock, the Republican administration in Washington,
and local officials to bring an end to Heywood's career. Heywood had at first been informed that he would have a number of weeks to prepare for the trial, but suddenly the prosecutor told him that he had "got orders from Washington to speed up the Heywood trial." Conveniently for Heywood's detractors, this order coincided with the illness of the district court judge, T. L. Nelson, in whose court Heywood had actually won an obscenity case in 1883. A less liberal judge from Rhode Island, George M. Carpenter, was brought in to hear the case in Nelson's absence.

Postmaster General John Wanamaker, the department-store magnate who became notorious for banning Tolstoy's Kreutzer Sonata from the United States mail, had appointed the new postmaster in Princeton, a sanctimonious man whom Heywood called "Deacon" Gregory. True to his instructions, Gregory took the important first step against Heywood by confiscating The Word and then informing Comstock about his action. Heywood protested both in The Word and at his trial against the confiscation, citing court cases which ruled that the post office had no further property nor moral jurisdiction over matter that had been refused admission to the mails. His objections did no good, however. Up to this time, local postmasters had always refused to interfere in Heywood's work, despite requests from Comstock. The previous postmaster, in fact, was a Democrat and a self-admitted infidel. Heywood believed that Comstock had directly influenced Wanamaker in his choice of the new postmaster at Princeton. Considering Comstock's seventeen years of service as an important "special" employee of the Post Office Department, Heywood's assertion did not seem far fetched.\(^6\)

In the 1890 trial, as in Heywood's Cupid's Yokes trial of 1878, the court forbade all arguments exploring the nature of the "obscenity" for which Heywood faced charges: the defense was limited to the question of whether Heywood mailed the indicted material. Influenced by a court that considered the material to be too questionable to be read into the record, and untrammeled by distracting defense arguments or such niceties as character witnesses, the jury was to apply the Hicklin standard to the marked portions of the material when it finally got access to it. The jury heard Heywood testify that he had earlier been convicted, but the defendant was prohibited from saying that he had also been
pardoned once and acquitted once. The charges against Heywood, in fact, were not read aloud to the jury at the beginning of the trial.

After the judge had lectured the jury on the evil of obscenity and had advised that only "proper fit and decent" speech had rights of protection, the jury retired to consider the material and the verdict. They pronounced Heywood guilty, and the judge sentenced him to two years at hard labor at Charlestown State Prison, and allowed no appeal. This time, petitions to the president for pardon went unheeded; the sixty-two-year-old editor served out his sentence, sewing prison uniforms.57

"It is something amusing that the world could have drifted on so long without being confronted with the sex question,—the whence, the what and the whither of us relative to each other as he's and she's," mused Heywood in one of his rambling letters to Moses Harman from his cell in the Charlestown prison. Although Lillian Harman and E. C. Walker visited Heywood in prison, Heywood and Moses Harman apparently never met. The feeling of partnership in finally confronting the world with the sex question pervaded Heywood's letters to Harman, however, particularly since both had, for a time, served concurrent prison sentences for what both considered to be the logical extension of their former abolitionist work. In vowing to publish *Lucifer's* O'Neill letter, Heywood had drawn upon the antislavery era for images of martyrdom that would describe Harman: "As Sumner spoke for ravished Kansas, in the U.S. Senate, so Harman types the woes of raped wives." Now in prison, he wrote: "Woman is the negro of today, whom Mr. Harman and I are befriending; it is Massachusetts and Kansas over again." *Lucifer* became the mouthpiece for the imprisoned editor during the time that *The Word* was silent.58

The *Twentieth Century* published a pamphlet by Julian Hawthorne, "In Behalf of Personal Liberty" (1891), which protested the legal harassment and imprisonment of Heywood. The pamphlet also contained a letter from Moses Harman which described his similar treatment. The novelist disavowed Heywood's sexual theories, but he defended his right to free expression as being basic to American ideals and tradition. Heywood's honest if controversial work should not be confused with obscenity. "It would be better to have the country flooded with genuinely vicious
and obscene literature, than to establish the precedent of imprisoning men for publishing their honest opinion," Hawthorne wrote.

When Heywood returned from prison, friends gave him a reception at Quincy House, Boston. Those who had visited him in prison noted his apparent poor health. Angela and the children had suffered too; as when Heywood went to jail for *Cupid's Yokes*, they again had to sell their house and goods in order to survive. And *The Word* had been silent for months.\(^6^9\)

Unbent, and with his sense of humor still intact, Ezra Heywood began publishing *The Word* again. A year after his release he died of a cold that he had contracted at the annual convention of the American Labor Reform League, an organization that he had founded twenty-two years earlier. Edwin C. Walker wrote a long report of his funeral in *Lucifer*.\(^6^0\)