



# Ezra Heywood & Benjamin R. Tucker



By Martin Blatt

**E**zra Heywood helped initiate Benjamin R. Tucker into the world of anarchist activism. Their relationship spanned three decades and during that time, Tucker matured from a student and apprentice of Heywood's to a sophisticated radical intellectual. Although at times they disagreed sharply and their reform efforts came to emphasize different issues, the two viewed one another with mutual respect. An examination of their relationship touches upon some of the central concerns of nineteenth century reform.

Ezra Heywood was already a veteran social reformer when Tucker first encountered him at a meeting of the New England Labor Reform League (NELRL) in the summer of 1872. In 1858 Heywood had dropped plans to enter the ministry and joined with the abolitionists. He worked unceasingly for the freedom of the slaves and was one of a minority of abolitionists who upheld their non-resistance. Following the Civil War, Heywood threw his energies into labor reform. Subsequently, he was to become a champion of free love and free expression and was pilloried by Anthony Comstock, the enforcer of Victorian virtue.<sup>1</sup>

Tucker, an eighteen-year-old student at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, had been listening to a variety of reform lectures and reading reform papers in 1872. Having chanced upon an announcement of the NELRL convention, Tucker attended. The

## Benjamin R. Tucker and the Champions of *Liberty*

convention was crucial in Tucker's political and intellectual development. "My meeting with Josiah Warren, William B. Greene, Lysander Spooner, Ezra H. Heywood, and Sidney H. Morse proved the pivotal point of my career," he wrote later.<sup>3</sup> Of these central figures of American individualist anarchism, Warren, Greene, and Heywood were at the convention.

Tucker's first impressions of Heywood were mixed. As Secretary of the League, Heywood presented a "series of resolutions very denunciatory in tone," and not clearly conveying a sense of the League's purposes. "Mr. Heywood's manner, on the other hand, was not at all violent; on the contrary, it was very attractive." Tucker observed Heywood as a "tall and rather lank New Englander . . . His delivery was slow and measured, but without hesitance, and his appearance was that of a scholar and gentleman."<sup>3</sup>

Heywood introduced, in Tucker's words, "a simple old man . . . whose Socratic features wore an expression of shrewdness and good humor." Indicating this gentleman, Heywood referred to the presence in the hall of "Josiah Warren, notable for his forty years' pilgrimage through the wilderness of American transgressions." Tucker purchased copies of Warren's **True Civilization**, Greenes **Mutual Banking**, Lysander Spooner's **No Treason**, Heywood's **Yours or Mine** and **Uncivil Liberty**, and copies of **The Word**, a monthly reform journal published by Ezra and his wife Angela Tilton Heywood. Tucker attended the entire convention, and, encouraged by Heywood, soon became active in the League, and he was elected its Treasurer the following winter.<sup>4</sup>

Tucker was greatly influenced by the social and economic ideas he encountered in the writings of these individualist anarchists: anti-statism., sovereignty of the individual, and cost as the basis of price. He followed closely the motto that Ezra Heywood had printed in large letters over his desk: "Interest is Theft, Rent Robbery, and Profit Only Another Name for Plunder."<sup>5</sup>

It was through Heywood that Tucker met the outspoken advocate of free **love**, Victoria Woodhull. He had already been reading **Woodhull and Claflin's Weekly** since the age of sixteen, "led there by . . . interest in the emancipation of woman, and, as a result... [I] looked with much favor on the doctrine that legal interference with private intimacies, and especially with the relations of the sexes, is sheer impudence, that is, impertinence carried to the point



**Ezra Heywood** (photo courtesy Labadie Collection, Department of Rare Books and Special Collection, University of Michigan Library)

## Benjamin R. Tucker and the Champions of *Liberty*

of effrontery."<sup>6</sup> In the winter of 1872, Tucker heard Woodhull lecture at the old Boston Music Hall. When she proclaimed her right to take a new lover every day, he joined in the waves of applause that competed with many hisses.<sup>7</sup> Young Benjamin Tucker viewed the beautiful Victoria as "a modest, determined and courageous woman . . . she stood fixed on her pedestal, I at her feet, a clod of common clay."<sup>8</sup>

In December, 1872, Mrs. Woodhull wanted to lecture again in Boston but could obtain no hall, owing to the uproar caused by her recent exposure of Henry Ward Beecher. The mayor of Boston and governor of Massachusetts did all that they could do to prevent her from speaking. Even Parker Memorial Hall, built to honor Theodore Parker by the society over which he once presided, closed their doors to her.

The NELRL, in the persons of Ezra Heywood and William B. Greene, decided that free speech would rule the day in Boston. They rented Tremont Temple for the League convention in late February, 1873. When the publicity revealed that Victoria Woodhull was invited to speak, the owners of the hall cancelled the contract. Threatened with a suit, they eventually had to pay a hefty sum to avoid appearing in court. The League then engaged several smaller halls for a convention lasting three days. Despite all sorts of official threats, the convention was held. Greene had drafted resolutions denouncing the actions of the authorities and the owners of the hall, and a speech endorsing the resolutions. Tucker was asked to offer the speech and resolutions, which he did. "The speech was in no way extraordinary, but, coming from a boy not yet nineteen, it excited much comment, and won many encomiums."<sup>9</sup> Tucker was embarrassed at the fraud of delivering someone else's words and resolved, successfully, never to do it again. He only learned later that much of what Mrs. Woodhull signed had been authored by someone else, often Stephen Pearl Andrews or Col. Blood, her companion and associate. Mrs. Woodhull complimented him for his presentation and went on to address the convention a total of four times. Rushing to catch a train back to New York, she left a wrap behind in the hall. Heywood asked Tucker to run after her. Rushing to the station, Tucker got the wrap to her just as the train was pulling out. "She accepted the wrap with thanks, and then, suddenly and to my intense astonishment, she put her face up to mine and kissed me

## Benjamin R. Tucker and the Champions of *Liberty*

squarely on the mouth." Tucker left off the already moving train; it took several days for the excitement of the kiss to subside. He came to conclude it was simply a kiss of gratitude.<sup>10</sup>

In the fall of 1873, Tucker helped manage a speaking tour for Mrs. Woodhull in the towns surrounding Boston. On Sunday, October 26, Mrs. Woodhull summoned Tucker, still a virgin at the age of nineteen, to her chambers at the Parker House. She was "obliged to make all advances," as Tucker was "slow and hesitating," but "within an hour, my 'rain' was complete, and I, nevertheless, a proud and happy youth."<sup>11</sup> Tucker observed, "It was a part of her doctrine, as it is a part of mine, that, in cases of sexual attraction, the initiative may be taken as properly by the woman as by the man, and that, when she takes it, she should do so frankly, modestly and unmistakably, rather than by arts and wiles and coquetry. It is decidedly to Mrs. Woodhull's credit that, in this at least, she was faithful to her creed."<sup>12</sup>

According to Tucker, "The Free Love cause was the single one that she understood."<sup>13</sup> Woodhull eventually moved to Britain, married, and became preoccupied with her own respectability. Her renunciation of free love and outlandish denials of her earlier advocacy earned her the enmity of Tucker and other libertarians.

Having contributed often to **The Word**, Tucker was engaged by Heywood as an associate editor in April, 1875: "Those who remember the force and point of what we have printed from his pen need not be informed that he will bring marked ability and intelligence to these columns."<sup>14</sup> Tucker's stay in Princeton, the central Massachusetts home of Ezra and Angela, was distinguished by two episodes. First, he spent a few days in jail refusing to pay town taxes, because he had made no contract with the town for any such payment. He was released due to the payment of the tax and costs by an unknown person.<sup>15</sup> Second, at the age of twenty-one, he published a translation of Proudhon's 500-page **What Is Property?**

In December, 1876, Tucker resigned his position at **The Word**. Instead of the issue of labor, the question of free love had become predominant in **The Word**. In 1876, Ezra Heywood had published what was to become his most noted pamphlet — **Cupid's Yokes**. There he argued that free love was the basis of all social reform and challenged conventional notions of marriage and sexuality. He argued that the New Morality as embodied in his notion of Free Love was "destined to supersede present religion, law and order..."

## Benjamin R. Tucker and the Champions of *Liberty*

Knowledge of ourselves as Human Bodies, naked truth between Man and Woman, Science is the right rule of faith and practice in Sexuality. More protestant than Protestants, yet essentially Catholic, Free Love proclaims the Right of Private Judgment in morals."<sup>16</sup>

Tucker argued that primacy in the social struggle should be given to achieving justice for labor. He wrote in *The Word*:

The emancipation of the world's workers will go far to settle many another question that else must drag hopelessly along. Indeed, let me say, the cause of free love can be rendered no such effective service as by that revolution in the rewarding of labor which shall place woman in a position of independence, taking her out of the 'market,' and giving her that freedom of life which shall not compel her to sacrifice herself for a pecuniary consideration. Self-dependence is the foundation of self-respect; and self-respect alone makes free love possible...<sup>17</sup>

Heywood had not abandoned labor reform and probably did not dispute Tucker's claim that the position of woman would be advanced if she were economically independent. However, Heywood did increasingly emphasize free love and changes in sexual life as the underlying basis for societal change. Tucker concluded his resignation with a personal note: "... I have been influenced by no feeling of ill-will or dislike for my associates ... We can all be true to ourselves, and still serve all we have at heart. And yet, it is with more sorrow than I can express that I now say, 'Farewell!'"<sup>18</sup>

Tucker immediately began making plans for his own publication and the first number of *The Radical Review* appeared in May, 1877. Contributors included Stephen Pearl Andrews, Greene, Spooner, and Heywood. Heywood later reprinted his article, "The Great Strike," which appeared in the November, 1877, issue. In this booklet Heywood strongly denounced the actions of capitalists and defended the behavior of strikers in the widespread labor turmoil of 1877. He viewed the strikers as lawful belligerents who were "asserting their natural right to live by their labor . . . The officials, on the contrary, represented the existing financial, commercial, and political power of the strong to plunder the weak." He concluded by reiterating the basic aim of labor reformers: ". . . *nothing short of the entire abolition of property in land and its kindred resources, and the removal of all restrictions on ex-*

## Benjamin R. Tucker and the Champions of *Liberty*

*change...* "19" (Heywood's emphasis).

Tucker's journal was a short-lived venture; the last issue came out in February, 1878. This would seem to be a result of Tucker's commitment to helping his former mentor, who was in trouble. In November, 1877, Heywood was arrested by Anthony Comstock at a Boston meeting of the New England Free Love League, an organization Heywood was instrumental in forming. This was the first of five arrests Heywood was to suffer. Comstock, who had the ardent backing of the Young Men's Christian Associations across the country, was a representative of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice as well as a special agent of the United States Post Office Department.<sup>20</sup> In this latter capacity, he orchestrated the enforcement of the 1873 obscenity law for a span of four decades. Charged with transmitting obscene materials — **Cupid's Yokes** — through the mails, Heywood was tried and found guilty in January, 1878. His appeal was denied in June, 1878, and he was sentenced to two years in Dedham Jail and to a fine of \$100.

Seeing that Heywood had been thrown into prison by a "band of Jesuitical conspirators," who aim to halt abruptly his "career of reformatory usefulness," Tucker stepped in and assumed the position of editor pro tern of **The Word**.<sup>21</sup>

One of Tucker's first acts was to call for a mass protest meeting at Faneuil Hall on August 1. This date, the anniversary of the freeing of the slaves in the West Indies, had been celebrated annually by the abolitionists at large open-air rallies. The meeting attracted a gathering of six thousand people. The presiding officer of the meeting was the veteran abolitionist Elizur Wright. Several speakers addressed the meeting and letters of support were read. Tucker, as secretary of the event, presented a series of resolutions that were passed with a roar of approval. The resolutions declared: 1) the inviolability of the right to free expression; 2) that no vague law be permitted that allows "designing knaves or narrow-minded bigots" the right to deny the exercise of free speech; 3) that since Heywood's case clearly is one of persecution of opinion under the law, the assembly called upon the President of the United States to release him; 4) that since Anthony Comstock had repeatedly attempted to suppress free thought, speech, and press and had employed despicable, immoral methods, he should be immediately dismissed from government service. The entire evening's discussion was printed as a pamphlet by Tucker.<sup>21</sup>

## Benjamin R. Tucker and the Champions of *Liberty*

A National Defense Association was formed to help secure Heywood's release. Tucker served on its Executive Committee. The Association chose Laura Kendrick as its representative to present a petition calling for a pardon to President Hayes. "She went to Washington, and by her infinite tact and persuasive tongue procured his pardon from the president."<sup>23</sup> Heywood was pardoned in December, 1878, after serving six months in jail. Tucker welcomed the news in the last issue of *The Word* that he edited. He took great joy in announcing that Ezra Heywood was no longer a prisoner. This represented "another victory in the great struggle for freedom of the press. But let us not forget that, though Mr. Heywood is free, the law under which he was convicted still exists, and the same infamous instrumentalities are at work to enforce it. The battle is not over, and our work is but begun . . . We congratulate him upon his freedom and his return to the editor's chair, and wish him in his work the most complete success."<sup>24</sup>

Tucker and Heywood next were linked together in a struggle to oppose censorship of Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*. In the fall of 1881, the Boston publishing house of James R. Osgood and Co. issued an edition of the book. In the spring of 1882, Oliver Stevens, district attorney of Suffolk County, Boston, at Anthony Comstock's instigation, advised Osgood and Co. that portions of the book were obscene. The publishers, before printing a second edition, invited Whitman to omit the offending verses. When he refused, they broke their contract and turned over the plates to the author, who entrusted them to David McKay, a Philadelphia publisher. Meanwhile, Postmaster of Boston, L.S. Tobey, had declared the book unmailable.

Tucker decided to challenge this affront to liberty. He procured from Philadelphia a sufficient supply of the book and inserted an advertisement conspicuously in the daily papers of Boston. He challenged the authorities of Boston, Comstock, and "all other enemies of liberty" to arrest him for selling the book. Tucker reported that Comstock begged the United States district attorney to indict him but the request was refused. In a notice to the press on August 19, 1882, Tucker declared, "I have offered to meet the enemy, but the enemy declines to be met . . . [It goes to show] that they have rights who know them, and knowing, dare maintain. It is to be hoped that the Boston booksellers will soon recover sufficient courage to keep the book in stock. Till then I

## Benjamin R. Tucker and the Champions of *Liberty*

shall continue to supply copies by mail . . ." On October 14, Tucker made a second announcement: "Leaves of Grass is now sold openly by nearly all the Boston booksellers. I have won my victory, and the guardians of Massachusetts morality have ignominiously retreated."<sup>25</sup>

Ezra Heywood had a more difficult time of it. He placed himself in greater danger by reprinting two of the "objectionable" poems, "A Woman Waits For Me," and "To A Common Prostitute," in the August, 1882, issue of *The Word*. His old nemesis, Anthony Comstock, remembering Heywood's Presidential pardon, did not move against the New York booksellers who reported a brisk sale of the Philadelphia edition of the work. Instead, on October 26, 1882, "acting in his capacity as a United States postal inspector, he entered Heywood's home in Princeton and arrested him on charges of sending obscene matter through the mails."<sup>26</sup>

Heywood faced trial for sending the following materials through the mail: *Cupid's Yokes*; a sheet entitled *The Word Extra*, which printed the two poems mentioned above; and an advertisement giving information on how a contraceptive device, dubbed the "Comstock syringe," could be obtained. Heywood, permitted to defend himself, spoke for four and a half hours in his closing remarks to the jury. He declared: "Since Comstockism makes male will, passion and power absolute to *impose* conception, I stand with women to resent it . . . In this case, the accuser is the immoralist, the criminal . . . as under the lead of Garrison and Phillips I urged abolition of negro slavery, so now I strive for the liberation of Labor and of Woman."<sup>27</sup> The jury returned a verdict of not guilty.

Tucker reported Heywood's arrest and trial in *Liberty* and defended the Princeton radical's actions: he "only did what he had a perfect right to do against the whole world, and it is the duty of every earnest Liberal to come to his aid in his hour of trial."<sup>28</sup> In another column, Tucker argued that Comstock is simply a logical product of statism:

Comstock is a true child of the State, of which nearly everybody is mortally afraid. The State is, by necessity, a breeder of sneaks and spies. It cannot live without them. Therefore all liberals who oppose the work of Comstock from any other platform than that of the abolition of the State are wasting good ammunition. By some fortunate chance they may succeed

## Benjamin R. Tucker and the Champions of *Liberty*

in displacing the man himself, but Comstockism will live after him, and will only fall with the State, its creator and sustainer. Tucker hailed Heywood's acquittal as a victory and observed that the jury's decision was based in large part on Judge Nelson's charge ". . . which declared questionable the evidence of a man who confesses, as Comstock did, his habit of deception [in procuring arrests and prosecutions]. He believed that Heywood's victory ". . . rendered the liberties of the people more secure by very materially increasing the difficulties of conviction."<sup>30</sup>

It is interesting to note that Whitman responded to Tucker and Heywood very differently. In a letter to his friend William O'Connor, Whitman wrote: "As to the vehement action of the Free Religious and lover folk, in their conventions, papers, etc., in my favor — and even proceedings like these of Heywood — I see nothing better for myself or friends to do than quietly stand aside and let it go on . . . I shall certainly not do any thing to identify myself specially with free love."<sup>31</sup> O'Connor replied: "You and McKay [Whitman's publisher] *did perfectly right* in keeping aloof and not contributing to the defense. Your connection could not help him and might hurt you. 'Against stupidity the gods themselves are powerless,' says Euripides, and Heywood is certainly a champion jackass. I am sorry for him, but his bed is his own making, and he should have known what Comstock could do to him if he advertised war on the ovaries. I only hope we shall escape the consequences of his folly."<sup>32</sup> Whitman and O'Connor were glad when Heywood was acquitted, but clearly could not be counted among his admirers.

In contrast, Whitman had great respect for Tucker: "I often feel as though I would like to see Tucker and have a long, long, long confab with him, just for the sake of squaring up some old scores (gratitude on my part, gratitude to him): he is remarkable for outright pluck - grit of the real sort: for loyalty, steadfastness." He felt that the "literary class" had been cowardly in their advice concerning the *Leaves of Grass* controversy, but "Tucker's immediate rally to its support, his persistent advocacy in thick and thin, excites me to supreme admiration."<sup>33</sup> Whitman did not "bank much on his anarchism . . . but on Tucker — well, he is a safe risk."<sup>34</sup>

Tucker and Heywood had different styles in making their arguments for anarchism. Tucker was sophisticated, witty, and biting in

## Benjamin R. Tucker and the Champions of *Liberty*

his writing style. Heywood was more earnest, direct, sometimes scholarly, and frequently almost religious. For Tucker, literary style and the form of expression were very important. For Heywood, although he was an able writer, the issues and ideas were of paramount importance. Heywood practiced a politics of confrontation with the authorities; Tucker did not cringe in the face of authority but he did take fewer risks with his own freedom in the assertion of his beliefs. Tucker's conviction that Heywood was overemphasizing free love is clear in that the three Heywood publications **Liberty** advertised dealt principally with economic reform: **The Great Strike, Yours or Mine**, and **Hard Cash**. This is not to say that **Liberty** ignored sexual reform. Rather Heywood's expression of it and special emphasis were increasingly distasteful to Tucker.

Tucker's antagonism to Heywood's approach was expressed in the pages of **Liberty** regarding how best to challenge Comstock and his allies. In the spring of 1890 Heywood was arrested for the fifth time as a result of Comstock's anti-vice crusade. The indictment covered three items that had been printed in **The Word**: "A Physician's Testimony," or the O'Neill letter, "A Letter From a Mother," and Angela Heywood's "Natural Modesty." (It is worth noting here that all of the Tilton sisters, Angela, Flora, and Josephine were active in the free love and labor movements along with Heywood and Tucker.) The O'Neill letter had been published earlier by Moses Harman in his journal **Lucifer** and had earned him a prison term. Several radicals including Eugene and George Macdonald, Moses Hull, and Tucker wrote letters and published articles urging Heywood to be prudent.<sup>35</sup> However, Heywood was totally intractable when he perceived that basic principles were at stake. He eventually was convicted and served two years in prison where his health was badly affected. He died within a year after his release.

Tucker believed that Heywood and Harman lacked any strategic thinking. They ". . . precipitate an irresistible onslaught upon our whole line which is liable to result in our annihilation." He summarized his argument as follows:

Economic liberty is the only road to that sexual liberty, sexual health, and healthy sexuality which Harman [and Heywood] claim to be striving after for society. As much freedom of discussion as we now enjoy is necessary to the achievement

## Benjamin R. Tucker and the Champions of *Liberty*

of economic liberty. This freedom of discussion is likely to be abridged by any *unsuccessful* direct effort to extend it, especially in a direction where it must encounter the most deeply-rooted prejudice that now afflicts humanity, - the sexual superstition. Hence any act that courts such certain defeat is rash, ill-timed, and calculated to separate us farther from economic liberty and sexual liberty.<sup>36</sup>

Tucker felt that Heywood did not know how to utilize the victory he had earned over Comstock several years earlier. Instead of discussing sexual questions with that sober freedom which he had secured, "he devoted himself to the reckless use of terms more than to the development of thought . . . finally, when Heywood had reached almost the farthest extreme of foolhardiness, Comstock pounced on him." Heywood had much less public support than in previous cases, Tucker argued. (Tucker did not note that this might have been as much a reflection of the changed times as it was a result of Heywood's extremism.) Once Comstock succeeded in putting Heywood away, Tucker continued, it would be that much easier for him to move against other publications, finally stifling *Liberty*, *Twentieth Century*, and every liberal paper, "protected by a public sentiment that has been misled to identify them all with Heywood's crazy methods."<sup>37</sup>

In contrast, Tucker presented himself as following through with a carefully conceived "plan of campaign." Desirous of translating and publishing Tolstoy's *The Kreutzer Sonata*, he immediately asked himself if the Vice Society could successfully attack the book. Since Tolstoy's work unsparingly exposed "the rottenness of the existing marriage institution," Tucker believed the vice suppressionists would leap to attack it. But he estimated that public opinion would rally against any such attempted suppression. Indeed, the postal authorities did attempt to suppress *The Kreutzer Sonata* by excluding it from the mails. However, Tucker reported the attempt utterly failed and "... the torrent of ridicule which it has brought down upon its authors from nearly every influential organ of opinion constitute the severest blow that has been dealt Comstockism since its birth . . . What is the result? Nobody has suffered martyrdom, and the idea of press censorship has suddenly become a thing of scorn and ridicule." He compared his steps to those of Heywood and Harman, who discussed tabooed questions "in language as obnoxious to the general public as it was

## Benjamin R. Tucker and the Champions of *Liberty*

possible to choose." As a result, the enemies of free speech were able to put them in prison without a public outcry. Tucker concluded: "We may admit and admire their bravery, but their judgment was lamentably weak. Comstockism was not weakened but strengthened by their course." Tucker saw his approach as resulting in victory without a struggle.<sup>38</sup>

However, Tucker's position was subjected to severe criticism. A.H. Simpson, companion of Flora Tilton, wrote in *Liberty*: "Where is the victory in publishing a book that according to your own language is 'written in sober language and from the standpoint of the most puritanical morality, without a nasty word or the slightest salacious suggestion?' " Simpson did not see the great victory that Tucker proclaimed for himself. He asserted that a real victory would be the circulation of a paper that "shall advocate sexual variety in free love, tell wives they owe no allegiance to husbands they no longer love and whom they wish to leave, promulgate the ideas to be found in The Word, 'Mother Letter,' and state the sum and substance of the O'Neill letter."<sup>39</sup>

Furthermore, the O'Neill letter was not simply old-foggyish, to use Tucker's phrase. Historian Hal Sears contends: "The letter remains significant as one of the few instances in nineteenth-century journalism of explicit discussion of oro-genital sex."<sup>40</sup> The mere fact that O'Neill engaged in such an open discussion would make the letter an important item to circulate. He decried, for example, how common it was for husbands to insist that their wives suck their private parts. Further, he reported a man contacting him who had the "fearful" habit of having an "*insatiable* appetite for *human semen* — all his family (men and women) suck each other's private parts in the presence of each other. He himself goes roaming all over the country trying to find men to allow him to 'suck them off.'" This frankness of expression, whatever O'Neill's biases, is crucial for sexual reform.

Angela's writing was similarly frank. For example, she wrote in her offending piece "Natural Modesty": "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."<sup>41</sup> "Letter From A Mother" presented a straightforward approach to the question of childhood sex education in response to the mother's child asking what the word "fuck" meant.<sup>42</sup>

## Benjamin R. Tucker and the Champions of *Liberty*

Thus, Heywood was imprisoned for printing materials vitally important for a frank and full discussion of sexual reform. In light of this, Tucker's position regarding Heywood appears weaker. He argued: "It is possible to forcibly express the most radical views without giving the authorities the slightest pretext for interference. Mr. Heywood's rashness consists in not availing himself of this possibility."<sup>43</sup> This seems to be a fairly lame assertion. Quite simply, it was *not* possible to express the most radical views with impunity. Heywood's rashness consisted in attempting to extend the outer limits of free speech and permissible discourse.

Heywood was totally enraged by Tucker's arguments. The **Word** had been silenced by his imprisonment; but from his cell in Charlestown Prison he expressed himself by writing a series of letters that were printed in Moses Harman's *Lucifer*:

Looking back to where Mr. Tucker stood, and to the immortal work done by him in Princeton, New Bedford, Cambridge, and Boston in 1875-8, work for Liberty in Right, — so grandly, ably, bravely and timely done, — and comparing it with his present attitudes, so short of sight and strength that, owning and controlling a newspaper, he cannot or dare not print an intelligent, honest sentence in defense of freedom of conscience, speech and the press now murderously assailed, what a fearful contrast!<sup>44</sup> Liberty, Heywood charged, "once gave evidence of belief in Mental Freedom . . . [yet it had become] part of the great imprisoning majority, silently acquiescing in the suppression of newspapers and the imprisonment of editors and publishers suspected of explicit utterance of Natural Right."<sup>45</sup> Heywood reiterated his commitment to Labor reform, but declared that Love and Labor cannot be divided. He went on to argue that the root of all social evil was in the startling fact: "*The creative sex organs of human beings are not recognized as worthy, in open, face to face discourse . . . but the SEX QUESTION has come, and come to stay, until all classes, nations, races, can read of it, and listen to it with a sobriety worthy of the ineffably serious issues it brings.*"<sup>46</sup>

Despite this heated exchange, Tucker maintained admiration for Heywood and felt for him in his plight. He expressed his fear regarding the effect prison would have on an old and feeble man and recalled how weakened Heywood had appeared from one visit to the next in his Dedham Jail cell in 1878.<sup>47</sup> For his part, Heywood said of Tucker in a letter from Charlestown Prison:

## Benjamin R. Tucker and the Champions of *Liberty*

Of a fine physique and presence, able, alert, self-sacrificing, Mr. Tucker's journalistic power would put him at the head of money-making metropolitan journalism could he quit advocacy of ideas which, practically, bring no money. The soul of honor, always doing as he agrees, a quick, affluent, and thorough worker, I trust faith in the essential and the absolute of life is not to die out of him.<sup>48</sup>

More generally, Tucker had been introduced to labor reform, free love, and anarchism by Heywood. For twenty years, the two men had engaged in the social struggle, fighting many fights together. Tucker willingly acknowledged his debt to Heywood when he wrote that the Princeton radical was the person who "had put me in the path that led me to anarchism."<sup>49</sup>

### Footnotes

1. For details on Ezra Heywood, see James J. Martin, **Men Against the State: The Expositors of Individualist Anarchism in America, 1827-1908** (Colorado Springs: Ralph Myles Publisher, 1970), pp. 105-125; see also Heywood's pamphlet *Uncivil Liberty* (Ralph Myles Publisher, 1978) (reprint) introduction by James J. Martin; Hal Sears, **The Sex Radicals: Free Love in High Victorian America** (Lawrence, Kansas: Regents Press of Kansas, 1977), pp. 153-82; and Marvin Lieblich, "Ezra Heywood: Intransigent Individualist," unpublished research paper (Waltham Mass.: Brandeis University, 1970).
2. "The Life of Benjamin R. Tucker: Disclosed by Himself in the Principality of Monaco at the Age of 74," Tucker Collection, New York Public Library, pp. 79-80, 84, and 69.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 85.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 85-90.
5. Ceres Heywood Bradshaw to Agnes Inglis, April 10, 1948, Labadie Collection, University of Michigan.
6. "The Life of Benjamin R. Tucker," p. 83.
7. Emmanie Sachs, **The Terrible Siren - Victoria Woodhull** (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1928), pp. 242-3. One chapter of this book, called "Mr. Benjamin R. Tucker's Story," pp. 236-66, was authored by Tucker.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 243.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 245.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 246.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 253.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 250.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 265.
14. **The Word**, April, 1875. p. 2.
15. **The Word**, December, 1875, pp. 1-2.
16. Ezra Heywood, **Cupid's Yokes** (Princeton: Co-operative Publishing Company, 1876), p. 23.
17. Benjamin R. Tucker, "Vale-

## Benjamin R. Tucker and the Champions of *Liberty*

- dictory," *The Word*, December, 1876, p. 2.
18. *Ibid.*
  19. Ezra Heywood, **The Great Strike** (Princeton: Co-Operative Publishing Company, 1878), pp. 11,22-23.
  20. For information on Anthony Comstock, see Heywood Broun and Margaret Leech, *Anthony Comstock: Roundsman of the Lord*, 1928.
  21. "An Announcement and Appeal," **The Word**, August, 1878, p. 2.
  22. Tucker, **Proceedings of the Indignation Meeting Held in Faneuil Hall, Thursday Evening, August 1, 1878** (Boston: Benjamin R. Tucker, 1878).
  23. "In Memoriam," (obituary of Laura Kendrick), *Liberty* 13(1882):3.
  24. Tucker, "The Pardon," **The Word**, December, 1878, p. 2.
  25. This account is from Tucker, "Walt Whitman and Comstock," **The New York Herald**, Paris, November 23, 1930.
  26. Ralph E. McCoy, "Banned in Boston: The Development of Literary Censorship in Massachusetts," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois, 1956, p. 113.
  27. **Free Speech - Report of Ezra Heywood's Defense Before the United States Court, April 10, 11, 12, 1883** (Princeton: Co-Operative Pub. Co.), pp. 17, 31.
  28. Tucker, "On Picket Duty," *Liberty* 29(1882):1.
  29. Tucker, "On Picket Duty," *Liberty* 14(1882):1.
  30. Tucker, "On Picket Duty," *Liberty* 36(1883):1; and "The Value of the Heywood Victory," *Liberty* 37(1883):3.
  31. Whitman to O'Connor, November 12, 1882, in Edwin H. Miller (ed.), **Walt Whitman - The Correspondence-Volume III: 1876-1885** (New York: New York University Press, 1964), pp. 314-15.
  32. O'Connor to Whitman, April 1, 1883, in Horace Traubel, **With Walt Whitman in Camden, Vol. II** (New York: Mitchell Kennedy, 1915), p. 260.
  33. Traubel, Volume II, pp. 241, 255.
  34. Traubel, **With Walt Whitman in Camden, Volume I** (Boston: Small, Maynard, and Company, 1906), p. 350.
  35. Liebling, Ezra Heywood, p. 43.
  36. Tucker, "Shoot Folly As It Flies," *Liberty* 158(1890):6.
  37. Tucker reply to A.H. Simpson, "Are Our Skins in Danger?," *Liberty* 160(1890):5.
  38. Tucker, "A Lesson in Tactics," *Liberty* 165(1890):4.
  39. Simpson, "Where is the Victory?," *Liberty* 166(1890):5.
  40. Sears, **The Sex Radicals**, p. 111.
  41. Angela Heywood, "Natural Modesty," **The Word**, March, 1889.
  42. Sears, **The Sex Radicals**, p. 178.
  43. Tucker reply to Simpson, "Are Our Skins in Danger?," *Liberty* 160(1890):5.
  44. E. Heywood, "Wordocratic Wisdom," **Lucifer**, June 5, 1891, pp. 2-3.
  45. E. Heywood, "Ezra H. Heywood to Friends and Foes," **Lucifer**, April 24, 1891, p. 3.
  46. E. Heywood, "The Sex Question Has Come to Stay," **Lucifer**, May 20, 1892, pp. 3^t.
  47. Tucker, reply to Simpson, "Are Our Skins in Danger?," *Liberty* 160(1890):5.
  48. E. Heywood, "Wordocratic Wisdom," **Lucifer**, June 5, 1891, pp. 2-3.
  49. Sachs, **The Terrible Siren**, p. 243.