

Transnational Feminists - The White Ribbon.

*Ph.D. Åsa Bengtsson
University of Halmstad, Sweden.*

The 10th Nordic Gender History Conference in Bergen August 9-12th
Session: "Feminism and Gender in a Trans-national Perspective"

Christian temperate women at the beginning of the 20th century are rarely connected to radicalism or feminism, and female Christian associations and the charitable activities by individual women of a Christian conviction have probably more often been considered conservative, promoting a traditional female ideal that consigned women to the private sphere. In this paper I will introduce my thesis, *Temperate women, educators, entrepreneurs and political agents. The White Ribbon 1900–1930*, and demonstrate quite the opposite.¹ The White Ribbon is a female Christian temperance organisation, founded in Stockholm in the year 1900. Its aim was to create a temperate and ethical society, and during the first half of the 20th century The White Ribbon was one of the largest female organisations in Sweden.² In those days, it was a well-known participator on the political arena, but today it is an anonymous organisation, and its members are just as unknown now as they once were well-known. Until now this organisation has been quite invisible in research, even in the field of Swedish female suffrage and women's movement.

The overall impact of the Christian temperate activists has in my opinion been underestimated, and in the first part of the paper, the purpose is therefore to briefly demonstrate the contextual and the transnational background of partly the temperance movement, partly the American temperate female activists, who were of significance for spreading ideas of feminism. The second part is a presentation; or rather the summary of my thesis *Temperate Women*, in which the result of my research is introduced, and finally I finish with a comment of conclusion.

The spreading of ideas and ideology

Temperance associations had initially been formed in Sweden during the first half of the 19th century by members of the nonconformist churches. The consumption of alcohol was at this time very high, and the aim of the associations was to scare and to save drinkers to sobriety. By this time, there was not yet a social movement to talk about. In the 1850s alcohol consumption became a political issue when the law that placed the selling and serving of alcoholic beverages under municipal companies was passed in 1855. The politics of alcohol then became a local question, and thereby, an issue for members of the temperance associations, who were often also active in political parties, and consequently, on the local political arena.³ The political culture of

¹ Bengtsson, Åsa, *Nyktra kvinnor, Folkbildare, företagare och politiska aktörer. Vita Bandet 1900-1930*. Gothenburg & Stockholm 2011.

² The national union was discontinued in 2005, but some individual associations still exist. Only the National Association for Women's Franchise (LKPR) was larger until 1921 when it was discontinued

³ Johansson, Lennart, *Staten, supen och systemet. Svensk alkoholpolitik och alkoholkultur 1855-2005*. Stockholm 2008 pp 13, 19ff, 31ff, 49-50, 71.

the revival movement and the free churches claimed the individual's responsibility and duty to participate in the social and political life and to be an active citizen. This culture was transferred by the members to the temperance movement and here it was particularly important since the ballot was an instrument in the politics of alcohol and to create a temperate society.⁴

At the end of the century a temperance movement began to take form when the gender mixed American temperance associations were brought to Sweden. The Swedish Baptist preacher Olof Bergström returned from the USA and started The Independent Order of Good Templars, IOGT, in 1879, and in the 1880s the strongly religious association The Blue Ribbon was formed by the teetotaller and publisher Oskar Eklund after a visit to Great Britain. The question of suffrage became a very important question for the temperance movement. Since the politics of alcohol was an issue that was handled on the local political arena, and a local alcohol prohibition (the local veto) was consequently considered a viable aim in several places. The temperance associations became political organisations of interest, and its members were active agents on the political field, waging political issues to promote a temperate society. The temperance organisations had now taken the form of a social movement.⁵

At the turn of the century the alcohol consumption was statistically lower than ever before in Sweden, and about 230 000 Swedish people were members of a temperance association.⁶ The temperance movement was accordingly well established when The White Ribbon was founded by the Good Templar Emelie Rathou in 1900.⁷ She had been one of the leading women in the IOGT, so why start a new female organisation? In the largest organisation, the IOGT, about 40% of the members were women, and in the Blue Ribbon the proportion was 50%. Even though half of the temperance movement was female, it was dominated and governed by the male members. Female members on high positions were rare, few women were published in the temperance journals, and only a couple of the 30 or so lecturers were women. Emelie Rathou was one of them. Mostly, the female member's task was to make coffee, while the men were the decision makers and the discussants. Male and female differences and duties were strictly maintained.⁸

The need of a separate female organisation can accordingly be found in the problem of gender within the temperance movement, but also in society in general. In a booklet introducing The White Ribbon's program, it was explained that in the mixed unions women were considered to be silent and passive members. In order to make themselves heard, the female teetotallers therefore had to join in separate associations.⁹ Some decade earlier, the unequal situation of gender in the American movement had in the same way led to separate female association, but

⁴ Ambjörnsson, Ronny, *Den skötsamme arbetaren. Idéer och ideal i ett norrländskt sägverks-sambälle 1880-1930*. Stockholm 2001 (1988) pp 247-248.

⁵ Bengtsson 2011, pp 31ff. Johansson, Lennart, *Systemet lagom. Rusdrycker, intresseorganisationer och politisk kultur under förbudsdebattens tidevarv 1900-1922*. Lund 1995. p. 10; *Svenska folkrörelser 1*. 1936. pp 16ff. About social movements see eg. Håkan Thörn's *Modernitet, sociologi och sociala rörelser* (1997) & *Rörelser i det moderna* (1997); and Charles Tilly's *Social movements 1768-2004* (2004).

⁶ Johansson 1995, p. 10; *Svenska folkrörelser 1*. 1936. pp 16ff. Read about the American temperance unions in eg. *Alcohol and Temperance in Modern History: a Global Encyclopedia*. (2003).

⁷ Read about E. Rathou in: Åsa Bengtssons "Emelie Rathou och *Vita Bandet*. Rabiata och radikala kvinnoröster." i *Presshistorisk årsbok 2010* (2010); Åsa Bengtssons "Nyktra, frisinnade kvinnor." i *Parti eller rörelse? Perspektiv på liberala organisationsstrategier 1880-1940* (2010) Ed. Tomas Nilsson & Martin Åberg; Brigitte Mrals *Talande kvinnor. Kvinnliga retoriker från Aspasia till Ellen Key*. (1999).

⁸ Gunneriusson Karlström, Märit, *Konsten att bli och förbli folkelig. Svenska kyrkans och IOGT:s strategier och omvandling i kampen på offentlighetens arena 1880-1945*. Uppsala 2004, pp 98-100; Edquist, Samuel, *Nyktra svenskar. Godtemplarrörelsen och den nationella identiteten 1879-1918*. Uppsala 2001p. 215; Bengtsson 2011, pp 45ff.

⁹ Rogberg, Ina, *Hvita Bandet, dess utveckling och syften*. Stockholm 1904. p. 3.

the separation from the male organisations did in fact have even greater impact, that later would cause the constitution of the White Ribbon.

Just like the Swedish Revival movement the Great Awakening in America had great impact on ordinary people and especially left an imprint on women. The religious movements encouraged both men and women not only to read the Bible, but also to have and to articulate their opinion and to participate as a social citizen.¹⁰ The American female teetotallers had begun to form female auxiliary temperance associations already in the 1840s. However, the male dominance within the movement was just as effective as in society in general. The lack of influence was unsatisfying, especially for the two most prominent female teetotallers, Elisabeth C. Stanton and Susan B. Anthony. When Stanton, who was also active in the anti-slavery movement was refused to speak her opinion at The World's Anti-Slavery Convent in London 1840 she reacted, and initiated a women's convent in Seneca Falls in New York in 1848. She wrote a manifest which was then discussed during the convent, and finally expressed in *The Declaration of Sentiments*, a feminist version of *The Declaration of Independence*, in which women's economic rights and the right to education were demanded. This was the start on what would later become the women's movement.¹¹

In 1852 Anthony was denied to speak her opinion at a temperance convent arranged by The Sons of Temperance, with the excuse that the female members had only been invited as listeners, and that they were to be seen, but not heard. As a counter action, Stanton and Anthony left the mixed temperance unions, and formed the New York Temperance Woman's Society. When The World's Temperance Convention in 1853 excluded women delegates from participation, Stanton and Anthony decided that they had had enough, and they left the temperance movement in order to work for women's franchise instead.¹² However, they were not the only ones unhappy with the issue of alcohol and women's lack of influence. In 1873 a temperance lecturer managed to electrify a female audience to cause a protest march to bars and saloons. The protest quickly escalated into marches all over the villages, spreading rapidly from town to town, from state to state. The phenomena has been called the Woman's Crusade, and for more than a year 911 protest marches, with between 57 000 and 143 000 women, took place in 19 states in America.¹³

The impact of the Woman's Crusade was great, however, not on the consumption or production of alcohol. According to the researcher Ruth Bordin, the Crusade had its greatest impact on the American women. It became an emancipating force, particularly for the religious women that would otherwise not had fought for women's suffrage, nor become involved in the women's movement. The temperance and alcohol issue were important and legitimate issues for women to run in public. The crusades made women conscious of what happened when they united in a collective action. When joining the crusade they found a sense of togetherness and an

¹⁰ Ambjörnsson 2001, pp 247-248, Sanders, Hanne *Bondevækkelser og sekularisering. En protestantisk folkelig kultur i Danmark og Sverige 1820–1850*. Stockholm 1995. pp 198-200, 317; Evans, Richard, *Kvinnorörelsens historia i Europa, USA och Nya Zeeland 1840–1920*. Stockholm 1979, pp 54ff.

¹¹ Evans 1979, pp 55ff. Stanton and Anthony initiated later initiated the formation of the American suffrage organizations, the International Council for Women. See Leila J. Rupp's *Worlds of Women. The Making of an International Women's Movement* (1997).

¹² Mattingly, Carol, *Well-Tempered Women. Nineteenth-Century Temperance Rhetoric*. Carbondale & Edwardsville, 1998, pp xiii-xiv, 22-24. Anthony did however continue to visit the temperance convents and was also a participating in the WCTU.

¹³ Mattingly 1998, p 41.

identity.¹⁴ A network of women was rapidly created, and soon became a guide to the growing women's movement.¹⁵

During the crusades in December 1873, Ester McNeil formed the first American White Ribbon association in Fredonia, New York. The Woman's Christian Temperance Union, WCTU, was constituted, and it began to replace the spontaneous campaigns. Soon local branches were opened in other villages, towns, cities and states. In 1874 they all met for a big convent in Cleveland, and WCTU was constituted as a national union. More than 400 women joined at the convent, and a comment was heard; a convent like this had not been possible a decade before "when woman was often no more than a slave to man".¹⁶

The American WCTU has been the object for many researchers. It was the largest female organisation in the USA, and it has been considered to be very important for American women. Anne Wittenmeyer led the WCTU during the first five years. She maintained a conservative position and meant that religious revival education, persuasion and prayer were to be the main method of the WCTU. This point of view was soon questioned by Francis Willard, who argued that the organisation should become politically engaged, and also demand women's suffrage. Her arguments made her extremely popular, and she was appointed chairperson in 1879. The number of members grew from 27 000 in 24 states in 1879, to 73 000 members in 42 states in 1883. Willard's leadership was very successful, and was chairperson until her death in 1899.¹⁷ She was considered to be the most famous woman in the USA, and she has been called the uncrowned queen of America.¹⁸

The American White Ribboners did not only see Woman's Crusade as a protest against alcohol, but also as a protest against women's lack of civil rights. Barbara Epstein claims that the WCTU was characterized by the conservative view on women's position in society, and that the members cannot be seen as feminists, since their goal was a moral improvement of society rather than women's emancipation.¹⁹ This statement have been questioned and contradicted.²⁰ Willard argued that the family was a political issue, and that women's suffrage was necessary for the welfare of society. The ballot was women's weapon against the abuse of alcohol, and consequently an instrument to protect the home.²¹ The idea of the "home protection" was, according to Suzanne Marilley, Willard's way to show how women could overcome their subordination and participate in politics with a legitimate cause and without being a threat to men.²² Willard used religion and the word of the Bible to support the demand for women's political rights and to make the female culture and the private sphere into a political issue.²³ To

¹⁴ Bordin, Ruth, *Woman and Temperance. The Quest for Power and Liberty, 1873–1900*. Philadelphia 1981, pp 30-33.

¹⁵ Cook, Sharon Ann, *Through Sunshine and Shadow. The Woman's Christian Temperance Union. Evangelicalism, and Reform in Ontario, 1874–1930*. Montreal & Kingston 1995, pp 29-30.

¹⁶ Bordin 1981, pp 34-36.

¹⁷ Epstein, Barbara, *The Politics of Domesticity. Women, Evangelism, and Temperance in Nineteenth-Century America*. Middleton 1981,

¹⁸ Kimble, James, "Frances Willard as Protector of the Home. The progressive, Divinely Inspired Woman." in *Lives of Their Own: Rhetorical dimensions in Autobiographies of Women Activists*. Ed. Martha Watson. Columbia 1999.

¹⁹ Epstein 1981, pp 147-148.

²⁰ Marilley, Suzanne. M., "Frances Willard and the Feminism of Fear." i *Feminist Studies*, Spring 1993; Tyrrell. Ian *Woman's World. Woman's Empire. The Woman's Christian Temperance Union in an International Perspective, 1880–1930*. Chapell Hill & London 1991, p 9; Bengtsson 2011, p 28.

²¹ Bordin 1981, pp 46; Slagell, Amy, "The Rhetorical Structure of Frances E. Willard's Campaign for Woman Suffrage 1876–1896." in *Rhetoric & Public Affairs*. Vol.4. 2001:1, (1-23), pp 3 ff, 8ff.

²² Marilley 1993, pp 15-16.

²³ Slagell 2001, p. 8-10; Marilley 1993, pp 20-25.

create a temperate and morally pure society, the WCTU worked from basis of Evangelical Protestantism and mission, and from three watchwords: agitate, educate and legislate.²⁴

By 1885 the WCTU, its journal *The Signal Union* and its motto “For God and Home and Native Land” had spread all over the world by travelling missionaries, and at a convent in Boston the international organisation was established in the World’s Woman’s Christian Temperance Union, WWCTU, and every second, and later every third year the world’s organisations met for a convent somewhere in the world. When Stockholm hosted the world convent in 1934, more than 800 White Ribboners from all over the world participated.²⁵

Ian Tyrrell has studied the transnational phenomena of the WWCTU and he considers it to be a form of American cultural imperialism.²⁶ The motto of WWCTU was important for associations all over the world, and it was a leading star for the White Ribboners’ work and commitment. It did not only imply that the temperance mission was authorized by God, but also that the members had a special mission with connotations that indicated a quest for equality. “God and Home” were spheres that women were expected to associate with, but “Native Land” was a male area connected to the patriotic warrior as a citizen. From the view of the White Ribboners, women were not victims that needed protection; they were to become patriotic warriors and citizens to protect home and nation from the threat of alcohol and immorality. The motto indicated the importance of women’s participation and power in society.²⁷ It also indicates an ideological perspective that was neither conservative, nor compatible to the traditional view of women’s subordinated position in society.

A study of temperate women in Sweden.

The white ribbon, tied around the globe with a bow, became the symbol of the WWCTU, and it would later give name to the Swedish branch. The first association was founded by Emelie Rathou in 1900 on Östermalm in Stockholm, and she immediately connected it to the WWCTU. She had visited the Norwegian branch during Nordic Temperance Conference in Christiania only a couple of week before, and she became inspired to start an association. She called for a meeting among the temperance movement and before long The White Ribbon was established in Sweden as well. With financial help from the WWCTU Rathou travelled around the country and started new local associations. Soon, The White Ribbon had spread all over the country, becoming the second largest female organisation in Sweden. In 1921 it became the largest one when the National Association for Women’s Franchise was closed. I have studied and analysed the Swedish White Ribbon in my dissertation *Temperate Women*, and the following is an excerpt of the English summery, slightly adjusted into a conference version.²⁸

²⁴ Slagell 2001, p. 4-5; Bordin 1981; Mattingly 1998, pp 178, 188. In 1901 the WCTU had about 158 500 paying members, while the national suffrage union, NAWSA, had about 9 000. In 1914 the NAWSA had about 70 240 members, and the WCTU had 346 600 in 1919. The WCTU did however only register the paying members and everyone did not have to pay membership to the national organization, only to the local ones. Poor and black women did for example not have to pay and were therefore not accounted for in the number of registered members, according to Mattingly 1998, p 188.

²⁵ Elgham, Elsa, *Vita Bandet i Sverige 1901-1961*. Stockholm 1965 pp 281.

²⁶ Tyrrell 1991, p 5.

²⁷ Mattingly 1998, p 39ff.

²⁸ The following text is an excerpt of the summery of the dissertation, and therefore there are few references. You are directed to find the sources in the book. I have, however, put footnotes to each chapter, and also when I have added the names of researchers that can be of importance for reading the text.

The starting position in the study is taken from the research of the Swedish temperance movement. While the male-dominated part of the movement has been studied and recognized as an important participator in both politics and in the process of democratization of Sweden during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the female activists have been forgotten. Previous research about the political work democratic ambitions of the temperance movement generated questions whether The White Ribbon was involved in politics and had any political influence like the male-dominated temperance organisations. The aim of the thesis was therefore to investigate the White Ribbon's social and political commitment and its ideological approach during the first three decades of the 20th century.

I have studied the organisation's journal, by the same name, *The White Ribbon*, but I also used the organisation's own history as a supplementary source of facts. I problematized the White Ribbons ideological approach and culture in relation to the prevailing and predominant outlook on women, which I call a "domestic" view of women. This view emanated from a Christian and a bourgeois stance, and it advocated that the position of the bourgeois woman was in the private sphere of the family and home, while the public sphere was for men.

I treat the organisation as a social movement, and I use a theoretical perspective of social movements as an analytic instrument. A social movement arises when a group unites due to a feeling of alienation and a conflict with those in power and the political establishment. Therefore, by its very nature a social movement can be viewed as always participating in a discursive political field. The Swedish sociologist Håkan Thörn has developed a theoretical and methodological framework for an analysis of a social movement which I found to be a useful. This theory aims to construct the collective identity of the movement by a close reading of the movement's texts, in this case the journal of the organisation. This is done by discussing what the movement identifies as social problems, what it apprehends to be the reasons for these problems, and what strategy the movement chooses to deal with these problems in order to create the prognosticated change. Thereby, I can study both the ideas and the ideological approach of the White Ribbon, as well as the more practical activities.

In order to capture the ideological fundament I start by looking into the background of some of the main characters that appear frequently in the journal.²⁹ I discuss them from a theoretical point of view as *movement intellectuals*. They are the persons who articulate the movement's ideology, and my analysis exposes the dominating norms and values of the White Ribbon, which identifies some obvious dimensions for the remaining investigation. The study of the movement intellectuals shows that the leading stratum derived from a bourgeois middle class. Most of them had a religious background and most of them were engaged in social politics and participated in public debates. They were all committed to and members of several associations, such as temperance and women's suffrage organisations, free churches and political parties. Accordingly, they were well familiar with the democratic principles of organisations and they were also part of large social networks.

After the leading White Ribboners have been introduced, the study moves on to an outline of their basic world of ideas.³⁰ When analysing the predominant paradigm both in the structure of the organisation's work and in the White Ribboners' argumentation and propaganda, it is obvious

²⁹ Bengtsson 2011, Chapter 3. "Vita Bandet" (The White Ribbon) pp 58-82. The chapter deals with the founder Emelie Rathou, Gerda Meyerson, Ina Rogberg, Anna Preinitz och Elsa Bengtsson, since they appear frequently in the journal and since they were also leaders of the organisations' different departments.

³⁰ Ibid. Chapter 4. "Kultur och ideal" (Culture and ideal) pp 83-140.

that the religious culture dominated. The study shows a strong religious heritage that can be traced both to the WCTU and to the revival movement. The White Ribboners argued that a woman was a Christian individual, and therefore should have social, juridical and political rights on same basis as men. In contrast to the more traditional point of view, they claimed that it was the woman's Christian right, duty and responsibility to act in the public sphere and to participate in politics, in order to create a better and temperate society.

Even though the organisation clearly opposed the bourgeois traditional view of where and how women should act, the study shows that a Swedish bourgeois middle-class paradigm still dominated the ideas of the organisation. However, this was a male-powered paradigm. Like the male led temperance unions, The White Ribbon carried and spread the ideal of education and of respectability, which was typical of the bourgeois middle class. These characteristics were, however, associated with men and masculinity. The organisation claimed that reading and self-education were also essential elements for women to become full citizens. The literary and aesthetic culture was important to become a well-informed and well-bred, capable and respectable member of society, just as it was fundamental for the progression of the nation.

The White Ribbon's journal (by the same name) was primarily used for propaganda and for spreading political and social information. However, it was also an arena for aesthetic culture. The White Ribboners can be regarded as a kind of cultural agents in a cultural arena. Many of them were authors and poets, and some had journalistic skills. Literature was reviewed and recommended. The organisation put together a rentable travelling library for the local associations. The journal also published illustrations of and articles about art. Lyrics, short stories, fiction and articles by both members and other female writers were published. In the journal *The White Ribbon* showed that both fictional and real women participated in the fight for temperance.

The international White Ribboners and the American pioneers appeared frequently on pictures and in articles, and Frances Willard was often quoted and mentioned in tribute articles. Emelie Rathou published a booklet in her honour.³¹ When members and women in general were presented, the journal concentrated on their competence and actual participation in the public sphere and in politics. It thereby presented alternative role models that glorified women's public and political appearance, skills, experiences and competence. In other words, *The White Ribbon* remodelled and launched a different kind of womanhood. Contrary to the traditional domestic ideal, *The White Ribbon* advocated that the ideal woman should participate in the public sphere and in politics. She was a proper and an educated person with knowledge and experience of politics and of how society worked.

The White Ribboners themselves were indeed active citizens. They participated in politics and in different fields of the public sphere. Each local association worked independently in the local area, but in order to organize the nationwide activities and politics, *The White Ribbon* had different departments, led by a movement intellectual, that concentrated on specific fields. This organisation model was imported from the WCTU. Another American legacy was the program, which was wide and not limited to the work of temperance.

Just like in the American organisation and the WWCTU, the Swedish branch formed a "Purity department" in 1907, with the focal point on morality and social purity.³² The department worked to promote high morals, to abolish the licensing of prostitutes, and to prevent the use of

³¹ Rathou, Emelie, *Frances Willard. Ett hundraårsminne 1839-1939*. Stockholm 1939.

³² Bengtsson 2011, Chapter 5. "Kampen för sedlighet och moral" (Fighting for moral and purity) pp 141-172.

contraceptives as well as prostitution. The White Ribboners arranged sexual education, courses, public information meetings and lectures. They published educational booklets; they proposed political motions and wrote petitions demanding reforms and change. Their ambition was to bring about legislation that placed women on a par with men. They demanded, for example, matrimonial juridical equality between the sexes, but they also insisted that sexual education should be a mandatory school subject. Sexual education and knowledge of reproduction would, according to the White Ribboners, make women independent and in control of their body and was therefore a more efficient way of improving morality and equality. The White Ribboners found it important to mold public opinion and to change people's attitudes, and get rid of the predominant double standard of morality that allowed men to live by other rules than women, that is, to have extramarital relations.

The organisation also had a particular department with the ambitions of changing the environment of a female group of stevedores. This department was founded in 1905, and in my study I analyse and explain in detail how it worked to influence public opinion and those in authority.³³ The White Ribbon was critical of the low morality and intemperance at the female stevedores' workplace. The organisation initiated a public debate, arranged public meetings, and pressured involved parties by official letters, criticizing the low morality and use of alcohol as well as the sexual exploitation of girls in the harbours. The White Ribboners successfully put forward suggestions for new legislation concerning the female stevedores, and also raised the question of establishing a female Labour Inspectorate. They argued that a female inspector should be appointed to look out for non-industrial female workers, such as the female stevedores. Their demands were implemented and the stevedores' work was eventually regulated according to law and came under the jurisdiction and supervision of the female Labour Inspectorate.

The White Ribbon criticized women's low, unequal wages and lack of vacations, as well as women's general situation on the labour market, but primarily their work was concentrated on the implementation of new female professions such as the female Labour Inspectorate. They also took an active part in introducing the new profession of female police officers.³⁴ The leader of the morality department investigated the American system of female police officers, and her investigation was used as a basis when introducing the Swedish equivalent.

Another department concentrated on the working-class women on a more private basis.³⁵ As part of the temperance work, the White Ribboners found the sense of togetherness important, and their aim was to attract working women to their organisation by offering the working-class women the solidarity of temperance and a Christian worldview. They also worked to change the female worker's personal life situation. In the early twentieth century the organisation started rest-and-holiday homes for working women all over the country. The White Ribboners argued that working-class women needed a proper rest from both work and household chores. With their rest-and-holiday homes The White Ribbon was breaking ground for a general debate that later included holidays for housewives, which was introduced in the 1930s.

The White Ribbon also started educational courses, the most popular of which were cooking and sewing courses, but other more traditional subjects like arithmetic and social studies were also common subjects. The course activities must be understood as a form of adult

³³ Ibid. Chapter 6 "Kvinnor i förvärvsarbete" (Women in gainful employment) pp 173-204.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid. Chapter 7. "Arbetet med fabriksarbeterskorna – ett folkbildningsprojekt" (Working with the female industrial workers – a project of education) pp 205-229.

education. The White Ribbon arranged series of educational lectures and their education activities developed alongside the temperance and labour adult education institutions, which have been studied and found important for the democratic development of the country despite the fact that they were organized by men and concentrated on male pupils, and therefore were by no means democratic in their form. The White Ribbon's educational activities included people that otherwise were excluded by the other educational institutions. Their courses were particularly an answer to insufficient education for women.

I also discuss the rest-and-holiday homes and the educational courses as philanthropic institutions.³⁶ Likewise, the activities that the organisation run for children and young people, children's homes and homes for outcast women, must also be understood as filling a philanthropic purpose. Other researchers claim that female philanthropists organized institutions on the basis of their gender.³⁷ My analysis proves differently. It shows that the White Ribbon's philanthropy rather emanated from a social political interest and with the aim of creating a social welfare system that included women and girls in need. The organisation ran philanthropic institutions for fallen women, young girls who had gone astray, women with alcohol addiction, and for poor and single women who had recently become mothers. The White Ribboners expressed a social commitment to women who had problems supporting their illegitimate children, and they argued that society had to force the fathers to take responsibility. They considered parenthood to be important for the wealth of nation. The unwed mothers should not alone bear the consequences of the relationship. Instead of being disgraced, the single mothers should, according to the White Ribboners, be highly praised for taking responsibility. The White Ribbon's aid was intended to give these mothers a second chance and new start in life.

The philanthropic activities were answers to what the White Ribboners regarded as social problems, and their institutions were models of solutions to deal with these problems. This commitment must be understood as a reaction to the absence of political solutions, rather than an effect of femininity. The philanthropic institutions quite clearly filled a gap with regard to social interventions for women and girls, and several of these institutions were later taken over by the authorities and are today taken for granted as parts of the current welfare system.

The White Ribboners called their philanthropic institutes "social companies", which leads to the conclusion that they very much saw themselves as entrepreneurs. I therefore also discuss their companies as political innovations to deal with social problems in order to develop an equal society, which is an important dimension in the process of democratization. Furthermore, these institutions must also be regarded as companies and businesses that provided for the growing demand for particular social services. All over the country the organisation also ran non-alcohol restaurants. In my study I show how the White Ribboners could evade the law that prevented married women, who were in fact incapacitated by marriage, from owning property by running their company as a cooperative undertaking.³⁸ Instead of loans and outside investors in the form of banking financiers, they were able to sell share certificates within the social network of the temperance movement.

In Sweden restaurants serving alcohol were regarded as places of high culture, while the non-alcoholic ones were considered to be second-rate and associated with the working class. The

³⁶ Ibid. Chapter 8. "Filantropiska vitbandister" (Philanthropical White Ribboners) pp 230-256.

³⁷ Hammar, Inger, *Emancipation och religion. Den svenska kvinnörelsens pionjärer i debatt om kvinnans kallelse ca 1860–1900*. Stockholm 1999, pp 163-164, 172.

³⁸ Bengtsson 2011, Chapter 9. "Företagarna" (The Entrepreneurs) pp 257-271.

White Ribboners regarded their non-alcohol serving restaurants as a sanitary tool to change the alcohol culture in general. The ambition was to create alternative temperate and high-culture public places. Since many women actually worked in restaurants, the White Ribboners considered the non-alcoholic alternative to be an improved working environment. Here, the waitresses and the female guests would not have to meet drunken men, and all the unpleasantness and immoral behaviour that alcohol and drunkenness entailed. The non-alcoholic restaurants were therefore an instrument for creating a morally decent labour market and a healthy and temperate nation.

The primary track to a temperate society was women's participation in the public sphere. Just like in America, the female suffrage was particularly important to the Swedish White Ribboners and was on the organisation's program from start, which implicates that they claimed women's suffrage two years before the first suffrage association was formed.³⁹ The White Ribboners argued that suffrage and political participation was not only a national, but mainly a human and a Christian right and duty. Like the WCTU, they also claimed the ballot to be the instrument to protect the home, but also and mainly, the nation from the threat of alcohol and immorality. Suffrage meant participation in parliament and legislation, through which the temperate society could take shape. In political historiography, women are rarely included as political actors since they were not allowed into parliament until 1921 and since married women were incapacitated. However, many women were politically active on a local basis, and several White Ribboners had in fact been politically engaged and had positions in local government and councils since the implementation of the election reform in 1909, which allowed both married and unmarried women to vote and be elected to local councils.

The White Ribbon was politically neutral, and the neutrality was a strategy that made it possible for the members to pursue the policy of temperance in all political wings. Many of the organisation's members were in fact active in political parties, mainly the Liberal Party. When the local female franchise was improved in 1909, and then fully implemented in 1918, much of the journal's propaganda was directed to making women realize the importance of being politically conscious and politically active. In order to inspire the female audience, the journal presented the politically active members as role models and encouraged women to join political parties in order to pursue women's liberation, suffrage, temperance and morality. The suffrage campaign was in fact about influencing and convincing women, not only of their rights but mainly of their duty and responsibilities in society. In order to improve the situation for children and home, women had to participate in politics and act in society's public sphere. It was a mother's duty to use her right to vote to contribute to the well-being of her family and to the progression of the nation.

Despite the right to vote a majority of the Swedish female voters refrained from using their ballot. The White Ribboners considered women's lack of political commitment and insufficient participation in the elections to be a serious problem. Even after women became political citizens and universal female suffrage was implemented in 1921, The White Ribbon continued influencing and persuading women to become active political citizens.⁴⁰ However, it was also a fight to end discrimination against women on a high level. Women were constantly reduced in politics, and a silent strategy to separate them from influence was applied by male politicians and decision makers. This strategy eventually became explicit in the referendum about alcohol prohibition in 1922 when it was decided that the ballot papers were to be gender-marked and that

³⁹ Ibid. Chapter 10. "Rösträtt och politiskt medborgarskap" (Suffrage and Political Citizenship) pp 272-307.

⁴⁰ Ibid. Chapter 11. "Det demokratiska genombrottet och folkomröstningen 1922" (The Democratic Breakthrough and The Referendum in 1922) pp 308-331.

the female electorate could not be accepted if they constituted the majority in favour of prohibition; women were not to decide whether men could drink alcohol or not.

In previous research the White Ribbon's participation in this debate has been described as weak and non-existent.⁴¹ My study proves the opposite.⁴² Two years before the decision to mark the ballot papers, the organisation started frantic activity to convince the politicians that that gender-marked ballots were not only unjust, but also inhuman, arbitrary and, particularly, undemocratic. The White Ribbon ran an energetic campaign for the prohibition and against the gender-marked ballot papers. It arranged a large conference to unite women from other associations, and at this congress a new, long-lasting union was set up. The fact that the Swedish parliament decided that women's votes should not determine men's access to alcohol proves how weak the support for democracy actually was when it came to those in authority. At the same time, the inadequate turnout in elections, as well as women's vote by proxy, also proves that the idea of democracy had not yet caught on. Nor had the principles of democracy been intended for women. My study points out that the White Ribbon's suffrage campaigns for female suffrage and fight against the gender-marked ballots was very much a promotion of democratic ideas. The aspect of establishing an attitude of democracy is an important, but sometimes forgotten, part of the process of democratization.

*

The theoretical analysis demonstrates that even if the White Ribboners considered that the existing social problems in general were caused by economic difficulties, housing problems, immorality and alcohol, The White Ribbon identified the predominant gender system as a primary social problem. The general attitude, as well as the current gender system, was dominated by the idea of the subordination of women and of the double moral standard. According to this idea, women were not to participate in the public sphere.

The diagnosis, or strategy, to create a change that would cause a temperate society was mainly to eliminate the patriarchal order of the gender system and to change the attitude of people through education, information and persuasion, but also by demanding impartial reforms promoting equality, increasing the possibilities for adult education, and providing social protection for poor, fallen and alcohol-addicted women and girls gone astray. The utopian vision prognosticated an equal, democratic and temperate society, in which the Christian world view and respectability and educational bourgeois ideals dominated.

The result of the theoretical analysis reconstructs the collective identity of the White Ribbon, which can be described as a temperate, Christian and political citizen, which was quite opposite to the traditional female ideal and the traditional Christian and bourgeois view of women. The domestic ideal was not one that the White Ribboners could relate to. My study shows that the organisation, like the individual members, was in fact active in politics and participated in different public arenas. However, the ideas and activities were in line with the bourgeois middle-class male paradigm concerning respectability and education, entrepreneurship, as well as social and political commitment and participation.

The White Ribbon's ideas and practical activities were critical of and thereby also challenged the order of gender, which means that the White Ribboners in fact were feminists and

⁴¹ Frånberg, Per, "Den sanna kvinnan och politiken. En studie av röstuppdelningsdebatten 1922." in *Scandia* 1983 (49).

⁴² Bengtsson 2011, Chapter 11. "Det demokratiska genombrottet och folkomröstningen 1922" (The Democratic Breakthrough and The Referendum in 1922) pp 308-331.

mainly argued and worked according to an ideological feminist approach. According to the organisation, women were cultural, political and public agents, participating in the development of society, and therefore also political citizens.

With the aim of creating a temperate society, the organisation was in line with the overall temperance movement's political point of view, and therefore had the acceptance of the general public at large. The White Ribboners did not only regard themselves as, but were in fact political agents acting in a political field. The study shows that the organisation was a political lobbyist and a public debater, just like their male equivalents. It hosted large public meetings, and worked continuously to influence public opinion and politicians. The White Ribboners participated in public debates, they wrote official letters, petitions and proposals for political motions. They were also active in political parties, in which they could work for the White Ribbon's cause. I have shown that The White Ribbon did in fact have political influence on issues regarding labour market and women's work environment.

Furthermore, my study also shows that that the philanthropic institutions emanated from an interest in social policy and can be understood as political innovations to solve social problems. Their social and political commitment concentrated not only on temperance but also on achieving equality between women and men in general. In an age when women were rarely welcome in political parties or in trade unions, nor regarded as part of the people or invited to participate in adult education, in politics or in decision making, The White Ribbon offered a forum through which women could participate in public spheres. The organisation did in fact have an influence on decision making, and it must be understood to be a political actor during the first three decades of the twentieth century, just like the other male-dominated temperance organisations. Even if the pronounced aim was a temperate society, my thesis shows that this endeavour also included equality and democracy. My study has not only elucidated the White Ribboners' ambitions and work to change the gender system, but also the social, economic and political structure, which in my opinion must not only be seen as a fight for democratization, but also as a step towards democracy.

Closure

In the first part of this paper I called attention to how the gender problems within the temperance movement affected the ideas and the spreading of feminism. The early American female temperance pioneers, like Elisabeth C Stanton and Susan B Anthony, and the participants of the Woman's Crusade, influenced not only the American female teetotallers, but also women all over the world. The Swedish White Ribbon was evidently influenced by the American pioneers, who were presented like honoured role models and a source of inspiration in the organisation's journal. When Emelie Rathou started the Swedish branch, she did not only import the model of organisation, but also the program, the ideas and the ideology, as well as the rhetorical arguments of the WCTU and the WWCTU. The White Ribboners saw themselves as missionaries and spread the WCTU paradigm. In 1927 the WWCTU had more than 766 000 registered members and up to a million followers all over the world.⁴³

Swedish White Ribbon was not a mirror of the WCTU, but the American organisation's norms, ideas and ideology was transferred, received, and interpreted by the Swedish female

⁴³ Tyrrell 1991, p 2.

teetotallers. The work of the White Ribboners aimed to create an improved, temperate and morally pure society, which could only become a reality when women were equal to men and had the same rights and duties as men. This meant that the patriarchal dominance and the subordination of women had to be eliminated. The ideas of feminism, equality and democracy were engraved in the female temperance activists' aim of creating a temperate society. These ideas were transferred all over the world by the members of the WWCTU.