
Summary:

Sober Reading: The Swedish Good Templar Movement and Literature 1896–1925

The general purpose of this dissertation is to chart the literary activities of the Swedish Good Templar Movement within the context of the social transformation that occurred during the decades around the turn of the century 1900.

The fundamental hypothesis is that the Swedish temperance movement at the end of the nineteenth century must be regarded as a plebeian counterpart to what Jürgen Habermas calls the public sphere of bourgeois society, that is, the liberal, upper bourgeois public sphere which became strong in Sweden during the nineteenth century. The branch of the temperance movement advocating total abstinence had its breakthrough in Sweden during the 1880s and was strongest in numerical terms about 1910. Nearly one half million adults and children were members of some of the many temperance organizations, of which the original American International Order of the Good Templars (IOGT), or the Good Templar Movement as it was called in Sweden, was clearly the largest. The temperance movement was peopled by social groups which were formed as a result of society’s adaptation to capitalism, and which had in common a lack of suffrage according to the voting system at that time. The movement had as a goal ideological and social debate and the stimulation of actual changes in Swedish society. For their members, who were excluded from society at large, the Good Templars assumed the function of some type of alternative society, a social organization of their own. Although there were obstacles to exerting influence on society at large, the opportunity to attain a position of power existed within the alternative society, if its basic values were accepted.
Because the temperance movement was accepted as an alternative public sphere, the assumption also follows that it may be regarded as an alternative literary institution, which grew alongside the literary establishment of the public sphere of bourgeois society. This dissertation comprises a study of what may be regarded as the Good Templars' literary institution. The concept literary institution may be defined as a circuit or a system within which literary works came into being, were distributed, read and evaluated. Therein are included various components such as authors, publishers, distributors and consumers. The concept, however, also encompasses the values and norms which determine how the literature is shaped and evaluated within that system. The literary institution also includes the literary work. The work reflects in its form and content the values and norms which permeate the literary institution.

Using a class and gender perspective, this dissertation sheds light on the factors which contributed to making the literary activities of the Good Templar Movement an alternative literary institution. It deals with how the relationship to the bourgeois literary institution changed during the period, in step with the decline in the movement's character as a counter public sphere. The goal is to show what literary views dominated the IOGT and in what way they contributed to strengthening or weakening the character of the alternative literary institution, and what various functions the literature had which was produced and read within the movement.

The investigation has been carried out in three phases. In the first, presented in Chapter 3, the central production and distribution of literature within IOGT has been studied. From the very beginning the publication and distribution of literature associated with the movement was extensive. Characteristic for the early years, the 1880s and the 1890s, was that the literature was nearly always related to the temperance question and was published and distributed by the authors themselves or by small publishers personally associated with the movement. In 1896 Svenska Nykterhetsförlaget (The Swedish Temperance Publishing House) was founded by IOGT's Swedish Grand Lodge. The publishing company was the first directly associated with a temperance organization and also became the largest publishing house and newspaper publisher within the entire Swedish temperance movement. Both fiction and non-fiction for children and adults were published, as were pure propaganda pieces, temperance oriented weekly magazines, Christmas magazines, literary magazines and children's magazines.
As early as 1900 Svenska Nykterhetsförlaget joined Svenska Bokförläggareföreningen (The Swedish Publishers’ Association), which meant that the books which were published were available through the authorized booksellers. The idea was thus to utilize the bourgeois literary institution’s distribution channels as well as to reach readers outside the movement. This was an expression of the fact that even at this point in time the movement was striving for integration in the literary establishment of bourgeois society. In practice, however, this does not seem to have produced results. At least until the beginning of the 1920s literature was primarily distributed by means of a separate system of agents within the Good Templar Movement which the publishing house modelled after the commercial system of book agents. The readers were mainly associated with the movement.

The small SGU-förlaget (SGU Publishing House), founded in 1906 by the Good Templars’ Youth Movement (SGU), was not particularly interested in reaching readers outside the movement. During the entire period of investigation the major purpose of the publishing house remained supplying the youth movement with the literature needed for their activities. To a certain extent the two publishers should be regarded as representatives for two different concepts of the role of literature within IOGT. Svenska Nykterhetsförlaget was run from the beginning as a company which had the goal of being self-supporting and preferably also making a profit for the movement. SGU-förlaget was characterized instead by a more idealistic attitude toward literature. It was seen as being primarily part of the propaganda apparatus, a means of reaching new members, and thus it was felt that no demands for profitability should be made on the publishing house. The organization’s poor financial situation, however, forced the publishing house to operate on a more commercial basis.

An outstanding central figure in the Good Templar Movement’s literary institution was Oskar Eklund (1861-1940), who joined the IOGT in 1880. Eklund was soon given responsibility for the publication of the major organ of the movement, and he started several other temperance magazines as well, both privately and on behalf of the movement. He also published other works on temperance and in 1884 became established as a printer in Stockholm, where he soon became the most important printer of literature associated with the movement. The printing business was purchased in 1901 by IOGT’s Swedish Grand Lodge and merged with Svenska Nykterhetsförlaget. Eklund was also one of the leading forces in the establishment of Svenska Nykterhetsförlaget and its head until 1924. Eklund was a Liberal politically, and for many years served as a member of the Swedish
Parliament and Stockholm's City Council. His business activities as an investor in the Good Templar Movement meant that even before the turn of the century Eklund had achieved a position in Stockholm's bourgeois society.

Although a couple of the most well-known women in the Good Templar Movement were active as printers and publishers during the 1880s and 1890s, none of them took part in the establishment of Svenska Nykterhetsförlaget. IOGT's two publishing houses became largely male worlds, as did the central organization of IOGT on the whole. From the mid-1890s until 1920 there was, for example, not a single woman within the movement's highest decision-making body in Sweden, although IOGT, at a time when female suffrage had still not become a fact, was officially an organization with equality of career opportunity for both women and men. Female authors were also poorly represented among the works released by their publishers and in the Good Templar newspapers. On the whole the position of female authors was, paradoxically, less favorable within the Good Templar Movement's literary institution, than within the bourgeois literary establishment.

A fundamental requisite for a work to be published by the Good Templar Movement's publishing firms was that its author was abstemious. At the same time it is also apparent that many important authors within the publishing houses and the newspapers also published their material elsewhere. Numerous writers in the Good Templar press were also found in the labor movement press. (Few, however, seem to have had any connection with the free church movement.) Furthermore, temperance publications by authors closely associated with the temperance movement were published by publishing companies within the bourgeois literary establishment. It is therefore doubtful if it is possible to speak about an alternative, literary institution in the case of these authors. The main criterion for the publication and distribution of literature within the Good Templar Movement was not in the first place who the author was, but rather the form and content of the literature. The literary work was the focus of the Good Templar Movement's literary institution.

At the turn of the century the literary view was still dominant within the movement which stressed that literature, independent of genre, should focus on the question of alcohol. Thus all literature that was published by Svenska Nykterhetsförlaget was related to the alcohol issue, as was the majority of the material in the press. Finding the correct social milieu was essential for reaching the desired public. In works of fiction the action was often placed in the kind of milieu from which the movement
recruited its members. Characteristic for this fiction was also its unequivocal and exaggerated nature. Ambiguity and critical distance were qualities that were valued highly in the bourgeois literary establishment. The Good Templar Movement used extremes to get its message across and left little room for reader interpretation. The texts provided minimal opportunity for the reader to misinterpret what was good and what was evil. The fiction comprised a kind of evangelistic literature with a clear nurturing function, not unlike the religious literature found within the free church movement, but with the difference that temperance occupied the central spot. The purpose of the literature was first of all to awaken the reader to the temperance question. It is probably this lack of ambiguity and critical distance which provides the primary explanation as to why this literature has not survived. It forms its own historical category. Most of the authors are quite unknown today.

Much of the literature was written to be read aloud during the lodge meetings, festivities, etc. The texts could thus not be very long. This, in turn, meant that few longer novels were published by IOGT's publishing houses. The literary publications consisted largely of short anthologies and collections of poems and stories.

After the turn of the century purely educational activity began to be developed within IOGT, but the great expansion came during the 1910s. The activities were based on the ideal of self-education, on the concept of study circles which was presented in 1902 by the Good Templar Oscar Olsson, seminary teacher, leader of study groups for the order and later Social Democratic member of parliament. Characteristic for the study circle was its intimate relationship with books and the library. The idea was that the participants in the circle should study at their own pace using books as the primary educational medium. In the study circle there was no requirement that the literature which was read should be concerned with temperance questions, and Oscar Olsson was critical of the fact that the alcohol question was made separate and treated independently. Instead the relationship between temperance and larger social questions was emphasized. The circle activities signaled the beginning of the dissolution of the old, narrow temperance-centered literary view and its replacement by a broader literary view, which had a basically positive attitude toward fiction in general and especially to the classics and known works and authors within the bourgeois literary institution.

For Svenska Nykterhetsförlaget the intensive educational activity meant that book distribution became an increasingly important part of the business during the 1910s. Earlier the publisher had procured some tem-
temperance writings from other publishers associated with the temperance movement. From 1915 to 1923 Svenska Nykerhetsförlaget had a government authorized book agency which distributed state subsidized literature from a number of publishers, including those associated with the bourgeois literary establishment. Distribution took place not only to IOGT but to all organizations which had study circle programs. The publishing house also began to publish educational literature during the second half of the 1910s, a further indication that the demand for a temperance connection in the literature was successively weakened.

The breakthrough of the new broader literary view was strengthened by the fact that the movement began to lose members during the 1910s. Interest in the temperance issue declined among people in general, and the market for pure temperance literature thus decreased. The problem became clearer, not least after the proposal for general prohibition of intoxicating beverages was rejected in the referendum in 1922, and contributed to the fact that Svenska Nykerhetsförlaget received a new, more neutral name to tone down the temperance profile: Oskar Eklunds förlag (Oskar Eklund's Publishing House). The publishing house began to direct its attention toward readers outside the movement in a manner that it had not done earlier, in order to defend its position on the Swedish book market. The epoch of the temperance movement's programmatic literature was finally part of the past, and the fiction published in the mid-1920s consisted primarily of stories of the common people (folklivsskildingar) in which the temperance message and fostering function had been greatly toned down. Even within the Good Templar press, at least the newspapers intended for adult members, reduced their emphasis on temperance matters in favor of stories of everyday life and nature poems.

The second part of the investigation, Chapter 4, deals with local literary activities. The purpose is to illustrate the range in the literary activities within the various parts of the organization and to see the relationship of these activities to the central level. The movement's character as a social organization and its democratic method of operation mean that many local chapters have left source material in the form of detailed minutes of the meetings and membership records, which make possible a thorough study of the local literary activities. It is thus possible to see not only what literature was used, but also which members participated, in terms of sex, social category and age. The process by which the focus on alcohol in literature became less dominant is also distinguishable in the life of the local meetings, although the local study at the same time clearly shows that the IOGT was an ex-
tremely heterogeneous organization. Literature served widely differing purposes, because the chapters, which had as their targets different ages, were dominated by various social categories and worked in dissimilar socio-economic milieus. The lodge Friden (Serenity), which was for adults, and the SGU organization Ljus (Light), which made its appeal to youths over 15 years, were both active in the sawmill community of Skutskär in northern Uppland, located where the Dala River enters the Gulf of Bothnia. Both organizations were clearly dominated and run by workers. Analyzing the organizations from the point of view of gender, it is evident that women had a very weak position, although they comprised one third of the members. They were seldom elected as officers or as members of the program committees and seldom served as readers (reading aloud), which meant that it was largely the men who established the norms for the literary activities.

The literature used by the Skutskär organizations for reading aloud is listed in appendices 4 and 5. In many cases the texts served as entertainment. Especially in Friden the literary activities often had the objective of amusing and diverting the members. At the same time, alcohol played a prominent role in the literature, something which provides a reminder of the fostering function of the texts. It also shows that Friden was largely steered by the older and more narrow literary attitude within the movement, although there were simultaneously indications that a broader literary view was beginning to manifest itself. The new way of thinking also left its stamp on the library which the lodge began to build up in 1910.

The youth lodge Unga Krafter (Young Forces) in Hållsta, Husby-Rekarne was primarily for children between the ages of six and fifteen years and was active in a rural area dominated by large estates, directly south of Eskilstuna in Sörmland. Although the lowest social categories, statare (landless agricultural workers who received their compensation in kind) and cottagers, comprised half of the membership, they had great difficulty making their presence felt in the organization and participating in the social life. Unga Krafter was an organization dominated by children of people from society’s middle strata, children of wage earners who did not call themselves workers and who could be characterized as the "worker aristocracy". At the same time it may be noted that the position of the female members was significantly stronger than in the Skutskär organizations. The majority of those who were elected as officers and readers in the youth lodge were girls, even though boys comprised more than half of the membership. The age of the members was apparently decisive for how the gender contract was formulated in the organizations. Several of the lead-
ers of the youth lodge were also women, which points out the fact that the role of women in the movement was primarily an extension of their roles as mothers and wives - women also took care of the movement's children.

The literature used for reading aloud in Unga Krafter is presented in appendix 6. In the youth lodge the fostering function dominated the literature. The choice of texts was dominated largely by the older, more restrictive literary view which focused on the alcohol question. However, the intent of fostering was obvious even in the literature which did not touch upon the relationship to alcohol, which is explained by the fact that this goal permeated most of the children's literature written in the beginning of the century. In Unga Krafter the fostering element in the literature was strengthened toward the end of the 1910s. There were no indications that a new, broader literary view was on its way in the youth lodge.

The study at the local level also includes an independent study circle formed by the most active members of the IOGT lodges in Eskilstuna in Sörmland, one of the most industrialized cities in Sweden at the beginning of the twentieth century, oriented primarily toward the metal industries. There was also a local Good Templar library in Eskilstuna, which functioned as a lending library independent of the study circle and its activities. The members of the study circle and those who borrowed from the library belonged largely to the middle social strata and the group of well-educated workers.

The literature read aloud in the circle is presented in appendix 7. The choice of texts was characterized from the beginning by the new and broader literary view. Although the reading contained some left-oriented literature mainly concerned with class and peace issues, foreign and Swedish classics dominated, well-known works and authors within the bourgeois literary establishment, which gives the impression that the activities primarily served as an orientation in what may be characterized as the literary canon of the public sphere of bourgeois society. The literature had an educational function. The program included instruction in the Swedish language and arithmetic, and parliamentary exercises were organized, for example, in the form of fictional community council meetings. These phenomena stressed preparation of members for integration in society at large. The study circle was long a purely male gathering. It was not until the middle of the 1910s that women seriously began to become involved. One explanation may be the fact that in discussions among the male members the preferred gender division of labor was one which emphasized the woman's task as wife and mother. Some doubted even women's ability to profit by intellectual education on the whole, and those who felt
that women were intellectually capable stressed the need for male guidance in the educational process. In other words, most of the educational activities were on conditions set by males.

The most frequently borrowed books in IOGT’s lending library in Eskilstuna are presented in appendix 8. The lending library’s stock of books and the lending which occurred were similar to the circle’s choice of literary texts in that the fostering literature which focussed on the alcohol issue comprised only a small part. There, however, the similarities end. In the lending library thrills, adventure and romance were the principle themes, thus giving the library primarily an entertaining function. Many of the authors were famous names in the nineteenth century’s most popular and widespread fiction libraries and family magazines. The book stock in the Eskilstuna library differs markedly from the library in Skutskär and from the selection of literature for reading aloud in all of the chapters. This was probably due to the fact that the library was largely built up through donations and thus not steered by any conscious literary view within the movement. The library was created during the earliest years, in the beginning of the 1880s, when the organization was in the process of being built up and lacked economic means. No public funds were yet available for library activities. Although certain purchases were made after the turn of the century to modernize the book stock and give it a profile which was more in accord with the educational objectives of the movement, the library still consisted largely of entertaining literature. In spite of the fact that it had not been consciously built up to attract the young, the majority of the borrowers were youths at the end of the 1910s. About one fourth were female.

The picture of the Good Templar Movement as an alternative literary institution is also complicated by the fact that even before the educational ideal of Oscar Olsson and the wider literary view had made a breakthrough, more or less well-known authors from the bourgeois literary establishment were admitted into the press and local literary activities. These were found parallel with the large quantity of expressly disciplined temperance literature. Above all, it was Swedish nineteenth century liberal literature (for example, Viktor Rydberg) and the authors of the 1890s (above all, Gustaf Fröding) who were highly esteemed. Humorists and depicters of everyday life (for example, Thure Sällberg) were also popular. From the bourgeois literary establishment the Good Templar Movement adopted literature that was in accordance with its basic values and complemented with literature directly related to temperance questions. Although the temperance literature which was part of the program occupied
such a large place in the movement, especially in the publications in its own publishing house but also in the press and in the local literary activities, even before the time of Oscar Olsson there was a certain literary pluralism. That distinguishes the Good Templar Movement from the free church movement, for example, where the fostering role was more dominant.

The investigations third and final part, Chapter 5, consists of an analysis of themes and motifs in the literature read aloud in the local organizations. The purpose is to show ideology and attitude toward society which was communicated to the members with the help of literature. A large part of the texts naturally dealt with the alcohol issue. Here emerges a major pattern of ideas which implies that alcohol makes people (almost exclusively men) malicious toward those dependent upon them and thus in practice defenceless: employees, women, children and animals. The literature advocates a collective social solution to the alcohol problem, total prohibition of alcoholic beverages. At the same time it expressed an individualistic, moralistic ideology of self-help which implied that the individual must assume responsibility for his/her own life and his/her relationship to alcohol. Another major pattern that may also be distinguished is the exhortation to abstinence, not just in relation to alcohol but also in relation to other stimulants such as tobacco. Ultimately, it was a question of an ideal of conscientiousness which was to be imprinted on the individual's entire way of living, everything from personal hygiene and language to choice of pleasures and attitude toward work. The message was repeated both in children's literature and in the texts which had adults as their target. The ideal of conscientiousness also permeated the educational view of the movement and therefore manifests itself in the debates concerning education and reading which were carried on in the literature which was read aloud. The ideal of conscientiousness was to nurture socially useful citizens.

The relationship between the sexes in the literature that was read aloud is the attitude toward male and female found in the public sphere of bourgeois society. Here woman's role as wife and mother is emphasized. Women in the literature do not use the movement for emancipatory goals. Instead it is the movement which uses women for tasks for which they are considered suited, in accordance with the ideal of sexual differences found in the bourgeois public sphere. The literature also communicates that sphere's attitude toward the relationship between parents and their children, an individualistic ideal of fostering. On the whole it is the bourgeois family which is emphasized in the texts, which may be interpreted as an
expression of the fact that with the help of literature the bourgeois norm was spreading downward in the social strata.

The activities in the local chapters, the choice of literature for reading aloud and the ideology which appears in that literature, do not indicate that the local organizations in any decisive manner were opposed to the ideology that was dictated by the central organization or against the directives which stated how local activities should be shaped. It must, however, be emphasized that the organizations were rather strictly controlled from above. The local chapters were required to report their activities four times a year. Itinerant speakers made regular visits, when they held so-called instructional meetings and inspected the financial records, minutes of the meetings, membership rolls, etc. in order to see that the organization was properly run. In order for the study circles to receive government subsidies for the purchase of literature, the literature first had to be approved by the study leader of the order. If contributions for literature were to be received from the Grand Lodge, the books had to be purchased from the movement’s publishing houses. On the whole that gave the local organizations and study circles little opportunity to act in direct opposition to the centrally issued directives. For members who did not support the ideals and the work methods of the movement, there was hardly any other alternative than to leave it.

The great interest within the Good Templar Movement for popular culture, folk dancing, popular games, dialects, popular beliefs, legends, depictions of everyday life, and folk costumes, etc. appears as an expression of nostalgia at a time when the old agrarian society was about to disappear. At the same time that interest gave the movement a nation-creating function. The Good Templars sought, among other things with the help of literature, to define and preserve a Swedish cultural heritage. The proportion of Swedish material was on the whole rather large both in the publications released by the publishing companies, in the press and in the local literary activities, which is remarkable considering that IOGT was an international organization, with the motto "the world is our field". The Good Templar Movement’s most important contribution to the formation of a national ideal, however, consists of the ideals that were communicated by means of the fostering, moralizing temperance literature, and in this context it is important to emphasize that the exercise of discipline was something that the IOGT considered positive. The temperance movement and the programmatical temperance literature have contributed to the creation of a guilt-ridden attitude toward alcohol in Sweden, which is common even much later than the period with which this dissertation deals.
The Good Templar Movement's literary activities have since become increasingly associated with the activities of the study circles, that is with the new educational program which developed after the turn of the century 1900 and largely bore the mark of Oscar Olsson's broader literary view. This dissertation shows, however, that the literary activities were intensive within the IOGT far earlier, even as early as 1879 when the order was introduced into Sweden. It is also important to emphasize that the study circle activities comprised only a part of the literary activities within the movement. Most of the members came into contact with literature at the meetings of the lodges, the SGU-organization or the youth lodges. In those groups the older attitude toward literature, which was coupled with the temperance ideal with its fundamentally fostering function, long survived, especially in the youth organizations, where it still dominated in the mid-1920s.

According to my interpretation, there is no doubt that Good Templar Movement just prior to the breakthrough of Oscar Olsson's broader literary view may be regarded as an alternative literary institution, even though the position of women was at least as weak as in society at large, and even though the movement borrowed literature from the bourgeois literary institution. One reason is that IOGT started its own publishing houses and its own distribution network, and sought its own groups of readers, that is, developed its own literary system. Most important, however, is that within that system a literature existed that was distinctive: a literature which thematically focussed on the alcohol issue and which acted as an evangelical literature with the goal of redeeming the reader from the hell of drunkenness and from the devil, King Alcohol. Its goal was to reveal the joys of a totally sober society, provide a vision of the totally sober society as paradise. But when the era of the programmatic temperance literature had passed by the end of the 1910s and the beginning of the 1920s, the movement's character as an alternative literary institution gradually dissolved. It became increasingly difficult to distinguish a separate literature with its own character. The literary system also became less restricted.

By the mid-1920s the Good Templar Movement no longer held the same oppositional position to established society as at the turn of the century. Initially the movement recruited members from those who were excluded from society at large. The communal voting reform which was carried out 1907/1909 gave certain organized members of the temperance group the opportunity to participate in society's decision-making process. The final breakthrough for democracy in 1921 meant that members of the
temperance movement made a definitive entry into politics. Increasing numbers were able to attain positions of political power, something which was made easier because the movement was built up parallel to society at large. The organizational techniques and parliamentary exercises had prepared the members for an integration. The political involvement of the temperance movement members had contributed to certain wide-range restrictions against alcohol as early as 1915 when a restrictive system (the so-called Bratt system) was introduced, although the demand for total prohibition of intoxicating beverages was later rejected in a referendum. The temperance issue in other words was not controversial in the same manner as it had been earlier. The changed relationship between the state and local governments and IOGT was even expressed by means of the public subsidies which IOGT's study circle activities and libraries could take advantage of after 1912, and which sometimes became totally decisive for whether an activity became reality or not. The subsidies, which, among other things, were granted on the condition that people who did not belong to the movement could also use the libraries, contributed to dampening IOGT's function as an ideologically specific organization and made it into some type of common, public organ. On the whole, such changes brought the movement into a position between class and state. By the mid-1920s the IOGT was on its way to becoming part of the social establishment, of that Popular Movement Sweden, which was characterized by a relationship to alcohol that was stamped with guilt and bad conscience. The organization's character of an alternative public sphere, of an alternative society, gradually dissolved.