Well-Tempered Women

Nineteenth-Century Temperance Rhetoric

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> would lose somewhat of their faith in humanity if I should drink a drop of wine." . . . Evidently this lady lived in a world so different from my own that it did not occur to her that a temperance woman was a total abstainer! (Willard, *Glimpses* 492)

Willard's concern here is for her image with union members, not the fear of her own addiction.

Alcohol abuse permitted women to focus their fears and anger, and to unite in a common cause: improving conditions for women. Nina Baym suggests that

> In striking contrast to woman's fiction, which frequently uses the motif of the drunkard, the temperance novel stresses, as it must, the failure or inadequacy of feminine moral influence to solve this problem. Many women sacrifice themselves and exert influence to no avail. A temperance novel must show woman's power as insufficient because its purpose is to get temperance legislation passed. (267)

Temperance fiction does often differ from woman's fiction, primarily because fewer stories end happily for women protagonists in temperance fiction, and because the happy bride appears at the beginning of the story rather than at the end. Nonetheless, in a great deal of temperance fiction by popular writers, influence does solve the problem. Numerous writers present woman's influence as a powerful and often successful deterrent or remedy for problems associated with intemperance. And, although the fiction often shows women's powerlessness amidst unjust legal laws and societal conventions, often the narrative explores options and suggests ways in which women might increase their power. Sometimes those suggestions include legal changes, but often they present other ways in which women may protect themselves and maintain a certain measure of power—by remaining single, by very carefully assessing a suitor before agreeing to marriage, and by leaving a marital relationship when the husband and father endangers the physical and economic well-being of his family. The compelling stories written by women about temperance permitted nineteenth-century women to focus their fears and angers, and to unite in efforts to improve their conditions. That, once organized, they were forced to recognize how very powerless they were led them to explore new and more effective means of addressing inequities.

Conclusion: Women of the Century

> The nineteenth century is woman's century [a] marvelous promise of the twentieth century.
>
> —Frances Willard and Mary A. Livermore
> Preface, *American Women*

THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY temperance movement provides lessons for us at the end of the twentieth century. A major contribution to the temperance movement's success was the ability of its leaders to appeal to women across socio-economic, racial, religious, and national identities. Everyday women came to accept the tenets offered by temperance leaders, including the necessity for suffrage and other equal rights for women. Leaders from mid-century through the end of the 1800s understood the need to approach women rhetorically on their own terms, accepting their level of consciousness and practical needs. Frances Willard expressed such awareness best:

> [I]f we are going to win, there is one individual we have got to win—she is the key to our position—the average woman. For the abstract principle of justice on which the woman question is really based, the average woman does not care a farthing; though for the sake of justice in the concrete she often plays the part of a heroine. If she thinks she ought to want the ballot she will seek it with persevering zeal; but she honestly believes that it is more womanly to cry out against than for it. She has been told this from press and pulpit since her earliest recollection, and she has learned the same doctrine from her husband at home. ("The Average Woman" 623)

Willard understood both that change for women would come only when large numbers of women demanded change and that those women would demand change only if convinced to do so by leaders whom they could safely and proudly emulate. Most nineteenth-century women were at least as fearful of being identified as "suffragettes" as many women today are of being labeled "feminists." Willard sometimes protested that the term "strong-minded" should be a designation of pride, but she carefully limited such remarks to such audiences as the National Council of Women and avoided the term at mass gatherings.

Willard also understood the fragile and precarious relationship she held with most women, noting that the "average woman" was not "too well pleased with platform women." She held great respect for the average woman, acknowledging that she might not be versed in current theories, "but this same average woman has a hard sense in the snug round box on top of her head, and whoever counts her out, let not the progressive women do so if they expect to win" ("The Average Woman" 623–4). Nineteenth-century temperance women leaders never "counted out" average women. Rather, they relied on these women to bring about change. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, leadership came from educated and professional women who understood, accepted, and made room for "the average woman."

Today, however, the average woman may be more difficult to define. Many of the changes brought about by nineteenth-century women have provided diverse opportunities and widened the image and identity of twentieth-century women. Women occupy a greater variety of educational levels, employment positions, and familial roles. Nonetheless, with modern techniques for polling women for their beliefs and for gauging their participation in various activities, both inside and outside the home, feminist leaders should be able to understand and appeal effectively to women of different consciousness levels. But to appeal to a broad spectrum of women, academic feminists must abandon complex, theoretical jargon when speaking outside the academy. If they take a lesson from the successful temperance movement, they will learn to speak a language non-threatening to most women. An understanding of parallels and differences with the largest movement of women in the nineteenth century provides helpful models for feminists today.

Women's political situation at the end of this century in many ways parallels their situation at the end of the last. Important correlations apply to leaders' general theoretical approaches. Both groups have recognized the power of language and popular appeal, for example, in reconstructing attitudes and in reproducing culture. In 1892, Frances Willard told her national membership,

> Because language is one of life's greatest educators, let us now attack the phrase, "man and wife" (still standing in the odor of sanctity upon the pages of Catholic and Episcopal ritual), because it incarnates all the serfdom of woman's past, exaggerates sex out of its due subordination to personality, and is false to the facts of the case. (*Minutes of Nineteenth* 117)

Willard recognized the enculturating effect of words, hoping to change their customary use in order to alter modes of thinking. Because of their awareness of such potential, women of both centuries have tried to change societal attitudes by including moral suasion in reform efforts. Nineteenth-century temperance leaders understood the necessity of persuasion, refusing to discard it totally in favor of legislation: "The old battle cry of moral suasion has been a constant weapon . . . [b]ut moral suasion or any other conciliatory means will not accomplish the end we seek. . . . [L]aw and gospel must go hand in hand" (Woodruff 27). Twentieth-century feminists, ostensibly, have focused more on legal redress, but their participation in the late-eighties and early-nineties political correctness movement to change acceptable attitudes differs little from late-nineteenth-century efforts at moral suasion, with both groups understanding the importance of subconscious viewpoints.

Both groups also reflect the importance of the popular press and media in communicating their messages. In the nineteenth century, women made use of both popular fiction and newspaper reporting to change opinions and to garner support. Today's women use television and music to present stirring messages about abuse of women. They also court the news media and capitalize on current events to emphasize their points. Recent made-for-television movies, such as *The Burning Bed*, in which a battered wife strikes back by setting her husband's bed on fire and killing him, as well as attention to real-life happenings, such as the Lorena Bobbitt case and the Clarence Thomas hearings, have served to highlight pervasive sexual harassment and abusive treatment of women; such efforts have helped feminist messages to reach a wide circle of women outside academic venues.

Parallels are also reflected in the specific battles women fight, with late-nineteenth-century rhetoric resonating strongly with issues of the 1990s, such as a woman's right to her own body, equal pay for equal work, and the imperative for women to focus on their own needs. These issues are still unresolved today, and women continue to fight comparable battles. For example, in Iowa at the end of the century, Marion H. Dunham was calling for the right for married women to control their own bodies similar to current efforts to provide legal protection from

rape within marriage: "[T]he wife must be conceded the right to retain as full control over her body after marriage as before, a right now denied both by law and custom, and because of which the foulest outrages have been perpetrated through the ages" (37).

And in 1896, Susanna M. D. Fry from Minnesota highlighted the need for better pay for women:

> There is a sentiment abroad in the land that the Utopian condition expressed in the above caption [Equal Pay for Equal Work] has been attained, at least to a good degree. . . . Women have climbed up to high places to-day, but few of them, even in the schools, receive what men do in similar positions. (33)

Such sentiments reverberate today in women's concerns about efforts to remove affirmative action, and their concern about the inequality of compensation between the genders remains a major issue.

Women continue to care for family at the expense of their own needs. Increased employment and career responsibilities among women have not lessened their family obligations proportionally. Women repeatedly remind one another to make time for themselves. In 1887, Lide Meriwether from Tennessee encouraged women to focus realistically upon their own needs:

> I rejoice in the knowledge that in the ranks of our own, and many other progressive and beneficent organizations, so many thousands of American women are finding themselves, and taking their true and rightful place in the world. . . . The special need of the nineteenth-century-woman is to find herself, and that in a very practical sense! ("President's Address" 26)

The need for women to counter opponents' arguments for limiting women's options are similar as well. Much of the rhetoric associating the "decline of the family" with a woman's changing role reverberates over the centuries. Mary T. Lathrap railed against efforts to contain women's progress based on the sanctity of the family: "If self-respecting women make protest against these things, they are met with the cry that the political and ecclesiastical progress of women will destroy the family" (*Poems* 399).

And much like late twentieth-century leaders, Mary E. Griffith, president of the District of Columbia WCTU, reminded listeners that many women were leaving their "sphere" out of necessity, rebutting the argument that women had less need for just compensation for labor than men: "Men claim higher wages than women for equal work because they have wives and children to support, but *some* women have *husbands* and children to support also" (16).

Nonetheless, temperance women, like many of today's women, believed they had made considerable, permanent progress. Today we hear about the "year of the woman," for example, signifying unusually large numbers of women political candidates. Repeatedly, nineteenth-century women referred to the "age of woman" and the "century of the woman" to extol the place they had created for women in nineteenth-century culture. Typical is this passage from Pamela L. Otis's address before the eleventh annual meeting of the Arizona state WCTU: "This has been called a woman's age. It is indeed the epoch of the awakened woman, and to convince one that it is high time that we recognize the need of this period does not require keen observation or logical deductions" (7).

Such rhetoric is associated with women's charting a new course. Today's women celebrate their pioneering entry into areas previously denied them: Sally Ride—first woman astronaut; Geraldine Fararro—first woman vice-presidential candidate from a major political party. They point to numerous other reasons for pride as women have broken restrictive barriers to career paths: women combat pilots, women professionals, women in public offices. Likewise, nineteenth-century women extolled their own originality and advancement despite a lack of models to emulate:

> In 1874 women, seperated [*sic*] by denominational differences, political preferences and sectional strife; as far apart as nationality, tradition, inheritance, temperment [*sic*] and education could place them, without experience in business or public affairs, with the old landmarks and ideas of woman's sphere left behind and with no precedent to guide them, but feeling the impulse of a divine call, had to be welded into a homogeneous whole, had to be united in a common purpose, had to learn step by step and costly experience what the purpose should be, had to discover, invent and test their methods, and all this to be done in a voluntary society. (Dunham 32)

Women had forged ahead, making progress. Women's claims to unity today are more likely to be along international lines (as for example, the International Conference on Women), and they are unlikely to claim divine guidance. Nonetheless, they continue to believe they are pioneers, testing new waters, creating change for future generations of women, and measuring progress.

Over and over, at state and national conventions, temperance women measured improvement. Because temperance readily accommodated a variety of women's grievances, the movement was both popular and effective. For example, Mary T. Lathrap enumerated to Michigan union members some of the accomplishments of the WCTU: "Ask," she prompted them,

why Lucy Hayes's portrait is in the White House? Why the girls' Industrial School is at Adrian? Why intoxicating wine is banished from the communion table? Go read the record on Constitutional Prohibition in Kansas, Iowa, Maine, and Rhode Island; and of Local Option in Atlanta and through the Sunny South land. Search the state books of fourteen States and one territory for laws compelling the study of temperance physiology; stand by the presses pouring out books to meet the demand of these laws. Then go to Washington and ask why Congress has just passed the first temperance measure since we had a country, and you will find that Mary H. Hunt and the WCTU are a very clearly defined power to the men who voted for the national Temperance Education bill. (*Poems* 336)

In fact, the 1886 Temperance Education Bill passed unanimously in the Senate and with a 209 to 8 vote in the House: "When the President had signed the Bill, he handed the pen, with which he had signed it, to our National Superintendent of Scientific Temperance Instruction, Mrs. M. H. Hunt of Massachusetts—saying that the Bill owed its passage to her" (Meriwether, "President's Address" 31). Hunt had written the bill, and it passed, unamended, as she had written it.

Lathrap and Meriwether mention activities directly related to temperance, but the WCTU was instrumental in achieving legislation in numerous areas of importance to women, some related to temperance only tangentially, if at all. For example, they also effectively worked to raise the age of consent in nearly every state, to guarantee the presence of police matrons for jailed female prisoners, to improve property rights for women, and to amend laws against prostitution in order to equalize punishment for men and women. In addition, they created homes for "fallen women" in many states.

Cornelia B. Forbes, state president of the Connecticut WCTU, extolled this "awakened woman" as follows:

> To her the gates of the future have swung outward. She has a glimpse of wonderous possibilities of achievement, glorious opportunities lie before her. . . . Because of her there is today in place of the timid and retiring, or frivolous, vain, helpless species of woman kind, a vast army of energetic, educated, self-reliant and self-supporting women. (37)

Forbes continued, noting women's newly gained skills in "parliamentary tactics" and in "addressing vast audiences with marvellous power," and provided statistics to show women's entry into education, medicine, religion, dentistry, law, architecture, and more.

Today, women still measure their success by statistical records of women in the professions, as well as by legislation, although the concerns sometimes differ in focus, such as with laws affecting abortion and the continued efforts for an Equal Rights Amendment. For many, such efforts do not focus on substance control, and they are unlikely to draw up legislation or to be credited with it if they have. Efforts to influence education, while still a concern for many women, are unlikely to proceed from a national level.

And much as the initial energy from the late-sixties and seventies women's movement diminished, altered, or diverged into new paths, so did enthusiasm for the broad causes espoused by temperance women. Membership that had grown so quickly in the first decade of the union showed substantially less growth by the 1890s. The reasons are complex and probably entailed the union's changing public image, increasing dissension within the union, and failure to attract young women.

Leaders broadened the union's agenda, but although leaders boasted of the union's forty departments and two-hundred-thousand-plus members, and although such breadth permitted a wide variety of women to become active as public leaders, such diverse interests also changed the identity of the union and eventually promoted dissension from within and criticism from without. The broader focus diminished the easily identifiable and respectfully safe image of the union.

Early criticism of the WCTU was readily absorbed. That women were the primary sufferers from drink had been firmly established, both in speeches and in temperance fiction, and most reproaches centered on women's taking a public role. Such criticism served to further unify members as these attacks were seen as assaults upon women in the union as a whole. However, as leaders included an increasingly varied number of causes and a more diverse membership, the dignified and respectable facade of unity began to crumble, and critics, especially in newspaper accounts, seized upon the opportunity to portray members as petty, squawking shrews.

Perhaps the greatest strength of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union in amassing such a large number of women was that of establishing an effective network of local, county, district, and state unions—a system nonexistent for women today. Unity among women from a variety of ideological, economic, and regional backgrounds, despite many unpopular and "radical" stands by national leaders, was sustained in large measure by the ability of state and local leaders to mediate differences. The national organization's position on states' rights was intended early on to deflect the discomfort of local and regional groups with more progressive national stands. State and local leaders nonetheless found it necessary to remind members of their right to differ with the position of the national union, and often found it necessary to explain national policy

as well. The issue of race, as noted in chapter 4, created severe discomfort for many union members. But efforts at appeasing some members had become necessary much earlier with regards to such controversial national stands as support for suffrage for women, official affiliation with political parties, and the use of local dues to support state and national efforts. Such efforts on the part of Maryland's corresponding secretary to direct members' attention to basic premises is typical:

> I ask those who sometimes fear we are straying from the original purposes of the organization to note particularly the foundation on which we have built, the purpose to use all possible means toward the suppression of the liquor traffic, and to enter into any Christian work connected with this as the Lord may direct. ("Corresponding" 23)

Local and state leaders continually pointed members to the original purpose and strength of the union in an effort to assuage discomfort with more progressive national policy. And as major controversial issues arose, they strove to palliate those matters with their own membership, especially regarding concerns such as suffrage, political affiliation, and the parting with precious money.

Frances Willard's early support for woman's suffrage dismayed and alarmed some local women. In 1878, when Willard called for a resolution supporting suffrage for women, some national leaders expressed concern about how to mediate such a volatile issue with their local members. Mrs. E. B. Hoyt explained that "the public would not understand." Hoyt insisted that she had been asked time and again if she were in favor of women's voting and believed that if she had answered yes, she would have been ineffective. She pleaded that the convention not take an official stand on suffrage for women lest she "feel I cannot go back to the State to which I belong, to do work I hope to do" (*Minutes of WCTU Annual* 32).

After the national organization adopted a suffrage resolution the following year, however, state leaders displayed sophisticated rhetorical acumen in mollifying uneasy members. In an effort to appease her Maryland membership, for example, Mrs. Summerfield Baldwin reminded members of their justifiable pride in the extensive membership of their organization. She also relied upon the diversity within the large numbers to justify the national position:

> Let us always remember that our National Society is composed of women from every State and Territory, women who have voted, women who have acted successfully on School Boards, women who have come from States where there are successful women doctors, lawyers and preachers. They may not think about women's work as many in Maryland do. We all meet together annually to plan for better methods of work, but we can't all be expected to think alike. (21)

Baldwin continued by carefully offering rationales based on temperance and the Bible. Like many leaders, Baldwin made the liability an asset by placing arguments in favor of suffrage before her membership in a manner that might serve to alter their thinking, while attributing the reasoning to others. She thus offered support for the national position while maintaining her affinity with local members:

> The majority think we will never get national prohibition until the women are allowed to vote; again others believe it is a fact that God made man in his own image; male and female created He them, and gave them dominion over every living thing, and think because it was God's plan for woman to be man's helpmeet everywhere, it is the best plan, and the nearer we keep to God's plan for this the better it will be for all humanity. (21)

State and local leaders also served to mediate differences when the national organization moved toward official support of the Prohibition Party. The issue was especially problematic in Iowa, where J. Ellen Foster strongly opposed such action.[1] Mary J. Aldrich, president of the Iowa WCTU, acknowledged members' feelings of bitterness at the stands taken by the national leadership and, at the same time, recognized their many sacrifices for the cause. After empathizing with members, she asked for unity and reminded members of the right of states to take a different stand in such matters: "Miss Willard and the National officers have ever kindly recognized the right of our State Union to maintain a non-partisan attitude." Aldrich continued to seek unity by invoking the "god terms" of Christianity for a spirit of acceptance and unity in support of an image of solidarity:

> [D]ifferent minds will so read events as honestly and conscientiously to reach different conclusions, and I have come to feel that greater, even than the interests of prohibition, so dear to us all, is the importance of each one deciding these questions in such a manner and with such a spirit that we ourselves and the world outside may see that our *christianity* is able to triumph over our *party spirit* in differences of opinion concerning political methods of prohibition work. (6)

Despite efforts at amelioration, however, J. Ellen Foster and the official Iowa delegation finally walked out of the national convention in 1889 and began a separate Nonpartisan Woman's Christian Temperance Union. Although no other states made such a strong show of opposition, many others found it necessary to pacify local and state members on this issue. In Illinois, Mary Allen West dealt with the problem by taking the middle ground:

> Early in the year, we, as Illinois women, were called to take a stand antagonistic to the wishes of our national president, for whom we would gladly have laid down our lives, but for whom we could not yield what seemed to us principle. In our own ranks have come wide divergence of convictions concerning duty. Many of us feel with all the intensity of our nature that the accepted time is *now*. . . . [T]onight I stand between them, with a hand clasping each, thanking God for both and the work he has enabled them to do. ("President's Annual" *Eleventh* 23)

Thus, West pointed to divergent parties within Illinois, acknowledging the validity of each, but, as mediator, exhibiting a desire to somehow join the two oppositions.

Resistance to sending local dues outside of the area of collection also created dissension. Many local unions severed relationships with state and national unions because auxiliary status meant sharing a portion of dues, and many believed that dues "could accomplish more good by being retained at home" than by being sent to a "foreign field" (Hobart 37). However, leaders usually mediated opposition to dues collection. West's effort to mollify members' opposition to a dues increase is typical. She first prepared members by evoking the strength of the WCTU, based on its network of unions:

> The centre of our organization, around which stand State, district, county and local unions grouped in concentric circles, is the National Union, the mother of us all. She has no constituency except in the hearts of her children, who are always loyal to her. (37)

West continued by further emphasizing loyalty and by offering a compromise, one that might not please members altogether, but one that would not increase the personal burden of individual members. West suggested that, rather than increase membership dues, Illinois supplement the national portion of current dues from the state treasury. She concluded her appeal by alluding to the pride of Illinois state members at being special among national groups and pointing to the attendant responsibility of such a position: "Numerically we are the strongest State union in America, paying more dues into the National treasury last year than did any other State. We that are strong should esteem it a privilege to assist in carrying the burdens of the weak" (37). West both invoked members' pride and duty to ameliorate difference and offered compromises in her effort to please both local and national constituents.

Organization alone, however, was inadequate to sustain previous membership growth because, while local and state leaders might have appeased veterans, they failed to attract younger members. In spite of efforts at conciliation, national membership did not continue its rapid growth after 1885. In its first ten years, the WCTU had rapidly increased in membership, official dues-paying participation reaching 135,253. In the subsequent fifteen years, membership grew by just over 20,000 members, reaching 158,477. Concern over slowing growth surfaces throughout WCTU minutes. Often leaders expressed concern that local unions were being "swallowed up by the Reform Clubs" that were part of the "great tidal wave that has swept over" their areas; such leaders stressed the unique character of the WCTU, noting that all temperance and all reform groups did not work for the same end (Moore, "President's Report" *Proceedings* 12).

But most often leaders lamented their inability to attract young women to the organization. Active participation in the WCTU does appear to be strongly generational. Crusade leaders had been described as "matronly," middle-aged mothers or older women, women who had become comfortable with themselves and secure enough in their position to lead public demonstrations. Annie Wittenmyer was forty-seven when she became the union's first president; Frances E. Willard was forty, but her style and primary acquaintances remained relatively fixed over her two-decade reign. Other women who had helped to establish both the national and state unions continued in positions of leadership until their deaths. And, upon Willard's death, Lillian Stevens and Anna Gordon followed as union presidents, both closely aligned with Willard and representative of the established leadership.

From the beginning there were few young members. Young mothers were probably too busy caring for small children and were less likely to have the funds to participate in state and local conventions. Newspaper reports nearly always attested to the white and graying heads that filled the audiences of national conventions, and they acknowledged explicitly that the young women in attendance were unusual. Members also recognized the aging image of union members. In 1887, Mrs. C. S. Abbot reminisced before the Connecticut WCTU convention:

> It was my delight once to be present at a national convention; as I looked over the vast assembly coming from every State in the

> Union I was surprised to see so many beautiful white-haired women. On almost every head it seemed as if there were silver threads. These, I thought are the women in the middle of life. (10)

Very shortly after the union's beginning, WCTU leaders had become concerned that young women were not being enrolled in sufficient numbers. Bands of Hope and other youth organizations flourished, but parents usually determined young children's participation in these groups. Young women were less inclined to join, and union leaders across the country expressed concern.

As early as 1881, Iowa's president, Mrs. V. W. Moore, was expressing concern that "One department of work suffers—that of interesting the young ladies of the State in the work of temperance" ("President's Report" *Eighth* 12). The following year, President Mrs. L. D. Carhart conveyed the national president's concern and recommendation: "[I]f a young lady superintendent of young people's work were secured in each local Union and left free to enlist her friends in her own way, we should soon see the present apathy changed to interest and enthusiasm" (25). In suggesting that young women should be permitted to recruit members according to their own methods, Willard seemed to recognize the need for a different kind of excitement to attract a younger generation. Carhart added her own recommendation that efforts be directed through local unions located in towns with seminaries and colleges to interest young women in membership.

Such problems were not confined to Iowa. Unions across the country were expressing such concern. In Oregon, President Anna R. Riggs "mourn[ed] the lack of advance" in recruiting young women and suggested, as remedy, "more earnest effort along the line of L.T.L. [Loyal Temperance League] work, for this Department is to cover our future recruits for the Y's" (46). But members of the Loyal Temperance League failed to join the Young Woman's Christian Temperance Union in substantial numbers. In Connecticut, Ida M. T. Pegrum explained part of the problem: "Since October last, one Y. auxiliary has been organized and one disorganized. New London Y. was organized in the William Memorial Institute, and quite naturally died as an organization when the members graduated and scattered" ("Young" *Report Twenty-Second* 59). The following year, Pegrum noted that the previous year's report had been inaccurate, suggesting more Y. auxiliaries than actually existed—"two of those auxiliaries were deceased"—and further acknowledged that since that time "four more have ceased to be" ("Young" *Report Twenty-Third* 75). State and local unions repeatedly noted the merging of Y's because of insufficient numbers to sustain separate ones.

The temperance cause, especially with its roots in the Woman's Crusade, was an exciting place for women of the generation of its early leaders. But younger generations, like today's generations who reap the rewards of the late-sixties and seventies feminist wave, were accustomed to many of the successes of the union and apparently found the organization of their mothers less exciting. They were busy making their own inroads, made possible by earlier reforms, and when joining organizations, they had a much wider variety of choices. Despite efforts on the part of leaders to interest younger women in becoming members of the WCTU, the new generation simply did not enroll in large numbers.

The failure of young women to enroll was disconcerting, too, because union members began dying in large numbers. National meetings began incorporating memorial services in the early 1880s, and in 1887 the national union designed a specific service to be used at members' funerals because so many were dying. Minutes of state conventions also attest to lost state members, each year publishing memorials to those who had died during the previous year. In 1890, for example, Minnesota's memorial list included twenty-one members, and in Connecticut the list grew from two in 1880 to forty in 1890 (plate 34).

Even today, members of the WCTU lament this problem. The average age of its membership is now fifty-five. According to Frances Thompson, a seventy-year-old WCTU member from Ohio, one hundred members in Ohio alone died last year. And even though the organization targets church youth groups and makes particular efforts to recruit young members, she says, "Many younger women are too busy with their jobs and families to get involved" (Hannah).

Because the WCTU had been so successful in creating change for women, perhaps young women saw less urgency in its causes. Women speakers and workers, if not quite commonplace, were no longer an oddity. Newspaper accounts of temperance activities changed dramatically over the years. Early reports openly ridiculed and indicted women for their unwomanly ways, and even though some derogatory reports continued, by the end of the century most accounts were either favorable or very subtle in their criticism, attesting to changing attitudes toward women's public role. Other venues reflected changing attitudes as well. By 1880, J. Ellen Foster was noting the change in the reaction of legislators when women sought hearings: "We were granted every possible courtesy in hearing before the committees, and in personal interviews with senators and representatives." Foster noted that "many kind things were said of our fidelity and truth to principle and 'a'that' . . . but very little of the old epithets or abuse of women who worked in temperance reform, as being out of their sphere, etc.,—very little of that" (34).

Young women who had been active in Loyal Temperance Leagues or other temperance youth organizations would have been prepared, not only for leadership in the WCTU, but for other independent choices as well. Temperance women both modeled a more public and independent

woman and helped to make professional and public employment, as well as higher education, more acceptable for women; in doing so, they may have undermined membership among young women in their own organization. Temperance reform had served to show unity among women who had become conscious of and disgusted with abuses toward, and unequal treatment of, women. It had also served as a means of escape and for broadening experience for many. But younger women, by and large, may have seen the temperance movement as their mothers' cause.

The union may not have inspired a younger generation, but as they matured, they returned to the reform of their mothers. As a new enthusiasm for reform caught hold in the early-twentieth century, membership in the WCTU again grew rapidly, helping to accomplish the drives for the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Amendments to the Constitution. WCTU membership remained far greater than that of the suffrage association. By the turn of the century, membership in the National Woman's Suffrage Association (NAWSA) was still less than 6 percent of the total membership of the WCTU. After the turn of the century, NAWSA, with its younger leaders and a rhetoric more attuned to a new generation, attracted increasingly larger numbers of young members; however, despite this growth, by the time of the passage of the two amendments, NAWSA membership had grown to only 20 percent of that of the WCTU.[2]

No such network as that established by the WCTU exists today. The National Organization of Women (NOW), while a national organization, more closely resembles NAWSA than the WCTU, and it lacks the grassroots membership that so strengthened the WCTU. Other efforts to strengthen the rights for women endure. Unity among women exists within specific, special interest categories, such as battered women's shelters and rape crisis centers. But such organizations remain primarily local. Even RAIN (Rape and Incest Network), funded by Lilith concerts of women musicians in an effort to organize a national network for dealing with abuse, seems unable to link with established local programs for greater effectiveness. On the political front, in addition to efforts by NOW, women members of Congress call attention to issues of sexual harassment, abuse, and the special needs of women and children. Still, no major organization has been able to unite women of diverse economic and educational backgrounds in order to provide the political force such numbers would entail. Building such a network requires leaders who can bridge the chasm between intellectual feminists, historically the leaders in such efforts, and other women, such as homemakers and women outside the academic arena.

Perhaps the rhetoric of the WCTU can provide a model of how feminists can more successfully appeal to the "average" woman. As Willard noted more than one hundred years ago, the average woman is not always "clear concerning the relations of cause and effect in politics and law, but she must be" ("The Average Woman" 623). Women who make such a connection must be willing to help other women reach that vision, in a language meaningful for those women. Studying the use of temperance rhetoric in both speech and fiction should, at the very least, provide hope and inspiration that women can help one another reach a meaningful understanding of their situatedness, and that they will prevail if they work together.