Missionary travels to China during the late 19th century - a way for European women to escape their ordinary life

A literary analysis of female independence challenging social norms through religious conviction

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Abstract

This thesis examines the role of women who went as missionaries to China between the 1890’s and the 1930’s, with a special regard to the Swedish missionary Sally Nordling. I think it is interesting to find out more about their motives. What made these women choose to go far away from their homes in Europe to live and work for God?

I have noted that there is not much written about these women and I hope that this thesis will shed light on this part of history, and that I will be able to give my own personal reflections.

Through analysing different biographies written about female missionaries that lived in China I hope to be able to answer my hypothesis that women through their religious conviction were able to escape their restricted lives.

The main research question for this thesis is whether female missionaries were allowed to do similar work as men when going to China.

Keywords: Sally Nordling, China during the late 19th century, Female missionaries, Personal calling, The Boxer Rebellion, life journey
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1 Introduction

Then they returned from the tomb and told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest […] It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them, who told these things to the apostles

Luke 24:9-10

My interest for this academic investigation started, after having read about the European men and women that went to work as missionaries in China in the late 1800’s and early 1900’s. When studying this part of history, a thought slowly took shape in my mind. There was something in this material that I wanted to look further into. I had got the impression that European women between the late 1800’s and 1930’s, suddenly had an opportunity to do a very different kind of career in life, working as missionaries. In those days, there was a big wave of missionaries going from different countries to China to spread the gospel. By taking on the role as female missionaries, they were not only going on an unusual adventure but were also able to take on a new role of independence and resourcefulness that they were unable to do in their own countries in the same way.

One has to bear in mind, that Swedish women did not actually get the right to vote until the year of 1921. As unmarried they had to obey their fathers and as married they were under the command of their husbands. The ability for women to educate themselves and to live an independent life was limited. Even though women in Sweden were able to study at the university from year 1873 they were not guaranteed any academic position. This is, why the case with the missionary women going to China is so compelling. The Theological department at the university still remained closed to female students
But the missionary women managed to go around this obstacle, studying the holy Bible at the Evangelical churches’ Bible courses. This is something that Karin Sarja mentions in her academic study (Sarja 2002).

The main literary source for this essay will be Sally Nordling’s book, *Kina-Kalselalandet* (1954) [China, The Land of Calling]¹. I will compare her mission, her spiritual motives and ideals with other female missionaries from this time; in particular Gladys Aylward, portrayed by Alan Burgess in his book, *The Small Woman*. Looking at the case of Sally Nordling, her going on this dangerous journey was perhaps a way for her to break free from obligations and life expectations in Sweden. At the same time as respecting the calling from God, her decision to become a missionary could also have been a way for her to escape the norms of what a young woman at her time was supposed to do. This certainly could not have been regarded as a wise choice of life; to leave your family and potential benefits for something as uncertain as a life as a religious teacher. But during her journey, she was not only encouraged to educate herself in foreign languages, English and Chinese, but also to become a religious leader, to go out in the world and careless of her own safety help other people.

However the questions remain; how were these women through the help of their faith able to reach their goals, and were the foreign missions a means of challenging the European conventions?

In this thesis, I would like to pay attention to the gender conflict between men and women by analysing how women in the late 1800’s until the 1930’s, with the help of their religious conviction were legitimized to do the same work as men. I want to look

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¹ In this essay I will refer to the English title of the book
closer at these women’s lives; their situation before they left (preparation), their documentation from their time in China, and their journey of maturity. Which role did education play in relation to their mission in China? What were the main differences work wise between men and women, functioning as missionaries in China during this time and what were the possible obstacles?

1.1 Why I chose this topic

I had seen her book put away in our book shelf, ever since I was a little child. I had seen the red and yellow cover and read the puzzling title, *China, The Land of Calling*. I had also heard the story, how my grandmother’s grandmother stood up against her own parents, and went to northern China to preach the gospel and stayed away for several years. I had also heard about the Boxer rebellion and my relative’s narrow escape back to Sweden. Now the years have passed by, and I had almost forgotten about this story. It took me a while after I had started the master’s course in Religion in Peace and Conflict until I realized what great resource material I had in my home.

Not until now, I had taken out the book to really read it. I did not know much about my grandmother’s grandmother, Sally Nordling, born Malmström. But I had seen the black and white photo of a young girl with a soft, innocent face, dressed up in the latest fashion together with her two, just as elegant sisters.

I had also seen the picture of Sally and her husband Carl in China, where she is holding her new born boy on her knee. In this photo they are both dressed in traditional Chinese clothes, Carl has even had his head shaved and a long, black braid is hanging down his back. I had been told that he had inserted black threads of silk, in order to make it as
long as the Chinese custom proclaimed. Sally looks serious and a little bit tired. She is only 24 years old but one can see that she has already gone through a lot in life, but at the same time determined and strong beside her husband, and I wonder what thoughts she had when she decided to undertake this dangerous journey.

On the third photo, I see the family after they have come back to Sweden. Now they have two children on their laps. But the most striking difference from the other pictures is the appearance of the mother. Here we see a mature woman. She has experienced the greatest adventures of her life. As a female missionary, she has put her own life and security at risk, she has fulfilled her dream from her early youth, and, on the contrary to many of her missionary friends, she has survived. My grandmother has told me that when Sally returned back home at the age of 27, her hair had already turned grey.

I wanted to get to know Sally, and I reached for her book. According to her son Jarl Nordling, Sally had been a very rigid woman, lacking any female softness or signs of sensuality. Could this really be true? I found it difficult to believe, and after indulging in her autobiography, I understood that no statement could have been more misleading. I will come back to this later in my essay, when discussing the different reasons for European women to become missionaries abroad.

**1.2 Purpose of the study**

My intention is to bring alive the female missionary story that seems to have been neglected throughout history. The story of the missionary women is an important aspect in the world today, where religion has become a controversial topic.
Sally was an unmarried young woman from the small town of Nora in Bergslagen, born into a middle class family in 1873. According to her son, she found the calling of God in a big Evangelistic Christian meeting campaign in the early 1890’s. Eventually she decided to stand up against her parents will and leave Sweden to follow her calling of God, to go and spread the gospel. This was of course something very unusual, as the majority of the Swedish population at this time had not even been outside their own county.

I have stuck with this topic because there are many interesting aspects; the call of duty, religious conviction, adventurous and strong women, encounter with different countries and culture, historic events such as the Boxer rebellion as well as the wave of religious awakening.

Although these women’s main mission was to spread the evangelical gospel, they did at the same time without even knowing, act as important research investigators, at least those who wrote detailed accurate letters and biographies. In fact during the Boxer rebellion (1899-1901), quite many of the European missionaries were killed and unable to tell their stories. But some of the survivors managed to document their experiences.

All religious activities that have been documented are of great importance for future investigations, as there is a constant religious presence around us today. The fact that there are many texts written by European missionaries should be an eye opener to the public that there are some interesting fates of people that we have not got to know yet.
1.3 Literature review

Sally Nordling, one of the Swedish missionary women who at the end of the 19th century went to the Far East. Due to illness, she left just a year before the Boxer outbreak, a return home that most likely saved her life. She later documented her journey in her autobiography, *China, The Land of Calling* (1954).

It is a biography of a young woman, who shares her personal impressions from a strange and foreign country and its people. She describes her everyday life from her own point of view; how she prepares to leave her family home, how she travels around in Sweden learning how to preach and how she after some years of preparations and language studies finally sets off on the long journey to China.

One could ask why she chose this country, and moreover this kind of life. It is an important fact that her youth was spent in China, far away from her comfort zone and the middle class lifestyle in Sweden. Was it only because the calling of God was so strong, that she could not resist the risk to go to a country that she hardly knew anything about? How could her belief be so strong and demanding?

Sally describes her work over there and gives descriptions and statements of the history of the missionaries during what seems to have been one of the most active times for missionaries in history. She also writes about the Boxer Rebellion that took place in the summer of 1900, when the Chinese peasants rose up against all foreigners in the country and many missionaries were killed or forced to leave the country. The outburst of the Boxer Rebellion was due to many reasons, “such as economic hardships brought on by poor harvests, floods and drought” that “were all blamed on the ‘foreign devils’ who were encroaching on China in increasing numbers” (Harrington 2013: 7).
Sally’s book, *China, The Land of Calling*, is a powerful story that touched me, and I was surprised how little I knew about the female missionaries.

1.4 Hypothesis and research questions

The hypothesis that I have formulated for this essay is: “Missionary travels to China during the late 19th century - a way for European women to escape their restricted life”.

A point of view that Alan Burgess also commented upon:

She realized now how circumscribed her life in England had been; how dull her parlour maid’s chores in Belgravia, with its vicarious routine which passed for living. In Edmonton she could see only as far as the end of the street; in Belgrave Square she was confined eternally to ‘servants’ quarters’ in a rigid caste system. No such thing existed in China (Burgess 1972: 62)

I base this hypothesis on my observations, that there is a lack of specific attention given to the different gender roles of the mission work in China in between the 1890’s and 1930’s. I think there is important information missing about women and their double roles in the mission work. In comparison to their male companions they were going through different terms and had to justify their reasons for going to China much more. I think that in the late 19th century, one can notice an increasing interest in women going to China to preach and that this opens up an interesting context in female missionary history in general. The thesis opens up to thoughts and analysis on the double benefits included in the missionary journey for women in the 19th century.

As mentioned earlier, my main research question is how these women, with the help of religion, were able to contribute equally with men on the missionary fields, and whether going to China as missionaries was a way for them to challenge European conventions.
Another aspect to this question is, what you as a single, young woman were able to achieve by leaving the stereotype life style in Europe in the 1890’s.

I hope to find answers to the above research questions, trying my theory that women were indeed finding a way of fulfilling their lives by choosing mission work as a path to independence and ability to work with similar tasks as men. I would like to emphasize on the different possibilities and responsibilities that were given to women that arrived to work as missionaries in China in the 1890’s to the early 1900’s. I hope that I can shed new light on a female chapter of history that has not been given the attention it deserves.

1.5 Thesis disposition

The thesis begins with giving a general introduction of the topic. It is thereafter followed by an explanation of the choice of topic and the purpose of the thesis. I include a literature review as well as background and review of previous research. The analysis is divided into four sections that take on the life of the female missionaries. I will emphasize the aspects of preparation, documentation and relationship with the Chinese women as well as the female missionaries’ process of maturing. The thesis ends with a conclusion of the results and suggestion for future studies.

2 Background

Sally Nordling develops a book that tells the story of a devoted Christian who leaves all trust in the hands of God. But I wonder if she is aware of the fact that she also paints out
a story of a fascinating young woman running away from her, more restricted, life in Sweden. What she describes is her point of view, a personal panorama of China, for her a completely new nation that she never knew before. For being for the first time abroad, there does not seem to be any time of worrying. As a reader, one can sense that she knew that she was on an important mission and one also notices a big dosage of her good self-esteem; she is quite quick to do judging comments and descriptions of the people and the situations that she encounters. It is particularly fascinating to read her inner thoughts about the Chinese people and the life that they led.

It is easy to judge these missionary women today, and only see them as a group of people who did things on command, within a religious context. However, there are interesting details to be found behind these individuals, who left their safe life conditions to seek something else. Even if that was in combination with their faith, it is still an interesting context that they placed themselves in.

The whole concept of traveling as missionaries could be thought of as very provoking, maybe especially to non-believers, even though they might have regarded it as beneficial in some way, as the missionaries also spread the notion of western civilization. In the earlier years of missionary, it was only men that were able to this, and the fact that it later became an opportunity also to women was in itself a revolution, as it truly encouraged them to seek to find their own voice and use it. Maybe at this time around the end of the 1800’s, they found greater freedom and equality with men abroad as a missionary in comparison to their lives in their home countries in Europe.

Karin Sarja brings up the issue of the Swedish Church and the Evangelical churches’ different viewpoints, regarding equality between the genders. The Evangelical churches encouraged a more equal division, considering both men and women as missionaries.
This must have been considered quite progressive for the time, and it should also have been a way for women to achieve more independence in their work. I will explain this further in the chapter Terminology.

The missionaries could perhaps be regarded as elite, since not all Christians would voluntarily go to China. Most of them would probably be too scared, or not willingly leave their comfortable life styles or families to go out on the long journey. Here the calling was a very important aspect. The men and women that left for China had to be able to bear the stress and dangers they were getting themselves into.

The PhD researcher, Anna Maria Claesson points to the importance of adapting to the Chinese society, to be able to reach progress. She also writes that there was not much chance for Swedish missionaries to influence on Chinese society and that:

> on the contrary, they were stationed far away from the gun boats and western trading stations, painfully exposed to Chinese indigenous conditions. The recurrent riots, culminating in the storms of the Boxer Rebellion, were reminders of their powerlessness.

(Claesson 2001: 244-245)

Claesson writes that belonging to the missionary was a kind of voluntarily commitment but that it also imposed boundaries. The missionaries chose more or less to subordinate themselves to this missionary movement. There existed eloquence among the leaders that created and maintained a collective identity that the missionaries had in common. (Claesson 2001: 24). Robert Coles (1993) talks about the reactions of the people that volunteers are working with, sometimes the honest questions and remarks could be hard for the volunteers to hear and actually put them off. I believe the missionaries must have gone through times when they were not sure of what they were doing in China and for
what purpose they were there. Being called “foreign devil”, thrown dirt and mud at and when times got even worse having rocks thrown at them (Harrington 2013).

2.1 Previous research

In her PhD-research, Karin Sarja, now appointed reverend in Gävle parish has noted that during the years 1876-1902, with similar time span as the missions in China, the Swedish Missionary in Natal and Zululand were primarily represented by women. She further questions why there today is such little knowledge about Swedish female missionaries, and why female missionaries have not been given more attention in historical research. She explains that one of the possible reasons could be that women at this time were lacking formal authority in the missionary board, despite that they made up more than half of the members (Sarja 2002: 19).

Sarja also concludes that research in Sweden involving women, gender and missions in general has been highly subordinated and that there is a lot of information left to cover regarding Swedish female missionary work in other countries (Sarja 2002: 40).

Claesson has also observed the lack of interest in the missionary work and that those researchers that have studied the Swedish or the Western world’s image of China find the missionaries’ point of view to be the most uninteresting one. She notes that “in the few cases where the missionary view has been mentioned, it has been considered to be both naïve and prejudiced” (Claesson 2001: 229). Claesson points to Richard Dawson who, in his book *The Chinese Cameleon, an analysis of European conceptions of Chinese civilization*, blames the conservative protestant missionaries for changing the
18th century admiration of China for a negative attitude. Dawson is also supported by the author Colin Mackerras and the Swedish historian Hans Hägerdal. Claesson does not disagree with these observations, but objects to the image of missionaries in China being represented solely by a few male Anglo-Saxon missionaries and she claims the importance to understand that the missionary image of China is more nuanced than that.

During 1897 there were approximately 200 male and female Swedish missionaries in China (Lögstrup 1897 cited in Claesson 2001). Letters sent to families back home as well as articles published in the missionary press brought forward important information. Claesson continues by saying that it is important not to neglect the image of the mission in China as the missionary did have a good insight in the Chinese conditions.

This statement is supported by Gunnar Hallingberg who pays particular attention to the rich material of missionaries in the 19th century. He points to the great inventiveness that prevailed in those days, to attract interest for the mission work. The female missionaries’ participation also served as an important image for the supporters back home. The historian, Eva Helen Ulvros, however comments that the letters written by women should be interpreted carefully. As the letters often were used for public purpose back home, the women would many times consciously avoid writing about such topics that would be regarded inappropriate or too personal (Sarja 2001: 30).

Furthermore, I would like to add that not only did the attitude towards China change for a negative one based on a few male Protestants, but also did they lack the insight of the many women that were working as missionaries. It is important to bear in mind that women and men due to social limitations and expectations were writing and documenting their experiences in different ways. Claesson points out that Hägerdal
(1996) righteously expresses that the Westerners’ detachment worked as a repressive factor, but that he ignores the hundreds of missionaries’ presence in China. August Berg writes that many Europeans spent years in China without learning the country’s language or customs. He states that no one comes as close to the people as the missionaries that “with love in their heart go out to live and work together” (Berg 1927: 10 cited in Claesson 2001: 22).

Just like Hägerdal’s and Berg’s views of the image of China do not coincide, the missionaries’ perception of their time in China differs between men and women. Even if there is more documentation written by men, there are books and letters by female missionaries that give vital information for research on mission, which has still not been taken into account.

3 Methodology

This investigation will be carried out primarily as a qualitative study with analysis of texts rather than a quantitative study. I have chosen to focus on women that travelled to China from Europe in the late 19th century up until the 1930’s. As a primary source I am using the autobiography written by Sally Nordling. I intend to analyse their journey of maturity as well as details that touch topics such as independence, responsibility, education, leadership and religious conviction.

Together with information from Claesson (2001), Sarja (2002) and Burgess (1972), I want to gather general in-depth insights that support my theory that through missionary
work, women were able to increase their chances to live a more free life in comparison to women in their home countries.

I would also like to involve personal reflections and word of mouth, passed down to me by relatives of Sally Nordling. I have taken part of notes written by her son Jarl, who has documented and summarized his parents’ journey in some few files. My grandmother, Lisbeth Sjödahl has also told me stories that she recollected from her time with Sally. Jarl and Lisbeth are now dead, but they had both vivid memories from Sally’s writing process as they lived close to her. I include these narratives in my own personal reflections where I explain why I chose this topic, the Background as well as in the Analysis.

Apart from biographies, I intend to analyse a magazine from the time when mission to China was current; the Swedish evangelical magazine *Trosvittnet*.

I have found some books by Robert Coles (1993) useful for my writing. One of them, *A Call of Service*, deals with feelings and reflections on voluntary work.

By reading stories and biographies of different European missionary women during this time, I want to try to deduce similarities in how they encountered and discovered their way to freedom in perspective from their home countries’ norms and expectations. I want to dig out what, apart from their faith, pushed them over the edge to run in to unforeseen dangers and living in harsh and prestige less conditions in comparison to their, most of the time, comfortable life standards in Europe.

I want to use Sally Nordling’s autobiography, *China, The Land of Calling*, as a base for this investigation of the connection of mission and female independence. I think that this work will bring forward some new interesting theories.
Unfortunately, I have not been able to find any separate letters, but there are quite a few letters cited in *China, The Land of Calling* and *The Friends of the Chinese*.

By analysing texts comparing autobiographies by female missionaries, essays on missionary women, as well as articles written in Evangelical press I want to get a clearer picture of these women’s decision and how this choice made a difference in their lives.

3.1 Terminology

The term ‘missionary’ is, according to Merriam-Webster, defined as “a person who is sent to a foreign country to do religious work (such as to convince people to join a religion or to help people who are sick, poor etc.)” (Merriam-Webster 2017).

It is rather complicated to distinguish the different roles of the missionaries. Today it is easy to think that all the men and women, who travelled to China during the late 19th century, were missionaries. In regards of work and their intentions they might have felt and identified themselves as missionaries. However, in terms of social norms and used titles, there were more specific division and decided terms for one another. During the 19th century, women were often not called missionaries as this term was appointed to the men. It was also preferred not to refer to women as missionaries but rather as a *humble sister* or just *Miss*, which was more commonly used than the title missionary (Claesson 2001).

Sarja explains that there was a difference in how The Swedish Church and the Evangelical Christian movement (Helgelseförbundet) classified the work of missionaries. Sarja mentions that within the Swedish Church only the men were considered to be missionaries. Their female companions were only called “wife, mother
and housewife”. In the Evangelical Church however both married and non-married women addressed themselves as missionaries (Sarja 2002: 138-139).

In my research, I have decided to refer to all women working on the mission fields as missionaries.

3.2 Limitations of analysis

As there were many European women going to China as missionaries during the time between 1890 and 1930, I have been forced to limit the analysis as time will not allow me to investigate them all. I have decided to focus on a few women from Europe, mainly Sweden and England, that have been able to document their journeys either personally or through other means. By concentrating on the personal reflections from these women and connecting their similar observations and experiences, I hope to give an informal overview of the particular situation that female missionaries found themselves in.

4 Analysis

The analysis will be divided into four different parts. The first part focuses on the preparation the women had to undergo before they left. The second part deals with their documentation from their time in China. The two last parts analyse the female missionaries’ relationship with the Chinese women and the female missionaries’ personal development.
4.1 Preparation

In *China, The Land of Calling*, we meet a young girl, just a teenager, who has had a deep religious revelation at the time for her confirmation, and when reading her text, there should be no doubt about her honest faith in God and her trusting in his loving care. But immediately, she meets opposition from her own parents, who do not approve of her spiritual conviction and her studying of the Holy Bible.

When Sally some years later gets engaged with a young pharmacist, they certainly do not share her optimism. Sally explains it in her book, as they saw her alliance with Carl Nordling “as a threat to her middle class welfare” (Nordling 1954: 6). Obviously, they did not regard his social background as discrediting, her fiancé’s father was in fact professor in Semitic languages at Uppsala University, but having their daughter married to a man who would most likely take her away from them, to a dangerous place far away, was a prospect most parents would find quite horrible.

It is indeed amazing how Sally could show such confidence, to stand up for her belief even in opposition to her own family, in a decade when young women did not have many legal options in choosing their own way in life. In fact, after her return home, Sally was reproached by her sister who many times told her that going to China was very irresponsible. She also claimed that the leader of the mission board, Fredrik Fransson, was a fraud who had encouraged young vulnerable people going to China without paying attention to their safety.

I have found one more photo, that shows three small sisters, where the youngest one, Sally, is firmly holding on to a big, old paper box. I have been told that she was
determined even as a small girl, and this particular day in 1877, no one on earth was able to stop her from bringing this item into the photographer’s studio. I found this picture particularly entertaining, as the girl I see is the same person that perhaps with the same stubbornness decided to do what no other woman in her family had done before.

Sally had a great trust in God, a belief that he would take care of her wherever she went, on the horse back on the narrow uneven roads in the Chinese mountains, and that he would protect her through the complications she met during the years, living and working as a missionary. It is curious to think about the interesting perspectives these women gained on their adventurous journeys, seeking to enlighten the world. A strong wish of saving people’s souls and to cross many borders to reach something that they would never be sure of, if it was even worth it.

When reading Sally’s book, one cannot help but sense the commitment and discipline from a hard working missionary. She is a proud Swedish woman, but sometimes I wonder if her integrity and radical choice in life, was really a behaviour that could have been completely accepted in Sweden around the end of the 1800’s. Perhaps she even saw herself as a national heroine, when she took the decision to work as a servant of God on the other side of the world.

Strangely enough, Sally’s biography does not give away any sensation of hesitation, or even moments of turning back. It is written in an easy to follow narrative that safely guides the reader through the maturity of a young inexperienced woman, becoming an adult abroad. However, her journey is not just any trip; it is a voyage of life, where history meets personal strength and happiness of being out of your comfort zone.

Claesson argues that the female independent missionary was provoking to the expectations of how a woman should behave during the 1890’s. The female missionary
also challenged the norms of what women were allowed to do according to the Bible. Even if the evangelical revival was important, especially for women, there was still a great division of opinions. The female missionaries were in comparison to their male companions, forced to demonstrate and defend their life choice, and this is where the importance of the calling comes in (Claesson 2001: 181).

The importance of the calling and the religious conviction was for women of huge importance when it came to motivate why they should be chosen to join the missions to China. They had to undergo certain requirements to be selected, and for women it was not as obvious as for men that they would have a guaranteed place. Their conviction and calling from God was their strongest card as it could not be questioned.

The missionaries had to write notes where they presented themselves and gave details on their calling. For women it was important to explain how they had been placed in front of this task. The missionary Klara Hall describes how she never would have imagined that she would be called by God to go to the land of the heathens. She felt that God was speaking to her and how difficult it was for her to understand this and to recognize his voice. She also found it strange that she, who was not a young girl anymore, should start learning a new language. She describes it as “nine weeks of lonely struggle with sleepless nights” to be convinced to go. However for men there was not the same risk to feel as anxious and in some cases, their notes did not even involve any details about their calling of God at all (Claesson 2001: 182).

The pressure before going was also hard on female missionaries as they would also have to face people’s prejudices and be able to live up to their expectations. Women were duly prepared with strategies that was said to work in their favour. These strategies usually involved not arguing in public about your rights to preach. It is noted that in
these women’s home, it was always the men that participated in the public debate. When women preached it should be called a public lecture rather than a sermon. (Claesson 2001: 182-183).

According to Dana L. Robert, the women’s future also depended a lot on which church they belonged to. At the end of the 1800’s, it was the time for the evangelical revival in the USA, and this had become an advantage to the female missionaries. Women had earlier worked in more traditional missions that restricted them in their work. Then, the most common options to go and work on missions would be by going as a missionary’s wife, work in schools, orphanages or hospitals. But what the missionaries considered being the most important tasks; to proclaim and to baptize was not applicable to women. The evangelical revival meant however more possibilities for women and many times the conditions were equal to the men’s (Sarja 2002: 38).

Revival movements during the end of the 19th century offered women to take more part and participate for example in preaching. Moreover the women’s subordinate place changed significantly. Ingrid Åberg is quoted when formulating this sign of equality through the missionary work: ”Class and gender boundaries could be broken up through conversion and faith” (Sarja 2002: 37-38).

Back to my question, what could the reasons be for those young women, besides a clear calling from God, to undertake this long and dangerous journey?

Every personal story has of course its unique reason, but the main interest for the missionaries was helping as many of the Chinese as possible to find God, and they felt that it was their duty. They thought that there was very little time left before the Judgement day, and wanted to save as many souls as they could until then. The argumentation used by the women who wanted to be sent to China as missionaries was
that “God had called [them], the Chinese woman suffered, she had the same rights as
her Christian sister and could only be reached by women” (Claesson 2001: 183).

In the case of Sally and her husband, their eldest son always claimed that his parents
found their mission extremely important, since they had heard Fredrik Fransson’s
preaching that Christ would not come back to earth until his followers had gone out in
the world and made his name known to all mankind, a slightly different point of view
than what Claesson cited. By risking their own lives in China, Sally and Carl would,
hence, pave the way for the Lord’s return. This, I still believe is the most important
reason for Sally’s journey.

But since we are talking about a living human being, obviously intelligent and outgoing,
there should be some other aspects as well. Thanks to a close reading of her
autobiography, I have found what I call, interesting clues to Sally’s inner thoughts and
motives, that is her hopes and dreams for the future, when she was still in her early
youth. Already from the first chapter, we understand that Sally is carried by a deep
passion. She describes a spring full of joy and beauty, “God’s wonderful love” had met
her soul, and her “future seemed like a long, sunny even path towards a never-ending
light”. She has found “a road without shadows” and there is no doubt that her reason for
living is to serve the Lord (Nordling 1954: 5).

But Sally’s love for Christ certainly does not restrict her from carrying on with her
intellectual interests. She is a devoted student. Her father has already introduced her to
the English language, she follows not less than three Bible courses in different Swedish
towns, compares her Bible with other translations and carefully looks up parallel verses,
besides learning to play the guitar (Nordling 1954).
Although, there must not have been a secret for her that most of her work would have been in vain, had she stayed in Sweden. The Theological department was closed for women (Universitetskanslersämbetet 2017) and according to my grandmother; the socially accepted choice of career was often to become either a nurse or a teacher for young children. She also explained that in the late 1800’s, a female teacher was not supposed to get married. If she did, she had to resign from her profession. Consequently, the young diligent Sally found herself with two, for her, unthinkable options; either a very limited intellectual stimulation teaching small children or marriage, remaining in a traditional Swedish middle class home.

We know that Sally was already engaged. She had chosen her fiancé herself, without her parents blessing and she was not going to give him up. In her book, she does not disguise her feelings for Carl, he is educated and, most important of all, a born again Christian, planning to travel as a missionary to the mysterious China. By choosing Carl, and following him, she can have it all!

In China, she will be working as an independent and respected woman. She will never be like the farmer’s wife that she met on her practice tour in Östergötland, who was shyly “curtsying for her husband” when serving him his coffee (Nordling 1954: 34).

Sally claims that she did not indulge in romantic dreaming, idling her time away waiting for her fiancé. She was a girl with passion and capacity; she was going to learn Chinese no matter how hard she would have to work. When reading her book, it stands clear that Sally wished for something else than a quiet small town life in Nora. She was out for adventure.
4.2 Documentation from the time in China

One thing was clear, the "missionary work was expensive; there was a constant need for new workers in the field and committed spokesmen for the cause at home” (Claesson 2001: 230). Now, even women were needed and demanded. Therefore, the women that had a calling saw their chance in starting their new life and career in China.

However, once the appointed female missionaries reached China they were facing maybe their biggest challenge so far. Now it was up to test, to see if they were really suitable and capable of managing the work as missionaries. It could not have been easy to get accustomed to the long tiring journeys in the foreign landscapes to later maybe turn up to a remote village where they were expected to get to work as soon as possible. Sometimes there was not any prepared station ready waiting for them, in these cases they had to set it up on their own.

In the beginning, the missionaries were only men and the life of the missionaries was not considered as suitable for women. Within time, the women would however start getting out in the mission fields. This was, if she was engaged or married to a male missionary. In the year of 1892 the first female missionary went to China from Jönköping in Sweden. Her name was Augusta Hulander, married to August Berg. Augusta kept a fairly withdrawn role and August came to speak a lot for them both (Claesson 2001: 177). In this time, some of the missionary women were not even visible in the missionary organizations’ statistics. Their existence could only be noticed if their husband were registered as married (Lögstrup 1897 cited in Claesson 2001).

It was not until the end of the 19th century that it became more common for female missionaries to start independent travels to China, working as unmarried women.
However, this was not without mayor obstacles. Claesson states, that there was much opposition against women preaching and Sigrid Engström, who went to China in 1897, describes the public disapproval:

No one wanted to believe, that God had called me to China. Some said to me that I should not fly higher, than the wings could carry, others said, that I should not tempt God; some said, that I only wished to give shine that I was part of the Christian army and that I did not want to do anything quietly, hidden away. I got many hints about really questioning my own motives (translation Engström 1910: 17 cited in Claesson 2001)

Fiona Bowies also concludes that knowledge about the female missionaries’ life and work is lacking, despite their large presence in the missionary society. She also points out that the female missionaries were subordinated in male dominated connections but that they could also have a more superior and privileged position in regards to the native population amongst whom they were working. Bowies means that the answer to the questions, whether women were liberated or not through their mission could be both yes and no, all depending on the time and context that it is compared to (Sarja 2002: 38).

In Europe some of these women would probably have lived a fairly sheltered life without responsibilities outside their household, not expected to take on any life projects nor educate themselves. But in the letters home from China, one can see that, they were suddenly exposed to life’s realities and had to shoulder the daily tasks together with male missionaries on equal conditions. In the case of the working class women, the situation was perhaps slightly different. They were already used to deal with hard working conditions, but in China they were now respected and regarded as self-sufficient colleagues. They might experience liberation from their subordinate
conditions in Europe and all of a sudden their personalities could prosper (Claesson 2001: 30). Although, both these groups would benefit from the fact that boundaries between missionary men and women disappeared in China and that a co-existence evolved.

Anna Maria Claesson (2001) has in her thesis *The Friends of the Chinese*, based on autobiographical letters and books written by missionaries, made an analytical work on how their narratives were shaped and used to call forth willingness in the home congregations to help the missionary communities. Claesson highlights the fact that for example, the Fransson Missionary encouraged more involvement of women working as missionaries to reach out to the Chinese female population.

However, according to letters cited by Claesson, the conditions for female missionaries were often hard and connected with a lot of responsibility. But, one could indeed question why women in these days in Sweden, and other European countries, chose to do these physically and demanding journeys. The women, sometimes as young as twenty years old, were often sent out in pairs, not mainly to do domestic work but to set up school education for children, be in charge of opium asylums and provide medical care. They were also expected to go out in the streets to preach and sing. This information sheds light on the unusual equality that existed on the Chinese missionary fields between men and women, an equality that was not to be found in for example Sweden at this time, where there were still gaps between the responsibilities of men and women.

Claesson collected documentation from female missionaries shows that China became a place that many women sought after to work in, and that the encouragement from J. Hudson Taylor, founder of the China Inland Mission, and his attitude towards female
missionaries, helped them in taking place alongside the male missionaries. They were moreover working as pioneers and were not limited to traditional domestic work. Taylor even regarded them as often more powerful than their male colleagues (Williams 1993, Tucker 1996 cited in Claesson 2001). According to Klaus Fiedler, Hudson’s ministry advocated a more radical way for female missionaries in comparison to traditional churches. Within faith missions, a formal education was not considered the most essential, but preaching God’s words to as many people as possible before the end of time (Sarja 2002: 38).

There were also different solutions for women from various social and educational backgrounds on the missionary fields. By appearing in the Evangelical press women were able to be heard and to have their stories told, however not in the same extent as the male missionaries. Claesson confirms that women that undertook these missionary journeys could not only gain independence but also professional training. Even if lacking high education, that only certain groups of women could obtain, women from socially lower classes could also get a change in life. Ruth Compton Brouwer claims that women gained more freedom and got more independent tasks through missionary work. In the studies of Rosemary Gagan, that has focused on missionary women who worked in Canada and the Orient between the late 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, she points out that mission work in other countries did involve interesting and exciting opportunities as an alternative to getting married or getting a job in Canada (Sarja 2002: 39).

It was important for the missionaries to evoke interest and understanding with their fellow members of the congregation at home, therefore they were careful in their writings and documentations. As the missionary depended on the donations and support
from people back home, they were choosing what to emphasize on or what to write less about (Claesson 2001).

There was also a difference in how women were expected to write in comparison to men. The women avoided to write about violence and dangers, instead they kept a positive approach ignoring their difficulties (Claesson 2001). This could possibly have been a strategy for women to secure their adventurous post and not risk being sent home, forced to return to their worried families. The female missionary letters were also possibly meant to keep inspiring other women in their home congregation, to come and do missionary work with them. By keeping a strong and professional outlook towards the congregation at home, they would possibly also convey a sense of respect and come across as trustworthy.

Instead of writing detailed and too sentimental about troublesome details, the women somehow managed to keep the spirits up and write in a way that would not sound too hopeless, but instead cheerful to encourage support of their projects. This was especially important for those women, who were in charge of large children’s orphanages and schools. They needed money to take care of the little girls that were left out in the cold and also for helping them to an education, so they would be able to make it on their own. The writing for the missionary was an important tool to keep the connection active between the financial and moral support going. The female missionaries had to fight, proving why they were needed in China, and most likely they were more pressured in doing so as they were women. As a matter of fact, Klara Hall’s orphanage in China often appears in several of the editions of the evangelical magazine Trosvittnet, during the 1890’s as a recurring beneficiary from Swedish contributors.
The men on the other hand, had more or less full freedom to write about the frequent dangers they encountered and were also expected to write more often than women. Here we can see that even if the female missionary had more independence and could explore her new life, she was still restricted to the norms and expectations from the gender system at home. The risk of being sent back due to lack of financial support could be devastating for an independent woman running a school or an orphanage. Without a husband’s support, it would certainly have been harder to run the project.

Sally on the other hand, does not refrain from depicting cruel details from her time in China. The Boxer Rebellion, where countless of missionaries and native Christians were killed, is described by Sally in an honest way and she does not, as the female missionaries mentioned above, try to avoid frightening details. She mentions people being beheaded and other persecutions. This is probably due to the fact that Sally wrote her book late in life, 50 years after her mission. She no longer had to think about her parents, who certainly would have been horrified.

Although, when she was still in China, her family must have been worried enough, reading the gruesome news figuring in the magazines. *Trosvittnet* was, in almost every edition during her time in China, publishing news on murdered missionaries as well as on people vulnerable to violence.

After returning to Sweden, Carl became editor for the magazine *Trosvittnet*, for which he wrote several articles on the situation in China. How come that Sally waited so long to write her own biography, after her husband’s death? I believe that even though women were able to compete with men and do similar work as they did, they were still restricted by society, domestic work and unknowingly, they followed certain rules holding a more withdrawn role.
Claesson also states that whether women were in minority or just regarded as an assistant, in many areas they were equally participating with their male companions in the fight. The women also showed, through their depictions, that they were capable; they travelled far, lived under primitive conditions, and experienced adventures. They were taking their own decisions and shaped several projects. This was a way for women to prove that they were just as valuable as men and that they, maybe for the first time, were able to do something meaningful with their lives (Claesson 2001: 188-189).

4.3 The relationship between female missionaries and the Chinese women

The female missionaries were not only, as one might think, directed to domestic chores. One of their most important tasks was to reach the female Chinese population. This was not a suitable commitment for the male missionaries, as it involved visiting the Chinese homes. The Chinese women would not go out, since they were even more restricted socially than the female missionaries (Claesson 2001). Sally, for instance, got interesting insight of the very private Chinese sphere, and she writes about how her being asked to help out as a midwife during delivery. She was horrified by the primitive conditions and the complete lack of medical treatment. (Nordling 1954: 137).

Another obstacle for the Chinese women to move outside as freely as the men was the old and painful tradition of foot binding. Already when the girls were very young, their feet were bound to keep them from growing. This made it hard for the women to walk properly during the rest of their lives. Claesson describes the binding of the girls’ feet as “heathen conditions” and “symbols for the physical enslavement of women, but also for
their ‘spiritual imprisonment’” (Claesson 2001: 234). Only a few women were lucky enough to escape this procedure, mainly slave girls and lower working class women. Sally herself mentions, that her big embroidered slippers were indeed a slave woman’s shoes (Nordling 1954: 53).

Many female missionaries were trying to reach out to the villages and convince the women to loosen the bindings, or at least to refrain from binding their daughters’ feet. This could be an example of connection between the European women and the Chinese, a cooperation that excluded their male colleagues. The problem and pain of the foot binding created a sisterhood between the Chinese and the European women. The female missionary, wanting to help, started a new communication with the Chinese women:

the conditions under which a Chinese woman lives may be different, but in accordance with the universal view of humanity, she had the same right to a life of physical and mental freedom as her Christian sisters (Claesson 2001: 234)

The female missionaries could very likely have seen themselves as primarily responsible for the wellbeing of the Chinese women and therefore undertaken this specific task. Indirectly, they might have come across to the Chinese as strong foreign women that were advocating new refreshing ideas as well as giving them the chance of relief from the old social norms in their society. In fact, Jane Hunter argues that unmarried women could be role models to the Chinese women, not least in advocating education (Sarja 2002: 37).

An example of a successful encounter between the Chinese and the European women is found in Burgess The Small Woman where the missionary Gladys helps out to relieve one small girl from her binding:
The spell was broken. The women came closer, chattering happily. In the years that followed Gladys was to realize what an independent, courageous group these mountain women were […] ‘Yes it is a good law,’ they said […] everyone wanted to tell of the pain and the trouble their own feet had given them for the past ten years

(Burgess 1972: 84)

Claesson also mentions the sad fates of unwanted Chinese girls left outside to die, that were sometimes rescued by the missionaries. At this time the Chinese regarded the girls less valuable than the boys and unfortunately this led to tragic outcomes. Sally also mentions the Chinese attitude towards girls. She describes her Chinese midwife’s surprise when finding Sally’s new born girl tucked into her own little bed, and how the midwife indignantly commanded her to: “Put the kid on the floor!” (Nordling 1954: 219).

The female missionaries’ primary task was to spread the gospel, but their close contact with the Chinese women gave them better insight and understanding for their life situation. It also caused a broader perspective to their mission journey. Their role as missionaries gave them the chance not only to work as religious leaders, but also, as mentioned, they were without even knowing, acting as research investigators that made it possible for us today to get insight into the Chinese women’s life.

4.4 The missionary women’s personal transformation

What I noticed when reading Sally’s book, is that she left as a single girl, completely inexperienced in her new field abroad but returned to Sweden as an adult woman,
mother of two children. The narrative gives an impression that she has matured during her mission. This could be related to Claesson’s reflections that when young Swedes arrived to Shanghai in the 1890’s, they underwent a change of personality; from bricklayer, farm-worker, teacher, girl at home to a missionary worker. The change occurred when the missionary received her Chinese name, clothes and for the men, shaving of their heads (Claesson 2001: 25-26).

Claesson questions, whether missionary organizations were afraid to send out women on their own after the Boxer Rebellion. Was it perhaps unsuitable or maybe even ungodly? Would there be any dangers for these women to work on their own on the fields? She admits that there were rules set up in China, that women should no longer operate on their own on the missionary stations, but this did however, not change the opinions that women were indeed needed (Claesson 2001: 189).

An example of this is Alan Burgess’ story about Gladys Aylward, a young British woman who travelled, almost 30 years after the Boxer Rebellion, the long journey by the Trans-Siberian railway and via boat from Japan. Gladys had not passed the Missionary education offered in England, and therefore decided to do the journey on her own, with only a few coins in her pocket. Although, she was regarded fairly old, 26 years of age, she proved the society wrong by doing an extremely dangerous journey crossing from Russia to China that was at the time in war.

She only brought the clothes she was wearing and her Bible. She was very determined and would not let anyone stop her dream, not even the travel agent in London who said that “We do not like to deliver our customers- dead” (Burgess 1972: 21).

Just as Sally Nordling, Gladys Aylward made a huge personal transformation. When starting her dangerous journey, she is described as a young woman ready to work as a
missionary, against all odds. She is fearless and positive in her attitude but also naïve, not knowing what she gets herself into. Miraculously she manages to reach her destination unharmed; there are times when the reader of *The Small Woman* doubts that she will make it. Once in China, she is inspiringly optimistic and resourceful. She is quick to demonstrate her skills and hard work, although she is not quite clear about what she in fact can contribute with. She does not have any plans to return to England and even applies for Chinese citizenship.

One really senses the revenge Gladys gets on people back in England, who did not encourage her nor believed in her. The Missionary School that dismissed her from the Theology course did after all tell her that, even if she would pass the course she would then probably be too old, almost 30 by the time, to learn the complicated language, Chinese. But in China, Gladys is quick to learn, and is later described as a woman “who rattled away in the Shansi dialect as if she’d been born in the district” (Burgess 1972: 119).

Burgess further writes that

> In this wide terrain of high mountains and deep valleys, where the material way of living was meagre and hard, she grew to maturity. All that had gone before was a preparation for this and this only a preparation for what was to come (Burgess 1972: 86)

And Burgess continues:

> The episode in the prison raised Gladys’s prestige considerably in Yangcheng. Becoming official foot inspector had given her some importance, but stopping a gaol riot had conferred honour of a different sort altogether (Burgess 1972: 95)
By working as a missionary, Gladys does not only experience a development of personality, she also undergoes a change of class. She probably knows that this progress would not have been possible in England. All of a sudden, she is listened to by the men. After proving her resourcefulness and her different way of dealing with problems, the Chinese look at her with admiration and she even starts entering conversations with the male leaders in the town: “I wish to discuss with you the status of women”. “Is it right, that a man is allowed to beat his wife?” “Is it right that a husband has the power to sell his wife”, “even to kill his wife?” (Burgess 1972: 97).

It seems like also Sally allows herself to do things in China that she would not have done in Sweden. For example, during her Chinese studies, the private teacher once hits her on her hand after she has made a grammatical error. She is surprised, but immediately decides to see the episode from a humoristic point of view: “Completely without respect but in a natural way, I slapped him back” (1954: 93). Perhaps Sally felt so mature after her long and exhausting journey, that she no longer would accept any physical correction from a teacher. She was, as a matter of fact preparing to leave and set up her own missionary station, where she was going to have a lot of responsibilities and it would not work in her favour if she let any man embarrass or belittle her, no matter if he was Chinese or European.

In contrast to Gladys, Sally’s journey does not imply any change of class; instead she matures through the change of environment and going against the main stream society. She is willing to give up her comfortable family situation for a non-materialistic, hard life on the Chinese country side. In Sweden she would of course have been restricted, being a woman, but thanks to her privileged situation, she would not have had to work for her living.
Back home in Europe, women were probably still not used of arguing their opinion in public. Although, the missionary journey could help the women to develop a strong shield as they as a missionary were expected to “never be afraid; not even for persecution, pain and death” but to remain brave and courageous in their acts (Clæsson 2001: 26).

Gladys also breaks the social norms and boundaries when leaving her home, but she becomes even braver after having stepped on foreign soil. It is, as if she dares to do things that only men would have done in her time, again, something that she would most likely not have got away with in England. She could indeed have failed, since the Chinese were at the time not used to the Western culture, and everything that came from there was looked upon with suspicion. This could however work towards her advantage as the Chinese were curious, open to new possibilities and solutions. Sally for instance, describes the situation when she and Carl are looking for a new Missionary station in Tien-chen:

The rumour of the white man’s arrival to the town was quickly spread and gave the habitants something new to talk about in the streets and on the square. They were quite doubtful about the foreigners’ motives [...] anyway [...] it could be interesting to observe his doings. Some of them found this so important, that they even in the middle of the day [...] came to the Missionary station (Nordling 1954: 143)

Burgess also describes how Gladys matures as a human being when finding the key to conversation with people in leading positions:

It was the first time in his term of office that any person, man or woman, had dared to question his authority as Mandarin. It was certainly the first time in his life that any woman had spoken to him in such a fashion (Burgess 1972: 100)
Where did this courage come from? Was this a way for Gladys to break with the social norms that she had been brought up with? Perhaps Gladys, after having spent so many years in China, obtained a sense of belonging that helped her keeping up her female integrity. As an alone woman, she had to be firm in her behaviour towards the Chinese, men and women. In England she would probably not have been able to maintain this self-esteem in public as she already would have her subordinate place in society, a condition that would be hard to change. In China, she simply belonged to the foreign class, something that could work in her favour.

Not having any higher education, nor experience from deeper conversations, her maturity and care for her new country has made her brave and intelligent. The Chinese men regard her as a fascinating stranger, and do not seem to reflect any longer upon her being a woman, someone standing lower than them: “Gladys blew into his yamen with the winds of the world around her ears. To him, she was worldly and foreign” (Burgess 1972: 111).

Further, Gladys philosophical and deep conversations with the Mandarin symbolize a woman’s chance to actively participate in a man dominated world. “It seems to me, said Gladys, that the only concern of Confucius and your other Sages was how to pattern life on earth. We in the West believe in life after death” (Burgess 1972: 114).

Gladys, from being a simple housemaid in London dreaming about going on a great adventure, is all of a sudden swept away and finds herself questioning and conversing about life’s great mysteries with the learned leaders: “He never tired of explaining the Chinese conception of the ’Princely Man’” (Burgess 1972: 114).
By living for almost twenty years in China, Gladys gets the chance to, as an independent European woman, experience the real world. She is given the opportunity to take part of new knowledge that her sisters in Europe are not able to in the same way. She even gets overconfident and questions the Mandarin: "You give most of your life just to learning a lot of old books?" (Burgess 1972: 115).

For Gladys, this experience of being listened to should have been a true awakening and a boost to her confidence, as she was maybe for the first time not discouraged or belittled for being a woman: “In all her conversation with the Mandarin, Gladys never left his presence with a feeling of inferiority or inadequacy” (Burgess 1972: 115).

With Gladys, the Mandarin was discussing things that he would most likely never have debated with the Chinese women in town. This might indicate that as a European stranger, Gladys, despite being a woman, through her religious role reached certain areas that would not have been possible, had she stayed in England. Sarja argues that even if “Female missionaries could have limited power. They could at the same time have power (or power to transform) and the possibility to affect the society through their work” (translation from Sarja 2002: 23)

5 Results and Conclusions

In my research, I have found that the female missionary in China was able to become a person that she could not be in her home country. I believe that behind the missionary narratives, there are strong women who not only had a calling to serve God, but also
had a wish for adventures, just like young boys and girls today dream about traveling the world and to live on the edge.

The preparations played an important role for the missionary women, as we have seen that it was not as easy for them as for the men, to be chosen for the journey. First of all they had to prove that they had a calling of God, something that could put a lot of pressure on these women, since there were many hindrances for them to leave in the first place.

For Sally Nordling and Gladys Aylward, new opportunities opened up. They seized the chance to work alongside with men, on almost the same terms. Sally chose to leave her comfortable life in Sweden for a challenge abroad, where she also started her journey as an adult. She chose to become a self-governing woman, who would not care for materialistic views in life.

Gladys, who left London despite discouragement, managed to fulfil her dream of becoming an independent woman abroad. In contrast to Sally, she felt that she had nothing to lose by leaving England, and once in China she was scared of having to return, as she did not know what she could offer as a missionary.

Women were encouraged to become missionaries, for example by the Fredrik Fransson Mission and Hudson Taylor, founder of the China Inland Mission. It is hard to imagine how this profession came across to young women around the 1890’s, but through the narratives of these women you get the impression that it was an attractive and sought after way of life, despite the dangers it involved. The Evangelical press, for instance the magazine Trosvittnet, worked as a source of information that must have been calling the attention of young people. As already mentioned, the press even printed advertisements that encouraged women to go, as “the Chinese women suffered”.

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I believe that my analysis confirms that the female missionaries from Europe reached a more independent lifestyle, going to China in the late 19th century. As the Fransson Missionary proclaimed that also women were needed as the end was near, the women got a chance to work with the same tasks as the missionary men.

And indeed, my thesis, that working as missionaries helped women to further their self-consciousness as well as their independency, is supported in *The Small Woman* when Gladys, after many years living in China, has gained plenty of experience with the locals and even received the acceptance of the Mandarin.

6 Thesis limitations and future research

In this thesis I have not been able to do any in-depth text analysis; observing the feelings and inner dialogues of the missionary women. Although, I have tried to centre my research on the thoughts and commitments that made these women do this dangerous journey, emphasizing on their courage and adventurous experiences in China. As time has not permitted, I have decided to leave this for another paper. This is an aspect that could put the female mission in an even more interesting context. Therefore in future studies, I would suggest other students interested in this topic to look closer at the language of some of these women, to investigate their way of description as a way for them to show their new identities. The biographies can provide a lot of inner dialogues and perhaps strengthen my theory, that the journeys for these women where a social call of liberation.
7 Bibliography

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