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# Recensioner av doktorsavhandlingar

Sigrid Schottenius Cullhed, *Proba the Prophet. Studies in the Christian Virgilian Cento of Faltonia Betitia Proba*. Institutionen för litteratur, idéhistoria och religion, Göteborgs universitet. Göteborg 2012.

Sigrid Schottenius (henceforth S.) has chosen as her PhD topic a thematic area that has conventionally fallen between all stools of the established academic disciplines, namely early Christian poetry. For *theologians* such works were traditionally regarded as not significant enough for a reconstruction of early Christian theology, and normally these texts were not considered to be as important and normative as prose writings. Moreover, Christian poets generally did not enjoy the same prestige as the so-called 'church-fathers' who hardly ever wrote poetry, as poetry was considered by them to be frivolous or, even more dangerously, to convey the wrong content, namely fictitious pagan myths, with which poetry tended to be associated. So it is not surprising that, especially on the Latin side, Christian intellectuals in Late Antiquity and in the 20<sup>th</sup> century displayed a distinct hostility towards this *genre faux* (E.R. Curtius).

*Classicists*, on the other hand, who are normally professionally interested in literary genres, and where poetry is considered to be a superior genre to prose writings, for a long time regarded texts written after the second century AD as belonging to a period of decline. This pejorative evaluation is expressed in the denoting of this 'after-period' as *Late Antiquity*, and as therefore not worthy of their attention. Classicists commonly judged post-classical poetry to be 'decadent' and 'less valuable' literature, and in particular the Christian content was considered to be at odds with the enlightened classical and secular ideal as promoted from the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards.

This precarious situation changed somewhat after the Second World War when continental European scholars became interested in what one could call late antique literature, and especially the Christian products of the fourth and fifth century AD, a

period considered to be the heyday of Late Antiquity. This research started to concentrate both on intertextual issues, paying attention to the appropriation of classical pagan models in late antique Christian literature, and the specific and new aesthetics these texts attempted to develop as suitable for the changed times. Distinguished examples among these include Manfred Fuhrmann and Reinhart Herzog from Konstanz, A.A. Bastiaensen and Jan den Boeft from the Netherlands, and Pierre Courcelle and Jacques Fontaine from France. Nevertheless, much still remains to be done in this field.

Coming from the discipline of Comparative Literature and with a strong interest in Latin literature and women writers, S. focusses on the Christian poetess Proba from the fourth century AD in her PhD thesis. Proba wrote a cento of 694 hexameters giving a succinct account of the origins of the world as created by God and then concentrating on important steps in the history of salvation until the resurrection of Christ. The poem culminates in the hope that future generations will never cease to worship Christ as the only true God. There are two special characteristics about this poem which deserve our particular attention: first, by writing such an account the poet undertakes a so-called biblical paraphrase, which means that the hexameters are a versification of specific prose hypotexts to be found in the Bible. Versifying important prose texts in elegant hexameters was already a stylistic exercise known in pagan times in the schools of rhetoric. There such versifications functioned to train future orators, high civil servants and administrators in the best possible Latin style, while at the same time intensifying the mnemotechnical effect of remembering the content better. There were already literary ambitions connected with this practice, as for instance in the epic *Punica* by the pagan poet Silius Italicus from the early second century AD, who turned Livy's account of the pivotal Second Punic War into hexameters which emulated Vergil's *Aeneid*. Christians adopted this technique from the early fourth century onwards. It should be

taken for granted, but is still not sufficiently clear to many scholars that by producing a *verse* paraphrase of a *prose* hypotext there must, by necessity, be alterations. It is precisely these alterations that deserve scholarly attention as they carry an additional message the prose hypotext does not necessarily contain.

The second speciality of Proba's poem is that it is, as already mentioned, a *cento*, i.e. a text entirely composed of hexameters or parts of hexameters taken from an already existing, usually well-known poem stitched together in a new fashion. In Proba's case the verses are taken from the three central works of the most famous of Latin classical poets, Vergil (1<sup>st</sup> century BC), namely his epic, the *Aeneid*; his didactic poem on agriculture, the *Georgics*; and his bucolic or pastoral poetry, the *Eclogues*. Again, this technique is not entirely new. The authority of the greatest Greek epicist, Homer, was such that it was believed that if one picked blindly snippets from his texts (namely the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*), these had the power to foretell one's future, in the so-called *Sortes Homericae*. It is not entirely clear whether Antiquity knew of an analogous practice regarding Vergil's works, as the *Sortes Vergiliana* are only poorly documented and could be fictitious, modelled on their Greek counterpart. (I am grateful for this information to Moa Ekblom, Uppsala University, who in 2013 completed a PhD thesis on this topic.) But be that as it may, Proba is interested on a higher and more complex level in this *serious* approach to Vergil as telling things hidden in his texts which need to be revealed and which have prophetic power: her intention is to prove that already Vergil sang of the pious deeds of Christ.

These two characteristics brought Proba's poem even more into disrepute in 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century scholarship – apart from very few exceptions, like myself – than other Christian poetry, as this approach was considered to be particularly unimaginative and sterile, and certainly not worthy of an original and creative poet. As a consequence, the poem was not studied at all, or often in terms where prejudice clouded sound scholarly judgement. It is the admirable achievement of S. to take this issue head on in the first part of her thesis, and to expose these prejudices as heavily contextually bound and historically contingent (p. 17). This is not only in itself a deserving enterprise (as scholarship should simply not operate with such biased and unreflected assumptions at all), but it also has the consequence that S. manages to free the road

for a more balanced perspective on a poet and a poem that have much to offer in terms of originality to those interested in the history of ideas. S. illustrates this with several powerful readings of the text itself in the second part of her thesis.

It makes perfect sense that, because of the predominantly biased state of scholarship before her, S. divides her thesis into two parts, with the first part dealing with the history of the reception or critique of this poem, while in the second part she interprets various aspects of the poem with the aim of demonstrating specific characteristics of its exegetical technique, literary focalization, theological message and Proba's self-portrayal as a poet. These two parts are preceded by a succinct chapter on theoretical and methodological issues, where S. carefully delineates how she wishes to use theoretical concepts such as author, reception, genre, and intertextuality. This section already displays the virtues of the thesis as a whole, namely clear and concise writing, carefully nuanced presentation of the arguments taken from an impressively wide range of primary and secondary sources, original thought and convincing conclusions. In this preliminary chapter S. is very successful in paving the theoretical way for her own consistent and persuasive reading of the literary genre of the *cento* in general, and Proba's *Centio* in particular: specifically, as a poetic hypertext which, owing to its extreme intertextuality, in each line, half-line or even each word provokes the reader to think of the Vergilian hypotext and make sense of the transposition and recontextualization of its signifiers. This opens up the possibility of multiple, potentially infinite interpretations to accommodate the all-permeating allusiveness of each of the *Centio*'s words (p. 27). Seen in this light, the genre of the *cento*, often wrongly labelled as 'decadent', has on the contrary to be seen as a form of extreme Classicism. The genre of the *cento* only really works with canonical texts as they have to be recognized as the relevant hypotext, similar to parodies of texts. (So far scholarship has not answered the question of why the less well-known *Carmen adversus Marcionitas* served as a quarry for two *centos* in or before the eighth century.) Thus, the *cento* is *not* a sign of finality (p. 81) or of a lost culture, but rather the dialectic expression of the continuing engagement with a transmitted text that is still considered to be normative in a changed environment; a *cento* distances itself from a transmitted culture while at the same time evoking and re-using it, thereby keeping this culture alive.

In order to be able to expose a certain structure in the method of the centonist, S. uses Reinhart Herzog's notion of *Leitreminiszenz* ('leading reminiscence', p. 29, or 'hegemonic reminiscence', as I would rather call it), by defining it in the following way: "Similar to a musical Leitmotif ('leading motif') it occurs when a large number of verses from one particular passage in the Vergilian hypotext are re-used in connection with a specific character or episode in the hypertextual cento" (p. 29). More than once (e.g. p. 164), S. demonstrates in Part II of her thesis the interpretative force and fruitfulness of this analytical category, as returning motifs manage not only to link the biblical passages to certain figures or concepts of the pagan hypotext, but also to interconnect the various passages within the cento itself, thereby creating 'structuralist' internal cross-references of meaning which densify the theological message of the poem. S. could perhaps have emphasized even more explicitly (cf. p. 25) the important distinction between conscious *rhetorical* intertextuality, which desires to be decoded, and *ontological* intertextuality, which is unavoidable as most words have been spoken by others before us and can be enriched with meaning by harking back to such earlier utterings (p. 25, the latter of course being a pet of postmodern deconstructivists). Finally, S. rightly argues against a notion of 'reception' as passive (p. 24), which has more to do with habits of the English language. For instance, the German terms *Rezeption* and *rezipieren* carry a strongly active notion in the sense of *Anverwandlung*.

In her first main part, S. is right in highlighting that an author naming him- or herself, as Proba does in verse 12 of her *Cento*, is not a legitimate convention for an *epic* (p. 33). However, it has to be added that in classical Latin literature, this occurs in smaller, 'personal' poetry: e.g. Catullus, poem 8 (talking to himself), poem 11, poem 13 (as lover), poem 49 (orator Cicero versus poet Catullus); Propertius in his elegies 2.8A (lover), 2.34 (poet praising Cynthia), 4.1A (poet), and also Ovid in his humorous elegies *Amores* 1.11; 2.1; 2.13, where he calls himself Naso as lover and poet (but he does not mention his name in the autobiographical *Tristia* 4.10!). Then the unconventional Christian poet Commodianus, in the concluding *Instructiones* 2.35, hides his name in an acrostic (*Commodianus mendicus dei*, 'Commodianus, beggar of God'). So the framework of reference for naming oneself in one's poetry is individuality, personal involvement

and love – and Proba seems consciously to hark back to this framework, turning her persona into an individual, personal character, with a strong identity both as a poet and as a lover of god. Again, this is highly original and can also be linked to the mixing of genres which was frequent in Late Antiquity in particular.

Then S. tackles first of all the thorny issue of who this Proba actually was, and more crucially, when to date her (pp. 34–37). The evidence at hand offers two contenders for this honour, namely Faltonia Betitia (wrongly spelled *Betita* in the summary on the loose sheet attached to the thesis) Proba, a noble woman of high rank from the middle of the fourth century, or her grand-daughter Anicia Faltonia Proba, who died before 432. Weighing the evidence and arguments carefully, S. decides to go for the older Proba, thereby accepting a date for the cento in the *mid-fourth century* (p. 37). This is extremely important as such an early date makes Proba one of the very earliest extant Latin Christian poets überhaupt, with her notable predecessors being only the already mentioned elusive Commodianus (dated now by the majority into the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD), then Lactantius' crypto-Christian poem *De ave Phoenice* (perhaps from around 303/4), the earliest securely datable Latin Christian poem *Laudes Domini* (written between 317 and 323), and Juvenius' biblical epic *Evangeliarum libri IV* (written around 330). Moreover, Proba has then to be seen as the inaugurator of the *Christian* genre of the cento (pp. 22, 39, 55f., 68). Greek centos were presumably composed already in Hellenistic times (e.g. *Anthologia Palatina* 9.381; see *Enciclopedia Virgiliana* and *Realenzyklopädie für Antike und Christentum* s.v. Cento), and a Latin mini-Cento can be found in Petronius' *Satyricon* 132 (which some prefer to call rather a pastiche). S.'s statement (p. 13), that centos 'emerge' from the 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> century AD onwards, has therefore to be understood as referring to the first substantial specimens of this genre; Irenaeus 1.9.4 and Tertullian testify to earlier (pagan) centos in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century which are lost (pp. 13f.). As an aside one should separate the verse cento, which is central in this context, from equally possible prose centos. Finally, one should note that pagan centos had a predominantly parodist function (as a *paignion*), whereas Christian centos tended to have a serious message.

If such an early date is to be accepted for Proba, then many of the poetic and exegetical features of her poem occur here for the first time in Christian

Latin literature and have to be considered as highly original. This is curiously at odds with the chequered reception history of Proba's *Cento* which oscillates between high esteem, especially in the Carolingian and the Renaissance period (pp. 91–110), and utter dismissal, especially in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (pp. 72–84). Secondly, Proba's gender proved a serious issue which, similar to the genre in which she was writing, more often than not clouded the judgment of the predominantly male scholars. S. lists frustratingly misogynistic statements about the poet made by such scholars (pp. 21, 23, 61, 73), and the various aspects of Proba that were emphasised to excuse her poetic activity, namely that she was a virtuous wife and mother and did this for her own children (pp. 55–57, 60–65, 73). An analogous, prejudiced attitude of scholarship which displays a double-standard if compared with the scholarly critique of *male* poets, can be found, for instance, when it comes to the female poets Sappho and Sulpicia, or the female mystic Julian of Norwich. The masculinocentric hostility against female literary activity caused several female novelists in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to write under male noms de plume, and a recent issue of the *Classical Receptions Journal* (vol. 4/2, 2012) exposes such mechanisms even when it comes to contemporary female writers. The author of the *Harry Potter* novels, Joanne Rowling, was persuaded to call herself J.K. Rowling so that her gender would not 'deter' the targeted reader group of young boys from reading her novels. Sadly, this attitude will not have the effect of changing such a prejudice, but rather of confirming it.

Finally, in her first part S. very skilfully embeds Proba and her work firmly in the volatile political and cultural context of the fourth century, in which Christianity was not yet entirely established but gained more and more adherents, especially in the educated classes. This made the issue more poignantly felt that Christianity had no schools of its own and that education was going through pagan channels which used pagan texts as important tools of instruction. And of course there was also the challenging issue of high-quality literature serving as an identity-marker and ideological bedrock for the hegemonic pagan culture of the time. The emerging Christian culture had to find ways in which to communicate and establish its own message in a culturally acceptable and convincing way. Proba's poetic work has to be seen in this context, as her *Cento* intends to highlight the affinities be-

tween the Judaeo-Christian and the Graeco-Latin culture as well as the discrepancies, with the final emulative aim of pleading in favour of the superior Christian message (verses 687–694).

Let me just briefly summarize the most important stages in the reception of Proba's *Cento* which S. displays in a stunning tour de force. As already mentioned, up to the Renaissance Proba's poem was predominantly admired very much, to which the numerous manuscript copies bear telling witness. By carefully analysing the context in the manuscripts within which the *Cento* is transmitted, S. can demonstrate convincingly that it served different purposes at different times: in the 7/8<sup>th</sup> century the *Cento* was a *pedagogical tool* and served as a model for metre, exegesis, grammar and rhetoric because its language was of course flawless, as it consisted almost entirely of text snippets taken from the canonical poet Vergil (pp. 93–95). In the later Middle Ages, the *Cento's content* became more prominent as a focal point of interest, emphasizing Proba especially as a cosmologist, as she dedicates almost half of her *Cento* to the creation and Paradise narrative from Genesis. Her credentials as a Christianizer of Vergil and as a prophetess demonstrating Vergil as a proclaimer of Christ were also important (pp. 95–98). In the Renaissance, Proba was both a provider of good Christian moral content and served as an admired literary model and teaching tool for the composition of contemporary centos (pp. 99, 101). Moreover, her gender was now particularly used as a stock example of a learned woman, and thereby represented an argument in favour of a thorough education for women (pp. 104–108). After losing ground as 'real poetry' in the 19<sup>th</sup> century due to changed aesthetic criteria (pp. 75–78), it was really only from the 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards that Proba began to be marginalised and heavily criticised by scholars as non-poetry (pp. 81–84). S. here very deftly exposes what one could call the 20<sup>th</sup> century paradox, as certainly much of 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century literary activity can justly be called centonic itself, with a clear predilection for poetic cut-ups, Dadaistic poetry, and collage (pp. 78–81). S. is right in highlighting the discrepancy between outmoded, anachronistic scholarly aesthetic standards and literary practice in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century (p. 84). This leads to a very peculiar logic which is hard to accept: even if we acknowledge that author ethics of the 20<sup>th</sup> century demand originality from a poet (p. 81), this should not automatically lead to the scholarly as-

sumption that Proba lacks such 'originality'. This circular fallacy of a *petitio principii* will be successfully refuted by S. in the second part of her thesis. Proba is original in presenting the first personal poetic prayer (p. 115), in inventing the genre of the Christian cento (see above), in presenting the first account of Inferno in Christian poetry (p. 161), and in her poetic integration of highly learned and controversial exegetical perspectives (for one example regarding the first chapters of Genesis, see below).

After having thus blown away the cobwebs of prejudices and misconceptions, as it were, S. is now free in the second main part of her thesis to look at the *Cento* in its own right. Programmatic already is S.'s choice of illustration for the cover of her thesis, a Grenoble manuscript from 1470 showing Proba as a mature and dynamic woman seated at her desk, holding a pen and a knife in her hands, ready to erase Vergil's text and replace it with her own version (pp. 41, 49). The square pattern of the floor and the ambitious perspective of the illumination visualize Proba's 'centonic labour'. In her main Part I, S. turns first to the overall structure of the *Cento*, where she insightfully notices a contrasting analogy between the bipartition of the cento and that of Vergil's *Aeneid* (p. 123): the first part of the *Cento*, mainly retelling Genesis, corresponds to the first, so-called 'Odyssean' half of the *Aeneid*, with Proba especially paying attention to *Aeneid* book 6, in which Aeneas visits the underworld and learns about the future of his race. But then, in the second half of her *Cento*, Proba distances herself explicitly from the second, 'Iliadic', and thus more martial, half of the *Aeneid* by stressing the 'greater work' (verse 334 *maius opus*, taken from *Aen.* 7.44) of telling the 'battle of Christ', which implies a transvaluation of traditional epic heroic values. S. then convincingly exposes Proba's assurance that this Christian cento had to be seen as penitence for her previous sins, namely the writing of pagan war epics (did she really write such at all?, see p. 118), as a self-referential poetological device to negotiate the inherent tension in her *Cento* in that it refutes a pagan epic tradition which at the same times it uses to tell its own story (p. 129). S. then raises the important question of whether there is a fundamental engagement with Vergil as a poet or whether the snippets taken from his works are selected at random for artistic effect (p. 127). It should by now already have become clear that S. has quite rightly decided to go for the first option. She also highlights the poet's ability to combine the grand epic style and

posture as a prophet with a very personal address to the reader, something S. correctly emphasizes as a typical Christian feature (pp. 130f.).

The following two chapters offer detailed readings of selected passages, concentrating first on the Genesis narrative as presented by Proba. Here a very important discovery is made by S., namely that Proba is actually consciously rearranging and re-accentuating the creation narrative of the Bible itself, thereby implicitly performing an exegetical task, i.e. dealing with the biblical text in a theologically reflected way of the highest level. This has so far not been sufficiently appreciated in scholarship, and S. is the first to demonstrate Proba's theological achievement in such a sustained and coherent way (especially pp. 134–143). Something that is almost (although not entirely) missing in this thesis is the discussion of Proba's exegetical and theological background, or, to put it bluntly: where does Proba get all this from? Did she know Greek? And who were her contemporaries in the middle of the fourth century? Who, for instance, was commenting on Genesis? Basil and Gregory of Nyssa did so only around 370, Ambrose wrote around 380–390, Augustine after 388, and in particular after 404. Origen (d. 253/4) is not particularly helpful for Proba's exegetical approach to Genesis. S.'s careful and unbiased reading demonstrates Proba's intellectual quality in this respect, which deserves to be further explored by scholarship.

In her final chapter, S. concentrates on the Gospel narrative in Proba's *Cento*, focussing on the important figure of thought called *typology* (p. 28). This figure establishes connections between various historical persons or events in order to prove progress in the history of salvation, in combination with *intertextuality*, which one could thus call a kind of *literarily supported typology*. As such, the *Cento* makes a very forceful case for embedding Vergil's work and thereby the entire classical culture in this Christian framework of the history of salvation – a very powerful conceptual usurpation which is mirrored by Proba's literary usurpation of the poet Vergil. Moreover, the 'polyphony' (a useful term S. employs fruitfully on p. 29, and more often) of the cento technique allows Proba to destabilize gender: Jesus oscillates between stereotypes of 'man' and 'woman', which is already biblical and also done in early Christian art, and Mary is characterized as a heroine while Joseph is omitted altogether (pp. 154–160). S. emphasizes in particular the role of the snake as a leading reminiscence

which creates a typological connection between Laocoon in the *Aeneid*, the first humans in Genesis 3 and Christ (pp. 28, 146–149, 171), which is again highly original and was later repeatedly done in Christian poetry.

A summary (pp. 177–83) and an English translation of the *Cento* (pp. 185–200), unfortunately without the Latin original, conclude the thesis. In general the translation is good and fluent, although improvements can be made in some details. E.g. in verse 239, *moritura* is translated with ‘mortal’, but ‘sure to die, doomed to die soon’ would better bring out the fated situation of Eve and her husband after the Fall (also on p. 139). There is one textually corrupt passage in the *Cento* (verses 38–42), on which S. does not comment, which risks putting her interpretation on unsure ground (especially on p. 139), and which leads to an imprecise and unclear translation (pp. 185f.). She should have followed the conjecture of either Green or Pollmann (both in K. Pollmann, ‘Philologie und Poesie. Zu einigen Problemen der Textgestaltung in CSEL 16’, in: A. Primmer et al. [eds], *Textsorten und Textkritik* [Vienna 2002], 211–230, here 227f.) and discussed this somewhere explicitly. These remarks should, however, not distract from the ground-breaking achievement of this thesis, which is rich in thought, methods and results. David Daube, the preeminent 20<sup>th</sup> century scholar of Ancient Law, said the cento of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the PhD thesis. I think it is obvious that S.’s thesis is so much more than that.

Karla Pollmann

Anna Jörngården, *Tidens tröskel. Uppbrott och nostalgi i skandinavisk litteratur kring sekelskiftet 1900*. Brutus Östlings Bokförlag Symposion. Höör 2012.

Anna Jörngårdens avhandling omfattar 288 stora trycksidor, varav 50 utgör noter och litteratur. Formatet antyder en ambitiös, omfattande och grundlig avhandling. Den inleds av ett ganska kort kapitel, ”Tre resenärer i tid och rum”, som presenterar avhandlingens projekt och dess tre huvudfigurer: Ola Hansson, August Strindberg och Knut Hamsun. Det följande kapitlet heter som avhandlingen: ”Tidens tröskel”. Där presenteras idékonceptet: de tre författarna är valda för att de ger signifikativa versioner av en gemensam upplevelse: att befinna sig i en övergångstid, på den tidströskel som brukar benämnas *fin-de-siècle*, det nostalgiska förhål-

landet till den tid som är på väg att ta slut och det bävande, förväntansfulla eller kanske avvisande förhållandet till den nya tiden.

De följande tre kapitlen ägnas de tre författarna: ”Sentimental journey. Ola Hanssons *nostos*-litteratur”; ”Transformation i August Strindbergs 1890-tal”; ”Blodets röst. Knut Hamsuns känslöestetik”. Avhandlingen avslutas därefter med kapitlet ”Mot nittonhundratalet”, där Jörngården drar några linjer framåt och försöker visa hur ”uppbrott” och ”nostalgi” går igen i modernismens litteratur och inte heller saknar relevans idag.

Inledningskapitlet presenterar således de tre huvudpersonerna som ”resenärer i tid och rum”: det handlar om deras flitiga resande ut i Europa, deras periodvisa exiltillvaro i kombination med upplevelsen att befinna sig på tröskeln till en ny tid. Avhandlingens kanske viktigaste tes formuleras så här: ”Upplevelsen av att stå på tidens tröskel mellan 1800- och 1900-talet väcker [...] ett behov av formförnyelse som pekar fram emot modernismen.” (s. 11) Denna upplevelse är ambivalent: den handlar både om förlust och frigörelse. Den laddar en produktiv nostalgi. Den anfäktar samtidigt identiteten, inklusive könsidentiteten. Avhandlingen handlar uteslutande om män – den nämner faktiskt inte en enda kvinnlig författare under perioden – och den lokaliserar också tidens ambivalens till de författande männen som ett manligt problem. Jörngården nämner inga kvinnor men väl en rad andra manliga författare som exponerar samma eller liknande ambivalens, och särskilt Herman Bang och Arne Garborg blir återkommande exempel i avhandlingen, vilket kvalificerar underbrukens löfte om ”skandinavisk litteratur”.

Kapitel 2, ”Tidens tröskel”, inleds med en bred och exempelrik presentation av *fin-de-siècle*. Jörngården går inte in på orsakerna till fenomenet, utöver att 1800-talet blir 1900-tal med distinkta skillnader mellan manligt och kvinnligt, där kvinnan kommer att uppfattas som ”förflutenheten, medan mannen är framtiden” (s. 24); ”allt det som mannen får lämna bakom sig i den moderna världen [...] placeras i en kvinnlig sfär. Det feminina blir emblematiskt för ett förlorat paradiset, ett mytiskt och andligt ursprung bortom alienation och fragmentering.” (s. 28) Konflikten mellan gammalt och nytt (som också är en könskonflikt) skapar nostalgi, åtminstone hos mannen, som har en tendens att idealisera både kvinnan och den gamla tiden, den som just gått förlorad eller som är på väg att gå förlorad. Nostalgin är emellertid ingen enkelriktad känsla