

Baroque Encounters of Various Kinds or : Anstösse für weitere Bemühungen um ein der Welt und Dichtung dieser Epoche gerechter werdendes Verständnis

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PAUL RIES, CAMBRIDGE

Baroque Encounters of Various Kinds or
Anstöße für weitere Bemühungen um ein der Welt und
Dichtung dieser Epoche gerechter werdendes Verständnis

It is an honour and a pleasure for me to have been invited to open this part of the celebrations of Wilhelm Friese's long and distinguished career as a scholar. As is well known, his contributions are by no means confined to the 17th century. But whatever his chosen field, he has always displayed a wonderful ability, not just to get the details right, but also to go beyond them and create, not a picture, but a portrait of the object of his study. This ability is the hall-mark of all his work, but it is displayed at its very best in the work, for which we all at this *Symposion* owe him a debt of gratitude, and which in more senses than one is the reason, why we are all here, viz. *Nordische Barockdichtung*. So what I would like to do this morning is to pay tribute to Wilhelm Friese by outlining the background, against which I believe his contribution to 17th century Scandinavian studies can be fully appreciated; I shall then go on to say something about the way, in which his methodology has influenced my own thinking about what literature is and what it can (also) be used for; and finally, I shall want to tell you about another *symposion*, which took place in a coach in 1675, and which involved an irate official, two Baroque scholars, viz. Magister Wilhelmus Friesius Tuebingensis, Germanicus and Magister Paulus Riesius Cantabrigiensis, Britannicus, and the Danish poet and newspaper editor Anders Bording.

„Anstoß A. D. 1968“

As you know, the *Nordische Barockforschung*¹ was first published in 1968, but unlike so many other promising events of that *annus mirabilis*, this one has turned out to be of lasting impact and value, having by now enjoyed almost 30 years as a classic. And there are, probably, as many reasons for this as there are scholars studying the literature of Scandinavia between the Reformation and the Enlightenment. But for me, at the time and since, what distinguished the *Nordische Barockforschung*

¹ Wilhelm Friese: *Nordische Barockdichtung. Eine Darstellung und Deutung skandinavischer Dichtung zwischen Reformation und Aufklärung*. München 1968.

above all, were two things. One: The recognition that Scandinavian Baroque literature needed to be recognised and therefore studied in terms, which the writers of the period would have recognised and accepted; and Two: that we must therefore go beyond the narrow aesthetic definitions of what literature is or does and instead accept that „Das Verhältnis des Menschen zum eigenen Ich, zur Gesellschaft und zu Gott bestimmen das Antlitz einer Epoche“.²

Of course, by 1968 there was – as Friese rightly acknowledged – a very considerable body of studies of Scandinavian literature between the Reformation and the Enlightenment. Indeed, as may be seen from a few recent publications,³ the 17th century has been studied as avidly as most other periods and more than some. But whereas scholars had been able to reach some form of agreement about what is meant by the labels attached to other periods, such as e.g. Romanticism or The Modern Breakthrough, no such consensus exists about which aspects or parts of 17th century Scandinavian literature deserve the label Baroque. Not that there has been a shortage of suggestions, far from it; indeed a large part of the problem has been that there were too many, as each scholar returned from the field with his own particular harvest of Baroque phenomena, which he had carefully selected in accordance with principles usually based on criteria imported from the literature, painting, sculpture, architecture, music, and political and/or religious belief systems *outside* Scandinavia.

As a result of this process, the picture of 17th century Scandinavian literature was a fragmented one. Some authors, viz. those who in the opinion of one scholar or another had displayed enough Baroque characteristics to qualify, would have been allocated their space on the canvas of the portrait of the age, while those, who had not, would be left out entirely, or relegated to one or more groups, who also tried, but failed. But even those writers, who were lucky enough to be accepted, could not expect to be so by virtue of their *entire* production, for while some of their works passed the examination with flying colours, others did not; indeed one might say of them, that they appeared as split personalities, not because they were, but because scholars have made them so. So Friese was quite right to describe the situation as follows:

Der Barock als Epochenbegriff für die nordischen Literaturen des 17. Jahrhunderts existiert in der skandinavischen Forschung nicht; noch liegt keine Arbeit in einem der nordischen Länder vor, die versucht, den Barock als eine umfassende Literaturperiode zu begreifen. Diese Feststellung gilt sowohl für die Nationalliteraturen Dänemarks, Schwedens, Norwegens und Islands, wie auch für die nordischen Literaturen in ihrer Gesamtheit.

² Friese, *Nordische Barockdichtung*, 1968, p. 19.

³ Paul Ries: *Danish Baroque Studies since 1900*; Bernt Olsson: *Schwedische Barockdichtung und ihre Rezeption*; Wilhelm Friese: „Am Ende der Welt“. Barock in der norwegischen Literaturwissenschaft. *Europäische Barock-Rezeption*. Hg. von Klaus Garber in Verbindung mit Ferdinand van Ingen, Wilhelm Kühlmann and Wolfgang Weiss. *Wolfenbütteler Arbeiten zur Barockforschung* 20, Teil II, S. 1083-1109. Wiesbaden 1991.

Die Aufgabe, die sich die vorliegende Studie gestellt hat, nämlich eine Synthese eines nordischen Barocks zu erarbeiten, ist bis heute nicht gesehen worden.⁴

Now, in the *post Friese* era, it may be difficult to appreciate what a relief it was to hear someone say this, and say it so clearly. Moreover, at the same time as one felt elated, one was also reassured by the fact, that though Friese clearly knew what he wanted, he did not hold out any prospect that his – or indeed any other – alternative methodology could put all wrongs right,

Endgültiges wird niemand von dieser Arbeit [...] erwarten. Nicht als Abschluß kann und will sie verstanden sein, sondern als *ein Anstoß für weitere Bemühungen* um ein der Welt und der Dichtung dieser Epoche gerechter werdendes Verständnis.⁵

This modest and measured approach was particularly important, because at that time Baroque scholars were not only prone to split the objects of their studies. As a group, if one can call them that, they were themselves deeply split into veritable camps, whose main means of communications was the firing of shots against one another, whether as broadsides, grapeshot or individual sniping. The deepest and most noticeable of these splits at the time was that between two main camps, on one hand those who insisted on prioritising aesthetic criteria and who had had the upper hand for a very long time, and, on the other, those who looked to the wider sociological context for theirs. Of those camps, the former had a long history behind it, while the latter was in the ascendancy, buoyed up by the general liberal and innovative spirit, which was one of the hallmarks of the 1960es. It was into this war zone that Friese stepped most courageously – and the more so as a non Scandinavian scholar – and announced that the fighting had to stop. In his view there was no way forward in Scandinavian Baroque studies, unless everybody were prepared to *consider* and, in so far as they might impede progress, *abandon* their fixed positions and instead *accept* the following four elements of a new approach,

1. Der Barock kann nicht mit der Gegenreformation gleichgesetzt werden. [...]
2. Kirchliche Autorität und absolutistisches Königtum sind wesentliche Kennzeichen des Barockzeitalters. [...]
3. Durch stilistisch-formale Kriterien allein läßt sich der Epochenbegriff Barock nicht deuten. [...]
4. Für eine Darstellung und Deutung der Barockdichtung ist es angebracht, soziologisch-geistesgeschichtliche und formal-stilistische Kriterien in eine wechselseitige Beziehung zu bringen.⁶

I was delighted with this clear manifesto because it made sense to me, when I considered the works I knew well from that period. But at the same time, I was concerned that some of the formulations, while they might lead to a valid description of

⁴ Friese, *Nordische Barockdichtung*, 1968, p. 13.

⁵ Friese, *Nordische Barockdichtung*, 1968, p. 29, my italics.

⁶ Friese, *Nordische Barockdichtung*, 1968, p. 17-18.

the Baroque in Scandinavia, might make a unit out of that region, but by the same token separate it from many other parts of Europe. So while I welcomed the removal of the crude and ideologically loaded equation of „Barock“ with „Gegenreformation“, which had previously excluded, not only Scandinavian, but the literature of any non-Catholic country, such as the Netherlands or Britain, from our field of study, I still kept at the back of my mind the facts about the religious organisations in power within the areas, in which the Baroque first came into being, and in which it reached a flowering unrivalled elsewhere.

Similarly, I was ready to accept Friese's general formulation of the political ramification; but again I was concerned about what would happen to e.g. the Baroque of the Seven Provinces of the Netherlands, indeed to practically all German Baroque, if monarchy were to be accepted as a *sine qua non*; would this not mean the exclusion of the English writers of the period, who in more senses than one had to serve two masters in their life time, one Monarchical with a divine sanction, the other Republican with a divine purpose? But again, I accepted the general idea, though I felt it necessary to substitute „Herrscher“ for „König“ in order to accommodate the wider variety of individuals, including the pope, who *all* believed that they had a Divine Right to wield absolute power over their subjects.

As to the third point, I freely admit that I felt it to be a much needed message to modern practitioners of one of the more barren and boring approaches to any form of literature. But at the same time I reminded myself of the importance, which the writers of the period attached to the formal aspects of their craft. For though that involved much pedantic counting of syllables and metres, and much pedestrian imitation of rhetorical devices, it was all part and parcel of their desire to have their respective mother tongues admitted to the literary *Parnassus* on equal terms with Latin and other European languages. Had they not succeeded, they would also have failed to reach their ultimate goal, viz. to forge their vernacular languages into the best possible means for expressing and conveying their messages, official or personal, about what it meant to be a human being at this particular time.

So I was particularly pleased to see, that far from being excluded, the formal aspects were now given their rightful place alongside the sociological criteria which, in their turn, were denied any supremacy of their own. In other words, by insisting on uniting these former warring parties, Friese had performed a truly Baroque act, viz. reminded us that opposites are not only contradictory, but also complementary.

However, Friese's approach involved more than the mere unification of opposing scholarly traditions. By seeing literary works as expressions of „die Gefühle und Erlebnisse des Individuums in das Formgefüge der Dichtung dieser Zeit“, which must be interpreted in terms of „die weltliche Ordnung“, because „in dieser Wirklichkeit entsteht die Dichtung“, ⁷ he laid down sound foundations for the study of a literary work as a document about a human being's experience of his or her Self,

⁷ Friese, *Nordische Barockdichtung*, 1968, p. 290.

their fellow men and women, and all the other objects of their inner and outer worlds, or, in Friese's words, their „Ich, Gesellschaft und Gott“. And he was able to go further than that. For as he found, that that triad was not only vital to our understanding of individual cases, but that it was the very same triad, which bound all those individuals together into a coherent whole, he was in a position to transcend the limitations of both an ego-centric and a logo-centric approach to literature and formulate a comprehensive and synthetic view of the period as a whole, which he expressed as follows,

Als Grunderfahrung des Barocks sehe ich die Einheit des gesellschaftlichen Struktur und des Weltbildes. Die absolute Wahrheit des christlichen Glaubens und die Autorität des Monarchen geleiten den Menschen durch eine Welt, deren Ordnung dem göttlichen Plan unterworfen ist. Der Mensch fügt sich ein in diese Ordnung, die sich ihm überall offenbart. Der alles beherrschende Gedanke der Ordnung wird auf die Dichtung mit derselben anspruchsvollen Ausschließlichkeit übertragen. Mögen die Formen der Dichtung in diesem Jahrhundert noch so verschiedenartig sein, so unterscheidet sie eines ganz deutlich von der vorangegangenen Dichtung: Der Wille zur Ordnung. Die Wirklichkeit und das Persönliche werden erhöht in eine poetische Welt und Ordnung. Hinter der „logozentrischen Stilform“ kann wohl eigenes Erleben gestaltet sein, doch nicht dies ist das Entscheidende, sondern daß die Gefühle und Erlebnisse des Individuums in das Formgefüge der Dichtung dieser Zeit gesetzt werden. Das Typisch-Allgemeine hat den Vorrang vor dem Subjektiv-Persönlichen.⁸

When, in 1968, I first read this, I had been forewarned by an article by Friese three years earlier⁹ of what he was looking for, and I was pleased to see that he had found it. For like so many other younger Baroque scholars, I was myself then experiencing the hazards involved in trying to navigate the rough and difficult Baroque waters, which flowed between the ferociously sociological Scylla of the left and the Charybdean *Feinschmeckerei* of the right, while being shot at from both sides. In my own case, I had chosen a course then, which has by and large remained the same since; I sailed as close as possible to the left bank, but tried to balance what I saw as its excessive insistence on societal factors by making use of the insight into the workings of the individual mind, which I had gained and still gain from the study and practice of psycho-analysis. Of course, this latter choice did not go down well with the radical political left; and as far as the radical religious and aesthetic right was concerned, it did not go down at all. So I was doubly pleased to find in Friese, not an ally, but a travelling companion, for it seemed to me, that there was considerable similarity between what he meant by „Ich, Gesellschaft und Gott“ and what in psycho-analysis we refer to as man's understanding of himself through his relationships with his own ego, with his fellow men, indeed with all the objects of his inner and outer world.

⁸ Friese, *Nordische Barockdichtung*, 1968, pp. 18-19.

⁹ Wilhelm Friese: Scandinavian Baroque Literature: A Synthetic View, *Scandinavica* 4 (1965), pp. 89-105.

„Anstoß A. D. 1675“

However, at that time I had already chosen another travelling companion, who was equally familiar with the 17th century „Welt und Weltbild“ in all its aspects and a good deal closer to them than Friese, viz. the Danish writer Anders Bording, who in the guise of *Den Danske Mercurius* over a period of eleven years produced an account of the world as he saw it between 1666 and 1677. I was, of course, familiar with his other works and had found what I understood to be personal statements behind the literary facades of his pastoral, political and devotional poems. But as I was, and still am, of the opinion, that each of Bording's works carries the same fundamental message irrespective of its formal garb, I wanted to concentrate on the one which, according to his contemporaries and later also to Hans Gram¹⁰ was formally his most perfect, despite its non-poetic matter, in order that I might see Bording reveal, unwittingly so to speak, his deeper thoughts and feelings, while he was preoccupied with the humdrum work of writing a newspaper. So I began a kind of double reading of the 14.700 lines of the *Mercurius*, dealing with it as a newspaper by checking the origin and accuracy of his almost 4.000 items of news about his world, while at the same time looking out for any signs or clues, which might show on a more personal level, what it meant to live in that world. In other words, I was trying to look behind the objectively descriptive to search for the subjectively experiential, at the very same time that my friend and colleague Friese was trying to go in the opposite direction by extracting a synthesis from a multitude of subjective texts. It goes without saying that we were bound to meet, and I was delighted when, in a dream set in 1675, I, in the garb of one Magister Paulus Riesius Cantabrigiensis Britannicus, found myself sitting opposite Magister Wilhelmus Friesius Tuebingensis Germanicus inside a coach, in which a third seat was occupied by a man of a somewhat dishevelled appearance, who had offered to be our guide on our tour in search of the Scandinavian version of what an eminent Baroque scholar once called the „temper“¹¹ of Baroque literature.

However, just as the postillion was about to crack his whip for the off, we heard an official shout: „Halt! You can't use a newspaper hack as your guide and still expect us to believe in the validity of what you have to say about 'das Verhältnis des Menschen zum eigenen Ich, zur Gesellschaft und zu Gott'. Here, we are only concerned with *Literatur*, not *Makulatur*!!! In any case, what are his true credentials?“ – „Or

¹⁰ Hans Gram: Fortale til det Danske Sprog Elskere. *Anders Bording's Poetiske Skrifter*. København 1735. See also Hans Mikkelsen Ravn: *Ex Rhythmologia Danica*. Sorø 1649, pp. 275-78; Søren Poulsen Gotlænder: *Synopsis Prosodiæ Danicæ*. København 1671, p. 296. (Page refs. are to the editions in *Danske Metrikere* by A. Arnholtz, E. Dal, and A. Kabell).

¹¹ L. W. Forster: *The Temper of Seventeenth Century German Literature*. London 1951 (German translation in *Daphnis* 6,4 (1977). See also his: *Deutsche und Europäische Barockliteratur. Wolfenbütteler Beiträge* 2 (1973), pp. 64-84, and his *Kleine Schriften zur Deutschen Literatur im 17. Jahrhundert*. Amsterdam 1977.

yours, for that matter?“, he added, eyeing me with a none too friendly critical look.

I was rather thrown by this verbal assault. After all, what were my credentials? Being primarily an historian of life in 17th century Europe as reflected in its newspapers, and seriously influenced by two modern Jewish thinkers, neither of whom the official could therefore have heard of, I felt I was on distinctly shaky ground. I therefore tried to draw attention away from myself by launching into a defence of the travelling companion, who had first been challenged by this clearly *pre-Friese* critical authority. But this was not as easy as you might think. For, sitting there in his corner, in his somewhat scruffy clothes, and puffing away at a clay pipe, which he had nonchalantly stuck through a hole in the wide brim of his hat, Anders Bording looked decidedly suspect. And he made matters even more difficult when, before I could speak, he offered – with a smile and an expression of levity about him not advisable when in the presence of *Auctoritas* – the following epigram *stante pede*, so to speak:

Hic Dominus Magister Friesius Germanicus,
Amicus literarum studium, qui argumentavit bis,
Primo Tubinga, Secundo Gripswalda, honoris causa,
Adversus Dominus Magister Riesius Britannicus
Amicus libellorum et Sphingis.

The official, who had no Latin – which Bording of course knew very well – suspected that he had been the victim of some scurrilous „Beamtenbeleidigung“, and he was clearly not prepared to let us pass as matters stood. Realising this, Germanicus agreed with the official, that Bording’s clothes were indeed a kind of confirmation of his rather chequered career;¹² but having reminded the official of his Christian duty according to the Gospel of St. John 7,24, Germanicus went on to invite the official to consider the following points in Bording’s favour: *Item*: That Bording had done much for the cultivation of his „Muttersprache“ with his „Schäfer-, Studenten- und Trinklieder“;¹³ *item*: That he was a master at matching the masculine with the feminine lines in that most demanding of metres, the Alexandrine;¹⁴ *item*: That he excelled at marrying the words of his „Hirtenlieder“ to the most dulcet tunes,¹⁵ accompanying himself on his lute – at this point Bording produced the said lute from his sack and would have offered to give a demonstration, had he not been physically restrained by brute Britannic force; – *item*: That his comparisons was beyond compare,¹⁶ and his antitheses redolent with meaningful contrasts; *item*: That he imitated the neo-Latin drinking songs¹⁷ as deliciously as he skilfully and liberally

¹² Friese, *Nordische Barockdichtung*, 1968, p. 68.

¹³ Friese, *Nordische Barockdichtung*, 1968, pp. 89-90.

¹⁴ Friese, *Nordische Barockdichtung*, 1968, p. 100.

¹⁵ Friese, *Nordische Barockdichtung*, 1968, p. 102.

¹⁶ Friese, *Nordische Barockdichtung*, 1968, p. 116.

¹⁷ Friese, *Nordische Barockdichtung*, 1968, p. 129.

made use of improvisation;¹⁸ *item*: That his „Gelegenheitsgedichte“ had pleased many people of the better sort¹⁹ and were so full of wise counsel about „den Weg und gesellschaftlichen Aufstieg eines Menschen am Hof“, that he might well be worth listening to, not least, because he might well himself have risen above his original station by those very means.²⁰ *Summa summarum* Germanicus concluded, Bording might not look the part, but he was in fact one of the most polished of poets of the age. Bording was delighted at all this and triumphantly exclaimed „Summa Summarum; Habitus non facit poetam!“, which, of course, was true, but also happened to be in Latin and therefore nearly undid all the good persuasive work done by the learned Germanicus. But being not just a connoisseur of literature, but also of the way of the world, Germanicus quickly recovered the situation, signalled to Bording to be quite, and continued his own line of argument by pointing out, that though Bording had indeed started out on a pretty low rung of the hierarchical ladder himself, even slipped down a rung or two in the course his chequered career, he was in fact now in the king's employment, having for the past nine years used his considerable skills as a poet as editor of a newspaper called *Den Danske Mercurius* in support of the regime.²¹

At this our official, who had not been all that impressed with Bording's qualities as a writer of songs about students, shepherds and shepherdesses and other layabouts, became rather interested and said, that he had in fact seen copies of that newspaper; it was delivered at the end of each month with the copies of the two weekly newspapers, one in German the other in Danish, printed by the royal printer, Henrick Gøede. He had been subscribing to those papers for some time to keep up with what was happening in the world. He had found them good value for money at the annual subscription of 2 rixdollars, and he had even found the monthly summary in the *Mercurius* useful, as it gave him an overview and interpretation of events complementary to the often confusing details in the weeklies.

At this point, however, the official took another critical look at Bording, and as Bording countered by blowing some smoke into his face, his original doubts about the person before him returned. Could this really be the person who wrote the king's paper? Had he not better remove him from the carriage? He did not utter those words, but thanks to the many encounters with the Sphinx Britannicus was able to read his mind and therefore promptly answered: „Absolutely and without a doubt“, and then dived into his hold-all and produced various pieces of paper as supportive evidence. One of these showed, that Bording was in fact on the king's payroll, another confirmed, that what he was being paid for was

¹⁸ Friese, *Nordische Barockdichtung*, 1968, p. 137.

¹⁹ Friese, *Nordische Barockdichtung*, 1968, p. 204.

²⁰ Friese, *Nordische Barockdichtung*, 1968, p. 275.

²¹ Friese, *Nordische Barockdichtung*, 1968, p. 211.

den poetisch Extract af Aviserne som Kaldis den Dansche Mercurius, som Osz Elsch. hederlig oc høylerd M. Anders Bording effter woris Naad. tilladelse oc befalning sammen-skriuffer oc lader trycke.²²

But it was the third piece of evidence, which had the greatest impact on the official, for though it lacked the stamp of officialdom of the former two, indeed, it was no more than a quickly scrawled note, it demonstrated, that Bording's rise to his present elevated position had come about „effter Sec: Schums ordre.“²³

At the very mention of that name a change came about in the officials demeanour, which Bording afterwards likened to the effect of the sun breaking through dense, black clouds and all becomes light; all of a sudden, Bording poetically continued, all obstacles vanished like the snows of Spring, like soap bubbles, like gossamer, etc. etc. In their own minds, Britannicus and Germanicus were quietly content that it was *their* argument, which had wrought this change; but in their heart of hearts they also knew, what Bording knew to be the case, viz. that by the mere mention of his name, Peder Schumacher, count Griffenfeld – the king's chief political advisor on the ground, so to speak, to God's anointed representative on Earth – like a *deus ex machina* had resolved a seemingly insoluble situation. So off we went, but not before Bording, who clearly sympathised with the poor official's predicament, had taken a rixdollar out of Britannicus' purse, slipped it into the official's hand, and assured him *sotto voce*, that this incident would not be reported to his superiors.

As the coach rolled on its way, Britannicus, by way of conversation, told Germanicus, how pleased he had been to see him, as the first literary scholar, give serious consideration to the *Mercurius* alongside the rest of the literary documents from that age. For instead of rejecting the newspaper because of its form, Germanicus had taken it into consideration, and had therefore been able to appreciate how well form and contents were matched, when he wrote,

Das regelmäßige Auf und Ab des übersichtlichen Alexandriners, die Bindung der Verse durch den Reim sind Ausdrücke der Ordnung in der politischen und poetischen Wirklichkeit.²⁴

This was indeed, as both *magistri* knew, a point, which was entirely consonant with the views of Bording's contemporaries who, like Ravn or Judichær, worked so hard to bring about the highest possible standards in the literature of their mother tongue.²⁵ What they also knew, but of course not Bording, was that it was the very point stressed later by the editor of the first edition of Bording's works, Hans Gram, who greatly admired „Bording's Poetiske Opfindelse og Artighed, hans Rigdom og Overflødighed i Talen“, and continued,

²² Rigsarkivet København, *Danske Kancelli, Breve og Aktstykker*, 1667.

²³ Rigsarkivet København, *Danske Kancelli, Breve og Aktstykker*, 1667.

²⁴ Friese, *Nordische Barockdichtung*, 1968, p. 211.

²⁵ See note 10 above.

Ja, jeg vilde, at de som ret agtede at kiende hans Styrke, ville prøve den i hans Mercurier, og der examinere, hvorledes hand udi een saa lidet Poetisk Materie veed at føre sig op.²⁶

Turning now to Germanicus' discussion of the contents of this extraordinary literary document, Britannicus quoted examples supporting Germanicus' praise of the *Mercurius* as a representation of „Wirklichkeit“, including references to the religious intolerance of the day,²⁷ to politics and economics,²⁸ to military exploits,²⁹ etc. etc., and as with one voice, the two *magistri* intoned the cautionary tale for all upwardly mobile courtiers at the time, about the fall from grace of one of Spain's most powerful politicians in November 1667,

Don Milior/ som før hos Kongen meest formaaede/
Med fleere pludselig er kommen i u=naade.
Det er hof lefnetz art. Hof=trappen er bestrøet
Med ærter vel saa tæt/ som volde fald og stød.
I dag ved Herre=bord/ med ord, som Centner Veye:
I morgen mindre værd/ end det som Folk udfeye.
Thi voct dig/ Hofmand/ vel: Frygt Gud/ och gjør dit kald:
Vær Kongen huld og tro: Det er mit raad for fald.³⁰

It was, Germanicus continued, precisely the choice of the right medium, which enabled Bording to paint this „volkstümliche Bild“,³¹ not only of the dangers of life in the political fast lane, but also more generally of the vicissitudes of human existence, and Britannicus supplied further examples, in which Bording gave advice, directly or indirectly, to the subjects of the Danish king, and which therefore supported Germanicus' statement about the *Mercurius* as „Belehrung und Propaganda“. ³² Indeed, both *magistri* agreed that it would be difficult to better sum up the essence of Bording's *Mercurius* than in these words,

Den danske Mercurius ist ein Organ des absoluten Königs, es verkündigt und verteidigt die staatliche Ordnung. Alles Geschehen in der Welt wird dazu benutzt, die richtige und kluge Politik des Herrschers zu demonstrieren.³³

²⁶ See note 10 above.

²⁷ Friese, *Nordische Barockdichtung*, 1968, p. 211.

²⁸ Friese, *Nordische Barockdichtung*, 1968, p. 212.

²⁹ Friese, *Nordische Barockdichtung*, 1968, p. 214.

³⁰ Anders Bording, *Den Danske Mercurius*, ed. by Paul Ries, vol. I p. 75. 'Dom Milior, who formerly had the most influence with the king, has suddenly fallen from grace, with others. That is the nature of life at court. The steps to the court are densely strewn with peas, which cause us to fall and get hurt. One day you are at the top table, with words as weighty as can be, the next day you are worth less than the rubbish, which the servants throw out. So, courtier beware: Fear God and do your duty; Obey and guard the King: That is my advice if you wish to avoid a fall.'

³¹ Friese, *Nordische Barockdichtung*, 1968, p. 215.

³² Friese, *Nordische Barockdichtung*, 1968, p. 211.

³³ Friese, *Nordische Barockdichtung*, 1968, p. 211; cf. Anders Bording, *Den danske Mercurius 1666-1677*. Udg. med kommentarer og efterskrift af Paul Ries. København 1973, pp. 206-208.

At this point, however, Bording, who had so far seemed rather pleased with what he had heard from both *magistri*, cried out, „What!?! Is that really what you think my paper was all about?“ Britannicus waited a little, and then said: „Well, what is wrong?“ He said, „There is nothing wrong as such; I can see what you both have in mind, and there were in fact also many people at the time, who thought of me as a smart time-server. And I suppose I was...“. He hesitated and then continued: „But so was everybody else; look at Stiernhielm or Kingo. They did exactly the same as I did, but their works are not described as organs for propaganda. I grant you, that their works may, to a superficial eye, appear to be less so, simply because Stiernhielm dressed up his propaganda in the language of classical mythology, and because Kingo disguised his in the language of the only version of the Christian mythology current, indeed allowed, at the time. But in the sense, in which my *Mercurius* is defined as propaganda, it is neither more nor less so than Stiernhielm's dramas or Kingo's hymns. At the end of the day, we all did the same thing, albeit in our different ways, but...“

„But what!“, Britannicus retorted, somewhat irritated by being criticised for something he could not quite comprehend. „What is it that you want from us? Surely it is extremely unfair to criticise my colleague Germanicus for not having given a fuller picture of your newspaper; his book was about *all* of you, and *you* have done rather well in it, if I may say so. Moreover, if you will just be patient for a while, I shall be publishing the full story about the *Mercurius*. So far I have only been able to show where I think you got your news from,³⁴ but soon I will be able to say something about the purpose behind the selection of the news you published – and the news you did *not* – for one reason or another – publish...“

„Well, all very clever, I am sure“, Bording began with a somewhat scornful ring in his voice. „But considering that both you guys pride yourselves on seeing our works in terms of our „Ich, Gesellschaft und Gott“, I had expected you to be able to see further than the masks, we all had to put on at the time. Yes, yes! We may well have drunk many a toast to the Horatian precept of *Utile dulci*, and it may look to you, as though all we were doing was „verkündigen, verteidigen, demonstrieren. But...“.

„But what, in Heaven's name!!!“

„But you do not seem to realise, that we did not write to preach, or entertain, or convince, or whatever. We wrote for the same reason, that writers always write – to *find out* – about our „Ich, Gesellschaft und Gott“! It was all search – search – *search!!!* We were all looking for some way of expressing our feelings about what it meant to be alive, how we felt in ourselves, and about others – *about everything!!!* The end result may look wonderfully ordered to you, but I am telling you – it was not. Surely, if you got nothing else out of reading my *Mercurius* you must have noticed, that it was not only the courtier's life, which was in the hands of that most

³⁴ Paul Ries: The Anatomy of a Seventeenth Century Newspaper. *Daphnis* 6 (1977), pp. 171-232.

dangerous of fickle ladies, Fortune. Yes, Don Milior, Edward Clarendon, Peder Griffenfeld and many others that I mention *were* men at court, and their splendid *rise* and sudden *fall* was of course in all the papers. But I was not making a political point; who, other than that hothead Jacob Worm would have been fool enough to do so? No, I used them as resplendent *exempla*, as emblems, to make an existential point, to hammer home the fact, that though we may have been writing about order, there was none, for anyone! We were all actors on that famous Stage of Life, acting out the parts allotted to us by a power beyond our control, and like all actors we wore the guises and dis-guises, which fitted those parts, but not our Selves. At the behest of the State, we were forced to play the part of obedient subjects, while the Church forced us to play the part of miserable sinners, and between them they indoctrinated us with the view, that our only chance of survival in this world and the next was – again, obedience!“

It was obvious that Bording was now really angry, for he continued, perhaps without noticing that he was to some extent repeating himself,

„There was nothing constant in our lives, except this demand for obedience and nothing certain, except the dire consequences in this world and the next, if we did not meet that demand. Our lives were dominated by the fear of the chaos and destruction, which our rulers constantly told us was reflected in our own, sinful nature. Buffeted as we were between the indoctrinators of Church and State, who never left us alone for a minute in our lives, preaching about the punishment and eternal damnation, which would be our certain end, if we did not follow their precepts from the cradle to the grave and beyond! That is where you will find the real propaganda and brainwashing that dominated our lives, my friends. Yes, there was „Wille zur Ordnung“ all right, but it was not ours! On the contrary, it was an order imposed upon us by others, which we all in our different ways, were desperately trying to write our way *out of*, not *into*!!! But neither of you have anything to say about that, about the way in which we were manipulated by those authorities into believing, that we were such poor sinners that we had to be led, that we were lost because of our very nature as human beings and could only be saved by others, by *them*!!! They invaded our daily lives, took them over, to the extent that we were no more able to think for ourselves than the poor wretches, who had been wrongfully accused of transgressions, were hauled before the courts, and who would sign fabricated confessions, the moment they were shown the instruments of torture in his Majesty’s dungeons. That was our situation: Toe the line – or perish! – Forever!“

Both Germanicus and Britannicus were trying to think of something to say, but were not able to do so in time to avoid this last outburst, „I know that you have persuaded yourselves, that you are really searching for the „Antlitz“ of our age. But let me tell you, as I see it, it may be the case that you may not even have seen its „Gesicht“!!! And you *do* know the difference, don’t you? Or are you after all no different from all the other practitioners of the craft of writing secondary literature, who seem to be more interested in finding their own security in answers that satisfy

themselves, than in staying with the chaos and the agony and the questions, that were ours!!!“

Britannicus, looking to the Sphinx for support, was just on the point of suggesting to Bording, that his oppressors might well have harboured the very same fears and anxieties; that oppressing others might in fact have been their way of coping with those selfsame problems, by passing them on, so to speak. But Bording had already left the coach and banged the door with such vehemence, that both *magistri* and it nearly became unhinged. All he left behind was a broken clay pipe as a reminder of the vehemence of his anger, and a copy of a short treatise on the temper of his age, written by one Leonardus Sylvanus Cantabrigiensis, who had written so wisely about Bording's

century of Fortune, of discontinuous time, of the isolated and menaced individual, which is at the same time the century of feverish organisation and systematisation of a world, whose ultimate validity was doubted.³⁵

As was the case when I first read Friese's methodically dispassionate *Nordische Barockdichtung*, I felt encouraged by Bording's most passionate tirade to continue my research in this rich field. And I have no doubt, that as our symposium in honour of Wilhelm Friese unfolds, I shall receive further „Anstöße“ of the Baroque kind to assist me in my search for a compassionate, empathetic approach, which will enable us to get in touch with, and experience, rather than merely explain, the temper of Scandinavian Baroque literature.

³⁵ L. W. Forster, *The Temper of Seventeenth Century German Literature*, 1951, p. 29.

