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1 Nordic Otherness

Research on Antisemitism in the Nordic Countries in an International Context

In December 2008 and January 2009, anti-Israel demonstrations in Oslo turned into riots with a distinct antisemitic character, where protesters shouted “Death to Jews!” and “Hunt the Jews!”¹

In March 2009, several thousand people demonstrated against the participation of Israeli tennis players in a match in Malmö, many of them screaming antisemitic slogans, comparing Israel to National Socialist Germany, and displaying maps of the Middle East in which the Jewish State was eradicated.²

In the year 2009, police reported seventy-nine attacks on the synagogue and Jewish cemetery in Malmö.³

In February 2010, the mayor of Malmö denied that there had ever been any violence against Jewish institutions, and demanded the city’s Jewish community denounce Israeli human rights violations against the civilian population in Gaza.⁴

In June 2011, a survey carried out by the city of Oslo found that 33 per cent of Jewish students in Oslo were physically threatened or abused by other high-school teens at least two to three times a month.⁵

In December 2015, a man wounded two police officers and killed a young Jewish man on security duty at the synagogue in Copenhagen.⁶

1 Eirik Eiglad, *The Anti-Jewish Riots in Oslo* (Porsgrunn: Communalism, 2010).

2 Per Gudmundson, “Varken fredligt eller lugnt,” *Svenska Dagbladet*, 11 March 2009, < <https://www.svd.se/varken-fredligt-eller-lugnt> >.

3 Ann-Helén Laestadius, “Hatbrott mot judar ökar,” 21 May 2015, < <http://www.minoritet.se/1357> >.

4 Ilmar Reepalu, “Reepalu: Israel har skapat en ‘varböld’,” *Skånska Dagbladet*, 27 January 2010, < <https://www.skd.se/2010/01/27/reepalu-israel-har-skapat-en-varbold> >.

5 Anette Holth Hansen, Øystein Solvang, and Kjersti Kanestrøm Lie, “Ett av tre jødiske barn hetses på skolen,” *NRK.no*, 7 June 2011, < <https://www.nrk.no/ostlandssendingen/en-av-tre-hetses-pa-skolen-1.7664103> >.

6 Søren Kjellberg Ishøy, “Mosaik Trossamfund: 37-årige Dan blev dræbt i terrorangreb,” *B. T.*, 15 February 2015, < <https://www.bt.dk/danmark/mosaik-trossamfund-37-aarige-dan-blev-draebt-i-terrorangreb> >. The gunman had also killed the film director Finn Nørgaard and injured three policemen that afternoon at an event at the Krudttønden cultural centre in Copenhagen.

In December 2017, a gang of young men threw firebombs and Molotov cocktails at the synagogue in Gothenburg. A number of young people were attending a party inside the synagogue at the time, though none of them was injured.⁷

In October 2018, the house of a Jewish politician in Lund was burned to the ground. The victim had received antisemitic hate mail and death threats in the months leading up to the attack.⁸

In all the Nordic countries, kosher slaughter is forbidden,⁹ while parliamentarians are considering a law that would criminalize ritual circumcision. The debate around this often bears distinct antisemitic undertones and invokes antisemitic stereotypes.¹⁰

These graphic examples should be evidence enough that antisemitism exists in the Nordic countries. It is present amongst left-wing anti-Zionists, Islamists, right-wing nationalists, and white supremacists, as well as just ordinary people with all kinds of political views. Many of the incidents above were followed by expressions of goodwill by politicians – promises to fight antisemitism, to stand up for Jewish communities, and to educate the public about antisemitism. The latter in particular has, however, been noteworthy for its absence – or rather, where it has occurred, it is often in a way that only defines antisemitism in a very narrow sense. Most of the educational programmes funded by the Nordic states are about visiting Holocaust memorials at former concentration camps, their focus being on the Holocaust and Second World War.¹¹ It is believed that the best way to fight against contemporary antisemitism is to focus on the most meticulously planned, industrialized mass killing of Jews, Sinti and Roma, homo-

7 “Tre döms för synagogaattacken i Göteborg,” *Dagens Nyheter*, 25 June 2018, < <https://www.dn.se/nyheter/sverige/tre-doms-for-synagogaattacken-i-goteborg/> >.

8 Jonathan Norström, “Misstänkt mordbrand mot judisk politiker i Lund,” *Nyheter Idag*, 10 October 2018, < <https://nyheteridag.se/misstankt-mordbrand-mot-judisk-politiker-i-lund/> >.

9 In Denmark, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden the animal must be stunned before cutting, effectively making ritual slaughter impossible. Despite vigorous and sometimes ugly debate in Finland, this is not the case here, but there are insufficient resources for ritual slaughter in the country and as in all the other Nordic countries kosher meat has to be imported.

10 Ayhan Al Kole, “12 grunde til at forbyde omskæring af drengebørn,” *Jyllands-Posten*, 29 May 2018, < <https://jyllands-posten.dk/debat/kronik/ECE10643216/12-grunde-til-at-forbyde-omskæring-af-drengeboern/> >.

11 See *Senter for studier av Holocaust og livssynsminoriteter*, Oslo (<https://www.hlsenteret.no/>); *Dansk Institut for Internationale Studier*, Copenhagen (<https://folkedrab.dk/>); and *Svenska komitén mot antisemitism*, Stockholm, particularly their educational trips for school classes (<http://skma.se/utbildning/>). One exception that does provide information on antisemitism in a broader perspective is *Jødisk Informationscenter* in Copenhagen (<https://www.joediskinfo.dk/qa/myter>), established in the wake of the 2015 attack on the synagogue there.

sexuals, and any other group that was defined as deviant by German National Socialism.

The educational value of this approach is debatable. Yet it mirrors and perpetuates currents in the academic landscape in the Nordic countries which make them an anomaly in the Western hemisphere. Antisemitism is largely seen as a phenomenon connected to the German, pro-German, and fascist movements of the 1930s and 1940s, and this is what research has tended to focus on – while the almost two thousand preceding years of relations between Jews and non-Jews have been largely neglected, as has the growing field of postwar antisemitism and secondary antisemitism.¹² This situation seems peculiar given the vast scholarly production on antisemitism in other European countries as well as in Israel and the United States. Historical perspectives are particularly lacking as are reliable data on antisemitic attitudes in contemporary societies. Hate crime statistics which explicitly list antisemitic assaults began to be collected only a few years ago.¹³ Most discussion about antisemitism occurs in media debates, not in academic publications, and without reliable research results from historical studies and the social sciences. Contributions to public debate tend only to come from Jewish voices (or, in Denmark, from a few individual non-Jewish politicians), as if antisemitism were a problem that is only of concern to Jews themselves. Generally, both interest in and knowledge of antisemitism in its historical dimensions and contemporary forms seems to be much more narrow in the Nordic countries than in the rest of the Western world.

This book on the study of antisemitism in the Nordic countries is largely a book about something that does not or that only barely exists, at least for certain periods and areas. In some cases, we can speculate about the reasons for this non-existence, in others, we can simply name that which is missing. Some of these contributions are the first accounts of antisemitism in the Northern peripheries ever published in English – these necessarily focus more on the phenomenon itself than on a non-existent research environment. The present book col-

¹² Werner Bergmann, “Sekundärer Antisemitismus,” in *Handbuch des Antisemitismus. Judenfeindlichkeit in Geschichte und Gegenwart*. Vol 3. *Begriffe, Theorien, Ideologien*, ed. Wolfgang Benz (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 300–02.

¹³ In 2006, two studies were published about hate crimes in Sweden, the *Brottsförebyggande rådet* study listed and quantified antisemitic violence directly, while the study of the *Forum för levande historia* did not. See < <https://www.bra.se/publikationer/arkiv/publikationer/2007-06-28-hatbrott-2006.html> > and < https://www.levandehistoria.se/sites/default/files/material_file/homofoba-hatbrott.pdf >. See also Johannes Due Enstad, *Antisemitic Violence in Europe, 2005–2015: Exposure and Perpetrators in France, UK, Germany, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Russia* (Oslo: Center for Research on Extremism), 12. See also FRA, *Fundamental Rights: Challenges and Achievements in 2013 – Annual Report 2013* (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2014), 151.

lects contributions from scholars who have been working on this topic in Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden, as well as contributions on attitudes towards Jews in the Faroe Islands and Greenland. Their accounts note three recurring factors relevant to the lack of scholarly interest in the topic: the late and quantitatively limited history of Jewish immigration to the Nordic countries compared to much of Europe; the experiences during the Second World War, i. e. Sweden's neutrality and humanitarian efforts in the last months of the war, the rescue of the Danish Jews, Norway's broad antifascist resistance, and Finland's complicated wartime role and postwar relationship with the USSR; and, finally, a general sense of Nordic exceptionalism. These arguments are seldom uttered directly, and yet they seem to linger behind the lack of interest in and support for research on antisemitism in the Nordic countries. However, as brief comparisons to other countries show, none of these factors is sufficient to explain our lack of knowledge about antisemitism in the North.

Absence of Jews – absence of antisemitism?

Very frustrating for a historian who studies the pre-modern period, most conversations in Scandinavia about antisemitism as a research topic are met with the typical remark that “there were no Jews in the Nordic countries before the seventeenth or eighteenth century.” The idea that antisemitism exists only in relation to, and in the presence of, actual living people of Jewish faith, is a very long-lived and problematic misconception, and it creates a blind spot for very many scholars of medieval and early modern Scandinavia. Additionally, the same idea or argument also obscures the identification of antisemitism in those areas where Jewish presence remains very limited to this day – as becomes clear from the contributions by Firouz Gaini on the Faroe Islands and Vilhjálmur Örn Vilhjálmsson on Iceland and Greenland.

Even though we can state with some certitude that there were no resident Jewish communities in medieval Scandinavia, it does not automatically follow that Nordic people never had personal encounters with Jews – as travellers, pilgrims, merchants, or slaves. The absence of stable Jewish communities leaving archaeological or written records does not mean that there were no Jews present at all in certain areas, as I have demonstrated for medieval Prussia under the Teutonic Order.¹⁴ Similarly, a ban and consequently the absence of Jews from

¹⁴ Cordelia Heß, *The Absent Jews: Kurt Forstreuter and the Historiography of Medieval Prussia* (New York: Berghahn, 2017), 280–82.

the Hanseatic towns of the Northern German coast has often been claimed, but has never been proven with detailed investigations of the surviving town records, trade registers, and so on.¹⁵ In medieval Scandinavia, there was not even a ban on Jewish settlement or presence.

What is actually more relevant to the development of antisemitism than the presence of Jews is, of course, the presence of the Christian Church. Regardless of the existence of Jewish communities or personal encounters, the Church brought texts, images, and ideas about Jews to the most remote corners of Europe – and as such, to the North, with Christianization and the subsequent establishment of dioceses during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Clerics read the texts of the Church Fathers, of Peter the Venerable and Bernard of Clairvaux, they had access to crusading propaganda and to hagiographic, historiographic, and exegetic texts, as well as works by the Franciscans and Dominicans, which carried an abundance of references to Jews – as well as to pagans, heretics, and Muslims, the latter two being similarly absent from the North, while the former were present amongst the indigenous populations of Greenland and Sápmi. All of this knowledge was passed on to and dispersed amongst the Christian communities in sermons, prayer books, and church paintings and thus brought the perceived enemies of the Church to the most remote areas of the Christianitas.

The discrepancy between actual living Jews during the Middle Ages, who lived in relatively small communities, and the numerous and practically omnipotent Jews who existed in theological writings, has been studied by many scholars. Jeremy Cohen has coined the term “hermeneutical Jew” for this, introduced by the Franciscans.¹⁶ Scholars have noted the changes and continuities in anti-Jewish texts and imagery following the expulsion of Jews from England, from Spain, and from various German-speaking lands, as well as before the arrival of Jews in Norway.¹⁷ Generally, much research on medieval anti-Judaism has

15 Jan Lokers, “Men bedrevet erer ok nicht? Juden in Hansestädten: Probleme und Perspektiven der Forschung,” in *Am Rande der Hanse*, ed. Klaus Krüger, Andreas Ranft, and Stephan Selzer (Trier: Porta Alba, 2012), 105–33.

16 Jeremy Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law: Ideas of the Jew in Medieval Christianity* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1999), 313–16.

17 See Anthony Bale, *Feeling Persecuted: Christians, Jews and Images of Violence in the Middle Ages* (London: Reaktion Books, 2012); Ryan Szpiech, *Conversion and Narrative: Reading and Religious Authority in Medieval Polemic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013); John D. Martin, *Representations of Jews in Late Medieval and Early Modern German Literature* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2006); Yvonne Friedman, “Reception of Medieval European Anti-Jewish Concepts in Late Medieval and Early Modern Norway,” in *The Medieval Roots of Antisemitism: Continuities*

been carried out without connection to any specific Jewish community – because the Jews of the Christian imagination are so disconnected from actual people, and because for many of the authors of *adversus Iudaeos* texts, it was irrelevant whether or not they had Jewish neighbours. Indeed, such an insight might have struck any medievalist working on Scandinavia, particularly those working on religious texts or on international relations. In this volume, Jonathan Adams and Richard Cole describe the “absent presence” of Jews in medieval Scandinavia as well as desiderata of future research.

The Nordic countries also encompass areas where Jewish life has been, and still is, so marginal that the reluctance to deal with antisemitism extends to the modern period. The selections in this volume about Jewish life in Greenland, philosemitic religious movements in the Faroe Islands, as well as antisemitism in Iceland, testify once more to the lack of any correlation between the numbers of actual Jews, on the one hand, and the space taken up by talking about Jews, hating Jews, or having misconceptions about Jews, on the other. In regard to the non-relation between Jewish presence and the presence of antisemitism, the pre-modern North is quite similar to some areas of the contemporary North. To assume that the Lutheran Church today plays a role similar to the medieval Catholic Church, with a massive discursive power over the production and distribution of antisemitic imagery, would be premature. For the Faroe Islands, the prominent role of the Evangelical movements for the establishment of the land of Israel as a surprisingly important feature of Faroese politics seems to hold true, while in the other countries, the Middle East conflict and the various political movements and parties who all take sides in it seem to have lived out and absorbed earlier forms of hostility. While the medieval and pre-modern Churches had been single and powerful producers of antisemitism, today there is one single topic that collects discursive strands from various agents, absorbs older forms of antisemitism, and adds new ones. However, the Christian heritage obviously plays a role for the tradition of stereotypes as well as for the history of Jewish settlement itself – as the under-researched history of Jewish emancipation and the measures preventing it shows.

and Discontinuities from the Middle Ages to the Present Day, ed. Jonathan Adams and Cordelia Heß (New York: Routledge, 2018), 59–72.

Emancipation

A gap not only in the research, but also in this book, is the period of Jewish emancipation, from the late eighteenth to the late nineteenth century – which is particularly puzzling because it has been identified as the critical period for the coming together of religious and racist aspects of antisemitism, as well as for identifying the significance of antisemitism in nation-building processes in Europe. Particularly for France, Prussia, and by extension all parts of Europe influenced by the Napoleonic Code, the literature about emancipation is extensive and forms a significant part of the historiography of the nineteenth century and its relevance to the development of imperialism and nationalism. The history of Jewish emancipation has thus received a tremendous amount of attention, both in its own regard and as a part of different national histories.

Curiously, even though state-building has for several decades now been the main research paradigm for almost all periods of historiographic research in Sweden and, to a lesser extent, also in Denmark and Norway, the significance of Jewish emancipation has yet to be acknowledged. The few exceptions consist mainly of Jewish scholars who look back on the process of achieving civil rights as a success story¹⁸ or of scholars who focus on the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, leaving out the circuitous paths which led to the achievement of civil rights.¹⁹ Some others have analysed the processes of assimilation of different immigrant groups, but only after emancipation had made Jewish immigration possible to a greater extent.²⁰ Yet others have written about various social

18 Leif Ludvig Albertsen, *Engelen mi: En bog om den danske jødefejde* (Copenhagen: Privattræk, 1984); Hugo Valentin, *Judarna i Sverige* (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1924); Marcus Ehrenpreis, “När Mendelssohn och Lessing möttes: Kampen för judarnas emancipation,” *Judisk tidskrift* 16 (1943): 135–40; Kurt Stillschweig, *Judarnas emancipation: En återblick* (Stockholm: Geber, 1943); Simon Victorin, *Judefrågan på 1840–1841 års riksdag: Emancipation eller förtryck* (Stockholm: Historiska institutionen, Stockholms universitet, 1997); Frode Ulvund, *Fridomens grenser 1814–1851: Håndheving av den norske “jødeparagrafen”* (Oslo: Scandinavian Academic Press, 2014); Lena Johanneson, “Schene Rariteten: Antisemitisk bildagitation i svensk rabulistpres 1845–1860,” in *Judiskt liv i Norden*, ed. Gunnar Broberg, Harald Runblom, and Mattias Tydén (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1988), 179–208.

19 Lena Berggren, *Nationell upplysning: Drag i den svenska antisemitismens idéhistoria* (Stockholm: Carlsson, 1999).

20 Per Hammarström, *Nationens styvbar: Judisk samhällsintegration i några Norrlandsstäder 1870–1940* (Stockholm: Carlsson Bokförlag, 2007); Carl Henrik Carlsson, *Medborgskap och diskriminering: Östjudar och andra invandrare i Sverige 1860–1920* (Uppsala: Uppsala universitet, 2007); Anna Besserman, “...eftersom nu en gång en nådig försyn täcks hosta dem upp på Sve-

and economic aspects of Jewish life during the nineteenth century, for which the changing tides of antisemitism and emancipation obviously were a relevant framework, but again, not the focus of interest.²¹ The first known physical attacks on Jewish houses reported in Sweden occurred in the wake of the first attempt of the king to grant the Jewish communities civil rights – but these riots are only known as a footnote to emancipation or even a footnote to Stockholm city history.²²

Consequently, we have very little knowledge about the ways in which antisemitism changed and developed after the Enlightenment period, or its role in the development of Nordic nationalisms.²³ Together with the lack of systematic research into the post-Reformation absorption of Catholic antisemitism in Scandinavia, analysis of antisemitism during the nineteenth century constitutes probably the greatest desideratum. Future research also needs to address the international influences which shaped debates in the Nordic countries – at this point, it is actually interesting to note to what extent debates about emancipation were introduced, translated, and disseminated in the Nordic countries, and which parts of these debates. The reluctance to integrate the history of Jewish emancipation into the history of the Nordic nation states and to analyse the significance of anti-Jewish and other prejudices for the process of nation-building and national identity formation also helps to foster the most common misconception in this field: the idea that antisemitism only came to the North as a German import. If, as has been claimed in order to explain the existence of anti-Jewish texts and images during the Middle Ages,²⁴ antisemitism was a literary import from Germany – why was the emancipation itself not also imported from Germany?

riges gästvänliga stränder.’ Mosaiska församlingen i Stockholm inför den östjudiska invandringen 1860–1914,” *Nordisk Judaistik* 5, no. 2 (1984): 13–38.

21 See for example David Fischer, *Judiskt liv: En undersökning bland medlemmar i Stockholms judiska församling* (Spånga: Megilla, 1996); Gunnar Broberg, Harald Runblom, and Mattias Tydén, eds, *Judiskt liv i Norden* (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1988).

22 Cordelia Heß, “Eine Fußnote der Emanzipation? Antijüdische Ausschreitungen in Stockholm 1838 und ihre Bedeutung für eine Wissensgeschichte des Antisemitismus,” *Jahrbuch für Antisemitismusforschung* 27 (2018): 40–62.

23 Within the “Archives of Antisemitism” project at the University of Gothenburg funded by the Swedish Research Council, I am attempting to publish an analysis of anti-Jewish print production in Sweden during the nineteenth century and its relevance for the delayed emancipation. See Cordelia Heß, “Eine Fußnote der Emanzipation?”

24 Bjarne Berulfsen, “Antisemitisme som litterær importvare,” *Edda* 58 (1958): 123–44.

Antisemitism as a German import: the 1930s and 1940s

The present volume contains a majority of articles dealing with the twentieth century, mirroring the focus of most research. All over Europe, the political and social changes that followed the First World War led to a radicalization of antisemitism. As early as 1909, the ideology of “racial hygiene” and “eugenics” had been institutionalized in Sweden. Jews were not the primary target, but racist antisemitism had nevertheless found academic support.²⁵ Towards the end of the long nineteenth century, political antisemitism had established itself as a quantitatively small but stable movement in the Nordic countries. Consequently, the interwar period saw the rise of marginal extreme-right groups featuring distinctively antisemitic ideologies. In Norway and Denmark, these parties played significant roles during the German occupation, and consequently, they have been seen as primarily a problem of wartime history and their members are considered traitors to national autonomy and peace. For a long time, most research on these groups has been largely descriptive, focused on their membership and their internal conflicts, and uninterested in their ideological significance. Moreover, they were usually seen as poor and somewhat ridiculous imitations of German groups and ideologies, and therefore as neither very interesting nor important in their own regard – a view that has been thoroughly challenged by some Swedish researchers, especially in the past few years.²⁶ The attribution of antisemitism to German influences is frequently mentioned as a major obstacle to thorough research on this question.

Finland differs from the Scandinavian countries insofar as it experienced a bloody civil war in 1918 and was attacked by the Soviet Union at the outbreak of the Second World War. It fought alongside Germany from 1940, with only a brief shift in loyalties and some months of battle against the remaining Germans in 1945. Finland suffered severe losses of population and territory and had to pay reparations: the political, social, and demographic impact the war had on this country are not comparable to the experiences of the other Nordic countries.

²⁵ Herman Lundborg, *Degenerationsfaran och riktlinjer för dess förebyggande* (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1922); Lena Berggren, *Blodets renhet: En historisk studie av svensk antisemitism* (Malmö: Arx Förlag, 2014), 32–35, 53–54.

²⁶ Described and criticized in Lena Berggren, “Swedish Fascism – Why Bother?” *Journal of Contemporary History* 37, no. 3 (2002): 395–417. Kjetil Braut Simonsen, “Nazifisering, kollaborasjon, motstand. En analyse av Politidepartementet og Forsyningsdepartementet (Næringsdepartementet), 25. september 1940–8. mai 1945” (PhD thesis, University of Oslo, 2016).

Even though it remained independent from both blocs during the Cold War, Finland was in a constant state of wariness regarding the Soviet Union, and this also affected academic work on antisemitism. Still, the marginal status of research on the topic in Finland seems curious, considering the fact that none of the factors complicating Finland's relationship to National Socialist Germany is entirely unique. For example, the Baltic countries and Poland had also been squeezed between the German and Russian spheres of interest and occupied, with significant sections of the population collaborating, particularly in the deportation and destruction of the Jewish populations. In all these countries, scholars have fought tough battles against political and public opinion and have found ways to describe their populations' antisemitism and participation in the Holocaust, without neglecting the suffering inflicted on them by Germans – the works of Jan Gross and Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, for example.²⁷ These studies, just like the few existing ones on Finland, have been carried out against severe governmental and public resistance, and despite the fact that many states that were formerly contained within the USSR or its area of influence have developed a self-understanding and historical narrative that focuses on the Second World War as a period of liberation from Russian influence – even if this meant collaboration in the Shoah. The congruence between being anti-Soviet and being pro-German and its consequences for participation in the Holocaust are often neglected in this version of collective memory. Similar tendencies can be seen in the Finnish debate about its role in the Second World War. Very recently, a report issued by the Finnish government following a request from the Simon Wiesenthal Center was published by a commission situated at the National Archives. It investigated the role of the Finnish SS volunteers in the Division Wiking during the Holocaust and the War of Extermination in East Germany. Praised by scholars worldwide, the reactions to the results in Finland were not quite as positive – despite the fact that the antisemitism of the SS volunteers only occupied a marginal place in the report, which focused on the atrocities they committed but was basically silent regarding their political attitudes.²⁸ The report, which in its first version had left out some crucial sources

²⁷ Jan Tomasz Gross, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, "The Polish Underground Organization *Wolność i Niezawisłość* and Anti-Jewish Pogroms, 1945–6," *Patterns of Prejudice* 51, no. 2 (2017): 111–36.

²⁸ Lars Westerlund, ed. *The Finnish SS-Volunteers and Atrocities against Jews, Civilians and Prisoners of War in Ukraine and the Caucasus Region 1941–1943: An Archival Survey* (Helsinki: The National Archives of Finland and Finnish Literature Society, 2019). – The investigators are cur-

and allegedly was not comprehensive regarding the topic, was heavily attacked by politicians, representatives of the military, and the public alike. Research results that do not seem very surprising from an international point of view, such as SS members being antisemitic and/or participating in war crimes, still create an outcry amongst the Finnish public, while the SS volunteers are treated and honoured just like other veterans of war, perpetuating the myth of the SS and Waffen SS as “just normal soldiers, following orders” – a narrative equally popular in postwar Germany. Generally, the question of how the country’s relationship to Russia has shaped Finnish self-perception on the one hand and the framework for research on antisemitism both before and after 1990 on the other has remained highly speculative.

The experiences of the Second World War have also shaped the self-perception of Sweden, Denmark, and Norway in relation to antisemitism. Obviously, resistance to the German occupation did not automatically imply a pro-Jewish attitude on the part of the population or government, and yet it did facilitate the neglect of home-grown antisemitism. Contacts between Sweden and Germany in the areas of academic scholarship and culture were only really disturbed when it became obvious that Germany would lose the war in 1943 – in terms of public opinion, this has often been backdated to 1933 and interpreted as an antifascist attitude – when it comes to anti-antisemitism, entirely contrary to the evidence. Sweden, for example, had posed severe restrictions on Jewish refugees until 1943. Several hundred Norwegians were involved in arresting and detaining their fellow Jewish countrymen for deportation to Auschwitz. After the war, the Norwegian government refused to pay for Norwegian Jews to return on the White Buses as they were no longer citizens of Norway.

Germany’s role in the development of racist antisemitism as well as the Germans’ singular responsibility for the Shoah is not downplayed by recognizing the fact that antisemitic ideas, laws, and norms had already been present in the rest of Europe for many centuries before National Socialist rule began in Germany. The idea of antisemitism being a German import has persisted in Scandinavian scholarship for several decades now. It has obtruded on the study of antisemitic ideologies and movements during the twentieth century, as well as of the significance of antisemitism for the development of eugenics, which was very much a Scandinavian invention in the early twentieth century.

rently dealing with some of the criticism within further studies including more archives in Eastern Europe, and will probably come to more far-reaching conclusions.

Romantic homogeneity

Scholars of Postcolonial Studies, Critical Whiteness Studies, and Religious Minority Studies have often identified and criticized the unwillingness of the Nordic countries to incorporate the experiences of minorities into the historiography of the majority society.²⁹ An example is the marginalization of Sámi people in academic research and the neglect of Sámi history in Norwegian, Swedish, and Finnish schools. Another example is the colonial relationship between Denmark on the one hand and Greenland and the Faroe Islands on the other. A romanticized picture of a socially, religiously, ethnically, and politically homogeneous society still seems to persist generally, and not only within the nationalistic movements that idealize the *folkhem* period.

Religious homogeneity in particular was a pillar of the early modern and modern states' constitutions with a firm connection between king, state, and the state-supported Lutheran churches. At the same time, it has never been total, and even though the various constitutions established a strong connection between citizenship and the Lutheran religion, the religious Other continued to play a role – as actual people who sometimes suffered severe repression, as an image of the “enemy within,” as a backdrop for self-assurance and self-definition, in the form of personal and intellectual contacts with other countries with different populations.

To this day, assimilation into the majority culture is strongly demanded of immigrant groups.³⁰ This regards both assimilation of what are perceived as “Nordic values,” and assimilation into a specific conception of secularism. As part of this, there is only minimal tolerance towards non-Christian religious rites. Lars Dencik has termed one aspect of this, “Enlightenment antisemitism” – the rejection of Jewish (and Muslim) rites, particularly circumcision and ritual slaughter, because they are perceived as anachronistic, unenlightened, and cruel. While German scholarship has engaged heavily in debating the “dialectics of Enlightenment,” in Scandinavia the positivist notion of the Enlightenment, secularization, and the Nordic model is still prevalent and also influences tolerance – or non-tolerance – of rituals and beliefs which are seen as “less enlightened.”

²⁹ See, for example, Tobias Hübinette and Andréaz Wasniowski, eds, *Studier om rasism: tvärvetenskapliga perspektiv på ras, vithet och diskriminering* (Malmö: Arx förlag, 2018).

³⁰ See, for example, Marie Demker, “Ökat motstånd mot flyktmottagning och invandrandes religionsfrihet,” in *Larmar och gör sig till. SOM-undersökningen 2016*, ed. Ulrika Andersson and others, SOM-rapport 70 (Gothenburg: SOM-institutet 2017), 475–88.

The idea, or ideal, of the Nordic countries as religiously, culturally, and socially homogenous has been an obstacle to emancipation and integration for centuries. Nowadays, the idea of homogeneity lives on under a different framework: secularization, enlightenment, and a political culture in which religion is seen as a private matter and yet defines national values. In this way, the Lutheran faith becomes an unquestioned pillar of national culture, while all other religions and confessions are deviations, and so the historically manifested dominance of a majority perspective on the Nordic societies is perpetrated.

Research on antisemitism in very small communities

Even though the Second World War ended almost seventy-five years ago, academic works that expose perpetrators and recall the memory of victims of the Shoah can still meet with harsh rejection. Sometimes criticism of the work extends to personal harassment of the scholars in question. In Germany, major collective outcries greeted, for example, Daniel Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners* (1996), and the so-called *Wehrmachtsausstellung*, which examined the participation of soldiers and police battalions in the Shoah. Minor controversies arose regarding the individual guilt and responsibility of scholars, not least in the humanities.³¹ To this day, critical biographies of individual historians and their involvement in the Holocaust, whether ideological or practical, are met with apologetic replies and *ad hominem* attacks against those who claim a critical *Aufarbeitung*³² of the field's own traditions. There is a gap between public exercises in memory politics, including apologies and government-sanctioned memorials, and the acceptance of individual and collective guilt for the Shoah as well as for antisemitism today. There is also good reason for scholars to be cautious about the immediate political uses of their work, which can easily lead to an instrumentalization of research results for various political purposes.

³¹ See, for example, the "Historikertag" in 1998, where a panel discussed for the first time the involvement of leading historians in the Holocaust. Marie-Luise Recker, ed., *Intentionen – Wirklichkeiten: 42. Deutscher Historikertag in Frankfurt am Main 8. bis 11. September 1998. Berichtsband* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1999); Fred Kautz, *The German Historians: Hitler's Willing Executioners and Daniel Goldhagen* (Quebec: Black Rose Books, 2003).

³² See, for example, several reviews of Ingo Haar's *Historiker im Nationalsozialismus: deutsche Geschichtswissenschaft und der "Volkstumskampf" im Osten* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), of my *The Absent Jews*, or the controversies around Theodor Schieder and Hans Schneider, which are distinctly apologetic towards NS perpetrators.

At the same time, the recurrent public and governmental focus on antisemitism has probably led to greater acceptance for the work of specific scholars, and for the topic in general.

Such institutional support is generally lacking in the Nordic countries. Scholars working on antisemitism, particularly during and after the Second World War, face accusations of being traitors and of fouling their own nests. It is insinuated that they have a specific political agenda.³³ In small research communities such as the Nordic ones, this can be devastating and dangerous, particularly for young scholars, and thus for academic freedom in general. While in international research communities various working definitions of antisemitism are debated and criticized, or the lack of Jewish scholars within certain institutions, or the relation of their research to the politics of the State of Israel,³⁴ in the North, the mere existence of research on antisemitism needs to be fought for, particularly within the growing and much better funded institutions focusing on the study of racism.

At the same time, probably as a side effect of the harsh tone in public debates, the few scholars, journalists, and publicists who research, write, and speak out against antisemitism have a tendency to isolate themselves from other scholars and from academic work and debates going on in other countries. Nordic Otherness, in this regard, seems to lead to the impression that the few people working on the topic and often facing harassment for their work are the only ones interested in, or competent in, contributing to the topic at all. Thus, international scholarship and international scholars are rarely integrated into Nordic research on antisemitism, and even inter-Nordic or inter-Scandinavian contacts are rare.

Not least because of this, research on antisemitism in the Nordic countries needs stronger institutional, financial, and governmental support – not only for surveys on contemporary attitudes and study trips to Auschwitz, but for research on antisemitism in all of its historical and contemporary dimensions, as an integral part of Nordic history.

33 See also Peter Tudvad, regarding Kierkegaard's attitude towards Jews, and some of the reactions to his work. Peter Tudvad, *Stadier på antisemitismens vej: Søren Kierkegaard og jøderne* (Copenhagen: Rosinante, 2010).

34 See, for example, the International Consortium for Research on Antisemitism and Racism (ICRAR) that aims to create a multifaceted understanding of antisemitism that is not limited to immediate political concerns. See < https://www.tu-berlin.de/fakultaet_i/zentrum_fuer_antisemitismusforschung/menue/kooperationspartner/icrar/ >; or the definition of the International Holocaust Alliance Remembrance, see < <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/working-definitions-and-charters> >.

This volume

This volume aims to help bring the study of antisemitism in and about the Nordic Countries to the fore. It covers the study of antisemitism from the medieval period to the modern day as well as some groundbreaking work on antisemitism in the North. Contributors from all the Nordic countries describe the status of, as well as the challenges and desiderata for, the study of antisemitism in their respective countries. The book looks at how research in the North relates to international research trends as well as to the self-perception of the Nordic countries.

The book begins with a section on “Antisemitism without Jews,” covering the periods before the twentieth century and testifying to the fact that anti-Jewish attitudes and ideas were of great interest to the Nordic societies long before the Second World War. The medieval period is covered by Jonathan Adams and Richard Cole, who analyse gaps in research on the East (Adams) and West (Cole) Norse material, and their respective representations of Jews. Both also discuss potential fields of research: Adams proposes the role of the Church and the medieval legacy and demonstrates this with a number of examples from miracle collections, sermons, and church paintings. Cole demonstrates the tradition of the blood libel from England to the West Norse text tradition. Vilhjálmur Örn Vilhjálmsson gives the first ever English-language overview of antisemitism in Iceland in all areas of political, social, and religious life, from the annual public singing of heavily anti-Jewish Passion hymns by politicians via various public writings declaring Jews to be responsible for war, terrorism, and the financial crisis. Clemens Räthel takes a broader look at the representation of Jews in Scandinavian literature and theatre particularly from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a period when the quantitatively very small Jewish communities were severely overrepresented in the cultural sphere. In these articles, the irrelevance of a Jewish presence for the presence of antisemitism becomes utterly apparent, and they all reveal many starting points for future work.

The next section, the largest of the book, focusses on the twentieth century, mirroring the majority of research and providing a coherent overview of it. Sofie Lene Bak’s article deals with the situation in Denmark, specifically the rescue of the Danish Jews during the Holocaust, and how this event has been exploited for Danish national identity. Christhard Hoffmann and Kjetil Braut Simonsen describe Norwegian research about the period before (Hoffmann) and after (Simonsen) 1945. Hoffmann shows that historical research has been able to deconstruct the Norwegian self-image as a tolerant, inclusive country by pointing out decisive events for the exclusion of Jews. Simonsen takes up both neofascist groups and everyday Norwegian antisemitism as relevant factors and agents affecting

the Jewish minority in the country. Karin Kvist Geverts sees the entire field of antisemitism as a neglected area of research in Sweden, both in terms of institutions and of academic education. She explains this with the common perception of antisemitism as something “un-Swedish” – a recurrent argument in many of the Nordic countries. Paavo Ahonen, Simo Muir, and Oula Silvennoinen describe the difficulties for research on modern antisemitism in Finland. They show that until about twenty years ago, the idea prevailed that antisemitism had been a marginal and irrelevant phenomenon in Finland both before, during, and after the Second World War, and how researchers have been struggling with this extreme form of Nordic exceptionalism ever since. What becomes clear is that although we might expect many similarities between the situations in each of these countries, in fact the opposite is true. Each country’s conditions for studying antisemitism are remarkably different – largely shaped by their different experiences during the Second World War – and the types of studies and research cultures that have developed are consequently unique.

The final section of the book collects articles that illustrate the contemporary presence of antisemitism in the North from various disciplinary, geographic, and chronological approaches. The contributions from the Faroe Islands (Firouz Gaini) and Greenland (Vilhjálmur Örn Vilhjálmsson) constitute “basic research” articles exploring encounters with antisemitism in each of the countries, since there is no previous research or existing framework to relate to in these cases. Gaini describes the central role which the land of Israel has been ascribed in the religious and political life of the Faroe Islands during the past 20 years or so. Vilhjálmsson collects the few cases of known Jewish travellers and inhabitants of Greenland. These contributions will hopefully provide an impetus for further research. The anthology concludes with Lars Dencik’s account of some of the results of the survey conducted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights investigating how and to what extent Jews in Scandinavia and across Europe perceive antisemitism – which, for Sweden in particular, reveals a wide gap between the numbers of hate crimes reported and the fear people actually experience as individuals. Given the lack of attitude surveys regarding contemporary antisemitism particularly in Sweden, as also stated in Kvist Gevert’s article, the analysis of the results of this survey significantly validates the claim for more research and institutional support that we argue for.