

—Malin Thor Tureby—“No, I never
thought that we were different.”
Vulnerability, Descriptive
Discourses and Agency
in the Archive—

Archives are together with other memory and knowledge institutions, like libraries and museums, active constructors of cultural memories, cultural heritages and historical narratives, not passive custodians of our recorded and documented past. Persons working in different kinds of memory institutions are constantly involved in processes of collecting, selecting, ordering and curating the materials from which history and cultural heritage is created. These processes are informed by prevailing traditions, discourses and practices on what should be omitted and what should be recorded, but also on how to collect, label, archive, curate and use archived materials.¹ “The archivization produces as much as it records the event”, as Jacques Derrida writes.² In this text I will use one specific collecting process of narratives from persons categorized as “Swedish Jews” at the archive of the Nordic Museum in Stockholm, Sweden, as a case study, to discuss the archive of the Nordic Museum as production site of knowledge on Swedish cultural heritage and history. My research is situated within the framework of a cultural approach to oral history and archival science.³ This text is also informed by feminist philosopher Judith Butler about how vulnerability and the relationship between vulnerability and agency can be understood.⁴ Butler’s ideas about descriptive discourses, vulnerability and agency in relation to the knowledge production will be applied to the archive of the Nordic museum to explore how the understandings of categories such as ‘Swedes’, ‘Jews’, ‘Swedishness’, ‘Jewishness’ and ‘Swedish Jews’ have shaped the processes of collecting and archiving. The empirical material consists of all 50 life stories collected from persons categorised as ‘Swedish-born Jews’ in the register of the collection. As often argued in the research field of oral history it is not only who is interviewed that matters for

which kind of narrative that will be created and later end up in publications and/or an archived collection, but also how persons are interviewed and by whom.⁵ I agree, and the point of departure for the analysis is therefor to investigate if and in which ways the actors in the knowledge production, the staff from the museum as well as the interviewees and persons who contributed with their written life stories, confirmed or challenged prevailing discourses about Jewishness in the 1990's and how this is manifested in the in the archived materials that constitute the collection "Jewish memories" at the archive of the Nordic Museum in Stockholm, Sweden.

Vulnerability, descriptive discourses and agency

The definition of vulnerability varies in and between disciplines, research fields and national legislations regarding research ethics. Indeed, vulnerability has been debated and contested not only in oral history and research ethics, but also in feminist philosophy.⁶ Judith Butler writes in her essay "Rethinking Vulnerability and Resistance" that one dimension of our vulnerability – as human beings – is related to our exposure to name-calling and discursive categories:

All of us are called names, and this kind of name-calling demonstrates an important dimension of the speech act. We do not only act through the speech act; speech acts also act upon us. There is a distinct performative effect of having been named as part of one nationality or a minority, or to find out that how you are regarded in any of these respects is summed up by a name or a category that you yourself did not choose. A category that existed before you could speak. We can, and do ask, Am I that Name? Am I that category?⁷

In this sense, we are all vulnerable and affected by discourses that we never chose, according to Butler. Some scholars argue that once groups are marked as "vulnerable", they are fixed in a position of powerlessness and lack of agency. Butler is not in favour of such definitions of vulnerability, since they continue to locate vulnerability as the opposite of agency. Instead, she suggests that we should try to understand the way vulnerability enters agency. When we do, our understanding of both terms can change and the binary opposition between action and vulnerability can become undone. According to Butler, without being able to think about vulnerability, we cannot think about resistance or agency.⁸

Inspired by Butler's understanding of vulnerability and how the relationship between vulnerability and agency can be analysed, I will in this text apply her ideas on vulnerability and agency in a research context and more importantly in relation to collecting and archiving narratives from one group that often is referred to as vulnerable in Swedish society, the Jewish minority.

When conducting research, we use concepts or categories such as "Jewish" – categories that are framed and filled with meaning in existing discourses. In my research, for example, with and about the Jewish minority in Sweden, I thus inevitably recreate "discourses about Jews and Jewishness", even though I strive to investigate and problematize precisely these discourses.⁹ However, I would argue that oral history provides the opportunity also to explore people's self-understandings and thus open up for questions and analysis of both structural oppression and oppositions to discriminating discourses and assigned positions created, for example, by research. According to Penny Summerfield, the challenge for the oral historian is to understand the cultural components that go into accounts of a remembered and interpreted past; or to put it differently, "the

oral historian needs to understand not only the narrative offered, but also the meanings invested in it and their discursive origins”.¹⁰ Thus, in order to understand the archived narratives in the collection Jewish Memories we need to understand discourses on Jewishness in the 1990’s.

To hear with the collection

I have in previous publications discussed the initiation and archivization of the collection Jewish memories in relation to dominant discourses on Jewishness in the 1990’s and will therefore only very briefly discuss these processes in this text.¹¹ The prelude to the collection was, according to my previous interpretation of the archived records, an idea by the author Pia-Kristina Garde to make an exhibition for the fiftieth anniversary of what she called “the White Buses”.¹² Garde’s intention with the exhibition was to collect memories from the Second World War in Sweden (she proposed that questions should be handed out to visitors to the exhibition) from as many people as possible to create a memory archive about Sweden during the Second World War. However, when it was decided at the Museum to create a collection, it became a collection solely focusing on Jewish memories.¹³

During 1994–1998, the archive of the Nordic Museum collected autobiographical material (interviews and written life stories) for a Jewish memories collection, in total, about 400 life stories. The impetus, to only focus on Jewish memories and not memories in general about and from the Second World War, as initially suggested by Garde, was motivated by the importance to contravene the voices that claimed that the Holocaust never occurred and to counteract a perceived increase in xenophobia and antisemitism in

society. The idea was that “A documentation of Jewish memories would, therefore, be a very important contribution and tool in the fight against hostility and racism.”¹⁴

Thus, one could argue that the “Jews” or the “survivors”, often categorized as “vulnerable”, were assigned a mission here, to save the vulnerable Swedish society from a perceived increasing antisemitism, racism and xenophobia. The initiation of collection can also be placed in a wider international context. Archived correspondence with, as well as brochures and interview guides from, for example Shoah Visual History Foundation, Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, The Montreal Holocaust Memorial Centre, Holocaust Oral History Project in San Francisco and Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, reveals that the staff at the museum interacted with other memory institutions.¹⁵ These contacts and visits to different memory institutions that had worked with documentation projects for decades (as for example the Montreal Holocaust Memorial Center and Yad Vashem) or more recently (as for example the Shoah Foundation) influenced most likely how the collection process in Sweden was designed.¹⁶

Furthermore, in the 1990s, the end of the Cold War also meant that archives of vital importance for the study of the Holocaust were made available and that the concern with Holocaust research was (re-)actualized in an international context. However, in Sweden Holocaust studies did not yet exist as a research field in the beginning of the 1990’s. Few scholars had researched or published about Sweden and the Holocaust at that time. In his discussion of Swedish Holocaust historiography in the 1990’s, Paul A. Levine remarked that there was an extensive historical literature about Sweden during the Second World War, but that only one study, prior to his own, discussed Sweden’s response to the Holocaust – Steven Koblík’s *The Stones Cry out Sweden’s Response to the Persecution*

of *Jews 1933–1945*.¹⁷ Levine's dissertation would become the second one. But as Levine underlines, although Koblik's book was a pioneering study, it was conducted by a historian, without any training or expertise in Holocaust studies. This is an important point made by Levine, since it suggests that Holocaust studies did not yet exist as a research field in Sweden. Furthermore, it is of importance to acknowledge that, what Levine defines, as the first two studies on Sweden and the Holocaust were published by historians born in the United States. However, as I have suggested elsewhere, one can argue that the research field of Holocaust studies had more than one beginning in Sweden.¹⁸ Paul A. Levine is mainly referring to studies in political history. However, testimonies was, for example, collected and Holocaust archives created even before the Second World War ended and these collecting, documenting and researching activities continued in Sweden with the arrival of the survivors, who was the most ardent collectors of testimonies.¹⁹

Further, as concluded by Levine, a considerable amount of research literature on Sweden and the Second World War existed in 1990s. In 1991 journalist Maria-Pia Boëthius book, *Heder och Samvete. Sverige och Andra världskriget* [Honor and Conscience. Sweden and the Second World War], was published. Boëthius questioned what she considered to be a conceited Swedish self-image in previous publications and initiated a debate about Sweden's "neutrality", actions and non-actions during the Second World War.²⁰ The book resulted in a heated public debate and self-reflections among Swedish historians.²¹

There are however no archived records or documents in the Jewish memories collection that explicitly relate to Paul A. Levine's, Steven Koblik's or Maria-Pia Boëthius books that confirm that the public and academic debates about Sweden's (im)moral (non-)

actions during the Second World War influenced the initiation of or the design of the Jewish memories collection at the archive of the Nordic Museum. Actually, previous public and academic debates and publications was mainly discussing Sweden as a state, while the memory collection initiated at the Nordic Museum in 1994 focused on individuals and their personal memories and experiences from and about the Holocaust. In fact, Ingrid Lomfors, whose dissertation uses oral history interviews with persons who came to Sweden with the *Kindertransport* in the end of the 1930s, was hired as the project leader for the collection. The collection Jewish memories at the Nordic Museum is in this way rather connected to the developments in the international research field Holocaust studies and to similar collections in other countries, rather than to previous research on political history in the Swedish context.²²

As I have discussed in previous publications, it was decided quite early in the process, that the documentation at the Nordic Museum should concern three categories of people, all of Jewish descent: Jews who were born in Sweden, Jews who fled to Sweden before and during the war, and Jews who came to Sweden from concentration camps. An interview guide and/or questionnaire was constructed to be used either while interviewing all the three constructed Jewish groups in the project (refugees, survivors and Swedish Jews) or when people from these groups were asked to write their life story. The guide was divided into eleven chronological sections. In relation to "Jewishness", the interviewee was asked to describe the Jewish background of his/her family. Was the family, for example, orthodox? How were Jewish holidays and other traditions celebrated in and outside the home? Was the interviewee active in any Jewish association? The questionnaire also asked about Jewish life and everyday Jewish culture and traditions in Sweden.

The respondent was also asked to talk about, for example, school, friends and hobbies. The questions which followed show a chronology related to the development of the Second World War and the Holocaust. Further, when the materials were archived all life stories was provided with a cover. On the cover there is information about the type of main source it entails (the terms used are oral or written life story), how extensive it is (number of pages), if there are any attachments (such as cards, letters, photos or other documents) as well as a review (for example reflective, easy-to-read, concise, etc.). Also, personal data are noted: name, category (in all of these cases 'Swedish-born'), gender, date of birth and place of residence. The cover also provide a short summary with a chronology that is divided into *Pre-war years* (place of birth, other places, family size, parents occupation, employment, other activities, Jewish affiliation), *War years* (here the archivist responsible for compiling the material has written a short story of what happened to the person during the war years, followed by a chronological account of the *Post-war years* – social situation 1945, the fate of the family, employment, other activities, family formation, Jewish affiliation and other tasks). The compilation of the material and the writing of the texts on the cover contributes to a homogenization of the material, but also creates a chronology of the individual life stories, that is rather following the course of the war than the individual's life course. Thus, the staff of the museum's archive have created a narrative, during the archivization process, that can be understood as a hybrid between a life story and a story of the Second World War and the Holocaust. The design of the archiving system, how the individual life stories were compiled and filed separately, but also together in the collection and the categories and names used when a registry for the collection was created (Swedish born, refugee and survivor) is a

concrete example of how the archivists are part of and co-authors of the stories contained in the archives.²³

My previous analysis shows that the staff at the archive of the Nordic Museum, as well as the interviewers and interviewees, had the idea that the materials could be used in the struggle against antisemitism and xenophobia as well as in documenting testimonies or narratives about the Holocaust or Jewish experiences of the Holocaust and/or the Second World War. Consequently, the deconstructions of the initiation and the archivisation process of the collection, concludes that the Jewish memories project is one available discourse on Jewishness in the 1990s that the interviewers and the 'Swedish-born Jews' had to engage with. This was a discourse where Jewishness is something related to the Second World War and the Holocaust; Jewishness as something that is not Swedish; and finally, 'Swedish-Jewishness' in relation to Jewishness represented by survivors and refugees.²⁴

In the following, this text will discuss how theses discourses and especially how the discourse about 'Jewishness as something that is not Swedish', is negotiated, contested or confirmed in the archived narratives. The analysis also explores how vulnerability enters agency, while acknowledging the capacity of a conscious individual to contest and criticize discourses.²⁵

The alleged Jewish appearance—descriptive discourses in the collection

Many of the collected and archived life stories contain narratives about childhood, experiences from school, marriage, high holidays, work life, meeting with refugees and survivors from the concentration camps during and after World War II, trips to Israel

etc. – themes initiated and elicited by the interview guide mentioned above. However, there are also narratives about other themes in the collected interviews, narratives that might be understood in relation to prevailing discourses and stereotypes about “Jews”. One such example of a recurrent theme is narratives about what I have come to call “the alleged Jewish look or appearance”. There are no questions about what the interviewees looked like as children in the interview guide. Nevertheless, several of the interviews contain narratives or conversations about appearances and “a supposed Jewish appearance.”

The Swedish historian Lars M. Andersson argues that the way a society defines and constructs the body reflects how its members define themselves and the other, how and where the line between Us and Them is drawn. According to Andersson, anti-Semitism during the 1920s and 1930s was hegemonic in Swedish society, in the sense that anti-Semitic notions were largely perceived as self-evident. Further, racial thinking about “Jews” and the use of anti-Semitic beliefs and stereotypes was an element in the creation of a modern Swedish cultural and national identity in diverse designs of Swedishness. During the 1800s and early 1900s, the Jewish body and the alleged Jewish physical appearance was constructed as different from a supposed Swedish body and look.²⁶

The life stories analysed here were told by several different persons in the 1990s. They were children or young during the 1920s and 1930s. There are no questions regarding “Jewish manners, looks or bodies” in the interview guide. Still the supposed Jewish appearance is mentioned and used by both narrators and interviewers as a distinctive and explanatory factor for whether people were subjected to antisemitism or not:

I have no specific Jewish traits, so I was never bullied. But it happened that someone shouted “Jewish pig” or something like that after my Jewish friends with strong Jewish appearances. As a young boy I was sometimes almost a little bit jealous of friends who looked like Jews should do. In my class, there was a small childish boy who gladly drew Jewish faces on the blackboard, i. e. faces with a large 6 as a nose.²⁷

This way of drawing Jewish faces was common in Swedish popular culture at the beginning of the twentieth century.²⁸ Although the narrator expresses that it was childish to paint “Jewish faces” this way, he has internalized the antisemitic perception and stereotype of what Jews look like. His explanation for not being bullied or a victim of antisemitism is that he did not look like a Jew was supposed to. His lack of personal experience from antisemitism, due to his ability to pass as a non-Jewish Swede becomes both an individual success story, and a narrative about structural antisemitism and antisemitic discourses in Swedish society.

In another interview, the interviewee cannot recall that he has ever been a victim of antisemitism (or “subject to antisemitic attacks”) as he puts it, even though he went to school during the 1930s and 1940s, when, according to him, there were plenty of “sympathizers with Germany” and “Nazi rascals” in Sweden. The interviewer responds and seeks to problematize this statement by attributing a Jewish appearance to the interviewee: “Even though you looked quite Jewish, but fair.” The interviewee answers:

No, I don’t think so, I was extremely redheaded, I looked like a Jew from Eastern Europe, but the Jewish caricature does not look that way. I didn’t have a weird nose and ... no, I probably did not

resemble the general notion of what a Jew boy should look like. I was not dark, I was fair ... and freckled and slightly chubby.²⁹

Both the interviewee and the interviewer thus place antisemitism in Sweden in the past, in the 1930s and 1940s and in specific groups. However, the interviewee questions the interviewer's analysis and choice of words by pointing out that he did not resemble what he refers to as "the Jewish caricature" and speaks of a general (if not antisemitic notion) of what a Jewish boy should look like. The interviewer does not reply to the interviewee's comments about "the Jewish caricature", but answers: "slightly chubby?" After that, the conversation takes a completely different turn and the supposed Jewish appearance or antisemitism is not the subject of any discussion or narration again during this interview.

A comparable situation and conversation about a supposed Jewish appearance and antisemitism can be found in another interview:

Interviewer: Did you have any friends when you were a child and went to school?

The interviewee: Yes, I had no difficulty with friends. I don't look like a Jew and I am not particular Jewish in my manners either. So, I had no difficulties, I had many good friends, I have had friends almost all my life, you see.

Interviewer: Do you mean Swedish friends?

The interviewee: Swedish friends, yes. There were not that many Jews in Stockholm then ... and they were not very religious, they didn't go to the synagogue and ... they had Jewish parents, but they were not that interested [in Judaism].

Interviewer: When you say you did not have a Jewish appearance, that there were those who would have distanced themselves from you ...?

The interviewee: No, not then, you know, but perhaps today ...

There are currently xenophobes in Sweden, they don't like immigrants ... and it is possible that at that time [in the past] being a Jew could have been uncomfortable, but I can't say that I've had any problems and I don't think my siblings have had any either. We are like everyone else, you know.

Interviewer: Were your friends Swedish children for the most part?

Interviewee: Almost all, ... there were classes [in school] with only one Jew and there were classes where there were no Jews at all.³⁰

In this excerpt both the interviewee and the interviewer explain Jewishness as something that is non-Swedish. The interviewee begins by telling that he neither looks Jewish nor is Jewish [in his manners] and therefore has had friends in his whole life. The interviewer does not react to his statement about the Jewish appearance or manners – she does not ask about Jewish looks or manners – but accepts that it is something that exists. Although the interview took place in the 1990s, when it probably was not as common as at the beginning of the century to express antisemitic stereotypes as to how a Jew should look and behave. However, by asking for a clarification, she indicates that, despite everything, it is not completely in its order to shut someone out because of an alleged Jewish look. On the other hand, the interviewee is constantly positioned against the Swedish by the interviewer. The interviewer is for example asking if the interviewee had Swedish friends – even though the interviewee is Swedish too. He was born in Sweden, which he points out several times during the interview. By repetitively asking about the Swedish friends, the interviewer creates a distinction between Swedishness and Jewishness, and Jewishness is during the interview constructed as non-Swedish. It is thus mainly the interviewer who that creates

boundaries and questions the interviewee's belonging and position in Swedish society in this narrative. The interviewer repeatedly creates an opposition between Jewishness and Swedishness that the interviewee must relate to during the interview. Thus, it is not a narrative about the interviewee's experiences of antisemitism; rather it becomes a narrative about Swedishness and Jewishness, where the interviewer repeatedly says that Jewish is not Swedish, although the interviewee continually tries to convince her that he is Swedish and like everyone else. It is also in relation to Swedishness and Jewishness that the interviewer asks if the interviewee had any friends in his childhood. She might just as well have posed an open question like: tell me about your friends in school. Instead she asks the interviewee if he had any friends, and when he responds that he had many, she asks if they were Swedish. Thereby the interviewer constructs Jewishness as something potentially negative and associated with being without friends. She also implies an incompatibility between Jewish and Swedish and Jews and Swedes. Later in the same interview, the interviewee once again uses his "non-Jewish" appearance to explain why he had not been the victim of anti-Semitism:

Interviewer: "Was there any experience of antisemitism in Sweden?"

The interviewee: I have been very little exposed to it, I must say. I

don't know if it's because my appearances. I speak the language.

I was born with Swedish; you know. It would have been a

different if I was an immigrant and didn't speak the language

[...]. I was like any other Swede, you know. Swedish is my native tongue; accordingly, I speak Swedish fluently.³¹

In this section the interviewer once again ascribes non-Swedishness and estrangement to the interviewee. By posing the question

"Was there any experience of antisemitism in Sweden?" she implies that the interviewee is from another country. And indeed, the narrator, once again, feels as if his Swedishness is being questioned and apparently finds it necessary to again clarify to the interviewer that he was born in Sweden and that Swedish is his mother tongue. The interviewee was born and raised in Stockholm, a theme he returns to several times during the interview. Locality, his belonging, love for and identification with Stockholm recurs several times during the interview: "I have lived my life in Stockholm, and I love Stockholm, it's a wonderful, beautiful city, especially in the summer." The interviewee's recurrent emphasis that he was born in Sweden, loves Stockholm and speaks Swedish fluently, indicates that he feels a need to clarify his Swedish character and belonging to the interviewer.

In the oral life story outlined above there is no explicit statement of what a supposed Jewish appearance looks like; it is implicitly understood. In another interview, the interviewer's understanding of a "Jewish look" is explicitly pronounced in the transcription of the interview: The excerpt below is a reflection by the interviewer on what the interviewed woman looked like in relation to her narrative about when she and her mother were harassed at a bus stop by a well-known Swedish Nazi in Stockholm in the 1930s. The interviewer writes:

On the photographs in the [woman's] room, you can see that when she was young, she had a more pronounced Jewish appearance than she has today. Her hair was black, her eyes very large and dark with marked eyebrows and she had a narrow, rather long nose.³²

In the same interview, the interviewer also poses the question: "Did you ever think that you were any different from 'ordinary

Swedes”)? The interviewee responds: “No, I never thought that we were different.” Stories about the supposed Jewish appearance, or that the respondent was supposedly different from a non-disclosed Swedish normality, are thus something initiated by the interviewer.³³ Sometimes the interviewee argues with the interviewer, disagreeing as in the example above of the man who said that his looks did not correspond to a stereotypical idea of a Jewish physical appearance or as in this example with a simple sentence: “No, I never thought we were different.” There are, however, also different scenarios, where the interviewer tells or tries to convince the interviewee that she or he was different, and where the interviewee finally agrees:

Interviewer: When you were quite young did you feel Jewish or that you were different?

The interviewee: (very firmly), Yes, it was known absolutely, yes absolutely! And in school too.

Interviewer: Did it [the Jewishness] bring any discomfort?

The interviewee: No, you know at that time one could hear on the street maybe someone something ... Jew or something like that, but not in person.

Interviewer: You didn't get teased?

The interviewee: No, absolutely not. Never directly, no.

Interviewer: But you felt that you were outside and different.

The interviewee: Yes, a little different, I did of course, I did actually.

Interviewer: Yes, because you were also dark.

The interviewee: Yes, I was.³⁴

This excerpt from the interview shows an extreme case. Jewishness is recurrently represented as different from Swedishness, and the interviewer constructs Jewishness as something negative and as-

sociated with being left outside, being teased or marginalised. The interviewer is actually telling the interviewee that she was different and that she was dark.

A dark appearance contrasted to the fair and supposedly Swedish look recurs in several narratives. In some cases, however, this experience is not interpreted as antisemitic or discriminatory. In a written life story, for example, a woman tells a funny anecdote about when she was a pupil in the French school in Stockholm:

Then we were all relieved from attending the lessons in Christianity. When our friends had lessons in Christianity, we were placed on a bench outside the classroom. We would then sit still there for a full hour. As all six of us were more or less black-haired, we were called ‘the six ink spots’. Throughout my schooling, I’ve never been exposed to any form of persecution, neither in the French school nor later.³⁵

Although the story is told as a funny anecdote, it relates to and is framed by antisemitism, since the narrator concludes at the end of the story that she has never been persecuted.

In many life stories, the school is the arena where the interviewees first encounter antisemitism. In one oral life story, a man tells the story of how his sister found out she was Jewish and had her first experience of antisemitism:

She was 12 years old, my sister [...] and the teacher asked one day: “Would [sister’s name] and [his sister’s friend’s name] come up to the lectern?” And they went there unsuspecting, presumably well-behaved girls in the Lyceum, up to the lectern, and so the teacher said: “Would you like to turn to the class?” And when they did

that, she took the stylus and then she said: “Girls, here we have two examples of the Jewish race. One can look like this and the other can look like this.” ... And this I actually remember because my sister came home and was completely ... she just screamed and cried and did not understand anything.³⁶

This narrative about the teacher who calls the two girls in front of the class in order to demonstrate “Jewish appearances” in the 1930s is of course terrible and must have been a very unpleasant experience for the narrator’s younger sister. Still, in the collection created in the 1990s at the archive of the museum, narratives and statements about the Jewish appearance and the othering in relation to what was perceived as “Swedish” and “normal” is articulated both by interviewers and by interviewees. By denying or confirming that someone looked like a “Jew” as a child, both parties relate to and thus consolidating a prevailing antisemitic discourse that very much resemble the antisemitic discourse that the narrators say that they experienced in the 1930s.

Concluding remarks—vulnerability, descriptive discourses and agency in the archive

Even though the collection Jewish memories was initiated and created to counter what was perceived as a vulnerable and threatening situation, with growing antisemitism and xenophobia in Swedish society during the 1990s, the Swedish-born Jews are constructed as non-Swedish and aliens in the interview- and collection processes. The stories of an alleged Jewish appearance and statements about a “Jewish” look differing from a supposed “Swedish” physical appearance is constructed by the interviewers as well as the

interviewees in the collection of the Jewish memoirs. By denying or confirming that someone looked like a “Jew” as a child, both the interviewer and the interviewee reinforce and relate to an antisemitic discourse. To be “dark” is a deviation from the normalized state of “white” or “fair”. A normative Swedishness is thereby consolidated in the material, as a whole, a homogeneous Swedishness that is never explicitly stated, but constantly made visible – as Christian, blue-eyed and fair or blonde. The alleged Jewish appearance is, in all cases, related to what the narrator looked like in childhood – a childhood lived in a society where antisemitism was an accepted discourse and an actual everyday reality. The stories and the interviewers’ statements regarding the alleged “Jewish appearances or manners” of the interviewees as well as the questions concerning their “otherness” were however, elicited in the 1990s, at a time when most of the interviewees explicitly claimed they had never been victims of antisemitism and at a time when the Museum through the collecting of these memories was trying to counteract xenophobia and antisemitism in society. According to the interviewees’ stories, few of them had been subjected to antisemitic attacks or insults – but the analysis of the collected life stories nevertheless affirms that antisemitic stereotypes still had a very strong impact in the 1990s in Sweden. The questions about how the interviewees perceived themselves in relation to “ordinary” Swedes, and whether they felt different, construct the interviewees as non-Swedes, not only back in the 1930s but also in the 1990s. Previous research has argued that racial thinking about “Jews” and the use of antisemitic beliefs and stereotypes was an element in the creation of a modern Swedish cultural and national identity, in diverse designs of Swedishness at the beginning of the twentieth century. The analysis of the collection Jewish memories shows how this was still done within the archive

of the Nordic Museum during the interview- and archivization processes of the collection in the 1990s.

However, this study also shows that the power to define and categorize does not only belong to the staff (in this case the initiators and interviewers working with the collection) at the memory and knowledge intuitions alone. According to Butler, without being able to think about vulnerability, we cannot think about resistance or agency. As this study illustrates memory and knowledge institutions may (unintentionally) contribute to recreating or maintaining discriminatory and marginalizing discourses, when creating, collecting and archiving materials for the archive for future research. But it also shows that social categories and stereotypes are not transhistorical or self-evident, but constantly (re)constructed in historical situations and institutional contexts. Moreover, this study also demonstrates how individual narrators resist assigned positions and descriptive discourses in the archived narratives. By acknowledging these acts of resistance, the dimension of the human vulnerability is illuminated, but also how vulnerability enters agency, in the knowledge production at the archive of the Nordic Museum in Sweden.

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Endnotes

1 See for example Francis X. Blouin Jr and William G. Rosenberg, *Processing the Past. Contesting Authority in History and the Archives* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Terry Cook, “The Archive(s) Is

a Foreign Country: Historians, Archivists, and the Changing Archival Landscape”, *The American Archivist* 74, No. 2 (2011): 600–632; Wendy M. Duff & Verne Harris, “Stories and names: Archival Descriptions as Narrating Records and Constructing Meanings”, *Archival Science* 2, No. 3-4 (2002): 263–285; Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past. Power and Production of History* (Boston, Mass: Beacon Press, 1995).

2 Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever. A Freudian Impression*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1996), 17.

3 For a cultural approach to oral history see for example Annika Olsson, “Från att ge röst till att ge plats. Oral history, retorik och intersektionalitet” in *Muntlig historia – i teori och praktik* (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2015), eds. Malin Thor Tureby & Lars Hansson, 41–57; Penny Summerfield, “Culture and Composure. Creating narratives of the gendered self in oral history interviews” in *Cultural and Social History* 1 (2004): 65–93; Malin Thor Tureby, “To Hear with the Collection. Recontextualisation and Contextualization of Archived Interviews”, *Oral History* 41, no. 2 (2013): 64–73. Concerning a cultural approach to archival science my main inspiration is from Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever. A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1996); Eric Ketelaar, “Tacit Narratives. The Meanings of the Archives”, *Archival Science*, 1, no. 2, (2001): 131–141. Eric Ketelaar, “Cultivating Archives: Meanings and Identities”, *Archival Science* 12, no. 1, (2011): 19–33.

4 Judith Butler, “Rethinking Vulnerability and Resistance”, in Judith Butler, Zeyneb Gambetti & Leticia Sabsay (eds), *Vulnerability in Resistance*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016, 12–27..

5 See for example Ronald J. Grele, *Envelopes of Sound: The Art of Oral History* (New York: Praeger 1991); Paula Hamilton and Linda Shopes (eds.), *Oral History and Public Memories* (Philadelphia Penn.: Temple University Press: 2008) Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli, and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press 1991).

6 For discussions about vulnerability or doing oral history with persons defined as vulnerable see for example: Jennifer Helgren, “A

'Very Innocent Time': Oral History Narratives, Nostalgia and Girls' Safety in the 1950s and 1960s", *Oral History Review* 42, No. 1 (2015): 50–69; Susan Kelly, "Stigma and Silence: Oral Histories of Tuberculosis", *Oral History* 39, No. 1 (2011): 65–76; Sheena Rolph, "Ethical Dilemmas: Oral History Work with People with Learning Difficulties", *Oral History* 26, No. 2 (1998): 65–72; David Palmer, "'Every Morning before You Open the Door You Have to Watch for that Brown Envelope': Complexities and Challenges of Undertaking Oral History with Ethiopian Forced Migrants in London, U.K." *Oral History Review* 37, No. 1 (2010): 35–53; Anna Sheftel and Stacey Zembrzycki, "Only Human: A Reflection on the Ethical and Methodological Challenges of Working with 'Difficult' Stories", *Oral History Review* 37, No. 2 (2010): 191–214. For discussions about research ethics and vulnerability see for example Carl H. Coleman, "Vulnerability as a Regulatory Category in Human Subject Research", *Journal of Law, Medicine and Ethics* 37, No. 1 (2009): 12–18; Samia A. Hurst, "Vulnerability in Research and Health Care: Describing the Elephant in the Room?", *Bioethics* 22, No. 4 (2008), 191–202; Mary C. Ruof, "Vulnerability, Vulnerable Populations, and Policy", *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal* 14, No. 4, (2004): 411–425; For discussions about vulnerability, feminist philosophy and gender studies, see for example Erinn Gilson, *The Ethics of Vulnerability: A Feminist Analysis of Social Life and Practice* (London: Routledge 2014); Catriona Mackenzie, Wendy Rogers and Susan Dodds (eds.), *Vulnerability: New Essays in Ethics and Feminist Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press 2013).

7 Butler, "Rethinking Vulnerability".

8 Butler, "Rethinking Vulnerability", 18–19.

9 Compare Ruth Swirsky, "Migration and Dislocation: Echoes of Loss within Jewish Women's Narratives". In; *Thinking Identities: Ethnicity, Racism and Culture*, eds. Avtar Brah, Mary J. Hickman and Máirtín Mac An Ghail (Basingstoke: Macmillan 1999): 187–205.

10 Penny Summerfield, "Culture and composure: creating narratives of the gendered self in oral history interviews", *Cultural and Social History* 1 (2004): 67.

11 Malin Thor Tureby, "To Hear with the Collection. Recontextualisation and Contextualization of Archived Interviews", *Oral History* 41, No. 2, (2013): 64–73; Malin Thor Tureby, "Svenskjudiska liv. Levnadsberättelser i skuggan av Förintelsen", *Svenska Landsmål och Svenskt Folkliv. Tidskrift för Talspråksforskning, Folkloristik och Kulturhistoria* 141 (2019): 117–144.

12 The "White Buses" refers to a programme undertaken by the Swedish Red Cross and the Danish government in the spring of 1945 to rescue concentration camp inmates in areas under Nazi control and transport them to Sweden.

13 Thor Tureby, "To hear with the collection"; Thor Tureby "Svenskjudiska liv". The contextual part about the collection discussed in this article draws on these previous publications.

14 Nordiska museets arkiv, Judiska minnen, D375:387, Undated document for applications for funds.

15 Nordiska museets arkiv, Judiska minnen, D375:389: Projektets verksamhet. Del 1–2. Kontakter utomlands [Project activities. Part 1-2. Contacts abroad].

16 Compare Malin Thor Tureby, "Memories, Testimonies and Oral History. On Collections and Research About and with Holocaust Survivors in Sweden". In *SOU 2020:21, Vol 2: Holocaust Remembrance and Representation. Documentation from a Research Conference* (Stockholm: Norstedts juridik 2020): 67–92.

17 Paul A. Levine, *From Indifference to Activism: Swedish Diplomacy and the Holocaust 1938–44* (Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, 1996): 30–32.

18 Malin Thor Tureby, "Memories, testimonies and oral history": 67–92; Malin Thor Tureby & Kristin Wagrell, *Vittnesmål från Förintelsen och de överlevandes berättelser: Definitioner, insamlingar och användningar, 1939–2020*, (Stockholm: Forum för levande historia).

19 Also in 1994 Mirjam Sterner Carlberg's dissertation, *Gemenskap och överlevnad: Om den judiska gruppen i Borås och dess historia* (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet 1994) was published and Ingrid Lomfors dissertation *Förlorad barndom-återvunnet liv: De judiska flyktningbarnen från Nazistyskland* (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet 1996) was published

the same year as Levine's dissertation. Further, the year before Levine's and Lomfors' dissertation Lars Olsson's book, *På tröskeln till folkhemmet: Baltiska flyktingar och polska koncentrationslägerfångar som reservarbetskraft i skånskt jordbruk kring slutet av andra världskriget* (Lund: Morgonrodnad, 1995) was published.

20 Maria-Pia Boëthius, *Heder och samvete: Sverige och andra världskriget* (Stockholm: Norstedt 1991).

21 See for example Johan Östling, *Nazismens sensmoral. Svenska erfarenheter i andra världskrigets efterdyning* (Stockholm: Atlantis, 2008); Lars M Andersson & Mattias Tydén, "Historikerna och moralen" in *Sverige och Nazityskland. Skuldfrågor och moraldebatt*, eds. Lars M Andersson and Mattias Tydén (Stockholm: Dialogos, 2007) for discussions on this debate. Worth noting is that both Östling and Andersson & Tydén write about Sweden, the Second World War and Nazi-Germany, rather than Sweden and the Holocaust, while discussing the research field in Sweden. Hence indicating that the research field Holocaust studies still did not exist in Sweden during the first decade of 2000 or that Swedish historians did not define themselves or others as Holocaust scholars. For further reading and a critical exploration regarding Swedish scholarship on the Holocaust, see: Kristin Wagrell, "*Chorus of the saved*": *Constructing the Holocaust survivor in the Swedish Public Discourse, 1943–1966* (Linköping: Linköping University Press): 31–38.

22 As I have discussed elsewhere. There exist earlier and other collections in Sweden. For example, two large interview and questionnaire surveys were conducted shortly after the liberated concentrations camp survivor's arrival in Sweden in 1945. A survey was conducted under the auspices of Samarbetskommittén för demokratiskt uppbyggnadsarbete (SDU). The Committee distributed a questionnaire in Polish, Czech, French and Dutch to various refugee camps in Sweden. It is now archived at the Uppsala University. In Lund, an interview survey was conducted with about 500 Polish survivors in 1945. An archive, which contains, among other things, these witness protocols, is today located at the University Library in Lund. Further the Raoul Wallenberg

Archive was initiated at Uppsala university between the years 1989–1991, which includes 170 interviews with people who knew or were rescued by Raoul Wallenberg. The purpose of this collection was to collect materials about the Swedish relief activities in Budapest, rather than to document personal experiences from the Holocaust. However, the materials were later put in a new context and used to investigate how Jews experienced the Holocaust in Hungary, See Laura Palosuo, *Yellow Stars and Trouser Inspections: Jewish Testimonies from Hungary 1920–1945* (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 2008). None of the above-mentioned collections are however referred to or discussed (as were the case with collections and archives in other countries) in the archived documents from the collection process at the Museum. For further reading about these collections see Thor Tureby, "Memories, testimonies and oral history".

23 Joan M. Schwartz, Joan M. & Terry Cook, "Archives, Records, and Power. The Making of Modern Memory" *Archival Science* 2 (2002): 1–19. For further reading on the deconstruction of the archivization process see Thor Tureby, "Svenskjudiska liv".

24 Thor Tureby, "To Hear with the Collection"; Thor Tureby, "Svenskjudiska liv".

25 Compare Butler, "Rethinking Vulnerability"; Anna Green, "Individual Remembering and 'Collective Memory': Theoretical Presuppositions and Contemporary Debates", *Oral Histor* 32, no. 2 (2004): 35–44.

26 Lars M. Andersson, *En jude är en jude är en jude : Representationer av "juden" i svensk skämtpress omkring 1900–1930* (Lund: Nordic Academic Press 2000).

27 NMA, JM, D375:41.

28 Andersson (2000).

29 NMA, JM, D375:232.

30 NMA, JM, D375:293.

31 NMA, JM, D375:293.

32 NMA, JM, D375:290.

33 See also NMA, JM, D375:241.

34 NMA, JM, D375:292.

35 NMA, JM, D375:86.

36 NMA, JM, D375:86. The family of the narrator of this life story lived a non-Jewish bourgeois life in the 1940s. The mother in the family was born a Catholic and the father had converted to Catholicism from Judaism. Both the narrator and his sister were baptized and raised as Catholics. The narrator converted to Judaism in the 1980s.