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Modelling bridges between past and current issues of forced migration: Frank Meisler's memorial sculpture *Kindertransport – The Arrival*

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The year 2018 marked the eightieth anniversary of the Kindertransport. As this rescue operation is remembered, aging Kinder, their descendants, artists, curators, and scholars are increasingly using Meisler's Kindertransport sculptures as commemorative platforms to create bridges between the history they represent and their contemporary concerns. Through a close, critical study of Meisler's sculpture situated in London, *Kindertransport – The Arrival* (2006), and an analysis of its role and repercussions in the creation of artworks and the development of several campaigns, this article establishes that by building onto the British tradition of helping child refugees, the artistic representation of the Kindertransport reveals how, in Britain, a hospitable country for contemporary child refugees may be imagined through the historical lens and memory of the Kindertransport mythos. I will begin this article with a brief biography of the artist followed by the contextualization of his Kindertransport sculpture in London, as well as a general contextualization of his transnational commemorative network, in order to establish that in Britain the celebratory narrative is used by contemporary agents to build bridges between past and current issues of forced migration to achieve tangible results in helping young victims in search of refuge. I will then offer a comparative analysis demonstrating the relevance of studying the art–site relationship of Meisler's memorials, in order to confirm that the Kindertransport is remembered according to retrospective knowledge and present needs. This article will conclude with a close study of artistic works and campaigns inspired by *The Arrival*.

Frank Meisler was one of the last sixteen children to leave Danzig (Gdansk) for England. In his autobiography, *On the Vistula Facing East* (1996), he writes about how his parents had to make the heart-wrenching decision to send their only son to London in hopes that he would finally

be safe until they could meet again. When feeling homesick in England, Meisler would often use art to recreate familiar scenes and feel closer to his lost home. He mentions how the sculptures he creates are in a way "a continuation of this need".[1] It is thus in that vein that Meisler's *Kindertransport* collection – composed of *The Departure* (2009) installed at Gdansk's main railway station, *Channel Crossing to Life* (2011) in the coastal city of the Hook of Holland, *Trains to Life, Trains to Death* (2008) in Berlin, *The Final Parting* (2015) in Hamburg, and *The Arrival* (2006) situated at Liverpool Street Station in London – maps Meisler's evacuation, while also representing this rescue operation more broadly. By mapping his own journey towards safety through various memorial sculptures, Meisler also represents "through the memory of a child, to the technique of an adult" his journey in relation to not only the Kinder who departed from Danzig and those who arrived in London, but also the children who were not evacuated but deported during the Final Solution.[2]

Meisler's *The Arrival* was the first sculpture of his Kindertransport network to be erected. This memorial was installed at Liverpool Street Station to commemorate the arrival of the Kinder at the station where a number of foster families were waiting for them. Although Meisler's choice to begin the visual representation of his experiences by his arrival in London may seem unusual, particularly since he describes art as a way for him to return, or at least feel closer to his hometown, the fact is that it was in England that there was such a demand. Meisler began to create the first of these memorials after being commissioned by the Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR) and World Jewish Relief to create a sculpture to replace Flor Kent's *Für das Kind* at Liverpool Street Station.

Kent's commemorative bronze sculpture, which was unveiled on 16 September 2003, is considered the first "permanent monument to the Kindertransport".[3] During the inauguration's welcoming speech for the sculpture, Nigel Layton, the Chairman of World Jewish Relief, reported that the many organizations and individuals involved in the realization of the visual representation of the Kindertransport hoped that *Für das Kind* would "become a major London landmark of historic and artistic importance".[4] In *Holocaust Consciousness in Contemporary Britain* (2014), Andy

1 Frank Meisler, *On the Vistula Facing East* (London: André Deutsch, 1996), 140.

2 Ibid.

3 *Für das Kind: Liverpool Street Station, Tuesday, 16th September 2003* (London: World Jewish Relief, 2003), 1.

4 Ibid.

Pearce reminds his readers of the importance of Kent's memorial at the station by mentioning that before its relocation in 2005 to the Imperial War Museum, "the statue of the girl was affectionately known as 'the face of the station'".[5] Although *Für das Kind* was removed because the artefacts contained in the glass suitcase next to the bronze Kind began to deteriorate, "the face of the station" demonstrates that its existence created an important precedent. Because of its presence at the entrance of one of the main stations in London, seen on a regular basis by thousands, Kent's commemorative sculpture eventually came to stimulate the public's remembrance of the Kindertransport: the memorial "became a fixture in the consciousness of regular commuters".[6] Its presence outside the station where eighty years ago thousands of Kindertransportees arrived in London also helped to prevent the history of Liverpool Street Station from being forgotten. In addition to instilling its memory in the collective consciousness as a place where a critical moment of the Kinder's evacuation took place, Liverpool Street Station entered the British public sphere as a symbol of Britain's role in rescuing vulnerable children.

To further explain the British interest in visually representing the Kindertransport, I will define and contextualize the British celebratory narrative by briefly outlining the circumstances that led to the incorporation of the Kindertransport history into British historical consciousness, eventually becoming dominant within British narratives of the Holocaust. British interest in visually representing the Kindertransport can be explained by Britain's nostalgia for a unified culture. In *The Stages of Memory* (2016), James E. Young mentions that "part of our contemporary culture's hunger for the monumental . . . is its nostalgia for the universal values and ethos by which it once knew itself as a unified culture".[7] When reflecting on the reasons why this particular rescue operation is, according to Tony Kushner, "the fastest growing story relating to Britain and the Holocaust", Young's argument indicates that this British celebratory narrative was influenced in part by a quest for a "unified culture" after the loss of empire, and in part by the unprecedented consequences of the Holocaust on people's trust in humankind, benevolence, and the

5 Andy Pearce, *Holocaust Consciousness in Contemporary Britain* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 216.

6 Ibid.

7 James E. Young, *The Stages of Memory: Reflections on Memorial Art, Loss, and the Spaces Between* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2016), 15.

future.[8] In the immediate postwar period, Britain's engagement with the Holocaust concentrated on its industrial and systematic nature, as well as on the liberation of concentration camps such as Bergen-Belsen by the British army. Attention was focused on historical documents rather than on testimonies given by witnesses. In his 2010 article on Britain's postwar responses to the annihilation of European Jewry, the British historian David Cesarani explains that, because of the media coverage and the population's emotional reaction, the omnipresence of testimonies and visual accounts of the Holocaust prompted "a sort of 'compassion fatigue'" which did not encourage survivors' testimonies to enter the public sphere.[9] As the French historian Annette Wieviorka argues in *The Era of the Witness* (2006), it was the Adolf Eichmann trial in 1961 that encouraged "a broad cultural deafness to survivors' stories [to be] replaced by the image of the witness as 'bearer of history'".[10] The Eichmann trial indeed acted as a turning point in legitimizing survivors' testimonies and in identifying the Holocaust as a specific crime in contrast to the other undifferentiated Nazi crimes. It is, however, the increasing presence of television in the common household that allowed for the trial to enter the population's living-rooms and be broadcast round the world, thus allowing survivors' testimonies to enter the public sphere and the popular imagination. Although it is true that the trial "put in the public domain the historical details of the Holocaust", Kushner has argued that in Britain "its longer-term impact was no more than a minor ripple" because the British public grew weary of the trial's high media attention.[11] In Britain, public engagement in survivors' personal memories of the Holocaust did not begin to increase until the release of Spielberg's *Schindler's List* in 1993 and the growing circulation of Anne Frank's diary. Since its publication in Dutch in 1947, *The Diary of a Young Girl* has been adapted for theatre and film, translated into more than sixty-five languages, and printed by hundreds of publishing houses. Despite the fact that the diary had been written by a teenager, the common postwar belief that during the Holocaust children had been

8 Ibid.; Tony Kushner, "Selective Memory", *Jewish Socialist* 57 (2009): 6–8.

9 David Cesarani, "How Post-war Britain reflected on the Nazi Persecution and Mass Murder of Europe's Jews: A Reassessment of Early Responses", *Jewish Culture and History* 12, nos. 1–2 (2010): 123.

10 Annette Wieviorka, *The Era of the Witness*, trans. Jared Stark (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), www.cornellpress.cornell.edu/book/9780801473166/the-era-of-the-witness/ (accessed 14 Oct. 2019); see ch. 2, "The Advent of the Witness".

11 Tony Kushner, "Too Little Too Late? Reflections on Britain's Holocaust Memorial Day", *Journal of Israeli History* 23, no. 1 (2004): 116.

shielded from trauma because of their age and were therefore unreliable witnesses meant that the testimonies of child survivors were excluded, and thus also the Kinder's testimonies. Giving the keynote speech at the United Nations International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust on 27 January 2012, Dr. Robert Krell, a child psychiatrist and Holocaust survivor, stated that after the liberation "there were children willing to speak. Some tried to be heard. Yet, few were asked, 'What was it like for you? What did you see? What happened to you? How did you feel?'" Krell explained that the "adults assumed that children were lucky. Lucky not to have memories . . . Lucky not to have understood what was happening."[12]

With the public's growing interest in survivors' testimonies came a demand for books and films representing the Holocaust, which lead to a number of questions as to whether the Allies could have taken earlier measures to prevent the annihilation of European Jewry. In response to these critical inquiries, regarding for instance the refugee quota, Great Britain chose to put forward its role in the implementation of the Kindertransport as a response to Kristallnacht in November 1938, thus "maintain[ing] the illusion of virtuous British liberalism", distancing itself from the countries that did not open their doors to European Jewry and positioning its intervention as early as 1938. In the introduction to *Holocaust Consciousness*, Pearce quotes Cesarani to explain that, in order to maintain this illusion, "historians often 'discreetly avoided' the 'anti-Jewish racism' that Nazi Germany 'shared with Britain'."[13] It is that celebratory narrative, which Caroline Sharples describes as "a self-congratulatory [one] which emphasises British humanitarian traditions and offers a heroic tale of derring-do on the eve of war", that came to be incorporated into British collective memory.[14] From this time until 1989, the British celebratory narrative remained largely unchallenged.

It is after the Kindertransportees chose to meet and celebrate the fiftieth

12 Robert Krell, "My Journey as a Child Holocaust Survivor", United Nations International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust, keynote address, 27 Jan. 2012, United Nations Headquarters, New York.

13 Pearce, *Holocaust Consciousness*, 26, quoting David Cesarani, "From Bullock to Kershaw: Some Peculiarities of British Historical Writing about the Nazi Persecution and Mass Murder of the Jews", in *Holocaust Historiography in Context*, ed. David Bankier and Dan Michman (Jerusalem: Berghahn Books, 2008), 349, 351, 352, 354.

14 Caroline Sharples, "The Kindertransport in British Historical Memory", in *The Kindertransport to Britain 1938/39: New Perspectives*, ed. Andrea Hammel and Bea Lewkowicz (New York: Brill/Rodopi, 2012): 15.

anniversary of their evacuation that ageing Kinder began to challenge the dominant narrative by voicing formerly silenced elements of their evacuation, such as that only unaccompanied, sponsored children under the age of seventeen had been allowed to leave on the Kindertransport and live temporarily in Great Britain. For a number of Kinder, the 1989 reunion was such a redefining moment in understanding their position as Holocaust survivors that some chose to devote a chapter of their memoirs to the reunion and its impacts: Emma Carlson Berne's *Escaping the Nazis on the Kindertransport* (2017), Ruth L. David's *A Child of our Time* (2003), Vera Gissing's *Pearls of Childhood* (1994), and Martha Blend's *"A Child Alone": A Kindertransport Memoir* (1995). In her 2012 essay entitled "Therapeutic Aspects", Ruth Barnett, a psychologist and former Kind, comments on the Kinder's growing interest in sharing their Kindertransport experience: she recognizes the importance of the 1989 reunion in enabling Kinder to rediscover their migration as being part of the Holocaust. In addition to describing the impact of the reunion on understanding her own disrupted story, Barnett describes how Dorit Bader Whiteman, a psychologist who had previously approached Barnett for an interview for her book then called *Those to Whom Nothing Happened*, chose to change the book's title after the 1989 reunion to *The Uprooted: A Hitler Legacy*, linking the Kinder's exile to the Holocaust rather than explaining how the evacuees had been shielded from Nazi annihilation.[15]

Subsequent to the 1989 reunion, counter-narratives written by Kinder were incorporated into the dominant narrative: the legitimacy of the celebratory narrative was changed by this rewriting of the Kindertransport as a complex, controversial, and transnational rescue operation, in which Britain's generosity was significant but not absolute. It is indeed not until that reunion, organized by Bertha Leverton, that the literature and research on the Kindertransport increased dramatically to the point where these publications began to influence the way in which this rescue operation is remembered in Great Britain. As James E. Young argues, "the result [of these multiple voices] has been a shift away from the notion of a national

15 Dorit Bader Whiteman, *The Uprooted: A Hitler Legacy* (Cambridge, MA: Perseus Books, 1993); Vera Gissing, *Pearls of Childhood: The Poignant True Wartime Story of a Young Girl growing up in an Adopted Land* (London: Robson Books, 1994); Martha Blend, *"A Child Alone": A Kindertransport Memoir* (London and Chicago:Vallentine Mitchell, 1995); Ruth L. David, *A Child of our Time: A Young Girl's Flight from the Holocaust* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2003); Ruth Barnett, "Therapeutic Aspects of Working through the Trauma of the Kindertransport Experience", in Hammel and Lewkowicz, *Kindertransport to Britain*, 157–72; Emma Carlson Berne, *Escaping the Nazis on the Kindertransport* (North Mankato, MN: Capstone Press, 2017).

'collective memory' to . . . a nation's 'collected memory' [composed of] disparate and competing memories [that have] found common (perhaps even a national) understanding".[16] By moving away from the dominant narrative and encouraging a more inclusive one, the Kinder's representation of their experience has enabled them figuratively to retrieve parts of their disrupted childhood, untangle their reconstructed past from the British celebratory narrative, and reaffirm their role as child refugees and Holocaust survivors.

In addition to the Kinder's first anniversary reunion in 1989, in the 1980s literary scholars, historians, and psychologists increasingly focused on the child survivors' testimonies in a way that went against the common belief, as noted earlier, that children's innocence meant they could not be reliable witnesses. Indeed, as Krell explained in his address to the United Nations in 2012, until the late 1980s it was generally assumed that children's naivety prevented them from understanding the atrocities occurring around them.[17] This shift in adults' understanding of children coincided with the growth of interest in child survivors' testimonies. Additional factors contributed to that interest, such as the death of adult survivors and the recognition of the value of including testimonies from different generations of survivors when studying the Holocaust, such as the by then familiar "1.5" and second generations.

With Kinder sharing their stories in the public sphere to raise awareness of contemporary children in search of refuge, the British population came to commemorate the Kindertransport as part of the British tradition of helping refugee children, a tradition that allowed, among other groups, the evacuation of 4,000 Basque children during the Spanish Civil War.[18] By encouraging Kinder to voice, beyond the personal sphere, their childhood traumas and current concerns, Meisler's *The Arrival* produces a space which promotes the building of bridges between the thousands of children who fled from the expanding German Reich and the young victims in search of refuge from contemporary wars such as the conflict in Syria. Moreover, the accuracy with which Meisler's bronze children were modelled after real Kinder invites today's children, who are approximately the same size, to

16 Young, *Stages of Memory*, 15.

17 Krell, "My Journey".

18 For more on the "complex if not fully recognized tradition of dealing with young refugees", see Tony Kushner, *Journeys from the Abyss: The Holocaust and Forced Migration from the 1880s to the Present* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2017), ch. 3, "The Journeys of Child Refugees, Lost and Rediscovered", 176.

identify with these child evacuees, while also reminding their parents and any adult passerby of the vulnerability of young victims of war. It was for similar reasons that, in sculpting *Für das Kind*, Flor Kent chose to model her bronze figure after the "granddaughter of one of the Kinder" and consequently portray the child in relation to her past, present, and future.[19]

In Meisler's *The Arrival*, five figures positioned at the end of a sculpted railway track are grouped around their precious belongings. They are waiting, hopeful but also anxious, for their journey into the unknown to continue. When arriving at Liverpool Street Station, these children (most with barely any English) were still unsure of their fate. Despite the fact that this sculpture commemorates the arrival of the Kinder in London and the role of British families in the Kinder's evacuation, *The Arrival* also commemorates the courage of those ten thousand children who left their parents and followed strangers in the hope of a safer future. The Kinder figures were sculpted looking in different directions, thus metaphorically looking towards different destinies. In contrast to the British celebratory narrative, *The Arrival* acknowledges, or at least alludes to, the fact that the Kinder lived their exile individually according to their personality, sex, and age. In addition to the Kinder whose relatives or foster families took them in, a number of Kinder lived in summer camps which were unsuited for winter weather, while others, mostly older girls, were compelled to work in menial jobs. Although *The Arrival* represents no negative details of the Kinder's placements, it acknowledges the Kinder's individuality and consequently their different refugee experiences. For instance, a perceptive viewer might notice that in front of the youngest boy figure lies a musical instrument case. Since the Kinder were not allowed to carry any object of value out of the German Reich, those who brought an instrument must have had musical training as they had to prove that their instrument was not for sale.

In addition to showcasing the Kinder's individuality by acknowledging their specific skills, Meisler's sculpture reveals the commonality of their collective journey. An example can be found in the clothing of all five bronze Kinder: their clothes seem carefully chosen to make a good impression and keep them warm in Britain. Indeed, Meisler recalls in his memoir how after joining his father in Warsaw "with a list of clothes I would need in England my father . . . dutifully took me to a tailor".[20] The realism of this memorial

19 *Für das Kind*, 6.

20 Meisler, *On the Vistula*, 69.

sculpture both allows viewers to identify with the figures and underlines its auto-ethnographic character. Moreover, one cannot but notice that the details included by the artist draw attention to the celebratory narrative in a way that encourages Britain to reflect on a celebrated past and, it is to be hoped, eventually reassert its former hospitality.

Near Meisler's sculpture, various plaques contextualize the piece. Attached to the memorial's railway track one plaque details the intention behind the sculpture: it was commissioned to honour "the people of Britain for saving the lives of 10,000 unaccompanied mainly Jewish children".[21] Another nearby plaque, in what is now called Hope Square, also commemorates the young refugees who arrived at Liverpool Street Station and the British people who saved them. The presence of commemorative plaques surrounding *The Arrival* reveals the site specificity of Meisler's memorial and thus its art–site relationship.

As stated previously, in Britain, the relationship between the visual representation of the Kindertransport and Liverpool Street Station fosters particular memories and views of the nation. I therefore contend that this relationship, or the reciprocity between the memorial sculpture and the station as a historical entry point to commemorating the Kindertransport, constitutes a *lieu de mémoire*, the term coined by the French historian Pierre Nora. As will be demonstrated here, the site-specific nature of the memorial "administer[s] the presence of the past within the present": the art–site relationship encourages "the crystallization and secretion of memory [through] an endless recycling of [its] meaning and an unpredictable proliferation of [its] ramifications".[22]

This *lieu de mémoire* is distinguished from other *lieux* fostered by Meisler and Kent's respective memorial networks across Europe. Despite the fact that Meisler chose to represent the evacuation of the Kinder by sculpting the same five figures throughout his Kindertransport collection, each of the sculptures' details demonstrate that the artist adapted them to each particular site. In addition to mapping his own journey towards safety and representing the transnational operation of the Kindertransport, Meisler's sculptures draw attention to different national narratives and to "the feelings of particular publics".[23]

21 Association of Jewish Refugees and the Central British Fund for World Jewish Relief, "Children of the Kindertransport" plaque, Liverpool Street Station, London, 2006.

22 Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire", *Representations* 26 (1989): 7, 19.

23 Erika Doss, *Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America* (2010; Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 59.

In contrast to Meisler's sculptures in which the role of the parents in the evacuation of the Kinder is omitted, the sculpture situated in Gdansk, the city from where the artist left for London, depicts one of the five bronze Kinder as waving goodbye to presumably a parent. Meisler's mapping of the Kinder's transnational journey comprises details specific to the different stages of the Kinder's evacuation: the representation of the Kinder's departure therefore differs from that of their arrival in London. The omission of any sort of acknowledgment of the parents and their role can, however, be explained by more than the chronology of the Kinder's evacuation. At Liverpool Street Station, behind Meisler's bronze children, a plaque quotes the Talmud – "Whosoever rescues a single soul is credited as though they had saved the whole world" – to express the artist's gratitude to the British people who opened their homes, fostered, and saved ten thousand unaccompanied children. Paired with the history of the station, this plaque reinforces the British celebratory narrative. By omitting to mention the parents in the operation of the Kindertransport, the various plaques around *The Arrival* not only emphasize the role of Britain in the rescue of the Kinder but also conceal the reality of Britain's immigration quota prior to the Second World War. As Pnina Rosenberg mentions in her 2013 article on Meisler's memorials, "Without the parents in the picture, there is no prompt to ask questions about the immigration policy in the UK that excluded them; thus, the good and benevolent image is left intact".[24] In recent years, further research on the experience and the fate of the Kinder's parents, as well as on the exclusion of older and disabled children, has opened up debate regarding these stories of exclusion, partly in the hope of influencing British responses to current issues of forced migration, to allow not just children but "*all* those who have been persecuted regardless of age and 'innocence"' to find asylum in Britain.[25] Rosenberg's close, critical study of the relationship between the memorial's site and the memorial itself reveals how different nations remember the Kindertransport distinctively, positioning the rescue in relation to their own history and engagement with the Holocaust.

Contrary to what the British celebratory narrative implies, Britain's role in the implementation and operation of the Kindertransport was significant but not unique. Indeed, other countries such as Sweden offered refuge to the Kinder. In Meisler's representation, however, only Britain

24 Pnina Rosenberg, "Footsteps of Memory: Frank Meisler's Kindertransport Memorials", *Prism* 5 (2013): 95.

25 Tony Kushner, "Truly, madly, deeply . . . nostalgically? Britain's On–Off Love Affair with Refugees, Past and Present", *Patterns of Prejudice* 52, no. 2–3 (2018): 176.

is represented as the Kinder's destination. Similarly, out of Meisler's five Kindertransport sculptures, only one was installed in one of the Kinder's transit cities. *Trains to Life, Trains to Death* at Berlin's Friedrichstrasse railway station could also be described as a sculpture situated in a transit city given that many Kinder, including Meisler, transferred there from their initial transports to the transport evacuating them from Nazi-occupied territories. However, because Friedrichstrasse Station acted as an exit point during the Kinder's evacuation, I consider the relationship between *Trains to Life, Trains to Death* and the station as representing the departure of the Kinder. The choice of London to represent the Kinder's arriving city can also be explained by the need to replace Kent's *Für das Kind* and by the role of World Jewish Relief and the AJR in commissioning Meisler's sculpture. In the case of the Hook of Holland, Rosenberg explains that it was "following the encouragement of Ahmed Aboutaleb, the Mayor of Rotterdam," that Meisler decided to commemorate and pay "homage to the Dutch people who comforted the young refugees at this (turning) point in their exodus" with *Channel Crossing to Life*.[26] In comparison to that and *The Arrival*, Meisler's remaining three sculptures were erected in the Kinder's departure cities.

Apart from *The Departure* in Gdansk and *Trains to Life, Trains to Death* in Berlin, the last Kindertransport sculpture, *The Final Parting*, was installed in 2015 in Hamburg. Since these were Kinder departure cities, a comparison of these sculptures may further our study of the art–site relationship as a *lieu de mémoire* that deepens understanding of different national narratives. Outside Hamburg's Dammtor station, a young Kind is shown by railway tracks leading her to safety as she is looking in the opposite direction, extending her right arm as if to reach one of the young bronze figures representing the "1.5 million children [who] didn't make it".[27] This scene contrasts with the young boy waving goodbye to his relative at Gdansk's main station in Poland. In Germany, the juxtaposition of the children rescued by the Kindertransport and the children murdered during the Holocaust positions the representation of the Kindertransport within the larger Holocaust narrative.

Details in *The Final Parting* and *Trains to Life, Trains to Death* reveal how Germany as a nation understands the Kindertransport differently from other countries from which the Kinder departed. In Poland, a plaque

26 Rosenberg, "Footsteps of Memory", 95.

27 Frank Meisler, interview by Pnina Rosenberg, Israel, 26 Feb. and 14 June 2012.

dedicating *The Departure* to "the Jewish Children of the Kindertransports from the Free City of Gdansk 1939 who were rescued from German Nazi persecution by leaving for Britain without their parents so their lives could be saved" reinforces Meisler's sculpted details which acknowledge the importance of parents in the Kinder's evacuation. *The Departure*, in addition to representing the boy waving goodbye, shows five Kinder waiting on a platform in front of railway tracks. These figures appear to have been represented in a somewhat different context of persecution from that of the Kinder sculpted for the German memorials. Behind the Danzig/Gdansk children are their unseen relatives, whereas behind the Kinder sculpted in Germany stands a group of children whose train leads to one of the Nazi concentration camps. In both the German sculptures, the immediacy of Nazi persecution is depicted alongside the children's displacement.

Kinder sculpted with a label round their neck can easily be differentiated from those with a star on their clothes on which one can read the word "Jude", the German for Jew. Despite other distinguishing details, the juxtaposition of one group's evacuation with the deportation of other groups reveals how they were all in fact one group of persecuted children whose fate was determined by unusually influential criteria. The similarity among the children serves to remind the viewer that the locations of these bronze children are interchangeable to an extent. Indeed, if the Kinder represented by Meisler had not found sponsors in England, they would probably not have been evacuated in time and would consequently have been represented by Meisler's bronze children heading to a concentration camp. This perplexing reality was not unknown to the Kinder, who for decades understood "their rescue to have been a matter of providence".[28] In her autobiography, *A Tempered Wind* (2009), Karen Gershon, a Kind and poet, relates that following her evacuation, she was constantly reminded that "other children might have come in my stead"; knowing that "[these other children] remained behind to die, [while I was] saved", she grew up feeling that she had to justify her survival.[29] By representing the evacuation of the Kinder alongside the deportation of mainly Jewish children, *The Final Parting* and *Trains to Life, Trains to Death* offer a contrasting narrative to the British national narrative in which

28 Claudia Curio and Toby Axelrod, "'Invisible' Children: The Selection and Integration Strategies of Relief Organizations", *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 23, no. 1 (2004): 41.

29 Karen Gershon, *A Tempered Wind: An Autobiography* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2009), 44.

the Kindertransport is tantamount to a humanitarian triumph and the Kinder's survival guilt is not addressed.

As well as representing the urgency of the situation of these persecuted children, *The Final Parting* and *Trains to Life, Trains to Death* remind the German population of a time not so long ago when children were systematically persecuted and families were torn apart. When observing *The Final Parting* and the girl whose arm is extended towards a boy whose fate differs from hers, one cannot but wonder if the two children know each other or even if they are siblings. Indeed, as a number of Kinder's narratives reveal, the evacuation of one child did not guarantee the evacuation of siblings. The autobiographies of Ruth Barnett and Karen Gershon record that in some cases siblings were evacuated together, whereas other narratives, such as Mona Golabeck's *The Children of Willesden Lane*, confirm that other circumstances led parents to make a heart-wrenching choice among their children in the hope that the evacuated child would help his sibling to join him in England. In *The Children of Willesden Lane* (2002), Golabeck describes that, because her grandparents, Malka and Abraham, decided that her mother, Lisa, should be evacuated first, Lisa felt responsible for her sister's survival and devoted her time to finding an English family that would sponsor her sister's journey on the Kindertransport.[30] Each of Meisler's memorial sculptures in cities of departure represents the parting of families by acknowledging those who were forced to stay in Nazi-occupied territories. By alluding to the parents in *The Departure* and representing the deported children in *The Final Parting* and *Trains to Life, Trains to Death*, Meisler ensures that they will not be forgotten when narrating the history of the Kindertransport which generally focuses on the ten thousand rescued children.

The study of Meisler's transnational network paired with a comparison of its sculptures reveals how Meisler's memorials represent more than the history they portray, as their art–site relationship offers insights into different national understandings of the Holocaust. By bringing light to the similarities and differences of various national narratives, Meisler's sculptures also draw attention to the ways in which Kindertransport history is narrated in commemorative and pragmatic terms. Indeed, despite the fact that in comparison to Britain's celebratory tale, "Germany's national narrative of the Kindertransports is about exclusion", both Germany's

30 Mona Golabek, *The Children of Willesden Lane: Beyond the Kindertransport. A Memoir of Music, Love, and Survival* (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2002).

and Britain's contemporary responses to their respective Kindertransport narratives are about inclusion.[31] As Amy Williams explains in "Kindertransport in National and Transnational Perspective", contemporary campaigns fostered by Meisler's *Trains to Life, Trains to Death*, such as the Federal Emergency Programme, reveal "how Germany's relationship to refugees today is about inclusion [as these campaigns suggest] a kind of Kindertransport in reverse [in which persecuted individuals would be] rescued and helped by the nation" rather than forced to flee.[32]

A clear example of how Meisler's *The Arrival* is used in Britain by the Kinder to raise the public's awareness of vulnerable children in search of refuge is Alf Dubs's campaign concerning the British Immigration Act. Sir Alf Dubs, a Kind who came to Britain from Prague, chose in 2016 to share his story in the media in the hopes of influencing the Immigration Act for the sake of Syrian refugee children. By juxtaposing the contemporary "pain of others" with his own narrative, I contend that Dubs positioned his narrative intervention alongside the postwar mantra of "Never Again", while also asking British society, in the light of our contemporary conflicts, to re-evaluate the role of Holocaust memory in preventing future human rights conflicts.[33] While Lord Dubs, alongside the campaigning group Safe Passage, still works to find "legal routes to sanctuary . . . for [many] vulnerable child refugees from the Middle East and north Africa",[34] other Kinder, such as Ruth Barnett, call for tolerance and kindness towards refugees.[35] Posing in front of Meisler's memorial sculpture, individuals as well as protesting organizations enter the public sphere urging the British government to show contemporary refugees compassion similar to that shown to the thousands of children who found shelter in Great Britain after fleeing German-occupied Europe on the Kindertransport. At the intersection between the British national narrative highlighted by Meisler's visual representation of the Kindertransport and the testimonies of Kinder juxtaposed to this site-specific memorial, the original message

31 Amy Williams, "Kindertransport in National and Transnational Perspective", in *Monument Culture: International Perspectives on the Future of Monuments in a Changing World*, ed. Laura A. Macaluso (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019), 138.

32 Ibid.

33 See Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003).

34 Safe Passage, http://safepassage.org.uk (accessed 30 June 2019).

35 Ruth Barnett, "Interest in the KT from 1938 to the 50th Anniversary", keynote address, The Kindertransport 80 Years On: Critical Approaches to Kindertransport Research and Historiography, Institute of Advanced Studies, University College London, 23 Jan. 2019.

of gratitude conveyed by this sculpture is altered to allow Kinder to build on the British tradition of helping child refugees, honouring this legacy by showing compassion to young victims in search of refuge from contemporary wars.

Since this comparative approach is critiqued by Jessica Reinisch in "History matters . . . but which one? Every Refugee Crisis has a Context" (2015), I suggest rethinking the bridges between past and present by acknowledging her concerns and adding Michael Rothberg's concept of multidirectional memory into the equation. In her article, Reinisch argues that the stories of the "Kindertransport [are] misleadingly cited [in British media] as precedents to be emulated by policy-makers today". She suggests that "rather than drawing a straight line between two superficially similar events, [one] should pay more attention to the context of refugee crises, and ask what is distinctive about them [to] help understand the present".[36] Although current and past issues of forced migration should not be compared too hastily in order to influence future policy on migration, the contemporary comparison with the Kindertransport needs additional nuancing. Rothberg goes beyond Reinisch's critique to apply a multidirectional, productive framework which, he has argued in *Multidirectional Memory* (2009), enables memory to be "subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing".[37] Establishing that the act of remembering is a continuous process, Rothberg's concept promotes dynamic transfers between the remembrance of modern genocides and the Holocaust. For him, "the emergence of Holocaust memory [including of the Kindertransport] has . . . enabled the articulation of other histories of victimization". Rothberg mentions that, surprisingly enough, the multidirectional framework allows "postwar events that seem at first to have little to do with it" – the memory of the Holocaust or here of the Kindertransport – somehow to enter the collective consciousness and alter the public's understanding of the present and vision of the future.[38] Another nuance that needs to be acknowledged in order to avoid misleadingly "drawing a straight line between two superficially similar

36 Jessica Reinisch, "History matters . . . but which one? Every Refugee Crisis has a Context", *The Reluctant Internationalists* 2 Oct. 2015, www.bbk.ac.uk/reluctantinternationalists/blog/history-matters-but-which-one-every-refugee-crisis-has-a-context-2/ (accessed 30 June 2019).

37 Michael, Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 3.

38 Ibid., 6, 7.

events", concerns Lord Dubs's comparison that focuses on the British national narrative rather than on the context leading to his evacuation and the context of children seeking refuge from contemporary conflict and persecution.[39] On the website Safe Passage, Lord Dubs indeed recognizes that "the refugee crisis today is very different to the circumstances that led to WWII and the holocaust in Europe".[40] In the same piece, Dubs pays particular attention to British compassion and its legacy by comparing how across generations, "just as Britain was one of the [few] countries to act then, many . . . believe [the British have] the capacity and obligation to help again".[41] Acknowledging Reinisch's concern and building on Rothberg's and Dubs's more positive and productive approach, I contend that the British understanding of the Kindertransport influenced by *The Arrival* promotes, through the media, the multidirectional potential of this rescue operation and builds on British past generosities to construct better connections between welcoming communities and arriving ones, rather than misleadingly equating different experiences of forced migration.

Stirred by the mnemonic power of *The Arrival*, artists highlighted this productive relationship by producing works inspired by Meisler's memorial sculpture. The juxtaposition of Meisler's piece to these site-specific performance and narrative pieces, such as a performance, *Suitcase*, on the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Kindertransport in January 2014, has also brought considerable attention to the association between contemporary debates on forced migration and a past that sends out a message of "Never Again". Jane Merkin, the executive producer of *Suitcase* and a second-generation Kinder, mentions in an interview that the idea behind this promenade theatre was to commemorate both "the Kindertransport children and those who were there to meet them when they arrived".[42] A label round their necks, suitcases in hand, the actors wait for the play to begin as two adult-looking performers incorporate into their disoriented group members of the audience. During the performance, depending on the spectators' knowledge, other associated historical moments can come to mind, including the Second World War and trains in general but, more specifically, the rescue of young refugees from the

39 Reinisch, "History matters".

40 Safe Passage.

41 Ibid., http://safepassage.org.uk/what-we-do/alf-dubs-fund-2/ (accessed 14 Oct. 2019).

42 Jane Merkin, "Suitcase, Kindertransport 75th Anniversary", YouTube video (00:26–00:31), 19 Jan. 2014, www.youtube.com/watch?v=NWvVUzaw1Vg (accessed 7 Oct. 2019).

Basque region during the Spanish Civil War and the evacuation of British children to Commonwealth countries during the Blitz. By embodying Meisler's bronze Kinders, the actors encourage the audience to reflect on the complex British history of the mass evacuation of children.

From the start of *Suitcase*, the audience is encouraged to participate by placing a label round their necks and singing the opening song with the actors, who are dressed to resemble Meisler's bronze children. There is no "fourth wall" separating the audience from the performance. By removing that wall, the director of *Suitcase* created a play in which several identities are imposed on the spectators depending on the scene unfolding around them. After embodying a Kind freshly arrived in London, as well as a future foster parent, the audience meets "Bill", acting as one of Liverpool Street Station's employees who assumes that the spectators are his fellow citizens. When meeting Bill, the spectators are in better-known territory as they are for the most part British citizens. It is this similarity, however, that allows the actor to create parallels between the past and the present. From Bill's radio, modern spectators hear the speech of Lord Baldwin who, in 1938, asked British listeners to help the thousands of children seeking refuge. In addition to creating bridges between past and current issues of forced migration through Baldwin's appeal, this particular scene blurs the distinction between reality and fiction. After turning off his radio, Bill begins to explain to the audience how Baldwin's speech touched his heart by reminding him of his son's vulnerability, linking him to the ten thousand children mentioned by Baldwin. Compelled to action by the speech, Bill explains that in order to help the children seeking asylum in Britain, he and his colleagues (in the play) have organized a fundraiser: Bill then asks the spectators standing in front of him to really participate by giving the coins in their pockets. By breaking the fourth wall and involving the audience in this historical re-enactment, *Suitcase* manages to overcome the temporal barriers by confronting the audience, compelling them to act and have tangible impacts on "today's terrible refugee crisis [in which] almost a million [Syrian] children . . . are suffering".[43]

Every November, these time barriers are further defied as members of Hands On London dress Meisler's bronze Kinder and other sculptures in red coats for the Wrap Up London campaign, launched in 2017. By drawing visual parallels between Meisler's representation of the past and the contemporary needs of homeless people, refugees, and many children

43 Merkin, *Suitcase*, 05:33–05:51.

and elderly people living in poverty, this campaign encourages Londoners to participate by donating their used coats and thus help the less fortunate of the city to stay warm during the winter. In 2017, Sir Erich Reich, the Kind on whom Meisler modelled his musician Kind, spoke as the chairman of the AJR-Kindertransport committee to remind the British of their tradition of helping children: "the underprivileged refugees and unaccompanied children need help today, just as they did in 1938 and 1939".[44]

While the current context of forced migration is different from the one that led the Kinder's parents to send their children to England, the examples mentioned here all succeed in revealing the parallels between their campaigns and the representation of the Kinder's arrival in London. However, rather than "drawing a straight line between two superficially similar events", these examples ensure, in keeping with the concept of multidirectional memory as theorized by Rothberg, that the memory of the Kindertransport transcends national and temporal boundaries to influence current issues of forced migration.[45] Whether it is Alf Dubs and the campaign concerning the British Immigration Act, Jane Merkin and the site-specific promenade performance *Suitcase*, or Sir Eric Reich and the Wrap Up London campaign, these works inspired by Meisler's *The Arrival* allow the memory of the Kindertransport to raise awareness of the needs of contemporary victims of persecution and provide a vocabulary for current crises.

To conclude, this article has demonstrated that Frank Meisler's sculpture at Liverpool Street Station in London continues to influence the way the Kindertransport is commemorated in British collective memory. The comparison of *The Arrival* to Meisler's other Kindertransport memorials has shown that, despite the relevance of studying the sculptures as a transnational network, the memorials' art–site relationships reveal how the German, Polish, Dutch, and British understandings of the Kindertransport differ from one another as the memory of the Kindertransport is shaped by their respective national memories. In Britain, many artists, activists, and Kinder use *The Arrival* as a public platform to create bridges between past and current issues of forced migration and build on the British tradition of helping child refugees in order to invite the British population and government to honour their generous legacy by showing compassion to young victims in search of refuge from contemporary wars.

44 AJR, "Wrap Up London", 2017, https://ajr.org.uk/latest-news/Kindertransport-statue-gets-wrapped-up/ (accessed 30 June 2019).

45 Reinisch, "History matters".

In Great Britain, the historical representation of forced migration implies far more than remembrance, as the mythos of this mass evacuation of children allows Kinder to voice their contemporary concerns as uprooted individuals and Holocaust survivors in order for their stories to have tangible impacts in helping vulnerable children in search of refuge.