

Critiquing the beheading of Britain's first Holocaust memorial

Fred (né Fritz) Kormis is not a name that would ring many bells for Britain's Jews. But in 2024 the late émigré's work was to be found in a small room in Russell Square, in London, in the centre of the Wiener Holocaust Library. It was an honour: the library's staff had just finished renovating the building's exhibition space. Bits and pieces of Kormis's works – sculptures, pictures of his sculptures, replicas, pictures of him and those related to him and pieces of non-sculpted works of his – were the first to grace the walls of this new, rather quaint room.¹

Kormis (1894–1986) might be construed as a somewhat unorthodox choice for a library that serves as Britain's oldest and largest archive of the Nazi era and the Holocaust. His relationship with that period of Jewry's destruction is geographically further removed than that of those who were dragged into camps, starved in ghettos or shot en masse in pits. Kormis had fled Germany in 1933, the same year that the Nazi Party took control of Germany's parliament, the Reichstag.

My intention in engaging with Kormis lies with a specific work of his, a miniature reproduction of which was displayed behind a glass panel in a corner of the Wiener Holocaust Library's exhibition room. This work is a sculpture group, and it is my contention that it has, since its situating in a London park in 1969, posed a contradiction to the scene of British history within which it is placed. The group is entitled *Prisoners of War and Concentration Camp Victims Memorial: 1914–1945* (fig. 1). Gladstone Park is a rather small patch of green in north-west London; it is somewhat distant from the library and, being difficult to access by public transport, somewhat distant from anywhere else. In a small enclosure – fenced-off, bolted shut, not signposted – the sculpture group, comprising five pieces, is caged.

The body furthest forward stands up. It rocks backwards. It clutches its head in its hands as it looks to the sky. It is exposed. Behind it is a line of four more sculptures, on individual platforms of descending height from left to right. They are all seated. The one on the far left recoils. It cannot look at you. It faces upwards. It winces. Its muscles are tense as its body recedes away from you. Looking at it is embarrassing. The next one (fig. 2) looks to its right. It elongates its body. It desperately wants to push itself out of its chair and perpetually cannot. The next (fig. 3) cowers from an impending blow – but no one that we can see stands over it; it is cowering from its memory of a blow, a memory that we imagine for it. The next – the lowest down (fig. 4) – does away with any illusion of defence, its head sunken, its back arched over, the defeat



1 Fred Kormis, *Memorial to Prisoners of War and Concentration Camp Victims, 1914–1945*, 1969, fibreglass. Gladstone Park, London (photo: © Adam Soller Photography (Wiener Holocaust Library Collections))

absolute as its arms dangle by its side. One returns to the furthest forward, standing sculpture: despair. Not one of these pieces turns to you. Bird droppings and dust and rain marks coat the sculptures. They appear to have been abandoned in this removed corner of London. The emotion of this group is raw, and the figures themselves frail, being made of fibreglass.²

Each of these figures responds to an invisible event: the event of their captivity. Neither the details of this event, nor the history whence this event emerges, are sculpted for us. The only material that exists extraneous to the sculptures is the landscape (Gladstone Park, Brent, London, and the United Kingdom more broadly) around the cage within which these sculptures are set.

Immediately unseen at the site of the sculptures, the event that these sculptures attest to is, of course, a moment of history. The relationship of this stamp of history to the sculpture group is one of tension, which we know, for they each cower, hide and wince before it. It is the intention of this article to investigate the relationship between these figures and the history before which they shudder, to investigate the discordance between the event that the sculptures seek to memorialize – the entrapment of individuals in concentration camps during the Holocaust and, more broadly, prisoners of war – and the wider British landscape within which these sculptures are found.

This article suggests that one might observe two symptoms of this dissonance between the sculpture group and its history. The first manifests itself as an awkward theoretical tension, found in the relationship between

the sculpture group and the history of British memorialization of the Holocaust. The second is more immediately visible in so far as it is not theoretical but physical: it appears upon the sculpture group in the form of the scars of a cumulative past of physical violence. This article follows these two threads, one speculative and one material, to their common point of tension: the disjuncture between the sculpture group and British history. It begins with an introduction relating the sculpture group to the theory of what constitutes a Holocaust memorial. It then turns to the British praxis of antisemitic violence against the sculpture group. The final portion of this article presses on this tension, between the memorial and its British historical environment, by way of offering a criticism of this rupture. This is an attempt to schematize the place of the sculpture group within history.

2 Fred Kormis, *Memorial to Prisoners of War and Concentration Camp Victims, 1914–1945*, 1969, fibreglass. Gladstone Park, London (photo: Leo Franks, 2024)

3 Fred Kormis, *Memorial to Prisoners of War and Concentration Camp Victims, 1914–1945*, 1969, fibreglass. Gladstone Park, London (photo: Leo Franks, 2024)

Before embarking on a full-throated study of the physical eruptions of tension in the memorial's envioning in Britain, it is worth probing at the point of theoretical discomfort that the sculpture group seemingly engenders. Is this Britain's first Holocaust memorial? Perhaps not conventionally so. The memorial does not directly name the millions of Jews who were murdered in extermination camps, ghettos and on the Eastern front. And yet this is a memorial to both prisoners of war and a part of the Holocaust: the part that constitutes the concentration camps. A plaque at the site of the memorial



reads: 'To the memory of prisoners of war and victims of concentration camps 1914–1945'. These sculptures are a memorial to the victims of the Holocaust who experienced captivity, and so too are they a memorial to soldiers interned between the beginning of the First World War and the Holocaust's end.

The 'victims of concentration camps' to whom Kormis refers are victims of the Holocaust. Whereas today there exists a sharp distinction between the terms 'concentration camp' and 'death camp', in 1969, when the memorial was constructed, the Holocaust had begun only recently to garner attention in British discourse. As the historian Tony Kushner puts it, with Adolf Eichmann's trial in 1961 – eight years before the construction of this memorial – the Holocaust was given a 'public exposure that never occurred before'.³ In the relatively recent aftermath of the Holocaust, the term 'concentration camp' was often conflated with 'death camp'. In part this owes to the fact that extermination camps with dedicated gas chambers were created only in late 1941 and operated across the final years of the war, whereas concentration camps had a longer history and at times became death camps, as was the case with Auschwitz-Birkenau. More to the point, the relationship between the two forms of camps was imperative to their practical functioning in the extermination of European Jewry: while those in concentration camps were kept alive longer than those in death camps, the death camps functioned on the basis that huge swathes of those in concentration camps and ghettos would be carted off to them to meet their death. It is reasonable to assert that, in 1969, a clear distinction between the two categories of camps had not yet been properly enshrined in the public view of the Holocaust. As Kushner would summarize the Western memory of camps in the years succeeding the Holocaust: 'Other locations of mass



4 Fred Kormis, *Memorial to Prisoners of War and Concentration Camp Victims, 1914–1945*, 1969, fibreglass. Gladstone Park, London (photo: Leo Franks, 2024)

murder and the possibility of death camps remained largely unrecognized in the liberal democratic world.⁴

While Kormis's choice not to name Jews, Jewry or Judaism at the site of the memorial might seem to support the suggestion that there is not enough Holocaust here for it to be a Holocaust memorial, one might interpret his choice to not explicitly sculpt Judaism into the monument as a testament to the very function of concentration camps. Wrote the late mediaevalist Amos Funkenstein, '[t]he systematic destruction of self-identity of inmates in concentration camps was also the attempt to destroy their narrative of themselves'.⁵ The unnamed Jews in the sculpture group speak to the reality of the concentration camps. I wish to suggest that this *is*, then, a Holocaust memorial, one which memorializes both concentration camp victims and prisoners of war, and one which does not name Jews as the exclusive victims of either category.

Kormis had himself experienced internment during the First World War. He was one of the many German Jews who expressed their gratitude for their 1871 emancipation by enlisting. The experience, for Kormis, was punishing. He was interned in Siberia, and had his custody transferred to the Japanese during the Russian Civil War. He escaped in 1920, fleeing back to Europe via the Suez Canal. In the years following, he desired to strip his experience of any uniqueness and to represent, in his sculpture, something more universal. This tendency towards universalism was noted by the curator Monica Bohm-Duchen some forty years ago. Bohm-Duchen wrote that Kormis was 'anxious to avoid any parochialism' in his work and 'had been obsessed with the universally relevant themes of freedom and captivity'.⁶ Kormis, in this regard, was not atypical of Weimar Jewry. Humanism, wrote the historian George L. Mosse, was part and parcel of early twentieth-century German Jewish culture. As one German Jewish author put it in 1843: 'the development of the human spirit knows no boundaries and cannot be confined by religious dogma'.⁷ These sculptures memorialize both concentration camp victims and victims of wartime internment by way of mixing the predominantly Jewish victims of the Holocaust with other concentration camp victims, and the multinational, not necessarily Jewish soldiers interned in the Great War.⁸ The former were largely exterminated, the latter (numbering eight to nine million) were largely released.

The idea that non-Jews could be memorialized in Holocaust memorials would persist in British thought after the construction of Kormis's memorial. In 1979 the then president of the Board of Deputies of British Jews (BDBJ), Greville Janner, announced plans for the construction of a Holocaust memorial in Whitehall (a BDBJ-backed memorial would materialize only in 1983 in Hyde Park). He advanced a similar universalism to that which Kormis had exhibited in the Gladstone Park memorial: 'The monument would not be confined to the Jews, but would include all the victims of Nazi extermination: "The cataclysmic murder of some eleven million people, five million of whom were not Jewish."' ⁹ Ten years earlier, Kormis had set a precedent for this in his sculpture group, which I perceive to be Britain's first Holocaust memorial.

But certainly there exists an awkwardness within the sculpture group, in so far as it neither directly names Jews as victims nor invokes the word 'Holocaust', and in so far as it has not conventionally been construed as a Holocaust memorial in literature on the subject or in the popular imagination. Its exclusion from popular attention might in part be because it is rather difficult to see the sculptures: they are poorly connected to public transport and are remarkably difficult to access in the park itself, being caged, not signposted, tucked under the lee of a hill, their fencing locked shut by way of an enormous padlock. But the fact of their namelessness further explains why the sculpture group has been left out of the literature on British Holocaust memorials.¹⁰

Beyond the apparent theoretical difficulty with regard to the form that Holocaust memorials should take, the memorial is also incongruent with the content of Britain's narrative of how it treated Jews during the Holocaust. This contradiction, between the history presented by the sculpture group and Britain's own history, erupted into the antisemitic violence that was visited upon the sculpture group. It was amid this violence that the sculpture group was more directly named as a Holocaust memorial. Here, its naming came not in words but in material symbols: graffitied swastikas, spray-paint repairs and blunt force trauma.

Although Kormis avoided directly naming the sculpture group as 'Jewish', a number of individuals, by way of incessant vandalism, did not shy away from the opportunity to do so. They thus exhibited their utter dissatisfaction with the 'humanist' version of history offered by him. The Metropolitan Police Service wrote in response to a Freedom of Information request that they could not enumerate the number of attacks on the memorial, for there was simply too much information to sift through.¹¹ A local paper, though, could report that the memorial was 'desecrated by vandals' in 1990. When Brent Borough Council and the Association of Ex-Servicemen and Women organized a memorial service at the site in 1991, one hundred people were forced to commemorate prisoners of war and victims of the concentration camps before statues 'which had been heavily daubed in swastikas'.¹²

Acts of vandalism are, of course, by no means unusual for Holocaust memorials. But what is especially curious about Kormis's memorial is that it requires more than a cursory glance at the sculptures on the part of the observer to perceive the memorial as having Jewish connotations. This labour was undertaken by the sculpture group's abusers, and the produce of this labour was manifest in the scars of their actions. As Norman Spaulding has written of a number of Holocaust memorials in Germany, the scars of antisemitic attacks (such as their being graffitied or experiencing other physical abuse) are intentionally retained by those who maintain the



5 Fred Kormis, *Memorial to Prisoners of War and Concentration Camp Victims, 1914–1945*, 1969, fibreglass (archive photograph, 2003). London, Gladstone Park (photo © Land Use Consultants Ltd)

6 Fred Kormis, *Memorial to Prisoners of War and Concentration Camp Victims, 1914–1945*, 1969, fibreglass (archive photograph, 2003). London, Gladstone Park (photo © Land Use Consultants Ltd)

memorials. The destruction becomes a point of present history within the sculptures, ever confirming them as Holocaust memorials.¹³

Vandalism against Kormis's sculpture group would continue into the new millennium. A report – written in relation to conservation work carried out on behalf of Brent Borough Council and funded by the National Heritage Fund – found that, at some point prior to the end of 2003, '[t]he surfaces of the figures required extensive cleaning as they had been painted matt black following an incident when they were sprayed with bright yellow graffiti'.¹⁴ Vandals had attacked the sculpture group by spraying them with yellow graffiti. The authorities responded with matt black paint of their own.

Together, this yellow graffiti and matt black counter-attack had been reasonably successful in removing the raw emotional affront that these sculptures apparently caused the wanton individuals – the result was 'a very somber appearance and also meant that much of the definition of the figures was lost greatly reducing their impact' – but the memorial was still found too jarring for some. In 2003 the statues were 'decapitated, with all but one head later found in nearby undergrowth' (figs 5 and 6).¹⁵ The sculptures' physical fragility made them an easy target. The decapitation, this particular exhibition of public engagement with the memorial, occurred on Christmas Day, 'when their heads were smashed by a person or group using a wooden paving mallet, badly damaging one of the figures and decapitating all of the others'. The report continued: 'We searched the surrounding undergrowth

and managed to find the faces of all but one of the heads and other bits and pieces which could be painstakingly pieced back together by our conservators, unfortunately one head could not be found.¹⁶ Outsourced conservation work followed, and the figures were reconstructed.¹⁷ One cannot say precisely why the vandals struck, and yet their actions serve to symbolize some sort of discomfort that the sculptures caused to elements of the viewing public.

Beyond the vandals' actions, the discrepancy between Kormis's memorialization of prisoners of war and concentration camp victims and Britain's widely accepted narration of history from the same period might explain the authorities' historical neglect of what can be argued to be Britain's first Holocaust memorial. The aforementioned report found that, even before the sculpture group's beheading, the figures were 'in urgent need of attention [...] as they had been neglected, allowing their steel armatures to corrode severely'; the matt black paint was apparently doing little to stem the memorial's decay.¹⁸ The memorial was only desecrated further by its coating in paint.

What precisely was it about the sculptures that the decapitators and swastika-daubers found so offensive? Kormis's sculptures do not make a case for a particular version of Jewish and British history in the face of the antisemitism that he (and the sculptures themselves later) would experience. The history of the sculptures' captivity is left unsculpted; it is to be imagined by the observer. And yet it is difficult not to think of a history immersing these sculptures. The metric of time is what makes historical concepts coherent to observers. The French Jewish historian Marc Bloch would write in 1920 (twenty-four years before his execution by the Nazis) that 'the time of history is the plasma within which phenomena are submerged and are the site of their intelligibility'.¹⁹

The vandals expressed how they found the sculpture group to be temporally intelligible. The phenomenon that they observed was captivity, related to the concentration camps by virtue of the titular plaque at the site of the memorial. They historicized the sculpture group as tethered to the Holocaust by way of their acts of vandalism. The symbolism of antisemitism is most explicit in the swastika-daubing, but it is there, too, in the sculpture group's execution: the victims of concentration camps being taken to their death as so many were during the Holocaust.

There exists a further expression of 'history' in relation to the memorial, which is observable in the actions of the authorities charged with its upkeep. The history of the memorial's neglect, especially before conservation efforts in 2003–04, reads like a continuation of Britain's relationship with the Holocaust and with German Jews in Britain.

In this reading, there exists the possibility that both the attackers and



7 Fred Kormis, *Freedom*, 1922, bronze. Keith Chapman Sculpture (photo: © Keith Chapman Sculpture)

the authorities charged with the memorial's upkeep found the nature of Kormis's telling of history to be deeply unsettling (hence the vandalism and the historical neglect), given the Holocaust's discordance with Britain's understanding of history. As one prominent historian of the Holocaust in Britain put it: 'The Holocaust [...] fundamentally challenges the belief in progress.'²⁰ Around the same time that Kormis was released from captivity, another German Jew, Walter Benjamin, would write that where once salvation was promised in the form of a Christ-like redemption, liberalism 'serves essentially to satiate the same sorrows, agonies and turmoil for which, formerly, so-called religions gave answers'.²¹ Britain's own Whiggish liberalism was no different. Its rationale of itself as harbinger of hope has been advertised as a tale of gain: if history is progressive, then so too will be the future. Naturally, memorialization of the Holocaust, which ended any semblance of progress in the lives of six million Jews and millions of others, would challenge what might be deemed to be liberalism's optimism. The sculpture group's affront to both the vandals and the authorities

charged with its upkeep might speak to such a denial of liberalism. There is no image nor structure of progress or redemption in the memorial.

British Holocaust memory generally holds fast to the broader European liberal engagement with the Holocaust. In the words of Saul Friedländer this narrative is a view of history that 'fits within the conception of a progressing rationality and indeed posits Nazism, its explicit ideology and its crimes, as the absolute counterimage to the ideals of the Western Enlightenment'.²² Indeed, the association of Britain with both the First and Second World Wars is one of 'victory'. Where the issue of Jews is raised, they are useful in so far as they prove what is supposed to be an absence of antisemitism in Britain (unlike in Germany or Eastern Europe), for they suggest that Britain did not (and, fundamentally, could not) perpetrate a Holocaust, that Britain fought against those who did, and that, therefore, Britain saved Jews from the Holocaust. Britain's narrative of itself with regard to Germany – that the latter was Britain's metaphysical opposite, defeated twice – is bound up with Britain's narrative of how it treated Jewish refugees of the Holocaust: that it saved many by way of the Kindertransport scheme.²³ In certain chambers of Britain's memory of the Holocaust, this metaphysics extends into a propensity to conflate the Germans of the First World War, which Britain and its soldiers fought, and the Nazi Germany of the Second World War. In popular memory, Armistice Day, the corresponding poppies worn on Britons' lapels



8 Fred Kormis, untitled, 1920, clay (archive photograph). London, Wiener Holocaust Library, 1032/2/6/59 (photo: © Wiener Holocaust Library Collections).

and the commemoration of the British dead in the First World War are bound up with the mourning of all British soldiers, no less those who died in the Second World War. Given the weight placed upon mourning British soldiers, it is of little surprise that poppy wreaths can be seen placed in front of the lower two seated figures in one image of the sculpture group.²⁴

But there are holes in Britain's story. Kormis himself likened Britain to Germany in its militaristic fervour.²⁵ And, more to the point, he had experienced the gaps in Britain's auto-hagiographical story of its role as saviour of the Jews. Having fled Germany for the Netherlands in 1933, he arrived in Britain the following year. He experienced the distrust Britain had of anyone on its shores who had come from Germany, including Jews. As Kushner has written, '[i]t was assumed that anyone emigrating from German-controlled lands would have needed Nazi permission to leave and therefore was automatically suspect'. Jews were not excluded from this terror of 'the potential "enemy

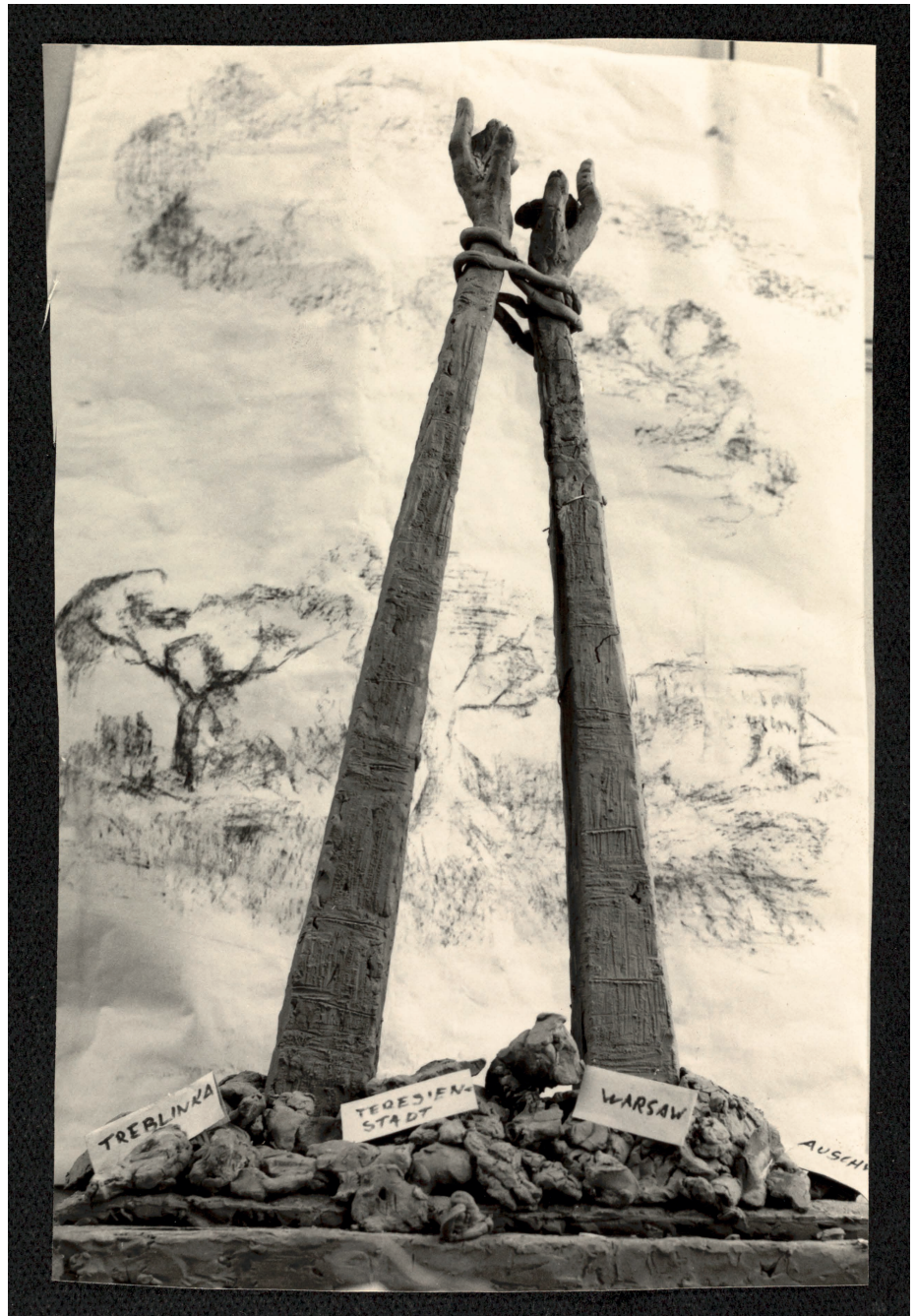
from within"'.²⁶ In the 1940s Kormis hid from Winston Churchill's goons, lest he be interned again:

I knew that they always came early in the morning, so early in the morning I went out, and then telephoned home if the air was clear. I didn't want to go, for a second time, into a camp, or to carry a rucksack. That was impossible. I tried to avoid it, five years was enough.²⁷

The Metropolitan Police Service also had the Jew and the question of his allegiance to Britain in its sights.²⁸ At around the same time that the British state was monitoring German Jewish refugees, Germany promulgated a law permitting Jews who had been naturalized as Germans between 1918 and 1933 to be stripped of their citizenship, should they have 'prejudiced German interests by an attitude contrary to the duty of loyalty'.²⁹ For Kormis, it would take fifteen years of living in Britain for such suspicions of his loyalties to have diminished to the degree that he could be naturalized, and a further eighteen years before he would be given a passport.³⁰

Kormis's experience was typical of Jews who had fled to Britain in the period. Rather than being a philosemitic safe haven for Jews and Germany's existential opposite, Britain had its own, separate history of antisemitism. As Kushner has it, 'there is a myth of British, more frequently English exceptionalism: that of all European nations, England has, post-readmission, been most free of antisemitism'.³¹ Albeit of a distinct pedigree from that found on the European continent, antisemitism is, in reality, not that far

removed from the country, as the sculpture group found. Kormis experienced a form of it, in the sense that the country's anti-immigrant policies were structured around the exclusion of Jews like himself. Kushner noted: 'in the 1930s and after the war, the Home Office ensured that the number of Jewish adults – refugees and then survivors – was kept low'.³² This followed the country's first ever border control law in 1906, the Aliens Bill, which overwhelmingly targeted Jews. 'It was predictable, [Theodor] Herzl remarked, that those seeds' – the 'seeds of Anti-Semitism' – 'had grown in Britain into widespread clamouring for restrictive anti-alien legislation.'³³ Thirteen years



9 Fred Kormis, untitled, c. 1978, clay (archive drawing). London, Wiener Holocaust Library, 1032/2/4/7 (photo: © Wiener Holocaust Library Collections)

and a world war later, John Maynard Keynes recorded his undying 'faith' in the potential for British growth: 'Progress is a soiled creed, black with coal dust and gunpowder; but we have not discarded it.' The British progressed the anti-immigration legislation and measures that they imposed against Jews.³⁴ Progressively, the physical space for Jews in Britain was eradicated. In 1945 a mere 750 child refugees were allowed to enter the country, all on 'temporary entry permits'. The British Home Office demonstrated a 'failure to understand the full scope of what we now call the Holocaust'. Kushner is unequivocal: this was British 'state racism'.³⁵

The history of Kormis and of refugee Jews writ large in Britain grates against the country's history of itself as the Jews' saviour and as the metaphysical opposite of the arch-antisemite, Germany. The sculpture group's failure to endorse Britain's narrative of itself as Jewry's hero only throws into relief what Eric Santner described as the fetishistic character of German Holocaust memory: that is, 'the construction and deployment of a narrative consciously or unconsciously designed to expunge the races for the trauma or loss that called the narrative into being in the first place'.³⁶ Friedländer would describe Adolf Hitler's appeal to Germans as follows: 'A metahistorical enemy demanded, when the time for the decisive struggle arrived, a metahistorical personality to lead the fight against those forces of evil.'³⁷ In simply demonstrating the phenomenon of captivity, detached from history, Kormis's sculpture group does not facilitate Britain's attempts to occupy the role of a progressive, liberatory 'metahistorical enemy' of the Nazi regime, as conventional British Holocaust memory would have it.

In this sense, before British history, Kormis's sculpture group might appear as a sort of 'counter-history'. At the conference 'Nazism and the "Final Solution": Probing the Limits of Representation', held in Los Angeles in April 1990, Funkenstein, quoting Benjamin, presented the argument that '[c]ounterhistories form a specific genre of history [...] Their function is polemical. Their method consists of the systematic exploitation of their adversary's most trusted sources against their grain – *die Geschichte gegen den Strich kämmen*'.³⁸ Kormis's sculpture group fits this criterion, albeit perhaps without the same intentionality that Funkenstein prescribed for the genre. But while Kormis may have been no polemicist, to the sculpture group's vandals the memorial stings. The group troubles Britain's story of itself in the Holocaust – a troubling that becomes manifest in the sculpture group's neglect and in the violence it has experienced. Kormis's sculpture group, in conjunction with the neglect and vandalism it has experienced, sits within its British environment as an awkward reminder that it was not British liberty and progress that was the negative of the Nazis, but the Jewish captive in the concentration camp: 'Jews were the hypostasized negation of sanity, creativity, health, and order, a secularized antichrist described in hygienic-pseudobiological terms', Funkenstein reminds us.³⁹

In fact, rather than encouraging the presentation of Britain as a progressive saviour of the Jews from Germany, the sculpture group does not express anything other than the event of entrapment. In this sense, it offers

an alternative philosophy of history. It presents history as singular scene, without a beginning or end. Its focus is entirely on capturing the sensation of captivity and presenting this to the observer. In so doing, Kormis treats, bluntly, the mental turmoil of imprisonment. There is no narrative – no story arc of redemption, no indication of freedom for the captive – in this sculpture group. There is simply the presentation of the nightmare of capture, and an invitation to the observer to try and lock eyes with the captured subject’s experience. The pieces that comprise this work are a memorialization of the state of being of entrapment.

Kormis himself was quite straightforward on the point: ‘You can’t express the death of six millions [*sic*] in figurative work; it’s nearly impossible. You can only express it in a symbol.’⁴⁰ This sculpture group, despite being figurative, is in itself a symbol. It is a symbol of the iterations of consciousness that one experiences when one finds oneself confined. The figures, he wrote, are a ‘five-chapter novel, each describing a successive state of mind of internment’. These ‘minds’, or stages of consciousness that are inflicted upon the captive, are semantically nameless, Kormis continued. ‘I have tried hard to elaborate on the captions of the figures but have failed. / My words cannot express what is expressed in sculpture; if they had I would probably call myself a writer or a poet.’ But title them he still did. Their names are as follows, presumably from the highest to lowest seated, followed by the standing sculpture:

The first	--	<i>In stupor after capture</i>
The second	--	<i>Longing for freedom</i>
The third	--	<i>Fight against gloom</i>
The fourth	--	<i>Hope lost</i>
The fifth	--	<i>Hope again</i> ⁴¹

This failure to articulate the nature of imprisonment in words has long been a theme in literary recreations of capture. In an essay written by Jean Starobinski on the psychoanalytic dimensions of Henry Fuseli’s 1781 painting of entrapment, *The Nightmare*, the Swiss literary critic draws one’s attention to the following lines, refashioned from the *Aeneid* by Erasmus Darwin and repurposed in Thomas Burke’s engraved copy of Fuseli’s painting.⁴² In them, one finds the same relationship between verbal and physical immobility as that which is expressed in Kormis’s sculpture group. Virgil’s scene of entrapment is that of sleep:

But as in dreams,
when helpless slumber binds the darkened eyes,
we seem with fond desire to tread in vain
along a lengthening road, yet faint and fall
when straining to the utmost, and the tongue
is palsied, and the body’s wonted power
obeys not, and we have no speech or cry:
so unto Turnus, whatsoever way

his valiant spirit moved, the direful Fiend
stopped acting in his will⁴³

It was this sort of dream that froze the internees' speech: 'After captivity [...] you come into the world like a dream [...] it takes a long time until you are awakened to reality', Kormis wrote.⁴⁴ Each of the sculptures finds its tongue 'palsied', its body's 'wonted power / obey[ing] not', each left without 'speech or cry'. Where one presumes that Virgil's description of his entrapped, slumbering subject was informed by his own experience of sleep's captivity, so too was Kormis aware that he was treating, in his sculptures, his own understanding of captivity: the sculptures 'intend to express four stages which I experienced myself and observed others to pass through. But far from me to pretend they were the rule which could be applied to all who were in captivity.' He continues: 'If, in my medium, I have expressed the emotions and feelings at that time; if I have aroused some compassion, I will be very satisfied. If I have failed it will be a cruel failure in not having mastered the task I set myself.'⁴⁵

Just as Virgil dreamed, Kormis remembered, by way of his sculpture, imprisonment. The literal, tiered stage upon which and next to which the sculptures are positioned is married to the abstract 'stages' of the psychological episode endured in captivity. The observer, outside the locked, hidden, caged pen within which these sculptures are confined, is like a theatregoer-cum-psychoanalyst. They watch the sculptures experience the stages of captivity.

In setting this stage, Kormis was sculpting in a manner not entirely dissimilar to what the art historian Alyce Mahon identified the French sculptor Jean-Jacques Lebel as having done: he was 'establishing the theatre', which he translated into his sculpture 'as the modern-day space of (mythic, religious) ritual and dream'. Though Kormis's group lacks the absurdity found in Lebel's pieces, the latter's description of sculpture is apt for understanding Kormis's work: 'Thanks to art [...] the multiple states of the human being must, in spite of everything, become liveable possibilities. The only reality in art is furnished by the hallucinatory experience, around which crystallise (ephemeral) rites, and around which our mythic thoughts express themselves.'⁴⁶

The 'theatregoers' or attendees of the sculptures in the park engage with Kormis's captured dream. Reaction to them was mixed. Other German Jewish *Bildungsbürgertum* (the educated and bourgeois) had already experienced this in Germany, as Mosse points out: Jews' '[d]aydreams and castles in the air could cope with neither the pressures of Germany's abrupt industrialization nor the always latent danger of the revolt of the masses'.⁴⁷ The sculpture group's decapitators represented the persistence of non-Jewish discomfort with such Jewish scenes, decades after the Holocaust.

But some were quite receptive to Kormis's work. Half a century after the sculpture group's construction, people living in Brent proved themselves to be attuned to the memorial. The curator of the Wiener Holocaust Library, Barbara

Warnock, noted: ‘When you talk to people who live in the local area [...] they’re all really aware of it.’⁴⁸ In successfully engaging nameless, faceless observers with his sculpted articulation of his own experience of internment, Kormis overcomes a dialectic thought to exist in his work by a Dutch art critic, decades before the unveiling of the memorial: on one pole, the personal-psychological, on the other, the masses’ consciousness.⁴⁹ Kormis’s success, here, does not emerge from what Martin Jay posited at the aforementioned 1990 conference on Holocaust representation as ‘the possibility of reaching a consensus within the community [...] on the basis of a Habermasian process of communicative reasoning’.⁵⁰ Rather, Kormis’s sculpture worked because it was, and is, wordlessly emotional. He sought to evoke compassion; to fail to do so was not to fail the responsibility of Holocaust memory writ large, but to fall short of his own aim to speak to a non-discursive empathy. Kormis’s method was to de-exceptionalize the sculptures, to free them from history, and to display them in all their emotional affront.

It is hard to fault Kormis’s anxiety over his ability to symbolize stages of consciousness for (in part) the sake of what would have certainly been, in the 1970s, a still deeply traumatized Jewish audience. His sculptures emerge from his own imprisonment and his own observations; he exhibits fear that his sculptures could succumb to the charge of having ‘distorted or banalized’ the Holocaust ‘by grossly inadequate representations’ – something that ‘aesthetic experimentation’, per Friedländer, might engender.⁵¹

Friedländer articulates four positions on the Holocaust vis-à-vis Enlightenment rationality: 1) that of liberals, that ‘Nazism [was] the absolute counterimage to the ideals of Western Enlightenment’; 2) that of the right, that “‘Bolshevik’ crimes’ explain ‘world events since 1917’; 3) that of the left, that ‘Nazism (or fascism generally) thus appears as a particularly barbaric outgrowth of the Western capitalist system’; and 4) that expressed by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, whose ‘total despair in the face of the process of civilization, as a result of the very occurrence of “Auschwitz” [...] does not allow [...] for any faith in the ultimate triumph of rationality’.⁵² Kormis’s trepidation regarding reason, found in his interpretation of his memorial, with his hesitation towards employing words and his emphasis on compassion, as well as the memorial itself, with its mere emotion, seem to place him quite firmly in the last category.

Kormis pushed through the task of rationalizing the Holocaust, and captivity more broadly, by sculpting its pain. Contrary to Don DeLillo’s character Nick Shay in *Underworld* – who declares himself to ‘live responsibly in the real’ and believes himself to ‘not stand helpless before’ the empiricism of ‘History’⁵³ – Kormis was anxious even in relation to the idea of his agency to sculpt his own history, let alone the history of the Holocaust. He was dealing with something that so wholly defied language, that defied any agency that

narration might bequeath, that it bordered on the unreal. In Kormis's counter-history, there is just the event of captivity – here, of the concentration camps, and the event of Great War internment. This fragment of history, fractured from any telos, is frozen. Of course, history exists. It is the thing within which these sculptures are submerged. And it is (Britain's) history that winds up destroying these sculptures.

The suggestion that there is an absence of history – as a story with a plot line – in the memorial is corroborated by another work by Kormis. *Freedom* (1922) (fig. 7) was produced the same year Kormis escaped captivity. The piece is ironic; it is exasperated. *Freedom* to return to what? *Freedom* from the Soviets, to return to would-be Nazi Germany? *Freedom* to depart for a Britain that would have killed him in the First World War or refused him permission to immigrate should he have tried during the Holocaust? *Freedom*, as in something that one strives towards, as a future end point of the history of progressive liberal society, is suggested to be ridiculous by Kormis's glum-looking sculpture. The figures of *Hope again* and *Freedom*, with their arms flung upwards, follow a series of miniature sculptures by Kormis of Jesus Christ on the cross (fig. 8), his arms flung upwards rather than impaled, and a proposed twelve-storey-high sculpture in a similar design.⁵⁴ Take this naked Christ, stuck in a similar pose to that of *Freedom*. He suggests salvation, but all that is memorialized in the image is his eternal imprisonment on the crucifix.

In his turn to the anti-historical, the supra-real, Kormis's pain is democratized through the medium of his sculpture. His work is emotional, bereft of mere reason. His expression of the unreal reality of the Holocaust is not to try and historicize it, but to freeze his expression of pain. This is the sculpture group: it captures his pain in a symbol that defies thought.

Writing on a quite different area of British history, the historian E. P. Thompson would describe history as containing jolts within it: that is, 'checks' on its unfolding. In Thompson's account, this disruption, the 'check', prompts history's ruling classes to cede some ground to the oppressed so as to stave off a full-scale revolt.⁵⁵ Thompson, knowingly or unknowingly, was borrowing Johann Gottlieb Fichte's notion of the *Anstoß* ('check'), in which an individual or the state at large receives a jolt from an external force which is necessary for the individual to keep defining himself or herself as a thinking individual.⁵⁶ But whereas Fichte's individual and Thompson's ruling class continue marching on their way precisely because the 'check' keeps them on the straight and narrow, Kormis's sculpture group is uninterested in what comes next, after the shock. Its jolt does not seem to serve British history. The sculpture group does not present a future. Kormis does not suggest concern for political progress in Britain or Britons' education in the Holocaust. The figures are simply, to borrow Benjamin's words, the place '[w]here reasoning, in a tension-saturated constellation, abruptly stops'. They 'confer upon that constellation a shock, whereby it is crystalized as a monad'.⁵⁷ This jolt – interrupting British history – is Kormis's sculpture group.

Couched in his own halting words, Kormis's sculpting of the obliteration of Jews and of his own lesion, of internment, placed tentatively before the

Jewish and other dead from the Holocaust and Britain's non-Jewish observers, is a symbolic exercise in the democratization and sharing of his own pain. The sculptures' beheaders and swastika-daubers were reacting not against Jewish words or a Jewish narration of history, but against a time-frozen Jewish symbol, a Jewish monad.

For Kormis, in his rejection of words in favour of the time-freezing sculpted, Judaism's experiences of the Holocaust and the concentration camps are not simply 'stages of the development of the human spirit, like the various snakeskins discarded by history'.⁵⁸ Kormis's sculpting of pain provides no explanation of the Holocaust. There is no narration, no 'causal nexus' from which emerges 'the progress of events' (in Benjamin's phrase) that (in Marc Bloch's words) have an 'irreversibility of momentum'.⁵⁹ In Kormis's sculpture group history has stopped, and the 'Konstellation' that is the Holocaust is presented as a sheer force of emotion. Kormis, to again borrow from a thesis of Benjamin's, 'stops letting the progression of events flow through his fingers like the beads of a rosary'.⁶⁰ Rather than seeking to rationalize the Holocaust, he grasps the constellation.

The sculptures are frozen in the event. But it is Britain's unrelenting history that destroys them, that turns them to rubble. As Benjamin mused of Paul Klee's *Angelus Novus* (1920): 'a storm gusts from Paradise; it has become entangled in his wings and it is so stark that the angel can no longer close them. This storm pushes him inexorably into the future [...] What we call progress is *this* storm.'⁶¹ The sculptures, the angel, trapped in time, eternally living in interment and in the Holocaust, are released from their captivity. Their freedom comes from their being destroyed. British time – 'the plasma within which' the sculptures are 'bathed' – progresses; 'the irreversibility of the momentum' of British history is what realizes the smashing of the sculptures, the smashing of Kormis's monad.⁶² Due to the contradiction of British history by the sculptures, it is British history after the Holocaust that realizes their destruction.

The destruction of the sculptures, their decapitation by British antisemites, fulfils the prophecy given to Klee's time-marbling *Angelus Novus* by Benjamin: Kormis's statues, like Klee's angel, stare.⁶³ They – especially *Hope again*, the standing sculpture – seem as if 'they are about to take off from something'.⁶⁴ Their 'face[s] [are] turned toward the past'.⁶⁵ But they cannot speak what they see; Klee's angel has 'its mouth agape' in frozen shock, never saying anything but wishing to. Kormis is conscious of his muteness, his words are halting, the mouths of his sculpture group are clamped shut, the sculptures cannot be looked in the eye (fig. 3).⁶⁶ 'In vain to scream with quivering lips she tries, / And strains in palsy'd lids her tremulous eyes; / In vain she wills to run, fly, walk, creep' were the words that appeared under Burke's engraving of Fuseli's *The Nightmare*.⁶⁷ Immobile, Kormis's figures look away. They each cower, they each shudder, from the memory of the impending blow that is eternally about to befall them, like rock-tied Prometheus (see, especially, fig. 4). Where we see narratives of the Holocaust, explanations of it, rationalities, '[w]here a chain of events appears before us', the angel, like the figures in the sculpture group,

sees 'a single catastrophe, which unremittingly heaps rubble upon rubble and hurls it at its feet' – those of the angel, and those of the sculptures.⁶⁸ The sculptures, crystallized in monadic stasis, are trapped in the pain of internment, in the pain of the concentration camps, in the pain of history being eternally piled up before them.

In destroying the sculptures (and in the authorities' neglect of them, as well as their decision to paint them matt black), some of the attendees of Kormis's stage could not allow his presentation of trauma to persist. In his work on sculpture and psychoanalysis, the French art historian Georges Didi-Huberman describes Aristotle as having spoken of 'memory' existing in 'the impression in the wax'. With its neglect, Kormis's sculpture group had failed 'to "take"' in Britain, for it is comprised of 'material that is too brittle, too "old" [and] too dry'.⁶⁹ Its material's metaphor, for both Jewish suffering and broader internment, was too brittle – too fragile – for both the wanton antisemite and the callous authorities.

The standing sculpture in Kormis's memorial, *Hope again*, should not be taken, then, as a prognosis for the future of Jewish (or human) history. It is not a statement of redemption. Rather, it is an acknowledgement of the real human need for history's events to fit into an arc or a pattern that will offer a neat ending. Kormis did not create *Hope again* because there was anything tangible or material about hope for Jews in the aftermath of the Holocaust, nor because there was any tangible or material hope for his freedom from captivity, or for any of those interned in prisoner of war camps or concentration camps. Rather, he created *Hope again* to acknowledge the tremendous intellectual and emotional difficulty of staring into and being present at a timeless event. As he put it in an interview:

[Kormis:] you can't get away, and then you have to fight against depression [...] and you can't see a way out, you are depressed [...] And then comes the last, when you see people give up, when you give up and see no way out, when illness, when Typhoid comes. When death is all around you and some have broken down completely [...] They simply gave up.

[Interviewer:] Gave up[?]

[Kormis:] They simply gave in [...] So the fifth year [in captivity] they wanted to have something which was not so depressing. So I made a figure called *Hope Again*.⁷⁰

Of course, as he knew only too well, Kormis was no spokesperson or symbol bearer for Jewry. In 1982 the BDBJ president Greville Janner rejected Kormis's suggestion for another Holocaust memorial (fig. 9).⁷¹ In the design, the arms that we have already seen in the sculpture of Christ, in *Freedom* and in *Hope again* extend towards the heavens; there is no liberation nor freedom, no redemption nor hope on earth. Salvation is found only in death and, unsurprisingly perhaps, the two arms rise up from mounds of clay resembling bodies bundled together, as Jews' bodies were in the gas chambers; the bodies are labelled with the names of sites of extermination camps. The design might induce one to remember the opening dialogue of the film *Shoah*, directed by Claude Lanzmann (1985):

'It's hard to recognize, but it was here. They burned people here. A lot of people were burned here. Yes, this is the place. [Crow caws.] No one ever left here again. The gas vans came in here. There were two huge ovens, and afterward, the bodies were thrown [sighs] into these ovens, and the flames reached to the sky.' 'To the sky?'

To the sky, just as with the arms of Kormis's sculptures? 'It was terrible.'⁷² The interviewee concludes, as Kormis had, on the difficulty of recreating what had happened by way of reasonable thought:

No one can ... recreate what happened here. Impossible! And no one can understand it. Even I, here, now. No, I just can't believe it. It was always this peaceful here. When they burned two thousand people ... Jews ... every day, it was just as peaceful. Yes. This is the place.⁷³

Kormis's ending, exhibited in his crucified figure, is godly, it is ahistorical, and it is nonsensical. It is understandable, then, that Kormis's work was so unnatural for Britain. To memorialize pain, to do away with history's narrative, to symbolize a predominantly Jewish event in universalist terms – and then to plant all that in a London park, all the while commemorating British prisoners of war in the same breath – was a recipe for the sculptures' eventual destruction at the hands of both the authorities' neglect and antisemitic vandals.

1. J. Ware, 'Revamped Wiener Holocaust Library to reopen with exhibition on celebrated Jewish sculptor', *The Art Newspaper*, 30 August 2024, <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2024/08/30/wiener-holocaust-library-to-reopen-fred-kormis>, accessed 3 December 2024. The exhibition was made possible by the donation of Kormis's works to the library by David Arohnson, the research of Helen Lewandowski and the curation of Barbara Warnock. B. Warnock, 'Introduction: the background to the project *Fred Kormis: Sculpting the Twentieth Century*', in B. Warnock

(ed.), *Fred Kormis: Sculpting the Twentieth Century*, London, Stephen Morris, 2024, pp. 7–9. The book is indispensable and is the most thorough survey of Kormis's work.

2. For their material, see *Gladstone Park: Fred Kormis Memorial*, c. 2004, p. 1, <https://londongardenstrust.org/features/gladstone.pdf>, accessed 4 December 2024.

3. T. Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1994, p. 247.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 210.

5. A. Funkenstein, 'History, counterhistory, and narrative', in

S. Friedländer (ed.), *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the "Final Solution"*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1972, p. 77.

6. M. Bohm-Duchen, 'Fleeing Hitler: German emigré artists in England', *Jewish Quarterly*, 33, 1986, p. 27.

7. G. L. Mosse, *German Jews Beyond Judaism*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1985, p. 5.

8. While explanations of Jewish German identity are not the *raison d'être* of Kormis, in contrast to Jewish historians, one has to admit that his refusal to label his sculptures as a memorial for Jews

– but rather for Great War internees and concentration camp victims en masse – speaks to the lack of a border between Germanness, or Europeanness, and Jewishness. This was precisely what Mosse deemed to be the (definitively Jewish) aspiration of German-Jewish *Bildungsbürgertum* (*ibid.*).

9. Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination*, p. 260.

10. E.-J. Stiles, *Holocaust Memory and National Museums in Britain*, Cham, Springer, 2022.

11. Metropolitan Police Service to Leo Franks, 'Vandalism at Gladstone Park', 7 January 2025, <https://www>.

whatdotheyknow.com/request/vandalism_at_gladstone_park/response/2877883/attach/html/2/attachment.docx.html, accessed 23 January 2026.

12. 'Tribute paid to martyrs', *Wembley Observer*, 12 September 1991.

13. N. Spaulding, 'Constitution as countermonument: federalism, reconstruction, and the problem of collective memory', *Columbia Law Review*, 103, 2003, pp. 1992–2051; J. E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 1993, esp. ch. 1.

14. *Gladstone Park: Fred Kormis Memorial*, p. 1.

15. *Ibid.*;

16. *Gladstone Park: Fred Kormis Memorial*, p. 1.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 1.

19. '[Le] temps de l'histoire, au contraire, est le plasma même où baignent les phénomènes et comme le lieu de leur intelligibilité.' M. Bloch, *Apologie pour l'histoire: ou métier d'historien* (1949), Paris, SHS Editions, 2023, p. 19. All translations are mine, unless otherwise indicated.

20. Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination*, p. 19.

21. 'dient essentiell der Befriedigung derselben Sorgen, Qualen, Unruhen, auf die ehemals so genannten Religionen Antwort gaben.' W. Benjamin, 'Kapitalismus als Religion' (1921), in R. Tiedemann and H. Schweppenhäuser (eds), *Walter Benjamin: Gesammelte Schriften*, 14 vols, Frankfurt-on-Main, Suhrkamp, 1991, vol. VI, p. 100.

22. S. Friedländer, 'Introduction', in Friedländer (ed.), *Probing the Limits of Representation*, p. 13.

23. T. Kushner, 'The Holocaust in the British imagination: the official mind and beyond, 1945 to the present', *Holocaust Studies*, 23, 2017, pp. 364–84.

24. 117 Peace Monuments in & near London (England), https://peace.maripo.com/x_uk_london.htm, accessed 4 December 2024.

25. Wiener Holocaust Library (hereafter WHL), Fred Kormis: Documents, 1032/1/1/11, pp. 5–6.

26. Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination*, pp. 150–51.

27. Quoted on a Wiener Holocaust Library exhibition placard. The exhibition ran from 20 September 2024 to 6 February 2025 and was titled *Fred Kormis: Sculpting the Twentieth Century*. For a survey of non-state expressions of antisemitism in Britain in the interwar years, see C. Holmes, *Anti-Semitism in British Society, 1876–1939* (1979), Abingdon, Routledge, 2016, pp. 203–19. For instance, at the same time as decrees were promulgated permitting the severe restriction of German Jews

working in the medical profession, so too was the British Medical Association successfully limiting German Jewish refugees' 'inundation' of British medical jobs. J. M. Efron, *Medicine and the German Jews: A History*, New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 2001, pp. 262–64; Holmes, *Anti-Semitism in British Society*, p. 206; A. J. Sherman, *Island Refuge: Britain and Refugees from the Third Reich, 1933–1939*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1973, pp. 20–21.

28. H. Lewandowski, 'Pigeonholes, and the task of the sculptor', in Warnock (ed.), *Fred Kormis*, p. 40.

29. Sherman, *Island Refuge*, p. 21.

30. Warnock, 'Introduction', p. 11; WHL, Fred Kormis: Documents, 1032/1/1/13, p. 1.

31. T. Kushner, 'Antisemitism in Britain: continuity or the absence of a resurgence?', in A. McElligott and J. Herf (eds), *Antisemitism Before and Since the Holocaust: Altered Contexts and Recent Perspectives*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, p. 259.

32. T. Kushner, 'The UK's response to refugee children in 1945 and now', *The Guardian*, 28 January 2020.

33. H. Ewence, *The Alien Jew in the British Imagination, 1881–1905: Space, Mobility and Territory*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, p. 4.

34. J. Maynard Keynes, 'The underlying principles', *The Manchester Guardian*, 4 January 1923, reprinted in E. Johnson and D. Moggridge (eds), *The Collected Writings of John Maynard Keynes*, London, Macmillan, 1978, vol. 17, p. 448.

35. Kushner, 'The UK's response to refugee children in 1945 and now'.

36. E. L. Santner, 'History beyond the pleasure principle: some thoughts on the representation of trauma', in Friedländer (ed.), *Probing the Limits of Representation*, p. 144.

37. S. Friedländer, *The Years of Extermination: Nazi Germany and the Jews, 1939–1945*, New York, Harper Collins, 2008, p. 657.

38. Funkenstein, 'History, counterhistory, and narrative', p. 69.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 76.

40. Here, he was explaining his choice of a harp for what would become the Holocaust memorial in Kiryat Gat in Israel, *Sho'ah, 1933–1945* (1979). WHL, Fred Kormis Collection, Fred Kormis: Documents, 'Fritz Kormis, interviewed by Jessica Wilks in 1980 for IWM in series: "Artists in an Age of Conflict"', reel no. 5, 1032/1/115, p. 1. Kormis had saved an article by Berger in which he criticized symbolism, perhaps contributing to Kormis's sensitivity to the subject: 'Shapes without meaning [...] are not unlike sounds without words [...] tolerant, uncommitted, remote, anaesthetised,

harmless and therefore, in the end, impertinent.' Lewandowski, 'Pigeonholes and the task of the translator', p. 42.

41. WHL, F. Kormis, 'Programme for unveiling of memorial to Prisoner of War and Concentration Camp Victims in Gladstone Park', London, 1969; HM Government, Department of Levelling Up, 'Memorial to Prisoners of War and Concentration Camp Victims, 1969', UK Holocaust Map, Housing and Communities, <https://www.ukholocaustmap.org.uk/map/records/memorial-to-prisoners-of-war-and-concentration-camp-victims-1969>, accessed 18 December 2024.

42. J. Starobinski, 'La vision de la dormeuse', *L'escape du rêve*, 5, 1972, pp. 9–26; E. Darwin, *The Botanic Garden. Part II. Containing The Loves of Plants. A Poem. With Philosophical Notes*, London, J. Nichols, 1791, p. 98, ll. 71–73; T. Burke, engraver, Henry Fuseli, 'The Nightmare', 1783 [1781], stipple, paper, London, The British Museum, 1870,0514.1610.

43. *The Aeneid of Virgil*, trans. T. C. Williams, Boston, MA, Houghton Mifflin, 1910, p. 454.

44. WHL, Fred Kormis: Documents, 1032/1/1/1, p. 5.

45. WHL, Kormis, 'Programme for unveiling of memorial to Prisoner of War and Concentration Camp Victims in Gladstone Park'.

46. A. Mahon, 'Jean-Jacques Lebel: anti-sculpture and anti-psychiatry', in B. Taylor (ed.), *Sculpture and Psychoanalysis*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2006, pp. 122–24.

47. Mosse, *German Jews Beyond Judaism*, p. 12. There is no English equivalent to this term, which Mosse spends the rest of the essay defining.

48. S. Li Bartov, 'He escaped the Nazis and created Britain's first memorial to their victims. Now this artist is getting a second look', *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, 6 September 2024, <https://www.jta.org/2024/09/06/culture/he-escaped-the-nazis-and-created-britains-first-memorial-to-their-victims-now-this-artist-is-getting-a-second-look>, accessed 4 December 2024.

49. 'Duidelijk vallen in het levensgevoel van Kormis twee zijden te bespeuren: de zijde van het psychologische, van de diep peilende aandacht voor de menselijke persoonlijkheid; en die van het "sociale", van de aandacht voor het, in de "massa" als zoodanig lovende bewustzijn.' WHL, 'Pages about an exhibition of works by Fritz Kormis in the 1934 Bulletin Internationale Kunst, published in the Netherlands', <https://www.refugeemap.org/map/collections/fred-ne-fritz-kormis>, accessed 18 December 2024.

50. Friedländer, 'Introduction', pp. 9–10.

51. *Ibid.*, pp. 3–4.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

53. D. DeLillo, *Underworld*, New York, Scribner, 1997, p. 82.

54. WHL, Fred Kormis: Photographs of Reliefs, 1920, 1032/2/6/59; WHL, Fred Kormis: Photographs of Reliefs, 1920, 1032/2/6/60; WHL, Fred Kormis: Sketch for Planned Sculptures, undated, 1032/3/3.

55. E. P. Thompson, *Whigs and Hunters: The Origins of the Black Act*, London, Allen Lane, 1975, esp. p. 265.

56. J. G. Fichte, *Foundations of Natural Right* (1797), trans. and ed. Fredrick Neuhouser, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 32. Neuhouser's footnote on this page is particularly useful.

57. 'Wo das Denken in einer von Spannungen gesättigten Konstellation plötzlich einhält, da erteilt es derselben einen Chock, durch den es sich als Monade kristallisiert.' W. Benjamin, 'Über den Begriff der Geschichte, 1940' (1940), in R. Tiedemann and H. Schweppenhäuser (eds), *Walter Benjamin: Gesammelte Schriften*, 14 vols, Frankfurt-on-Main, Suhrkamp, 1991, vol. 1:1, pp. 702–03.

58. 'verschiedene Entwicklungsstufen des menschlichen Geistes, als verschiedene von der Geschichte abgelegte Schlangenhäute.' K. Marx, 'Zur Judenfrage' (1844), in *Marx-Engels-Werke*, 43 vols, Berlin, Dietz Verlag, 1981, vol. 1, pp. 347–77, at p. 349. Emphasis in original.

59. 'Irrréversibilité de son élan' are Bloch's words, in *Apologie pour l'histoire*, p. 20. The rest – 'Kausalnexus' and 'die Abfolge von Begebenheiten' – are from Benjamin, 'Über den Begriff der Geschichte', p. 704.

60. 'hört auf, sich die Abfolge von Begebenheiten durch die Finger laufen zu lassen wie einen Rosenkranz.' Benjamin, 'Über den Begriff der Geschichte', p. 704.

61. 'ein Sturm weht vom Paradies her, der sich in seinen Flügen verfangen hat und so stark ist, daß der Engel sie nicht mehr schließen kann. Dieser Sturm treibt ihn unaufhaltsam in die Zukunft [...] was wir den Fortschritt nennen, ist dieser Sturm.' *Ibid.*, pp. 697–98.

62. Bloch, *Apologie pour l'histoire*, p. 20.

63. 'startt'. Benjamin, 'Über den Begriff der Geschichte', p. 697.

64. 'im Begriff, sich von etwas zu entfernen.' *Ibid.*

65. 'Antlitz der Vergangenheit zugewendet.' *Ibid.*

66. 'sein Mund steht offen.' *Ibid.*

67. Darwin, *The Botanic Garden*, p. 98, ll. 71–73; Burke, 'The Nightmare'.

68. 'Wo eine Kette von Begebenheiten vor uns erscheint';

'sieht *er* eine einzige Katastrophe, die unablässig Trümmer auf Trümmer und sie ihm'; 'Fuße'. Benjamin, 'Über den Begriff der Geschichte', p. 697.
69. G. Didi-Huberman, 'The

order of the material', in Taylor (ed.), *Sculpture and Psychoanalysis*, p. 197. Emphasis in the original.
70. WHL, Fred Kormis: Documents, 1032/1/1/13, p. 5.

71. R. D. Pollack, 'The politics of space and identity in the Hyde Park Holocaust Memorial', *Jewish Historical Studies*, 54, 2022, p. 20.

72. C. Lanzmann (dir.), *Shoah* (1985).
73. Ibid.