“In My Eyes, Each Photograph was a Masterpiece”. Construction of children's photos in a family album on kibbutz in Israel

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This article explores the process of the creation of photographs on kibbutz through a case study of one nuclear family living on kibbutz in Israel. It examines the process of construction of photographs in the private family album of the nuclear family in relation to the public forms of documentation on kibbutz. The article explores to what extent the photographs enabled the family to express their individuality in kibbutz society, which was self governed by a socialist, egalitarian ideology. It examines the influences of the childhood photographs of the mother, who joined the kibbutz as an adult, on the construction of images of motherhood in her private kibbutz photo album. It investigates the way in which the construction of private photographs in one family album contested dominant mythologies on kibbutz at that time.

Key words: photography, family-album, kibbutz, childhood, ideology, socialism, motherhood.

Introduction

This article presents the case of one family on kibbutz in the south of Israel, in the Negev. It investigates whether this family succeeded in creating a photo album that reflected a personal representation of their individual and emotional reality on kibbutz and to what extent was the album marked by the public collective, socialist visual representation. The study involved investigation of visual material created on kibbutzim in Israel, interviewing families having lived on kibbutz between 1948-67, belonging to the Ha'Shomer Ha'tzayir youth movement and having raised children at that time. Each family was analyzed as an entire universe, yielding a different argument. In the research, the case study families offered several private albums; the albums selected for analysis were those containing photographs of babies, infants and toddlers. In each album, certain photographs were selected for the analysis. In this case, the album selected for analysis is that of Anna and Shmuel's son, N., born in 1966.

The analysis itself explores the way in which the family photographs and the overt family narrative that accompanied the photographs contested dominant mythologies common on kibbutz at the time. The core of the narratives belonged to the mother, Anna, who was the one who compiled the album and was emotionally involved in the interview. This is the first study of photographic albums on kibbutz, created in this context. Kibbutz society and the communal child rearing has been research extensively, but the focus on the visual material of individual members on kibbutz, and in particular the documentation of children in private photo albums of kibbutz members, has not been researched elsewhere. The article expands to the discussions of

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practices of documentation common on kibbutzim, to the notion of credibility of family photographs, the female and male gaze, the return of the gaze in an andocentric society, the question of whether family snaps existed on kibbutz, and the collective vision in kibbutz society.

Analysis Methods
The analysis of photographs in albums in itself is complex and poses particular challenges, since photographs in albums are not created in a systematic structure. The research methods employed incorporated a semiotic approach to the analysis the photographs, searching for signs in the photographs and their meanings to the interviewees. This research introduces visual analysis of elements, such as body posture, posing, proximity and assessing the quality of the photographs alongside the semiotic analysis. Photo elicitation was used during the interviews, in order to generate narratives.

Photo albums lack the clear intentionality of the photographer; they do not rely on text to convey a message and the reading lacks consistency; the same signs are read differently by the same kibbutz members over different periods of time, in which kibbutz society went through structural transformations in its lifestyle and ideology. Contemporary kibbutz society has found itself in a state of change; the ideological and institutional order has lost its grip, creating a platform for kibbutz members to release hidden meanings that previously did not correlate with kibbutz ideology and social trends. Interpretations and meanings given to old photographs shifted, new meanings were produced to photographs containing old signs. Anna's covert stories, exposed by means of the narrative and the semiotic analysis of the images lent meaning and significance to the photographs in her album. This creates a methodological interface in certain parts of the article regarding the attribution of voice, between the voice of the interviewee and the voice of the writer.

The Credibility of Family Albums
Family photographs constitute a special genre within the world of photography, characterized by a separate set of values than other genres of photography, which are contested as being manipulated or contrived, by the photographers themselves and the media. The decoding of information in family photographs was based on the conviction that photographs depict reality and are therefore trustworthy. When photography was a new technology, over 170 years ago, it was associated with the positivist worldview, formulated by August Comte in the mid 19th century, such that photography was considered a form of science. Positivism gave priority to anything that was measurable and amenable to scientific proof. It held that only that which could be seen truly existed, concrete knowledge was reduced to that which could be seen with the eye - to that which could be measured, quantified and controlled. Photography was considered an 'ideal means of reproduction and penetrating nature without any distortions (Kracauer 1980, 248). The attribute of realism lies in the belief that the visible is the real and the real becomes the viewer’s knowledge of the people.

The philosophy of positivism has clung to family portraiture and segregated it from other branches of photography, ever since the use of daguerreotypes, turning the family portrait into an entity in its own right (Barromi Perlman, 2007, 4-6). A connection was forged between the images in family albums and the established scientific outlook which accorded these photographs credibility and the attribute of realism. Roland Barthes explains that the relationship of signified to the signifiers is one of recording, which reinforces the 'myth of photographic "naturalness": the scene is there, captured
mechanically' and reinforces the 'stupefying evidence of this is how it was' (1980, 278). Gillian Rose refers to the 'Indexicality of the image' (2010, 38), that 'the photographs is a true record of what was there when the shutter snapped'.

Family photographs may undergo a process of selection, after which they are placed within a photo album and are chosen as objects entrusted with the preservation of the family's heritage. This was particularly common amongst Jewish families, post WW2 (Barromi Perlman, 2007, 19-21). The process of compiling an album, selecting certain images over others, arranging them in a particular order and connecting them to an oral narrative serves the purpose of perpetuating those family memories which the family chooses to favour over others. Yet, these narratives can also be accompanied by covert narratives, underlying denotations and subtexts in regard to the overt visual and oral narrative.

Family photographs are taken to function as 'readerly' (Barthes, 1974) texts in the sense that the viewers – for example extended family members or those outside the family - are restricted to reading them and are not expected to undertake in a discourse or dialogue with the images. Viewers of family photographs do not question whether the family photo is a social construction, 'an object of complex, emotional and cultural meaning, and [an] artifact used to conjure memory, nostalgia and contemplation' (Sturken, 1999, 178). Nor are they expected to create their own personal critical interpretations of the photographs, but rather to accept the visual text and related narratives. Narratives which are repeated during the process of viewing define the family identity and become part of the ritual itself. By participating in the family ritual, the viewer is demonstrating a form of acceptance towards the representations in the album. Hirsch explained that

[T]he structure of looking is reciprocal; photographer and viewer collaborate on the reproduction of ideology. Between the viewer and the recorded object, the viewer encounters, and/or projects, a screen made up of dominant mythologies and preconceptions that shape the representation. (1997, 7)

Thus, it is assumed that there is a stability of meaning and purpose in the family photograph in general. Yet, the family considered in the present article lived in a state of tension regarding the demands of kibbutz society and their personal existence as a nuclear family on kibbutz in an ambience dominated by mythologies of collectivity. The mother defied the conventions and acted in her own private sphere of family photographs and contested the reality of communal child rearing which they represented. She was not willing to accept the normative visual representations created by the kibbutz as representations of her life and experiences, or as images that would ultimately supply her with visual memories of herself as a mother and of her son's childhood. She was unable to outwardly defy the norms of communal child rearing on kibbutz, her option was to leave kibbutz or to accept them. She acknowledged the fact that staying on kibbutz meant compromising her maternal desires, in her own words: Those who couldn't abide by the rules are not here today. Her deep maternal instincts lead her to pave the path of action by means of controlling and influencing her personal visual documentation.

Kibbutz Society
The kibbutzim created a unique form of society, based on Marxist ideology with a communist life style and was founded on the ideological unity of its members sharing common beliefs. Kibbutz society defined itself as a recruited society: the members were recruited for the common cause and were required to forsake their personal pleasures, their parental desires and
personal development in order to prioritize the needs of the collective. This was the prevailing spirit in most kibbutzim during their early years, before the foundation of the State of Israel, in 1948 (the album in question was created over thirty years late, in another era). Kibbutz society in its formative years, in the 1930's, relied on the members' total commitment and sacrifice for the sake of Zionism, building a homeland for the Jews and settling the land. The physical hardships, existential dangers and constant strains of settling the land justified the demand made of the pioneers to repress their need for familial bonding, intimacy and proximity with their children in favour of the communal good (Gavron 2000, 162-4). Communal child rearing was introduced as a solution for the trying circumstances in which kibbutz inhabitants existed and eventually became institutionalized. Parental demonstrations of love were discouraged and were considered a threat to the process of collective socialization.

The effect of adopting the socialist, egalitarian ideology by kibbutz members was such that, according to Abrams and Mucculloch (1976), the biological families living on the kibbutz underwent a de-construction of their traditional role of being ultimately responsible for their own welfare in terms of economy and education and health. Families underwent a process of re-construction in accordance with the principles of kibbutz ideology. The traditional roles were transferred into the hands of the collective so that the kibbutz community was given responsibility over child-rearing, as well as the economic, cultural and educational welfare of the children. Melford Spiro wrote that:

The kibbutz has succeeded in eliminating most of the characteristics and functions of the traditional family. The parents have little responsibility for the physical care or for the socialization of their children; the relationship between mates does not include economic cooperation; and parents and children do not share common residence. (1967, 123)

Parents were divested of the traditional Western patriarchal roles; children were separated from their parents at birth and raised in communal child rearing, in children's homes, by caretakers. The caretakers were called metaplot in Hebrew, plural, and metapelet, single, feminine (the work was considered a woman's duty in kibbutz). A child's reference group was not his or her biological parents, but his peer group; the children were divided according to their peer groups and were raised and educated with their peers in children's homes; the peer group was meant to serve as an extended family. Spiro wrote that in spite of the fact that the family did not exist in the structural-functional sense, it existed in the psychological sense, in the strong attachments between parents and children. (1967, 123-4).

The Return of the Gaze

Kibbutz society aspired to be an egalitarian society; but in point of fact, it was an androcentric society, which took a male view of the world, and in which power and control was in the hands of men (Leichman and Paz 1994, 191-2). Although kibbutz society had pretensions of being an egalitarian society and upheld principles of gender equality, it operated by means of male-centred concepts and worldviews. Women were designated for female roles in the kibbutz; education, laundry, health. Today women testify about the frustration they experienced within the social system that spoke in two voices, which in actuality contradicted the ideological principles that it claimed to espouse: by discriminating against women in terms of the occupational roles they were allowed to fulfil within the kibbutz, and in terms of the status they were permitted to achieve on the kibbutz. Jo Spence wrote that “For women, the question of looking and taking pictures is determined by the dominant culture. Those who create, circulate and
own the image production process, thereby define and control their meanings” (1988, 174). Within this reality, Anna attempted to turn her female gaze back at the male world, if not through the actual manipulation of the photographic craft, but by controlling the image production and the photographic reality reflected in them. The photo album was her means of dealing with the societal pressures and maintaining her individual outlook on parenting. She struggled to create images that would provide her the pleasure of looking, to create an album that would sustain its hold and remain impenetrable and immune to the social pressures regarding child rearing. She did so by omitting a large part of the visual signs of the collective from her private albums: the children’s home, the metapelet, the room the baby slept in, the food he was served, the bath he bathed in over there in Anna’s words.

The Practice of Photographing Children on Kibbutz.

Rose explains that ‘family photos are particular sorts of images imbedded in specific practices, and it is the specificity of those practices that define a photograph’. (2010, 14). From a methodological point of view, this approach implies that the focus of the analysis should not only center on the construction of meaning through semiotic analysis of the photograph, but on the social practices in which the taking, making and circulation of the photograph are embedded (2010,14). The question about photographs is not only what their content is, but what is done with them. Slater, (1995, 137) writes about photography’s ‘relation to the dominant practices of the image in domestic life’. Richard Chalfen asks ‘what do ordinary people “do with” their personal pictures’ (2008, 119). Harrison (2002, 90) writes that research involves understanding the contexts and practices of photographs. Photographic prints are material objects; the way in which they are produced, stored, viewed, displayed, archived and circulated are all practices which are embedded in the object. The practice may involve an emotionality related to viewing the photographs, or the articulation of certain feelings. Rose explains that a family photo can become one not because it looks like one but because it is treated like one, family practices have to be connected to it, narrative, and memories, feelings and it needs to a participant in a family practice.

Public documentation of children on kibbutz was devoid of private practices in domestic life and lacked private memorials to it. The public practice distanced the biological parents from the event itself-the parents often did not participate in the creation of the image and had no memorials related to the creation. It was mostly performed at the initiative of the kibbutz itself, by its members, during children's social and educational activities (of which kibbutz society was proud). Often the photographer would be designated for the role simply by owning a camera, during the 1960s cameras were rare possessions on kibbutz. The photographers on the kibbutz generally pursued their activities voluntarily and would enter the children's home in the midst of their daily activities. When children from one nuclear family were scattered over different children’s homes, no effort was made to place siblings within one photographic frame, so that each child was photographed with his or her peer group.
The above photograph is a typical form of kibbutz photographic portraiture, taken during educational activity. The child is dressed in kibbutz casual attire, her hair is disheveled. The child does not gaze back at the photographer, so that it appears as if the photographer himself was not interested in capturing her individual gaze, but rather to document the children in this peer group. Although the photograph appears to be an individual portrait, it lacks individuality in the sense that the photograph has no private aspect to it. The child has no particular recollection of the photograph being taken (From interview with S. G.); the parents have no narrative relating to the photograph or the event itself, thus the photograph lacks a personal narrative or memory. The memory belongs to the photographer, and thus to the collective, and not to the child or the family. This practice transforms the portrait into a portrait of a child belonging and functioning in a collective system and being a product of it. These photographs would be stored in the kibbutz archive under the category of 'education' and under the sub category of the child's specific peer group. Anna was intuitively trying to create an visual alternative to the common practice of documentation, which was according to Shapiro (1988) reproducing dominant forms of discourse, which help circulate the existing system of power and authority (1988,130).

Anna's Childhood Album

Anna was born in 1944 in the city of Bnei Brak and joined kibbutz in 1962. Shmuel was born in Australia in 1936, joined the kibbutz in 1956. Anna and Shmuel are kibbutz founders and Shmuel held key positions in the leadership of the movement. Their kibbutz is located in the southern part of the country, in the Western Negev. Their kibbutz is ideologically cohesive, privatization is arriving on this kibbutz gradually and children's home functioned as late as 1991 on this kibbutz.

Anna and Shmuel's case is unique in that they joined the kibbutz voluntarily as adults, met and married on the kibbutz. Their perspective as people who were raised and educated in an urban environment shaped their worldview and informed them as adults in relation to Western conventions of child rearing and patriarchal family conventions.
Anna was born to a family of Polish immigrants who had left Poland before the Holocaust. The entire family from both sides had perished in the Holocaust. The photographs from Anna’s childhood album exemplify urban habits of photographing families in Israel during the 1940s and 50's in a patriarchal, traditional Western style. The father in this photo appears as the dominant figure; his height is conspicuous. The photographs were taken by a photographer who was invited to make occasional family portraits, or by her cousin. The words 'the entire family' in Hebrew (kol hamishpaha) are inscribed on the bottom. These words denote the significance of the photograph to the family; it is a presentation of the whole nuclear family. The verbal text and the non verbal messages combine into a visual unity. The reading of the visual text is that of a family being decoded as a cohesive unit, which is supported and complemented by the written text. The visual codes of the family are unity and physical proximity. The father's embrace contributes to the sense of family unity.

The girls were dressed up for the portraits: the dignity accorded to the very action of making the photograph, to the moment itself, can be seen in the family's decision to create a mise-en-scène of festive dress.
In the above photo we see Anna as a child holding the hand of a proximate adult figure, and although the adult does not appear in the photo frame, the viewer assumes the child is not alone - that an adult exists in the baby’s life. The lack of a central visual adult presence does not indicate a sign of absence of parenting or lack of love; the baby is holding out her hand to a figure that is technically absent but emotionally present to the eye of the viewer—suggesting a form of parenting which does not need to rely on visual affirmation the photographs.

The parents are not always present in the photographs, nor are there visual forms of parental passion or caring; these are present in the album in the form of symbols of unity. The viewer decodes the signs of a family unity, of ceremonious attire, as signs of love and emotion, and of parental love. The love presumably exists in the relationship, along with the care and the attention.

The images from Anna’s childhood photo album reflect the cultural in which she was raised. Some of the visual symbols among which Anna grew up and absorbed as a child are repeated in the albums she created for her son such as proximity and motherhood affection.

**Photography on Kibbutz and the Male Gaze**

The habits of portraiture Anna was familiar with from her childhood did not coincide with the practice of public and private documentation common on kibbutz. The concept of a close-knit nuclear family was perceived as a potential threat to kibbutz society, and was not encouraged. The presentation of a well-groomed family was perceived as a bourgeois preference and was not an accepted value in the context of kibbutz society. The nuclear family undermined the kibbutz, and the existence of a nuclear family was thought to come at the expense of the entire kibbutz. Bar On wrote that ‘The original kibbutz was intended to be, actually, a kibbutz without children. Only under such conditions was it possible to maintain a façade of equality’ (2004, 100) [Hebrew]. Family life was deconstructed; kibbutz members ate their meals with the other kibbutz members in the dining hall. ‘Any tendency to stay away in the family rooms and to build up a segregated family life was strongly condemned’. (Kransz 1983, 259).

Photography on kibbutz was largely a male occupation in an andocentric society (In the 1960s there were close to 150 registered photographers working for the kibbutz movement, records show that the vast majority were men”[iii]). The
photographer on kibbutz occupied a position of power not only by virtue of his position behind the camera, but also in respect to those who stood in front of the camera and could turn an object into a subject that was observed and examined by the viewers. In this sense, the camera, held by a male photographer, can reflect the dominant gaze. Sontag writes: 'Photographing is essentially an act of non-intervention. The act of photographing is more than passive observing. Like sexual voyeurism, it is a way of at least tacitly, often explicitly, encouraging what is going on to keep on happening' (1977, 11-12). Anna was required to adapt and make concessions, to adjust to the norms being dependent on the availability of the photographer. They did not own a camera until the early 1970's nor could they order the services of a commercial photographer.

Anna did not accept the role of non-intervention and acquiescence; she encouraged the photographer to visit their home frequently, to take photos of her son at significant milestones of the child’s development, such as his first baby steps. Her desire to reverse the gaze was an attempt to shift from being a female subject for a male photographer in an andocentric society, into an active object in the photographs. This also applied to altering the representations of her son from that of a child raised and educated by the collective to her personal, biological, individual son.

Anna's Narrative
During Anna's interview it became clear that she objected to raising children in the children's home on the kibbutz and had a difficult time reconciling herself to the demands of kibbutz life. She said that it was especially difficult for her to take leave of the children at night and turn them over at bedtime to the metaplot at the children's home. She also said that it was even more disturbing to her that while she was working as a metaplet, putting other to bed children, a different kibbutz metapelet was putting her own children to bed. She admits that she feels guilty for having left the children in the children's home at nights. Viewing the album together was emotionally fraught for Anna, who brought up unresolved issues and painful memories of the era in which the album was created and of her experiences from the time and differences of opinion. Her personal pain was associated not only with the compromises demanded of her by kibbutz society but by the lack of support at home she had suffered from in this sense. Anna explained that she had often asked herself whether she wished to leave the kibbutz and break up the family, but that she had decided to make peace with her current reality for the sake of the family's unity. In Anna's words:

I remember that we had to take our children back to the children’s home at a quarter to eight every night even if your child slept the whole afternoon and you had no time to spend with him. Shmuel was very strict about this. If we wouldn’t cooperate, then the kibbutz movement might collapse. They had to maintain very strict rules. There were very few who didn’t abide by the rules and brought their children over at eight. And they were reprimanded....There was a metapelet in the children’s home who was so strict that Yasser Arafat seemed lenient next to her. She was terribly strict. Some parents liked that, and some suffered and just waited for her to leave.

Anna and Shmuel travelled in the service of the Ha'shomer Ha'tsayir youth movement to the United States, and lived there for three years (1977-1980). Returning after this time abroad was extremely difficult, both for her and for the
children in relation to her role as a mother and especially affected her youngest daughter. When they returned from America, her daughter

...would run away from the children’s home at night crying that she wanted to be with us. I found it very difficult to force her to return there to sleep. Whenever I would tell her to go back to the children’s home, she would say: I want to be with you, with you.

Anna’s Photo Album
N.’s album is in good condition, it contains 24 inner pages, an entry page and a light blue binding, in which a small photograph of N. is inserted. Black pages are protected with tracing paper. On the cover Anna wrote N. 2, indicating that there existed N. 1 album. The text inserted in the album pages by Anna is written with a white pencil in small letters, indicating the age of the child, for instance ‘51/2 months’. The photographs are small in dimension, (9x11 cm), hand printed, 2-3 photographs in average on each page, over 60 photographs, of which some are almost identical. Some are pasted at a 15 degree angle to each other, so that each page has slightly different design. The age of N. in the photographs is approximately from five months until the age of two.

N. was born in 1966, by which time cameras were quick; household flashes, fast shutter speed cameras using sensitive roll film were common along with familiar amateur photographers encouraging smiles and informal, natural situations instead of premeditated facial expressions. Processing and printing were made easier, which explains the large amount of indoor photographs and the feeling of spontaneity in the photographs, as opposed to Anna’s own childhood photos, in which the figures appear rigid and the photographers was dependant on outdoor lighting. Around a third of the photographs were taken in the children’s home some were taken in a sequence. The rest were taken in Anna and Shmuel's room (the term used on kibbutz for home). N.’s album is rich with images, the photographs are characterized by spontaneity, closeness and bonding; they are of good quality, expressive and well composed. N. appears as the central figure surrounded by family members in most of the pictures. There is minor visual evidence the children's homes in these images in some photos and no photographs of the metapelet.

Figure 16-19. Photographs in the children's home, taken by the kibbutz photographer.

In these photographs the children are viewed from above, not at eye level. The photographer himself does not physically appear as a parent in the photographs, although he is the father of one of the babies, the images do not reveal any particular parental association.

Anna made an effort to construct a visual documentation of herself as an active and fully present mother, in spite of the challenges she faced. Her possibilities of
creating the photographs were restricted to those hours in which she could spend time with her son in the afternoon, after work hours, and on the weekend. In her family album, which she created, she is presented as an involved mother who maintains a physical relationship with her son. She holds him warmly, kisses him, and is very present in the photos. Even in the photos where the child appears to be alone, one of the parents can be discerned in the background, whether they are holding the child's hand or one of their shoes peeps into the frame.

Figure 8-15. Anna and Shmuel and N. as a toddler during afternoon parenting hours.

In these photographs N is responding to his parents who are not physically present in every single photograph but visually exist in his smiles.
Figure 20-21. Anna and N. at the children's home.

These photographs carry weight in relation to the other photographs in the album because of the layers of symbolism they contain. Anna is holding N. during feeding hours in the children's home. She is seated with her back facing the cradle in which he slept. Her body serves as a barrier between the infant and the immediate communal environment of the children's home. Her body is physically separating him from his surroundings and she is carrying out the task of feeding him, which is a task she was unable to perform during the day, and was normally carried out by the metaplot. In these images, Anna is claiming her role as caretaker and parent of her child, the motherly role she wished to fulfil. The photographs taken at her home did not show this form of nurturing activity, which was denied her, because according to the kibbutz system the time spent at home was considered quality time and feeding one’s child did not qualify as quality time, so that feeding only took place communally in the children's home.

Figure 22-23. Anna and Shmuel appear as active, hands-on parents who are engaged with their children and have a bonding relationship with them. The home serves as a backdrop for the closeness and intimacy they have.

Anna tended to keep all the photographs she owned, and admitted that until this very day she has not thrown out a single photograph, every image found its way into the album. In Anna's words:

*In the past, I used to put photographs that hadn’t come out well into the album. In my eyes, each photograph was a masterpiece. Even if the photograph was blurred or not good [to me], it commemorated a certain period in our son’s life. If I had a*
photo of him at fourteen months, then I would put it in the album. If there was just one photograph, then that was the one I put in the album. Shmuel disagrees with me on this subject, he always has. Even today I won’t give up on a photograph, even if it isn’t perfect. They are irreplaceable.

This clinging to the photographs appears to be a vestige of the distress she had experienced in respect the lack of control over the process of creating photographs and her dependency on the system. The fact that Anna did not discard any photograph and preferred to insert all the photographs in her album indicates that she did not create a hierarchy of selected photographs. She did not prefer to keep only those images which presented an ideal representation of reality for her; a personal visual utopia or a preferred construction of identity. Jo Spence (1995) explains that there are various gazes that help to control, define and mirror identities. These images, which are mirrored to us, construct our identities. By internalizing these gazes we learn to differentiate ourselves from others in terms of our class, gender, race and sexuality. We learn to distinguish the ‘shifting hierarchies within which we are positioned’ (1995, 167). The mother represents the first level of hierarchy: the primary gaze. The family, the second level of hierarchy, secondary to the mother, is positioned within the discourses of society and it in turn sets up its ‘own gaze of definition, power and control’ (1995, 167). In this case there exist multiple gazes in the in the album: there is the gaze of the child towards his mother, the gaze of the mother at the child, the non-iterated gaze of Anna towards kibbutz society and the gaze of the father at the child. The hierarchy seems confused and undefined, allowing room for a variety of representations. This may explain why the album is not clearly an album of her child, or of herself or of her family, since the process of creating a hierarchy of meaning did not occur.

Anna attempted to construct a photo album for herself that would help her cope with the feelings of frustration and loss of control: not only was the photographic craft controlled by others, but the content of the images was also dictated by the social system of the kibbutz which preferred to document kibbutz-related collective events consonant with kibbutz ideology. Anna wished to be the dominant figure her son’s life, and her construction of the visual documentation in the album reflects this desire. She
attempted to create an album which suited her visual self perception of her role as mother, one that was impermeable to the outside world and a form of escapism from the external social pressure. This desire was just as strong as her wish to present her images of her son in the album: to create not only an album of her son but an album of herself as a mother to her son. The process of the construction of the album itself and the ritual of viewing the album allowed Anna to partially re-appropriate the role of the mother to her son N., as she perceived it, albeit in a restricted form. Unfortunately she was only partially successful.; when looking at her forty-year old photos, the memories that well up are not only sweet ones. Although she presents her motherly role forcefully and persuasively through the photographs in the album, the album also brings up painful emotions, to this very day, as she turns its pages.

The Collective Vision of Kibbutz Society
The reading and analysis of Anna's family album should be contextualized with the time frame of the socio-cultural background prevailing on kibbutz in Israel during the period in which they were produced, before the Six Day War, before the days of prosperity and changes in the standard of living in Israel. During the period in question, the habits of kibbutz life were consolidated and enjoyed a long stretch of ideological continuity that was supported institutionally by the government and morally by a broad societal consensus. The public documentary material created on kibbutz was aimed at being consistent with kibbutz ideology, kibbutz members were expected to construct similar personal and ideological responses to the images. (Barromi Perlman 2007, 257). They were joined by a vision which enabled them to endorse the same decoding system for signs and symbols which existed in kibbutz photographs, they cooperated with the collective vision by accepting the decoding system suggested by kibbutz society and by its mechanisms. This, in turn, created a basis for a uniform and communal reading of kibbutz photographs stored in the kibbutz archives, a process which enabled the construction of a utopian vision of kibbutz life. (Barromi Perlman 2011, 15). Thus, image construction and production in kibbutz society was meant to support that society's ideological structure; the intentionality of the visual images was to promote the ideology and visions of utopia. This state of mind at the time left little room for the creation of alternative, personal forms of documentation, such as those Anna created in private.

This question is relevant to the process of construction of meaning in family photographs created on kibbutz. The genre of family snaps and the analysis of this genre have created a body of literature and theory regarding the cultural, economic and social conventions of creating domestic photography and viewing family snaps in Kodak culture in western, democratic societies. My research led me to understand that family snaps, a mass marketing consumer product of capitalist society, 'leisure commodities in the home' (Slater 1995, 132) as we know them today, did not exist on kibbutz during that era. Snapshots which carry an air of spontaneity to them, characterized by bourgeois pleasure, which Kuhn describes as a testimony to "happy beginnings, happy middles" (2003, 401) were not part of the ethos of kibbutz life at that time.

Some public photographs found in kibbutzim or in Anna's album can be perceived as belonging to the genre of snapshots: quick, spontaneous, haphazard images. If a snapshot can be defined as a spontaneous photograph, unpremeditated, with no ulterior motives, then in the case of Anna, the gap lies in the awareness of intentionality. The process of creation of public photographs on kibbutz was controlled, not spontaneous and suffered from a shortage of a democratic
participation process, therefore not pertaining the attributes of a snapshot genre. Social theories regarding the democratizing of the medium of photography on kibbutz do not apply, the development of domestic photography on kibbutz during this era and the 'snapshot aesthetic' (Cobley and Haefner, 2009,126) was not developed. Although some of Anna's photographs may seem to contain a snapshot air or sentimentality, altogether, the cumbersome process of construction, the restriction and challenges turned each and every photograph into a "masterpiece", a unique object, worthy of narration, attention and analysis.

Conclusion
Kibbutz society expected nuclear families to extend and share their personal parental feelings and bonding with their children with the entire community. In turn, it created public forms of documentation of children, which were intended for the community as a whole, particularly in the case of photographs found in the kibbutz archives (Barromi Perlman 2011). The public documentation of children created on kibbutz, may have appeared to be innocent representations, but photographs of children on kibbutz were in fact carriers of kibbutz ideology (Barromi Perlman 2007). The photographs of groups of children in the children's homes and during educational activities were divested of their privacy and re-instated with public emotions and interpretations. This in turn neutralized private meanings and interpretations of images for the sake of the collective ideology.

Anna's album, in its entirety, served as a memorial of her bond with her son and of the pain created by the conflict of emotion and her ambivalent relation to the kibbutz. She was not prepared to relinquish her dilemmas and conflicts of emotions, even though she lacked support from within her family and insisted on iterating her emotions in her narratives. I believe it is fair to say that kibbutz life provided Anna with an impetus to create a powerful visual testimony of her motherhood and emotional bond between mother and son, which would not have necessarily been presented in such a moving and emotional visual form if the parenting had taken place outside kibbutz.

The two poles of interpretation and contextualization of family photographs presented in this article - kibbutz visions of utopia on the one hand, and personal rebellious representations of motherhood and individuality on the other, all deriving from the same core of photographs - contest the notion that family photographs provide bland evidence or mere truthful representations of reality. The notion that photographs depict reality and are therefore trustworthy can only apply and be valid if the viewers, the public audience is in accord with the interpretation of the content of the photographs.

Anna's actions, created in an intuitive, unarticulated mode, far from the public eye, were a personal form of individual rebellion towards the system of kibbutz society (a rebellion which paradoxically was aimed at regaining the traditional role of a mother). One can call her album a form of subversive activity which is a far cry from the perception of the family album’s innocent representation of reality. Anna's choice to prioritize the unity of her biological family to her own needs was painful and her private photo album serves as a testimony to her personal individual pain - but Anna was not alone in her rebellion. Eventually, communal child rearing was abolished in all kibbutzim in Israel; Anna's kibbutz was one of the last kibbutzim in Israel to relinquish the practice. This article focuses on family album but, in fact points to the history in which the combined and diverse efforts of mothers and fathers on kibbutz promoted change.
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http://tnuathaavoda.info/zope/home/6/1140975067/#t000


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\(^{i}\) The study was conducted for my PhD thesis. 12 families were interviewed, according to the criteria:

- Parents between 1948-1967
- In possession of photo albums of their children from the period between 1948 and 1967
- Willing to participate in in-depth interviews
- Willing to give permission to use their material for the purpose of the research
- Of solid mind and lucid regarding their past
- Kibbutz members during the time frame of the interview
- Living presently on kibbutz

\(^{ii}\) A Marxist Zionist youth movement, founded in Europe about 1913, established within the Jewish people, to prepare Jewish youth for kibbutz life in Israel.

\(^{iii}\) These albums were selected because the parents were responsible for the creation of the album, the choice of photographs, appearance of the albums, content of the photographs. The parents of the case studies retained memories as to the process of construction of the photographs in the albums.

\(^{iv}\) Pseudo names.

\(^{v}\) During the time frame of this case study, kibbutz society turned more lenient towards the needs of the individuals and parental needs of biological families. Outward
manifestations of emotion and bonding towards children were common, and parents' time was considered and respected as the families' quality time.

vi Used with permission by S. G., Kibbutz Bet Alfa.

vii Photographs used with permission from Anna and Shmuel.

viii Yuval Danieli (2006) wrote an article based on writings of Avraham Toren, (1988), who wrote a survey on the 'Cultural Institutions, Creators and Fields of Interest in the Kibbutz Movement', for an internal publication of the kibbutz movement. Toren surveyed the major photographers active in the kibbutz movement, the vast majority being male.