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Yael Darr

Discontent from Within: Hidden Dissent Against Communal Upbringing in Kibbutz Children's Literature of the 1940s & 1950s

ABSTRACT

The article analyzes the place of kibbutz children's literature in the internal kibbutz discourse during the fervent 1940s and 1950s. During this era, all kibbutz movements implemented the principle of communal sleeping of children and youths, before the gradual erosion and decline of this fundamental principle of Communal Upbringing began. Kibbutz children's literature of this period has often been regarded as a tool for reinforcing collective kibbutz values, as taught by the various institutions of communal upbringing. The article investigates a parallel role that kibbutz children's literature has played, with subversive undercurrents. I demonstrate that alongside the expected glorification of communal ideology, some texts also evoked deliberations and frustrations—at times even piercing criticism—regarding the principles of communal upbringing, especially the marginalization of the family institution. It presents and analyzes several key children's books published in the 1940s and 1950s by the two kibbutz publishing houses: Kibbutz Meuhad and Sifriyat Poalim, all of which have been published in several editions.

In her essay, "Parents and the Child at the End of the Workday,"[1] educator Berta Hazan, of Kibbutz Mishmar Ha'emek, urged members to read stories to their young children during their daily brief evening encounter, before taking them back to the collective children's home. Hazan (1899–1992) was a prominent formulator of the integrative "subject system"

introduced by Kibbutz Artzi in elementary and secondary school education in the 1940s and 1950s.[2] As an educator, she also felt obliged to intervene intensely during the brief hours that parents and children spent together. Choosing appropriate books and providing guidance for the way they should be read was part of this professional intervention:

> The story must be oriented around young children's immediate surroundings in order to interest and influence them. Only a few stories are to be read at each sitting. [. . .] The search for reading material must be the Collective's responsibility. Age-appropriate reading material should be assembled and offered to all kibbutz members.[3]

Of no less importance than the educative value of the books' content, Hazan believed, the act of reading itself served as a means of protecting the communal upbringing endeavor from harm that parents might potentially cause. In her opinion, the evening encounter between kibbutz children and parents carried the potential ". . . to destroy everything that had been achieved during the day at the children's home and transform this 'evening rest-time' into a source of many educational mistakes."[4]

A decade later, in 1958, educator Miriam Roth (1910–2005) from Kibbutz Sha'ar Hagolan, one of the founders of Kibbutz Artzi's "Theory of the Nursery", also warned parents to abide by the advice provided by professional educators: "Many parents do not know how to handle their children. They have not learned the laws governing a child's development and are not familiar with his needs. It seems that 'parenting', too, is a profession that must be taught"[5] In the spirit of Shmuel Golan, the founding father of communal upbringing in Kibbutz Artzi, Roth claimed that in the absence of professional guidance parents could in fact damage their children and the kibbutz's educational efforts.[6]

Like Hazan, Roth too believed that educators should be responsible for the production and promotion of children's books, as they were for schoolbooks or instruction manuals for teachers.[7] Two years earlier Roth published *The Theory of the Kindergarten,*[8] which laid out guiding principles used by all three kibbutz movements in planning children's homes and their learning environment. It included a list of recommended children's books. In later years, Roth returned to composing reading lists for young children.[9]

Both Hazan and Roth regarded the evening familial encounter as part of the kibbutz's comprehensive system of communal upbringing. During the 1940s and 1950s, the fervent years of communal child rearing in all kibbutz movements, this system encompassed all realms of a child's life in

the kibbutz. It included informal as well as formal institutions, from the moment the child awoke in the morning until he or she was put to bed at night together with her peers in the children's home. Yehezkel Dar describes kibbutz upbringing during the first decades of its existence, until around the 1950s, as one ". . . which integrates, and considers inter-exchangeable, all factors involved in children's upbringing—the family, the peer group, the children's home, the school, and members of the kibbutz community." This took place within a coordinated system of what he calls an "environment of socialization" for the next generation of kibbutzniks.[10]

Books were part of this "environment of socialization". During the 1940s and 1950s, the Israeli Labor Movement owned three publishing houses that invested considerable efforts in literature for adolescents, children, and toddlers, alongside their varied publications for adults. Two of the three houses—Sifriyat Poalim (Kibbutz Artzi) and Kibbutz Meuhad (Kibbutz Meuhad movement)—regarded kibbutz children as their designated public for children's publications. The third publishing house, Am Oved (Mapai Party), appealed from its foundation to a wider public, which included all Labor Movement-affiliated children, both urban and rural. Despite their ideological differences, they openly declared their aim of glorifying the socialist settlement endeavor and of promoting the moral values and practices of communal life.[11]

The article deals with the place of official kibbutz children's literature in the internal kibbutz discourse during the "ardent" years of the 1940s and 1950s, in which the principle of communal sleeping was still widely applied in all kibbutz movements. Rather than regarding kibbutz children's literature solely as a tool for reinforcing collective kibbutz values, I present a more complex picture, in which kibbutz children's literature plays a subversive role parallel to its apparent agenda.

The books will be understood as an internal channel of expression aimed at kibbutz adults and children alike. I argue that, alongside their expected glorification of communal ideology, they also evoked deliberations and frustrations—and at times even piercing criticism—regarding the principles of communal upbringing, especially the marginalization of the family.

No less significant than the existence of these ambivalent, and at times even subversive, messages in the kibbutz's inter-generational discourse is the fact that the publishing houses did not prevent the publication of such books, but rather aided their distribution and public acceptance, which allowed a conflicting discourse from within.[12] Controversies involving communal upbringing appeared in the kibbutz movements' general

meetings and journals of education.[13] I show how these controversies subtly penetrated the inter-generational kibbutz discourse.

LITERARY GENERATIONS: METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

The progress of the ambivalent and critical narrative in kibbutz children's literature is examined here in accordance with the division of generations as accepted in the sociological and historic research about the kibbutz: the "founding generation" (from the origins of kibbutz foundation to the mid-1950s), the "second generation" (from the mid-1950s to the late 1970s), and the "third generation" (from the 1980s onwards). However, the article deals with "literary generations", or "generations of discourse", and focuses on the choices made by the publishers as to the literary representations addressed to kibbutz children in a given time. Therefore, in addition to the biological age of the authors and what Karl Mannheim relates to as their social generation,[14] in this discussion the time in which a work was chosen to first be published is of greater importance for the distinction between generations.

The discussion of kibbutz children's literature belonging to the founding generation, examines the literary products of the founding generation in the kibbutz' early days: people who chose the kibbutz as their lifestyle, raising and educating their children according to the principles of communal upbringing; them, and their peers.

The discussion of kibbutz children's literature belonging to the second generation, on the other hand, will be more comprehensive. In accordance with the generational definition in Rosner, Avant, Cohen, and Leviatan's extensive research of the second generation,[15] it will examine the texts for children produced by the children of the founding generation—those born and raised on the kibbutz. However, this discussion must also include stories for children produced by non-kibbutz members and by writers of the previous generation, if they were published by the kibbutz during this period from around the mid-1950s to the 1980s.

The same scope holds true for an analytic discussion of third generation children's literature written from the 1980s onwards, reflecting the extensive changes in kibbutz society. In the present discussion, I do not deal with the third-generation narrative, since the ideas of communal upbringing had already disintegrated by then.[16]

THE CHILDREN'S STORY OF THE FOUNDING GENERATION

The kibbutz founding generation's literary voice for children was first granted official status in the 1940s, with the establishment of the Labor Movement publishing houses—Kibbutz Meuhad and Sifriyat Poalim in 1939 and Am Oved in 1942. Two of the three publishers—Kibbutz Meuhad and Sifriyat Poalim—explicitly aimed their publications at kibbutz children, their parents, and their educators.

The books were, for the most part, written by educators, members of the communal rural settlements, often at the initiative of the educational committees of the three movements and the Kibbutz Education Committee that combined the three.[17] The authors' own parenthood played no role in the texts; there were no references to a personal relationship between parent and child, such as dedications to children or other such hints. In the 1940s, it was considered much more important that the writers and illustrators be kibbutz members themselves.

The children's story as told by the founding generation usually revolved around the glorification of the kibbutz way of life, depicting kibbutz childhood as the embodiment of heaven on earth. When a city-dwelling child appeared in these stories, his strong yearning for the kibbutz life or at least for a visit to the kibbutz was emphasized. The stories were based on collective adventures from the children's home and the children's society.[18] Parents and their "room" were most often absent from the plots. Readers were often addressed by the plural "you", referring to the generational collective of the peer group.

This coincided with the educational doctrine already developed, at the time, in all kibbutz movements. Undermining the family institution and marginalizing the role played by parents in raising and educating their children was fundamental to the system of communal upbringing that guided the founding fathers and their followers.[19] Various reasons were stipulated for reinforcing this principle: from the evocation of practical and economic concerns about security and hygiene, efficient use of housing structures and solutions for working mothers, through ideological advocacy of the socialist way of life, and culminating in deep Freudian rationalizations (especially in the Artzi movement).[20]

GLIMMERS OF PARENTHOOD AND FAMILY: FREUDIAN SLIPS?

During the 1940s, around a decade before the principle of communal sleeping began to erode in the kibbutz, the family home and parents started making an appearance in kibbutz children's literature. Despite the official status of the children's home and the kibbutz's open spaces as the primary spheres of action, parenthood and the family began to infiltrate into the stories, flickering momentarily as a type of clandestine longing that defied the books' overt message.

The book for young children *Come to Me, Sweet Butterfly* (Meuhad, 1945) provides an excellent example.[21] The book was written by the poet Fanya Bergstein (1908–50) of Gvat (Meuhad) who worked in the field of education and was a youth instructor for Gvat's children in the Working Youth movement. She published poems for young children sporadically in the Histadrut children's periodical *Davar L'yeladim* (under the name Fanya). The idea of writing the book was not her own but rather that of Rachel Bobshover, who at the time served as the coordinator of the Kibbutz Meuhad Education Committee. In an interview conducted in honor of the book's 40th anniversary, printed in the Kibbutz Meuhad Movement's periodical *Yachad*, Yudke Helman, the movement's secretary and one of Bergstein's old friends, recalled that, "In those far-away years, the Education Committee was engaged in providing kibbutz children with original literature, produced in the kibbutz and written by kibbutz members.[22] Fanya willingly took up their offer."[23] The book was illustrated by Elsa Kantor (1922–2000), at the time of Na'an (Meuhad). In the same article, Kantor recollected the circumstances under which she was chosen as the book's illustrator. Here too the initiative came from the inter-kibbutz Education Committee:

> When the Kibbutz Meuhad publishing house was established, one of the kibbutz members at Na'an took a few of my drawings to town to show the publishers. A while later, two members of the Education Committee visited me and suggested that I illustrate the eight rhymes written by Fanya. I was very hesitant, but they succeeded in convincing me to try.[24]

Come to Me, Sweet Butterfly was constructed in accordance with the well-known model of "countryside poems." for young children, still familiar to this day: a collection of images from village life, usually focusing on animals, depicted by pleasant and catchy rhymes that are easy to pronounce and remember.

Come to Me, Sweet Butterfly (Bo Elay Parpar Nehmad)
illustrated by Elsa Kantor, book cover.
Under the guise of "nature", the book portrays time and again a family model that reveals home scenes of mothers and their offspring.

The book's front cover presents us with the illustration accompanying the first poem, the one that lends its title to the entire book. A girl in the great outdoors, her back turned to a house in the distance, is facing a fenced-off plot of land where a butterfly rests on a flower. She is dressed in typical kibbutz attire: shorts and no shoes, inadvertently suggesting that she feels "at home." even when she's outside. The illustration is not spread out on the whole page, but rather is bound by a kind of elliptic frame of color, thereby transforming the open fields inhabited by the girl into a closed, bounded space. This is a kind of "outdoors home", reflecting the traditional kibbutz view that "the limits of the kibbutz are the limits of home".

The "Me" that appears in the book's title defines the narrator, already in the primary stage of the book's cover, as a child who observes kibbutz nature while simultaneously playing an integral part in it herself. This type of anonymous subject, a kind of "every child", conforms to the kibbutz poetics of the times, which established a collective subject and left little to the realm of the private and the unique.[25]

Other illustrations in the book illuminate the fact that kibbutz children wander around the kibbutz on their own, visiting the emblematic

kibbutz stations: the chicken coup, the cowshed, etc. The children portray a free-spirited childhood as they meander through the kibbutz outdoors as if it were their home. The final scene of the book, the only one that takes place inside, shows the peer group of children going to sleep, together, in the children's home, with no adult in sight. Instead, the children are bid good night by "our watchful dog",[26] which is depicted peeking in through the screened window. Thus, the going-to-bed scene, which in western children's literature revolves around a loving parent attending to a child, here reflects just the opposite: it serves to emphasize the independence of the children's society.

However, Fanya Bergstein and Elsa Kantor wove into the book another model of parenthood diametrically opposed to the kibbutz childhood model. Under the guise of nature and namely animals, the book repeatedly shows a family model that reveals "home" scenes of mothers and their offspring. The kibbutz children (and through them, the readers as well) are shown viewing these scenes with pleasure.

Kantor even took care to draw into each of these scenes a fence or wall enclosing the family, providing a protective boundary—a symbol of the role played by the traditional family home. This explains why not only farm animals, but also the butterfly, the pink flower, and the tractor (portrayed in other scenes in the book) appear enclosed within such a fence even when there is no practical need for one; the fence nevertheless outlines the limits of the observed objects' "interior" space. The fact that every illustration simultaneously includes two enclosed spaces: the home space of the observed object, and the illustration itself as enclosed by an elliptical frame of color, emphasizes the sense of interior, of home, without the latter being mentioned. In this way, while formally the book glorifies the independent kibbutz childhood, it simultaneously also brings to light another childhood model, one based on family and home.

We do not have evidence as to whether Bergstein and Kantor were aware of the duality expressed in their book regarding the "correct" family and parenting model that should be represented to the young kibbutz children. Bergstein's diary entries published after her death, however, explicitly express her ambiguous feelings towards this issue in her own life. She wrote of the inner struggle she felt as a parent:

> While with the group, at work, you weren't worried about your child. You knew—his day was good, organized and plentiful, and he spent his time productively, without you. He longed for the evening hour he would spend with you—but still, he went on without you. You were completely immersed

> in your work—yet a distant sound of crying, the crying of a child among the group taking a walk with the caretaker, made you tremble; and you searched, from within the mix of cries and shouts that reached you, for the sound so familiar to your heart: 'maybe it's mine?' [. . .] And then you were struck with shame at your own relief; for it was 'someone else's child' crying.[27]

Her book for young children expresses this ambiguity by implicit artistic means.

This unresolved duality can also be found in the book *What Happened in the Shade of the Oak Tree* (1946) by Rivka Gurfein (1908–83), for young readers (aged seven to nine). Gurfein, of Ein Shemer (Artzi), was a nursery school teacher and an instructor in the youth group, and later taught in the kibbutz's central institution of secondary education. The book, which relates short stories taken from the daily life of children in Ein Shemer, was one of the first books published in the children's series *Ankorim* by Sifriyat Poalim.

The first story, "Joseph's First Sowing",[28] tells of the wonders of the kibbutz and kibbutz childhood: eight-year-old Joseph's first nighttime sowing experience. Gurfein seemingly had no qualms regarding the principles of communal upbringing. At the outset of the story, she depicts an emblematic model of collective parenthood: a kind of hybrid between parent and teacher. Joseph is angry because his parents (who are always busy with work) and his teacher never have time to play with him. He therefore decides to make them worry—to run away from home at night: "I'll hide between the sacks and I'll go out into the fields with the tractor, for the sowing. That way my parents and teacher will surely be a little bit sad."[29] The story goes on to tell of Joseph's nighttime experience of sowing with "Moshe the farmer". At the end of the story, when Joseph returns to the kibbutz, Gurfein abandons the collective parenting model with which she began:

> At the break of dawn, when the farmer and the boy returned home, they left a wide, tilled field behind them. Rain began to fall. Before them lay the kibbutz, still asleep. Only Joseph's pale parents were wide awake, standing beside the gate. Silently, they kissed their son.[30]

This description, like many others found in kibbutz stories, portrays the kibbutz as home: the limits of the kibbutz define the boundaries of home. Nevertheless, the ones waiting at the gate, the entrance to the home, the ones who are, at the end of the day, really worried, are the parents. Thus, despite the marginal role played by the parents throughout the story, they are the ones who say—or rather, refrain from saying—the last word.

And Then It Was Evening (Vayehi Erev) illustrated by Chaim Hausman.
The book's true essence lies in the relationship between father and daughter.

Another example of the implicit undercurrent of family and home can be found in the Israeli classic for children *And Then It Was Evening* (1949) by Fanya Bergstein.[31] Despite the story's setting in a rural and cooperative settlement (moshav) and its heroine's expedition outdoors for an evening walk—in line with the standard Labor Movement model—the book's true essence lies in the relationship between father and daughter, in which discipline, love, and forgiveness play a prominent role: "Then Daddy picked up his kind, kind daughter, forgiving her with a loving embrace. / In the clear night sky, in the blue night sky, the moon showed its smiling face".[32] This is the central emotion, the story's catharsis.

THE SECOND GENERATION'S STORY

The stories produced by the kibbutz's second generation began to appear in Labor Movement children's literature during the mid-1950s, and gained momentum in the 1960s and 1970s. During the years of the dramatic and

painful political split of the kibbutz movements, in the '50s and '60s, the argument regarding family dwelling became one of the central issues in kibbutz educational discourse.[33] At the beginning of this period, communal sleeping was still considered the only acceptable system for the kibbutz, although isolated violations of this principle became more and more common.

When regarding second generation kibbutzniks, one usually relates to the children of the founding generation, the first children born and raised in the kibbutz, who, in time, were to lead the revolution that eventually ended communal sleeping, especially once they became parents themselves. In contrast to the first and third generations, second generation kibbutzniks went through the experience of communal sleeping twice: once as the first babies and children raised in the children's home and the children's society and then again as parents at a time when the children's home and the parents' room were still separated. This double experience of communal sleeping, according to Sylvia Fogiel-Bijaoui, Amiah Lieblich, and others, led to the revolution against it, first advocated mainly by the mothers of the second generation.[34]

However, the first subversive kibbutz literary discourse for children concerning communal upbringing was not mainly led by kibbutzniks, but rather by non-kibbutz writers, most of whom did not come from within the education system, but rather from the field of adult literature. Their texts for children show they were aware of the Labor Movement's educational imperatives and of the literary model approved by kibbutz publishing houses. However, while making use of the approved literary model, some consciously aimed at subverting the idyllic model of kibbutz childhood as a means of introducing a change in values.

Subversion Disguised as Submission

In 1955, Sifriyat Poalim published a children's book that was, at first glance, striking for its artistic quality, its elongated format, and its precise illustrations and typography, *Shmulik Porcupine*.[35] The authors took on the penname "Kush". In fact, the penname hid the initials of two artists, married to each other at the time: the poet T. Karmi (Tsherni Karmi, 1926–94) and the sculptor and painter Shoshana Heiman (1923–2009), who were not kibbutz members. The joining of their names identified them as the joint "parents" of the book. The name of the book's hero, Gadi, was, for insiders, another clue pointing towards their real-life parenthood, the spark that motivated the book—for this is the name of their child.

ShmulikPorcupine (*Shmulikipod*) illustrated by Shoshana Heiman, book cover. The authors took on the penname "Kush", combining the initials of two artists, married at the time. The joining of their names, T. Karmi and Shoshana Heiman, identified them as the "parents" of the book.

The presence of the real Gadi was intentionally emphasized in the book's subtitle: "Happened to: Shmulik / Saw: Gadi / Wrote and Illustrated: Kush / Published by: Sifriyat Poalim". T. Karmi, by means of the name "Kush", disguised his presence as a well-known poet, representing himself instead as a parent. This poetic stance, defining the children's story as a loving present from a parent to a child, was a defiant innovation in kibbutz children's literature. In contrast to his works for adults, Karmi chose to tell the story in prose that obeys, at least formally, the local-realistic model of stories for young children advocated by Kibbutz Artzi at the time. However, subversive messages are interwoven into the story—messages that do not conform to kibbutz ideology.

Following the rules of the realistic kibbutz model, the story implies that Gadi is a kibbutz child, or at least a child who is used to the presence of many other children, and he is isolated, against his will, because he is sick: "I'm sick—I'm lying alone in bed. I don't have any friends, only the donkeys on my pajamas. But I can't talk to them. I'm so sad."[36]

In fact, Gadi's forced isolation provides the framework for a personal, intimate experience of a child within his home, exploring the wonders of being alone. Thus, in opposition to the collective kibbutz perspective, the home is represented as a place in which a rewarding personal adventure can be experienced: a real/fantastic meeting between a sick child and a talking porcupine. The fact that the porcupine is so human—and his name, "Shmulik Porcupine", reinforces this—provides the story with a child-like figure from the "outside" that is not associated with the kibbutz children's society. At the end of the story, Shmulik Porcupine chooses to return to his parents ("Goodbye Shmulik Porcupine"—said Gadi—"Say hi to your mother and father and come back to play with me"), and the parents are even illustrated on the left inner cover at the end of the book, waiting for their young son to return.

Miriam Roth, one of Artzi's leading nursery school teachers at the time, managed to read between the lines. In February 1957 she published a scathing criticism of the book.[37] She protested sharply against the humanization of Shmulik Porcupine or, in other words, against the central literary strategy used by Kush in order to present an alternative model for friendship and family in contrast to the kibbutz model:

> The long name is artificial and presents us with a hybrid human/animal, bringing to light the questionable content of the character [. . .]. This Shmulik—whom I can't under any circumstances bring myself to call 'Shmulik Porcupine'—experiences things that would never happen to a normal porcupine. [. . .]. Normal porcupines wander around at night, hunt mice, eat snakes, and wonderful stories can be told about them. [. . .] Every child understands that Gad didn't actually meet a porcupine who comes to visit sick people in the middle of the day; who eats strawberries while leaving half for Gad (!). [. . .] This tale destroys its good first impression. Why tell a stupid, artificial tale when the most appropriate story is the **truth** [emphasis is in the original] about the beautiful life of the porcupine? Why confuse the children?[38]

Roth ended her essay with bitter criticism aimed at Sifriyat Poalim: "How I would love to recommend a book printed by Sifriyat Poalim! Yet I ask, and ask again: Why doesn't the publishing house conform to the educational principles determined by the Movement? "[39]

Despite this disapproval of the Labor Movement's educational institution, the book was a great commercial success, and in time became one of the most successful books published by Sifriyat Poalim and is considered a classic. In fact, the overwhelming majority of Israeli classics for children

originated in the kibbutz publishing houses during the 1940s and 1950s. In most of them, the rural settlement and the young collective peer group take center stage, serving as the direct, explicit message. Nonetheless, home and family are present as an alternative, hidden chord.

Such is the case in the 1957 children's book *Where is Pluto?,* illustrated by Ari Ron of Meggido (Artzi) and written by the well-known modernist poet and professor of literature Leah Goldberg, a non-kibbutz member (1911–70).[40] Alongside her diverse activities in the field of literature for adults, Goldberg was also highly involved in publishing for children where she served as writer, critic, translator, and substitute editor of *Davar L'yeladim* from its outset. From 1943 she served as editor of "Daf Mishmar L'yeladim", the children's section of the *Mishmar* newspaper (which later became *Al Ha'mishmar*, Mapam's organ). She also wrote sporadically in *Mishmar L'yeladim*, which began its distribution in 1945. With the establishment of Sifriyat Poalim, she served as editor for the children's series "Ankorim". As an editor in Sifriyat Poalim she took upon herself to add her own lyrics to Ron's illustrations of *Where is Pluto?*

The story, as usual, takes place in the kibbutz outdoors; but the presence of home acts as a protective frame for the story, written by Goldberg: "Pluto is a dog from kibbutz Meggido. He has all he needs, meat and a bone. This is fine, but nonetheless—he's tired of sitting so, all alone."[41] These opening lines portray the home from which the adventure begins and to which one gratefully returns at the end of the day. Goldberg thus created a "bourgeois" distinction between home and outdoors, private and public. The home and the parental point of view are, in fact, already present in the book's title. While the book relates the dog's adventures outside, in the kibbutz outdoor spaces, the title *Where is Pluto?* represents an alternative, static point of view of the home from which little Pluto is missing—obviously, a typical parental point of view.

The book, as others analyzed here, was considered at the time another voluntary agent of the collective kibbutz ideology. However, the longevity of the text, the fact that it has survived the test of time and became a classic, even after the demise of kibbutz ideology, can perhaps be explained by these subterranean undercurrents. Home and parenthood, twinkling from beneath the official message, have over time been transformed into the central experience of these stories. In contrast, the kibbutz ideology, which had been taken for granted in the original reading, is barely noticed nowadays.

Contradictory Readings: True Subversion

During the 1950s, kibbutz publishing houses printed even more insurgent children's stories, which gave rise to explicitly contradictory readings. Given that they were published through kibbutz channels, these stories could be read as glorifying the kibbutz way of life and kibbutz childhood, but simultaneously, they offered an alternative reading that defied kibbutz values. An instructive example of this type of story is *Ziva the Doll* by Raphael Eliaz and Peter Mirom (1957) by Meuhad.[42] In this case, criticism of kibbutz principles was so well concealed that the book was received with warm approval by the kibbutz's educational institutions. The editorial of *Mishmar L'yeladim* (children's periodical of Hashomer Hatzair's newspaper, *Al Hamishmar*) praised the book on its publication:

> Do you remember the doll Ziva from the Bubatron? Well, she got tired of acting in the theater all day, so she went for a walk in the outdoors—she made friends at the playground, she met the horse in the barn, she played a bit on the swing, climbed a high tower, wandered around the paths.[43]

The article then described the process involved in the book's production, emphasizing the kibbutz presence as a source of inspiration:

> The artistic photographer, Peter Mirom, followed her everywhere, taking her picture, while the poet Raphael Eliaz composed beautiful rhymes to accompany the breathtaking photographs. Thus the book before us was born, and we warmly recommend it to our young readers.[44]

The book was also very well received by Miriam Roth, who included it in the list of recommended reading for children that she added as an appendix to the second edition of her book *The Theory of the Kindergarten* (1958). Indeed, at first glance, this is truly an "engaged" book, depicting the wonders of the kibbutz by means of a walk through its outdoor spaces. The use of photography, which was quite popular in Labor Movement literature for children at the time, heightened the realistic impact of the scenes.

Three prominent kibbutz icons collaborated in the production of the book. David Ben-Shalom, otherwise known as "Honzo", was the founder, puppet-maker, and operator of Ha'Bubatron—the famous and much-loved puppet theater at Giv'at Hayim (Meuhad). Honzo's puppet "Ziva the Doll" was especially familiar, as she often played the role of narrator in introducing and commenting on various plays.

Another kibbutz icon was the photographer Peter Mirom (1919–) of Hulata. When *Ziva the Doll* was published in 1957, Mirom was already a well-received landscape photographer and was known to the public through his photographic documentation of the draining of Lake Hula during 1951–58.[45] A year earlier, Meuhad published the children's book *Adventures at the Lake*[46] by H. Razi—S. Yizhar (1916–2006) the renowned writer, born in Rehovot, a private rural settlement, serving at the time as a Mapai member of Knesset. Mirom's photographs were the foundation and pretext for that book as well. *Adventures at the Lake*, dedicated to "the children of Hulata with love", followed, in compliance with the kibbutz's realistic story model, the adventures of six children, members of Hulata, at Lake Hula—their own backyard.

The poet and translator Raphael Eliaz (1905–74), who composed the rhymes accompanying Mirom's photographs in *Ziva the Doll*, was not a kibbutz member, but his name was well known to readers of *Mishmar L'yeladim* as the periodical's editor (1946–48), alongside Mordechai Amitai of Sarid (Artzi). Poems, stories, and translations written by Eliaz were published occasionally in the periodical, and also, less frequently, in *Davar L'yeladim*, until the early 1970s. Between 1948 and 1951, Eliaz also edited the literature section of *Al Ha'mishmar*.

The fourth kibbutz icon involved was, of course, the Meuhad publishing house itself. All these collaborators, taken together, provided a sound foundation for a contract-like relationship between the book and its readers, even before it had been read: setting the guidelines for reading the book according to the conventional Labor Movement interpretation, as another story aimed at glorifying the kibbutz way of life. In practice, the book set up, from within the accepted models, the possibility for an alternative interpretation: not only did it abstain from adhering to its "contract", it rather breached it time and time again, presenting the doll's stops at the various emblematic kibbutz stations as an ongoing nightmare.

Already in the opening lines of the book, Eliaz begins with an abrupt violation of one of the kibbutz literature's central poetic principles by establishing a voice of a strikingly "other" subject—a female doll that visits the kibbutz from "outside", observing the kibbutz as a tourist. The doll's grotesque, fragile image—simultaneously repellant and appealing—transplanted by Mirom into the kibbutz reality—emphasizes this otherness.

In contrast with the traditional kibbutz children's story model, we learn that Ziva has not come to the kibbutz because of her longing to visit or live there. True, she runs away from her home and arrives at the kibbutz, like many children described in Labor Movement children's stories, but unlike

Ziva the Doll (*Ha'Buba Ziva*), photographs by Peter Mirom, book cover. The doll's grotesque, fragile image—simultaneously repellant and appealing—transplanted into the kibbutz reality, emphasizes her "otherness".

them, she is running away from a lover's quarrel: "One day he teased me / [. . .] I tossed and turned all night, / I moaned and groaned. / The next day I woke up / and ran away from home. " Needless to say, romantic love, even between dolls, was not among the highly valued subjects of kibbutz discourse, especially not in its children's literature.

The story deviates conspicuously from the traditional kibbutz children's story model in other ways too. Instead of a pleasant trip through the emblematic kibbutz scenes, the story describes a series of terrifying incidents, dangers, and accidents that the heroine undergoes. Because she is a doll, she doesn't actually get hurt, but the ordeal brings to the surface disturbing undercurrents regarding the kibbutz environment and its hostility towards "outsider" children.

Ziva's visit to the kibbutz begins with a frightening encounter that she xperiences as an assault. At this point, the reader interprets the incident forgivingly, as a mistake made by a stranger: "Suddenly, oh me, oh my! / Two demons pounced, angry and sly. / Who are they? What are they? Oh my goodness, / Not angry demons, just little kittens." These two "demons" herald her arrival at the kibbutz: "You've arrived at the kibbutz, little young thing, / don't worry, this isn't a trap".

Ziva answers the kittens' greeting with an enthusiastic, perhaps even suspiciously over-enthusiastic proclamation of admiration:

> At the kibbutz? Wonder of wonders!
> Here I'll stay, I'll be a worker,
> Gladly I'll toil and sweat
> and I'll earn my loaf of bread.
>
> Here one must hitch up one's trousers,
> here one's hands must be strong and sound,
> and so diligently I began
> to take care of the playground

This reaction can be interpreted at face value, or it can be taken as an amusing parody of Labor Movement pioneer spirit. This is the moment at which the story opens two optional readings that exclude each other.

The next scene, the one described in *Mishmar L'yeladim* as a pleasant encounter with the kibbutz children, ends with Ziva's narrow escape:

> Quickly they approached
> Uri, Gad and Eliyahu.
> They circled around me, they greeted me,
> they lifted me up into the air.
>
> I was passed from hand to hand
> and I almost, almost broke.
> When at last I was rid of them
> I wasn't sorry, not a stroke.

In another scene, in which the doll climbs up a high tower, an actual accident is portrayed, as she falls headlong to the ground. Then a "miracle" occurs. The doll, lying face-down on the grass, is saved by the kibbutz

"mother"—the child carer: "A warm hand picked me up, / A hand as soft as mother's".. This merciful pseudo-mother's speech is also worth reading as a parody: "She told me: 'It's nothing!' / If you fall, get up, get on with your day. / Rest a bit, take a deep breath, / Sit for a while on the hay!" The correlating photograph shows the doll hanging from a thread attached to a heavily-laden hay wagon.

The ordeal, however, does not end here. Ziva relates her next stop, a visit to the ducks: "They received me like I was a monster / They screamed and cried. / They pounced on me / trying to peck out my eyes". No wonder that the following day she declares: "I'm tired of being a stranger", and makes her way homeward, turning her back on the kibbutz. At the end of the book, as a form of lip service, the story notes how the kibbutz children take leave of her warmly and promise her they will meet again at the "Bubatron". The very last words of the story, however, are given over to the lovers as they are reunited back at home. In stark contrast to the traditional kibbutz story model, the happy ending occurs beyond the borders of the kibbutz.

Another example of a story revolving around romantic love, entirely incompatible with the kibbutz model, appears in a book published by Sifriyat Poalim three years later: *Tapu and Puza*, by S. Yizhar.[47] Here too, like the book *Ziva the Doll*, the experience of romantic love is estranged by means of non-human objects. This time the lovers are two oranges, Tapu and Puza (in Hebrew, two parts of the word signifying "orange"—*tapuz*), who have grown together on the same branch and eventually fall in love. After a very romantic description of their growing love, the oranges are separated on the assembly line, while being packaged. Their tragic cry of loss resonates heartbreakingly throughout the last lines:

> 'Hear, O hear me!' cried the lonely orange. 'No, don't close the lid. No, don't close it, no! There must be some mistake. I should be over there! I don't belong here, no. I'm hers, I am! We're together! I gave her my word! We're from the same branch, from the same tree! We love each other, we do! Don't separate us!' (no page numbers).

Thus the book, apparently aimed at glorifying agriculture production (orchard crops were the most profitable agricultural product in Israeli export at the time), evolves into a tragedy in which the mechanical efficiency of the production line destroys "nature" and leads to personal tragedy.

CONCLUSION

Prominent educators of the kibbutz movements during the 1940s and 1950s declared the official role of children's literature to serve as an educative tool that should be harnessed within an all-encompassing system of communal upbringing. Yet kibbutz children's literature also served as an outlet for a parallel, subterranean education. Its poetic characteristics, distinguishing it from other modes of expression, provided the means through which children's stories could offer—alongside the collective ideology—an alternative perspective about communal sleeping, family, and home.

We have seen how during the years in which the communal childhood experience was considered the best option for raising a "corrected" generation—a way to leave behind complexes and weaknesses—kibbutz children's literature gave public voice to both the educational consensus and the inner conflicts evoked by the demands of communal upbringing.

Both voices, simultaneous and unresolved, are present in kibbutz children's stories of the 1940s. The kibbutzniks of the first generation, the founding generation, who formulated and promoted the doctrine of communal upbringing, also expressed the emotional conflicts that this doctrine elicited. This generation evoked, apparently unintentionally, the core family and parental experience alongside the communal childhood and the kibbutz way of life.

We have seen that some kibbutz publications of the second-generation went a step further. Writers, most of them not kibbutz members, initiated a process of subtle subversion, in which they undermined the communal kibbutz values through use of various literary strategies that allowed them to rebel, between the lines, against the prevalent kibbutz childhood model. While applying accepted story templates, these texts also protested against the principles of communal sleeping and the negation of the nuclear family.

These expressions of ambivalence and criticism regarding the principle of communal upbringing—both implicit and explicit—nourished the kibbutz children born and raised by the system. A handful of writers and artists of this generation came together years later, forming a wave of retrospective criticism around which public discourse in Israel has revolved throughout the last two decades. In short stories, novels, exhibitions, films, plays, and television shows, ex-kibbutz members express bitter public criticism of their kibbutz childhood, bringing to the surface the heavy emotional price they have paid as a result of communal upbringing.

In the field of literature, it is impossible not to mention one of the first and most disturbing retroactive critiques—the 1976 short story by Dalia

Rabikovitz, "The Summer Vacation Tribunal",[48] and the novel *Mourning* by Avraham Balaban.[49] In the field of the plastic arts, one exhibition especially worthy of attention is the joint exhibit *Communal Sleeping,* which included works created by kibbutz-raised artists (most of whom had left the kibbutz in adulthood), curated by Tali Tamir. The exhibition took place at the Helena Rubinstein Pavilion in Tel-Aviv in 2005 and incited heated discourse on the subject. In the field of cinema, two films from the past decade have left a lasting mark and evoked much public discussion: *Crazy Earth* by Dror Shaul (2006) and *Children of the Sun*, Ran Tal's documentary film, which was screened in 2008.

The mainstream began to accept the place of the critical discourse of "the sons" of communal upbringing parallel to widespread abandonment of the kibbutz and its system, and the final move of all kibbutzim from communal sleeping to family dwelling in the early 1990s. As demonstrated, it was the hesitant and ambivalent voice of the earlier generations who lit the first sparks of this critical discourse from within.

Notes

1. My thanks to Kibbutz Meuhad and Sifriyat Poalim for permitting the use of relevant illustrations in this article.

2. Berta Hazan, "Parents and the Child at the End of the Workday," in *Communal Upbringing: The Collective Education of Infants*, ed. Frida Katz and Menahem Garson (Merhaviya, 1947), 32–40 [Hebrew].

3. For more on Hazan's position in Kibbutz Artzi's education system, see Yuval Dror, *The History of Kibbutz Education: Practice into Theory* (Bern, New York, Oxford, 2001), 144–8.

4. Hazan, "Parents and the Child at the End of the Workday," *Communal Upbringing: The Collective Education of Infants,* 37–8.

5. *Ibid.*, 34. All translations from Hebrew are the author's.

6. Miriam Roth, *The Child and You* (Merchavia, 1958), 11; "Working with Parent," in *The Theory of the Kindergarten* (Merhavia, 1956), 208–10 [both in Hebrew].

7. For more on the educational doctrine of Shmuel Golan (1901–60) and other founding fathers, see Dror, *The History of Kibbutz Education,* 41–84. On the marginalization of the role played by family in the upbringing of kibbutz children until around the mid-fifties, see Yehezkel Dar, "Changing Identity of Kibbutz Upbringing," in *Education in the Changing Kibbutz: Sociological and Psychological Perspectives,* ed. Yehezkel Dar (Jerusalem, 1998), 17–41 [Hebrew].

8. Roth, *The Child and You,* 94–5.

9. Roth, *The Theory of the Kindergarten*.

10. Miriam Roth, *Literature for Young Children* (Tel-Aviv, 1977), and *Literary Collection for the Preschool Years and First Steps in Reading: Essays* (Oranim, 1984) [Hebrew]. From the 1970s onwards, she began writing her own stories for young children, some of which have become benchmark classics of Israeli culture.

11. Dar "Changing Identity of Kibbutz Upbringing," 17–41. Dar also designates the 1950s as the period in which the Kibbutz Utopian ideology started to erode, and gradually brought change in the education system and in youngsters' total way of life. See Yehezkel Dar, "Social Generations among Kibbutz Youth, 1957–1987," in *The Transformation of Collective Education in the Kibbutz: The end of Utopia?* ed. Werner Fölling and Maria Fölling-Albers (New York, 1999), 145–70.

12. See Tmira Arbel, "The Poetics of 'Settlement Literature' for Children in the 1930s and its Ideological Manifestations" (M.A. thesis, Tel-Aviv University, 1994); Yael Darr-Klein, "Legends of an Evolving Nation: Writing for Children and Youth, Written and Edited by Bracha Habbas during the Years 1933–1940" (M.A. thesis, Tel-Aviv University, 1997); and *Called Away From Our School-Desks: The Yishuv in the Shadow of the Holocaust and in Anticipation of Statehood in Children's Literature of Eretz Israel, 1939–1948* (Jerusalem, 2006) [all in Hebrew].

13. The phrase "inter-generational discourse" refers to the body of texts that one generation passes on to the next. This obviously includes children's books written by adults and addressed, at least formally, to an audience of children.

14. See Dror, *The History of Kibbutz Education,* 85–105.

15. Karl Mannheim, "The Problem of Generations," in *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge* (Oxford, 1952), 276–321.

16. See Menachem Rosner, Yitzhak Ben-David, Alexander Avant, Neni Cohen, and Uri Leviatan, *The Second Generation: Continuity and Change in the Kibbutz* (New York, 1990).

17. At the brink of the 1960s, isolated kibbutzim belonging to the Ihud Hakvutzot Ve'hakibbutzim Movement were granted permission to give up communal sleeping in favor of Family Dwelling. In 1967 the movement declared that both systems were legitimate, but that communal sleeping was preferable. Due to internal pressure, Kibbutz Meuhad followed the Ihud in 1975. Artzi remained faithful to communal sleeping until 1991. See Henry Near, *The Kibbutz Movement: A History* (Jerusalem, Tel-Aviv, Sede-Boker, 2008), 528–9 [Hebrew].

18. For more on the vast changes in kibbutz society during the last two decades of the 20th century see Eliezer Ben-Rafael, *Crisis and Transformation: The Kibbutz at Century's End* (New York, 1997) and "The Kibbutz beyond Utopia," in *The Transformation of Collective Education in the Kibbutz,* 31–49.

19. For more on the different education committees, see Dror, *The History of Kibbutz Education,* 279–85.

20. The term "children's society" had a double meaning: a non-formal organization of the peer group, and the formal Artzi elementary school. Here I refer to the first.

21. Yuval Dror points to the three most prominent "founding fathers" of kibbutz upbringing who were exceedingly influential from the 1930s through the 1950s: Shmuel Golan (1901–60) [Mishmar Ha'emek, Hashomer Hatzair]; Mordechai Segal (1903–91) [Kfar Giladi, Ihud]; and Yehuda Ron-Polani (1891–1983) [Ramat Yohanan, Ihud]. He names their direct followers who formulated the theory of Communal Upbringing: Arnon Yosef, Menachem Garson, and Gideon Levin (Artzi), in *The History of Kibbutz Education,* 100–3.

22. See Ora Aviad, Marinus Van Isendorn, Avraham Sagi, and Carlo Svengal, "Return to the Children of Dreams: 70 Years of Communal Upbringing for Young Children," in *Changing Education in the Kibbutz*, 61–83, and Emanuel Berman, "Communal Upbringing in the Kibbutz—The Allure and Risks of Psychoanalytic Utopianism," *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child* 43 (1988), 319–35.

23. Fanya Bergstein, *Come to Me, Sweet Butterfly* (Tel-Aviv, 1945) [Hebrew].

24. Ora Armoni, "The Sweet Butterfly Turns Forty," *Yachad* 145 (1985), 10–1 [Hebrew].

25. *Ibid.*, 11.

26. *Idem.*

27. For the dominance of the collective subject in kibbutz literature for adults during the first three decades, see Shula Keshet, *Underground Soul: Ideological Literature: The Case of the Early Kibbutz Novel* (Tel-Aviv, 1995) [Hebrew].

28. No page numbers in original.

29. Fanya Bergstein, *Notes* (Tel-Aviv, 1952), 121 [Hebrew].

30. Rivka Gurfein, "Joseph's First Sowing," in *What Happened in the Shade of the Oak Tree* (Tel-Aviv, 1946), 3–8 [Hebrew].

31. *Ibid.*, 4.

32. *Ibid.*, 8.

33. Fanya Bergstein, *And Then It Was Evening* (Tel-Aviv, 1949) [Hebrew].

34. No page numbers in original.

35. Dror, *The History of Kibbutz Education: Practice into Theory,* 66–84.

36. Sylvia Fogiel-Bijaoui, "Motherhood and Revolution: The Case of Kibbutz Women, 1910–1948," in *Pioneers and Homemakers: Jewish Women in Pre-State Israeli Society*, ed. Deborah Bernstein (New York, 1992), 211–33, and Amiah Lieblich, "The Feminine Revolution, the Masculine Revolution and Communal Sleeping," in *Reciprocal Relations between the Family and the Kibbutz, a Dynamic Process* (Oranim, 2007), 7–14 [Hebrew].

37. Kush (T. Carmi and Shoshana Heiman), *Shmulik Porcupine* (Tel-Aviv, 1955) [Hebrew].

38. No page numbers in original.

39. Miriam Roth, "From Here to There," in *Brochure for Educators of Young Children. The Education Department of Kibbutz Artzi, Nursery School Division* (Tel-Aviv, 1957), 33–4 [Hebrew].

40. *Ibid.*, 34.

41. *Idem.*

42. Leah Goldberg, *Where is Pluto?* (Tel-Aviv, 1957) [Hebrew].
43. No page numbers in original.
44. Raphael Eliaz, *Ziva the Doll* (Tel-Aviv, 1958) [Hebrew].
45. Anonymous, *Mishmar L'yeladim,* xiii.15 (1957), 227 [Hebrew].
46. *Idem.*
47. Photographs of the series "Song of a Dying Lake" were exhibited by the Tel-Aviv Museum of Art. Peter Mirom's 1960 book, *Song of the Dying Lake*, which included a selection of his original photographs, was very successful and reprinted in several subsequent editions.
48. H. Razi (S. Yizhar), *Adventure in a Lake* (Tel-Aviv, 1957) [Hebrew].
49. S. Yizhar, *Tapu and Puza* (Tel-Aviv, 1960) [Hebrew].
50. Dalia Rabikovitz, "The Summer Vacation Tribunal," in *Death in the Family* (Tel-Aviv, 1976), 34–66 [Hebrew].
51. Avraham Balaban, *Mourning* (Tel-Aviv, 2000) [Hebrew].