

Literary analysis of "where the jackals howl" essay sample



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Amoz Oz’s “ Where the Jackals Howl” is short story illustrating the plight of young female in a kibbutz and in a struggle with herself as well as an older member in the kibbutz. At the story’s heart is a masterful depiction of the protagonist which at times seems to be Galila as well as Matityahu Damkov and other times Matityahu being the antagonist. Galila seems to fall for the bait of art supplies as Matityahu draws her to his room to take advantage of her. Amoz Oz achieves the greater theme of “ entrapment” through the psychological social realism meaning characters in fictional narratives have realistic or complex emotional and intellectual depth including perhaps subconscious urges and fear they are not aware of. (superglossary. com) A brief inspection will reveal how “ Where the Jackals Howl” by Amoz Oz achieves it inspiring effect. Amoz’ portrayal of the kibbutz includes the land between Israeli and Palestinians, illegitimacy and Jewish life. Giving his reasoning of strong urges and subterranean passions, which illustrates his hidden feelings. The khamsin-the hot winds, seemed to effect everyone in the community of the kibbutz. It was everything to them that the khamsin was leaving and the cool winds were coming in.

The cool winds brought darkness and meant that seasons were changing and Autumn was coming near. Everyone came out to bask in the winds and the darkness that was coming except for Sashka who would see this as time to stay in his room and write about the problems in the kibbutz. As the darkness slowly creeps in and seems to consume everything within it from the outward land in, the elders sit and enjoy till it was time to go to the

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dining hall. That is where they would all sit around and discuss what has happened and what is to happen. As the narrator describes his concentric link between his description of the landscape as circles he speaks of them as the outside circles being " The Autumn darkness".

The inner circle being the circle of lights and the innermost, the illuminated heart of their world (pg486). It could also be described as the concentric circles to the sealed kibbutz circle. The inner circle, represents the physical, the country, the kibbutz society, inner family and their personal circle. The darkness, which represents the political aspect of the land being taken over by the Palestinians and them encroaching can be seen as the outside circle. The darkness represent as well all the grim events that play themselves out in the backyard of the community, and behind closed doors of their homes and represents the innermost circle. At some point in time, we all feel like our world is getting swallowed up by the darkness. If its not in our hearts, but in our minds, then to feel it in our own community.

Within the community of the Kibbutz there is a young girl named Galila, who is torn on who she should believe is her father. At the beginning of the story it already says the Galila is the daughter of Sashka and at the end a man named Matityahu Damkov tells her he is her father. Who is she to believe? When she was a young girl she had a fascination watching Damkov work with the horses. She couldn't keep her eyes off of him while she would chew on her hair. As she grew older her hatred grew to disgust and she despised him, but as a young lady she grew to be materialistic and greedy in a sense that it didn't matter how much she didn't like Matityahu Damkov she wanted the art supplies he told her he had bought just for her only. While she

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showered she even asked herself " What does Matityahu Damkov want of me?" (pg482) How could she be so naive? With Matityahu asking her to his room and buying art supplies and canvas just for her it was obvious of his hidden lust for her. Now she still decides to go to his room despite the feeling she has and he convinces her to stay and drink with him, telling her she will get the art supplies soon.

He tells her a story of when he worked with the horses which at first fascinates her and takes her back to when she was younger. He tells her a story of how he was shown how to get what he calls a " stupid horse"(pg488) drunk and mad and ready to mate. He would have a mare pass so it would get the scent and get really mad. That was when he knew the horse was ready to pounce. He described the blood in the eyes and anger and shortness of breath just as Damkov did to Galila. He brought her by baiting her with the art supplies and then giving her something to drink. He would have her relax and talk to her till he felt ready.

As she relaxed and laid on his bed looking asleep he laid next to her. After a little time he started to caress her trying to softly and passionately wake here telling her he wanted to run away with her, but as she woke buttoning up her skirt, (which would give give you the assumption he had raped her) she stated " This isn't what I want, I didn't want to come here at all. You're taking advantage of me and doing things to me I don't want and saying all kinds of things because you're mad and everyone knows you're mad ask anyone you like." (pg491) He would get mad and have blood in his eyes and breath deep just as the horse. If she truly felt that way why did she go? She

as many young females today do as they want and to get what they want
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and consequences mean nothing till they are confronted with the danger and bad choices they made. As Galila stands in his room Matityahu looks at her and thinks to himself " She's so young, she's a little girl, slender and spoiled. I'm going to smash her to pieces. Slowly"(pg490)

If he believes he is her father why would he want to hurt her not physically but mentally and emotionally? Why would he of needed to bait her with the supplies to get her to his room? What kind of man would look at a female they believe to be their daughter and and rape her and want to hurt her? These are questions we still ask ourselves today regarding child molestation. He tells her he is her father and she doesn't believe and he tells her to blame her mother if she wants to be mad not at him. Could that mean that he at one time was with her mother or perhaps raped her as well since he would always tell Galila that she was just like her mother. When Matityahu speaks to Tanya, who is the mother of Galila, they speak with haste and unkindness in their voices but we may never know what truly happened. Matityahu laughs at Galila and tells her he doesn't care who's daughter she is, Sashka's or Ben-Gurion's. (pg492)

In the story it says that when Matityahu laid on his bed he summoned a dream. It say's " quiet dreams and wild drams" (pg490) could this be a misprint? Could they be her dreams with Damkov acting as a lens, noise, clamor, smells of the kibbutz, dancing Jackals howl inside her head. And then is her madness only a metaphor for the madness of trying to claim back the desert. Trying to make the land of Israel in the land- scape of Arab? Oz's political view of anti-settlement and entrapment.