

Uncanny Planes of Menace in Heather Raffo's *9 Parts of Desire*

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Abstract

The primary purpose of this paper is to explore the uncanny planes of menace in Heather Raffo's play, *9 Parts of Desire*. *9 Parts of Desire* (2006) is regarded as one of the most recognizable plays that could speak out Iraqi women suffering, both before and after the second Gulf War. In this play, there is a vast spectrum of images of 'uncanniness', which Sigmund Freud explicated in his 1955 article "The Uncanny". Giving literary analysis to Raffo's play, this paper will bring into light its uncanny feeling of menace, with reference to Freud's definition of 'the uncanny'. To Freud the uncanny is "undoubtedly related to what is frightening—to what arouses dread and horror; ...[and] coincides with what excites fear in general" (1955, p. 219). *9 Parts of Desire* portrays the narratives of 9 Iraqi women, who speak out their sense of uncanny menace under the devastation of war. The paper will explore how Raffo's style of writing was able to voice the uncanny sense menace of these women. Through her employment of monologues and intense soliloquy in the play, Raffo managed to produce the uncanny effect by making these women articulate their persistent feeling of menace and terror. Focusing more on the effects of war, feelings of repression, repulsion and distress in the play, Raffo captures the fearful menace, that extremely shocks the audience, and awakens the uncanny.

Keywords: 9 Parts of Desire, Gulf war, Iraqis' dilemma, Iraqi women, Raffo

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