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فشل بزوغ الوعي الإنسانوي في مسرحية قفص للكاتبة جمانة حدّاد

د. أماني العيد*

الملخص

تنظرُ هذه الورقة البحثيّة التي تحملُ عنوان – فشل بزوغ الوعي الإنسانوي في مسرحيّة قفص للكاتبة جمانة حدّاد – في فشل صعود الإنسانويّة في ظل كل من البطريركيّة والمَوجة الثانية للحركة النّسوية أو ما يُعرف باسم النسويّة الراديكاليّة. الإنسانويّة هي مشروع الأديبة جمانة حدّاد نحو بناء عالمٍ أفضل يليقُ بإنسانيّتنا جميعاً للوصول إلى صَحوة جَماعيّة وذلك بالتّفوق على التّربية والنّظم الاجتماعيّة والدينيّة السّائدة وبالخروج من قفص الأدوار الجندريّة النمطيّة. في قفص (2014) نصطدمُ بواقع النظام الأبوي البطريركي من جهة وبواقع النَّسويّة الراديكاليّة من جهة أخرى حيثُ يفشلُ الأخيران في وضع الإنسانويّة على رأس أولويّاتهما. بدلاً من ذلك تعتمدُ هويّةُ وبنية وأجنّدة كلٍّ منهما على إدامة التحيّز الجنسي والوصم والإيذاء لتزجَّ بنا داخل أقفاص الجنس والجندر والدّين والسّياسة. ومن هنا جاء عنوان المَسرحيّة "قفص" لفضح هذه المُمارسات وكشف السّتار عن الأدلجة التي يتعرَّض لها ويُعاني منها كل من النّساء والرّجال.

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The Failure of the Rise of the Humane in Joumana Haddad's Kafas

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Abstract

This research examines the failure of the rise of the humane in Joumana Haddad's play Kafas (Cages 2014) under patriarchy and second-wave feminism or what is known as radical feminism. The humane, Haddad's project for a better world, requires humans to rise above their social and religious upbringing and to break free from conventional gender roles. In Kafas, both patriarchy and radical feminism fail to put the humane at the fore front of their creed and methods of operation. Instead, their very identity, agenda, and structure rely on the perpetuation of sexism, stigmatization, and victimization. Hence, the title of the play "Kafas" came to expose these practices and the indoctrination that women and men are subjugated to and suffer from.

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Joumana Haddad's play Kafas (Cages in English) examines the victim mentality, gender roles, and the relationship between victim and victimizer under oppressive regimes and radical movements. The play was written in 2014 in Arabic and was first performed in 2016 on Metro Madina Theatre in Beirut. The Kafas copy has two versions followed by a poem; the first version is written in Lebanese slang and the other is in standard Arabic. Each version has two scenes: the first scene shows one anonymous man and five women – Lama (spinster), Zeina (veiled), Hiba (prostitute), Yara (lesbian), and Abeer (obese). The five women in their cages confess and share stories of exploitation, marginalization, and victimization. In this scene, they pour their hearts out to share with the audience what it feels like to live in a patriarchal society. The man's identity and his relationship with the women is not revealed; he could be a relative, a jailor, a judge, a doctor or even society. The second scene takes place in a living room and shows a family that consists of a husband, a wife and their daughter. The husband is veiled and the women become the new matriarchs who have full authority over their bodies and their men. In Kafas, Haddad invites her audience on a journey to view two models of the same oppression - patriarchy and radical feminism - in order for them to compare and contrast, investigate and question gender inequality, extremism, and stigmatization. It is important to note that Haddad does not refer to these terms directly in Kafas, but their theories and practices are clearly exposed and criticized. She does so as she constructs the parallel worlds of scene one and two giving particular attention to conventional gender roles under patriarchy and the reversal of these roles under radical feminism. Thus, she leads her audience to a place where victim and victimizer cannot be

distinguished. By means of this comparison, Haddad also invites her audience to examine the linguistic as well as the thematic features of both scenes. Her interest in gender equality and human rights stems from having a large repertoire in the fields of literature and political activism.

The Murderer of Scheherazade

Joumana Haddad born in 1970 is a prolific Lebanese writer, human rights activist, and editor at "An-Nahar" newspaper. Haddad has tried her hand at a wide range of genres including poetry, fiction, and drama. She began her career by writing poetry at a very young age and she identifies herself as a poet. Her name is well-connected to "Jasad" (meaning body in Arabic) a 2008 cultural quarterly magazine she founded to break taboos about the body, agency and sexuality believing that "eroticism is the pulse of life" (Haddad, Eroticism). By founding Jasad, Haddad hoped to create a possibility for change, a counter-wave against the suppression and manipulation of sexuality by the clergy of Abrahamic religions, their followers, and political allies. The magazine publications, however, came to an end due to many direct and indirect reasons including death threats and lack of financial support (Haddad, Female Solidarity). Jasad would have been an important platform for freedom of expression were it able to persist and stand in the face of religious extremism and patriarchal guardianship; nevertheless, this was not the end of battle for Haddad. In 2010, she wrote her famous English essay collection I killed Scheherazade in which she announced the murder of the veiled and submissive female-figure Scheherazade and the birth of the New Woman Haddad. The latter is a nonconformist thinker who continues to call for freedom of speech and equality of the sexes in the Arab world.

She dreams of a secular world where Jews, Christians, and Muslims; religious and nonreligious alike are defined by their citizenship rather than by the religious heritage they have passively inherited from their parents and grandparents. Thus, she criticizes what she calls "a culture of confessionalism" that poisons the minds of the youth in the Arab world making them believe they are their religious sects (Haddad, The Best). According to Haddad, this cult/ure waters the seeds of sectarianism prioritizing religious division and extremism over national belonging and citizenship (The Best).

In 2012, her English essay Superman is an Arab marks her personal genesis bearing witness to the suffering of others and narrating Haddad's story of rebirth from the quagmires of religious paternalism and patriarchal guardianship. Then in 2015, she wrote The Third Sex - an English essay in which she argues that the race we should strive to belong to is humanism or the humane as an alternative to the superman or the macho man. She views the humane as an alternative because it liberates us from the restrictions of gender, religious sects, political classifications, age, and sexual orientations. Unlike the superman, the humane "isn't ashamed to show his vulnerability. Superman is a consequence of an educational problem: we're educated to fill certain roles, even if they're unnatural" (Haddad, The Hypocrisy). Hence, her post-feminist stance should not come as a surprise but should be seen as a confirmation of a more inclusive approach vis-à-vis a world shaped and ruled by oppressive patriarchal values. In her books and interviews, Haddad refers to post-feminism (third-wave feminism of the 1990s) as an outlet from patriarchy and radical feminism towards the awakening of the humane and the birth of possibilities

beyond stereotypes, binary oppositions, sexism, and conventional gender roles (Haddad, Superman 164-165). The history of women's movement has gone through so many changes since its early beginnings in the late nineteenth century. One of its critical moments was the formation of second-wave feminism or radical feminism of the 1960s and 70s which was an aggressive and exclusive view of women's movement. This phase of feminism views women's liberation in opposition to men's, and words like "women's solidarity" or "sisterhood" had a strong resonance for them (Rivkin and Ryan 766). However, women's struggle under post-feminism has taken on a new perspective not limited to or by sexual, ethnic and national boundaries. The individual – both man and woman - has become their point of reference in order to escape from the monolateral language of either/or into the pluralism of both/and.

Together with Haddad's generation of writers form, according to Miriam Cooke and Lucie Knight, "the Beirut Decentrists" (Knight 12). The latter share "similar literary characteristics and […] wrote during and about [the Lebanese civil] war" such as "Ghada al-Samman, Hanan al-Shaykh and Etel Adnan among others" (Knight 12). In 2017, Haddad was selected as one of the most powerful and influential women in the Arab world by Arabian Business Magazine. Her most recent work is her first 2018 novel The Seamstress' Daughter published in English and translated into Arabic in 2019. It is also known as The Book of Queens in which she retells the story of her Armenian ancestors as they endured persecution, sought asylum, and were burdened by witnessing and the survivor's guilt. Haddad has not limited herself to books and magazines, but she also ran for the 2018 elections in the Lebanese

Parliament (Haddad, Doomed). This unsuccessful round, however, has pushed her to continue the march to speak up for the marginalized particularly women and LGBT. Also, her TV shows until today are platforms for the Arab youth's inspirations of a just world where national, cultural, and religious barriers melt for the rise of equality, liberty, and humanity. Haddad has always been criticized for her controversial writing and outspokenness about sexism, confessionalism, corruption, and discrimination in Lebanon and the Arab world.

Kafas: Looking Beyond Labels

Against this intellectual, cultural and political background, Kafas came as a call for today's women and men to flee from the cage(s) of male chauvinism, extremist feminism, discrimination, and patriarchal myths about virginity, honour, and sexual perversion. In Kafas (scene one), Haddad takes us on a journey to look at the roots of the oppression facing women such as sexual exploitation, gender inequality, and bullying, as well as social norms and traditions. The American Psychological Association (APA) defines gender as "the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for boys and men or girls and women. These influence the ways people act, interact, and feel about themselves" (About Transgender 1). Such constructed roles have hindered the interaction and the communication between men and women associating one sex with the power to conquer, explore, and exploit whereas silence, passivity, nurture, and nature become women's lot. The women in Haddad's play (scene one) clearly state their opposition to these binary oppositions because such labels and

classifications justify gender imbalance and abuse of power as well as perpetuate oppression and violence against women.

Scene one deals with five different labels or stigmas – spinster/singlehood, (in)visibility, homosexuality/heterosexuality, prostitution/marriage, and obesity - that define women's roles, identity, and body regardless of their age, class, or religion. For example, the sixty-six-year-old Lama is burdened by being a spinster, a label that patriarchal society gives to single women as a sign of emotional and sexual lack. She was raised to believe that having a husband is more important than receiving education. Therefore, she kept waiting for the prince who never arrived and she became her stigma 'a spinster'. The latter symbolizes patriarchy's disrespect for the single women who choose themselves over social or religious obligations or even fail to fulfil the 'sacred' mission of becoming a wife and a mother. Being single is viewed as a revolt that must be aborted and, as a result, women like Lama are bullied, stigmatized, and marginalized to remind them of their status in society. They are worthless without a husband whether they are educated or not because a woman's worth in patriarchal societies is always defined in relation to a man (husband or father) and her productivity is limited to her fertility. "Women [according to patriarchy] belong to the family or the group; not to themselves" (De Beauvoir, Women 18). Thus, a single woman becomes a threat to society and the 'holy' institution of marriage because her very existence on her own questions the very purpose of reproduction and the continuity of Homo sapiens. In other words, the stigmatization "spinster" is the mark of patriarchal polarity – wife/whore, single/married, spinster/fertile, virgin/mother, and the list goes on. By this mark or stigma,

patriarchy reduces women to their biological roles. Women are pressured to reproduce, and must offer their wombs on the 'holy' altar of patriarchy. Orchestrating the womb to feed the needs of patriarchy is believed to be women's religious, social and political mission. A womb that has not been fertilized is out of balance, a bomb waiting to explode. Therefore, Lama is condemned.

The language Haddad uses in Kafas is both shocking and indecent; it is not only sexually explicit and brutally graphic, but it is also written by a woman writer and spoken by female characters. By giving her women the right to speak about their cunts, masturbation, sexual orientation, prostitution, sexual abuse, and maternity, they are enabled to explore the maxims of their Arabic language and check for themselves its elasticity and capacity to contain the female voice and female experiences. Haddad uses language as a transgressive and empowering mode of expression and of being; her women are given the right to swear, to explore the power of words, and to question their position in a patriarchal culture. Under the oppressive rule of patriarchy, women are not supposed to claim their bodies, speak for themselves, explore sexual pleasure or even be rude. On the contrary, they are expected to be timid, obedient, conservative, innocent, and ignorant. Lama criticizes the patriarchal double standards and believes that even Arabic language is sexist for differentiating single women from married women by the use of the titles miss and Mrs (Haddad, Kafas 21). She regrets saving her virginity for the prince that was promised but never arrived (Haddad, Kafas 22). Now she is sixty six, she realizes that the so-called treasure she was asked to preserve is nothing but a patriarchal myth, a chain, or a veil that perpetuates her objectification and keeps her invisible. The

Virginity Complex, a major patriarchal weapon in the perpetuation of the battle of the sexes, continues to limit and define the existence of Arab women as well as control and manipulate their anatomy and autonomy. Given her circumstances, Lama speaks of masturbation as her only means to give herself pleasure. Masturbation, however, is one way women begin to recognize that pleasure is above all subjective; pleasure is me and myself getting to discover my ecstasy without fear of or interference from the Patriarch represented by God, father, or even husband. Lama's confession about getting pleasure from masturbation is empowering and liberating because now she claims that this body is hers; it is her holy temple, the altar where she gives herself to herself freely and without conditions.

The story of stigmatization continues with Haddad's second female Zeina who wears niqab, and thus is viewed by society as "a ninja", "a moving plastic bag", and "a coffin" (Haddad, Kafas 23-24). Although Zeina's stigma (invisibility and objectification) might seem different from Lama's (virginity complex), both stigmas in fact reveal so much about women's sexual repression, oppression, and lack of freedom of expression. Zeina was forced to wear niqab since she had her period when she was eleven years old and was also forced to marry when she was fifteen (Haddad, Kafas 24). Having her period means she is now a woman capable of seducing and destroying men according to the patriarchal standards that still dominate religious interpretations. Niqab is, therefore, used by family, society and the clergy as a shield protecting the female and the male from the fatal bite of sexuality. As a result, the female is harnessed, her body is controlled and manipulated, and her individuality is concealed and obliterated. However, by this

very indoctrination, men are made to look like beasts, they become inhumane and even weak for failing to control their very sexual needs. Women under the rule of patriarchy are persuaded that niqab is God's divine order for them to be safe and invisible from men's bestial nature. By means of this cloak of invisibility and concealment, patriarchal women believe they are protected and their chastity is preserved. Therefore, when Zeina dares question this so-called godly instrument, its function and purpose, she is accused of blasphemy (Haddad, Kafas 24-25). Under the veil or niqab, she is nowhere to be seen. It is true she can see others, but she is not here/there. Her presence, her body, and her identity are reduced to a piece of black cloth, a garment of nothing. Niqab is similar to the medieval chastity belt by which women must keep their vaginas safe and secure from external threats. In other words, Zeina's body, her voice, and physical needs are the very stigma she bears and has to conceal. Since the moment a female is born, she is cursed, condemned, and is viewed as the source of evil, sin and seduction.

Niqab is not the only custom/ideology Zeina openly criticizes, but she also points to the injustices that women/girls endure because of child marriages and marital rape. Like many girls, Zeina was married at a very young age and was denied education in the name of family and honour that continue to shape women's existence since they are in their mothers' wombs. Zeina's anger is justified because she lost the freedom to live the childhood she deserves, and she also lost her freedom of choice as an adult. She was also raped both as a child and later as an adult in the 'holy' name of marriage and its patriarchs. As a married girl/woman, she is not expected to say no to her husband no matter what her

physical, emotional or psychological situation is because she does not own her body, she does not have a voice, and she is not even viewed as a partner that can give pleasure in the sexual intercourse or be equally present as an active participant. Her consent is not an issue for her father or her husband because she is a commodity to be bought, possessed and exploited. In other words, she is an object of male pleasure, and by the same equation men too are reduced to sex organs and their humanity is turned into oppressive manliness. Thus, men are also manipulated and controlled to fulfil their reproductive role, they must prove how fertile they are by having a woman and a family to support. Both men and women are objectified for the sole purpose of reproduction, and the relationship between them is neither healthy nor equal. The reason for this is because they have been brainwashed to believe that the male should behave like a guardian or a parent and the female should obey his orders and desires.

Like Zeina, Hiba's story is not very different. Hiba too had to give up her ambitions for survival; ambition in a woman is a contagious disease, an undesirable seed, and it is in opposition to the ideal of femininity women must embody and represent (De Beauvoir, Women 25). Hiba's stigma, however, is prostitution or being a sex worker. She lost her childhood and had to give up her ambitions in order to help her family and herself by selling her body at the age of sixteen. As a kid, she was sexually abused by her aunt's husband who happened to provide her father with a job as a bus driver (Haddad, Kafas 30). She views her parents as murderers because they gave birth to six children when they are unable to raise them, provide for them or even protect them (Haddad, Kafas 29). Hiba's situation highlights the importance of sex education and

birth control methods such as the use of condom, contraceptive pills, and abortion in order to protect women from exploitation and the risk of getting sexually transmitted diseases. By studying these cases of violence against women, Haddad is trying to appeal to public attention urging authorities to take action in the fields of sexual health, family issues, and women's rights. Hiba points to the injustices she went through as a kid and as an adult, and she is also aware of her parents' ignorance about sexual health. She is not ashamed of her stigma being a prostitute. From Hiba's perspective, a prostitute is a worker who owns her body, but a wife is helpless because she works for free and is expected to fulfil her husband's needs regardless of what she feels (Haddad, Kafas 31). Marriage, according to Hiba, does not protect wives from domestic violence or marital rape because patriarchy views marriage as a transaction between a father and another man (Haddad, Kafas 31-32). By this transaction, a woman is expected to consent to whatever her husband needs. It is her duty to submit because he is viewed as the subject, the doer, and the owner whereas she is his object and investment. De Beauvoir explains the contradictions at the heart of these practices and points to the injustices operating here when she says: "Man, for reasons of prudence, vows his wife to chastity, but he is not himself satisfied with the regime imposed upon her" (The Second 584). Marriage could also become a disguise for secret practices and illegitimate relationships in a world defined and shaped by sexual repression and exploitation (Haddad, Kafas 31). Although Hiba takes pride in the fact that her body is her business and that sometimes she enjoys giving and receiving pleasure, her sexual act is also a transaction with a customer. "The prostitute is a scapegoat; man vents his turpitude upon her, and he rejects her"

(De Beauvoir, The Second 584). She is not recognized as someone doing services for the community or as the victim of a system that has failed to protect women from sexual exploitation and slavery, but she is made invisible by the very role she is forced to play. Hiba's story reveals the double standards by which patriarchy functions labelling women according to the tasks they are given and dividing them into groups and categories in order to easily control and manipulate them.

Unlike the other women, Yara's stigma is 'sexual perversion' because she is a lesbian, and lesbianism is not tolerated in Arab societies. The latter view lesbians as aggressive men-haters who are constantly questioned about whether or not their lesbianism stems from their being trauma survivors or victims of rape and sexual abuse (Haddad, Kafas 33-34). However, Yara explains that she neither hates men nor does she hate her father; she is a lesbian because she is born this way (Haddad, Kafas 34). It is important here to add that the West has recently become tolerant towards homosexuality, and terms like "sexual orientations" are fairly new. "Since 1975, the American Psychological Association has called on psychologists to take the lead in removing the stigma of mental illness that has long been associated with lesbian, gay, and bisexual orientations" (For a Better Understanding 1). In an Arab world still dominated and controlled by patriarchal religious views and laws, people like Yara are openly discriminated against. Yara also draws our attention to the hypocrisy of patriarchal men who enjoy watching two lesbian porn stars kiss, yet at the same time they condemn homosexuals for falling in love or having sex (Haddad, Kafas 35). Lesbianism, however, is not necessarily viewed as a total threat to patriarchy and its institutions simply because

lesbianism is neither penetrative nor reproductive. Like single women, lesbians have chosen themselves over traditional heterosexual marriage, and thus their very existence is an act of defragmentation of the so-called divine husband-wife 'corporation'. Coming out in a world that continues to demonize them and to treat them as perverts or/and criminals constitutes a schism at the very heart of patriarchy and its myths. In the context of the Arab world, neither sexual orientation nor sex for the sake of sex is considered an option on the heterosexual patriarchal menu, which still waits to be liberated from the virginity complex and a very exclusive heterosexual view of love.

The next cage that Haddad's women try to liberate themselves from is the cage of obesity. It is Abeer's desire to come out in order to reclaim her voice and her body against the stream of objectification and marginalization. Her overweight is her stigma, and thus she has been bullied and called "a cow", "a bear", and "Merkava" (Haddad, Kafas 38). Abeer's struggle with obesity is also sexualized because a woman's worth has nothing to do with her personality, education or achievements but with her appearance and the sacred duty of becoming a wife and a mother. To clarify, because Abeer's body does not follow modern beauty standards, she is not fit for living nor for marriage. She is just a commodity in this game of marriage, a valuable sex object that belongs to a man. Her overweight becomes her cloak of invisibility and is the cause of her low self-esteem. Abeer does not feel loveable or desireable, but above all she does not love herself and keeps waiting for a husband to feel loved, whole and become visible. Her escape to food is a mechanism by which she shuns the world and its challenges. Food for Abeer becomes a comfort zone yet an

addiction because of depression as well as emotional and sexual unfulfillment. Gaining more weight helps Abeer cover up that apparent sense of lack. At the end of this scene, the five women realize that victims, victimizers, and bystanders are all one. The labels might change but the cage is one and suffering cannot be divided (Haddad, Kafas 43-44). However, in spite of this very important realization, the women together form a circle and besiege their 'jailor'. Scene one ends with women's solidarity rebelling against patriarchy, its institutions and the man who was questioning them. Zeina rebels by taking off her headscarf, a symbol of patriarchal oppression and female objectification, forcing the jailor to wear it (Haddad, Kafas 47). The jailor/ prisoner is now feminized and the women with their high heels march on like soldiers, a symbol of having giving up their femininity. The women's realization, however, does not lead to a collective awakening, and thus the vicious cycle of violence perpetuates in scene two.

Haddad's female characters have employed language differently to relocate themselves, claim their bodies, liberate and empower themselves, establish female solidarity, and redefine their identity away from patriarchal binary oppositions – us/them, male/female, oppressor/oppressed. However, they fall in the same trap they rebelled against. The women's use of confessional narratives and children's songs in scene one is another example by which Haddad enables women to explore the means of their liberation within themselves and within their language. By doing so, Haddad helps them dig deep beyond the linguistic level into the psychological, social and political roots of the problem. Their narratives and songs, on the one hand, function as a medium by which women

express their craving for an unattained maternity, for that part of themselves they have not necessarily explored yet. On the other hand, these confessions may also be seen as a parody by which they mock women's biological role and how it has limited women over the centuries to the back seats of passive observation and participation. This is clearly shown at the end of scene one when the female prisoners decide to rebel against their jailor, and thus he is besieged by the bars that used to form their cages as they sing a famous children's song "open oh rose; close oh rose"[1] (Haddad, Kafas 46). The rose in this context may be the womb itself; however, instead of embracing the human (the jailor in this context) in a moment of reconciliation and love, the rose/womb still waits to bloom and free itself from all the nurturing/poisoning women have received as well as the oppression and the suffering they have gone through.

To understand the women's behaviour at the end of scene one, we need to look deeply at their "internal conditioning" which "is much more important in explaining the limitations of their achievements than the external circumstances" (De Beauvoire, Women 24). It is this indoctrination which Haddad dissects and rebels against in Kafas particularly in scene two. The veiled jailor of scene one is a woman's husband in scene two, but women have failed to escape their "internal conditioning" and this is clearly shown by having given up their femininity for the ideal of virility. Women now are breadwinners whereas men are househusbands who clean, cook, and look after their children. Following the

[1] My English translation of the original text "إفتحي يا وردة، ضمّي يا وردة" (Haddad, Kafas 46).

women's rebellion, men work in minor jobs such as secretaries, and they get sexually harassed by their female managers. In order to understand what happened in this scene, it is important to go back to the roots of the problem "the division of labour into male and female tasks" in patriarchal societies (Leclerc 74). Annie Leclerc writes that the male "hungry for real control over the female" was hasty "to spread the word that the tasks which belong to her are base, while those belonging to him are noble. […] the very idea of this inferiority would never have been thought of, if the domestic tasks allotted to woman were not considered base, sordid, and beneath the dignity of man" (74). In addition to what Leclerc mentioned, I would add that women's roles in society should not be merely limited to or defined by housework and their biology because such a definition limits their participation to the sphere of the house/family. This reduction of women's humanity to the physical and the reproductive is an injustice because it views woman's contribution as a trivial thing she is destined to do and fulfil. The women in scene two are still in the same cage that men have built for them; they suffer from an inferiority complex caused by men's desire to control, own, and exploit. Leclerc clarifies that "one cannot even pretend to discredit the idea of her inferiority, or the fact of her exploitation, without also condemning […] the attitude of disdain, scorn or pity […] adopted in relation to women's fate, whether biological (periods, childbirth, etc.), or traditional (domestic duties, for example)" (74). By reversing gender roles in scene two, exploitation is not eradicated: removing the disdain that Leclerc referred to is not the end of the problem without providing equal educational as well as professional opportunities by which women become active and independent

members in their communities. Without challenging the notion that women are destined to become wives, mothers, and housewives, the oppression against them will continue.

There is clearly a power imbalance in scene two where women are given the upper hand, but they have failed to free themselves from hatred, disdain, wrath, and the desire for vengeance. Still handicapped by the bars of patriarchal oppression, the wife in scene two, who reminds us of the jailor in the previous scene, has also sacrificed her femininity and humanity. She has become her jailor justifying sexual abuse and oppression against men (Haddad, Kafas 54). The husband now stands behind the bars of domestic work, he is sexualized by the veil and has become invisible. Deprived of agency, he is unable to gaze, and he is reduced to his sexual and reproductive roles. Also, the daughter's attitude towards the male sex is not very different from the patriarchal views and values in scene one. For example, she sleeps around and scorns her feminized sex partner for desiring commitment and choosing family over irresponsible sex (Haddad, Kafas 55). The so-called liberal daughter, like the five women of scene one, is still behind the bars of scorn and pity that patriarchy subjects women to because of women's biological role. In other words, the women of scene two have failed to subvert their internal conditioning or break free from the vicious circle of violence in which women are praised and condemned, elevated and mocked, sanctified and disdained. Women in scene one under the rule of patriarchy are encouraged, pushed, and even forced to become wives and mothers, but ironically enough, the sacrifices they make and the work they do for their families are undermined and overlooked. Because women were denied the freedom to think for themselves or claim their

bodies, the same cycle of objectification, marginalization and exploitation is perpetuated against men. The double standards of patriarchal oppression continue to shape women's lives in scene two in spite of their so-called 'liberation' or 'radicalism'.

By reversing conventional gender roles, Haddad's women in scene two turn the tables round on their fathers, partners, co-workers, and lovers revealing the hypocrisy, oppression and double standards of radical feminism. Here, Haddad discusses traditional marriage, women's sexual conquests, domestic abuse against men, and men's rights. In other words, women's situation is amplified to help men and women reconstruct reality differently away from the indoctrination of both patriarchy and second wave feminism. Thus, scene two could be seen as a criticism of extremist feminists who want power and authority for themselves and fail to break free from the vicious cycle of oppression and victimization that they previously went through. In her interviews and books, Haddad prefers to speak of feminisms in the plural and criticizes the extremity of second-wave feminism: "They thought they had to deny their femininity and deny being women to prove they were strong. They began to behave like men or they were men-haters" (Haddad, The Hypocrisy). It is interesting that Haddad did not give the family members in scene two any names because they symbolize any family who rebelled against patriarchal oppression to fall for another kind of oppression. In the name of women's liberation, they justify violence and abuse against men, irresponsible sex, male objectification and sexual exploitation. Haddad reverses gender roles to let men see the situation from the perspective of the victim – the female. The new women belittle the men's movement for liberation and deny any oppression practiced

against them. In the end, the victimized husband shoots his wife with a gun repeating what the women in scene one do. Here, the husband's final words remind us of Abeer's words in scene one that we are all in the same cage and our suffering is one, but he fails to translate this realization into action. As a post-feminist, Haddad condemns patriarchal polarity and extremist feminism inviting both men and women to fight together for freedom and equality. This is exactly what women and men fail to do in Kafas. Haddad explains that "men are accomplices in the feminist struggle, which is based on human dignity. Feminism is universal, it transcends gender, sexual orientation, nationality, religion …" (The Hypocrisy). By her post-feminist position, Haddad endorses a humanist as well as a secular approach, and thus she appeals to women to be free from the victim mentality and the notion that femininity is weakness.

Kafas is Haddad's metaphor for the perpetuation of violence and oppression under different disguises and slogans. The victim and the victimizer are inseparable, but continue to shape one another in different ways. In order to heal the wounds of domestic abuse, stigmatization, sexual exploitation, and bullying, Haddad calls for the humane as a future possibility by which both victim and victimizer may be able to build bridges in order to communicate and facilitate change in a community. Her philosophy of humanism which she presents in The Third Sex as a solution for today's world, a world dominated by survival of the fittest, greed, and violence, calls for all of us to question the taboos that carve the male/female body/identity and to look beyond the restrictions of gender, religions, and nationalism. Haddad is no heroine or prophetess as she clarifies in "The Outside an Illusion" her poem at

the end of Kafas, but she is haunted by the hissing sound of shackles hindering human progress and confiscating both freedom of expression and human dignity. The shackles she is drawn to break seem to be part of a bigger chain, yet her search for freedom and the exploration of the unknown is a mission and a calling she is destined to follow. It is interesting how Haddad insists on signing Kafas in poetry. Like many other works (Superman is an Arab and The Seamstress' Daughter) where poems are interventional, Haddad's poem at the end of Kafas functions as an epilogue. It is both a message to her audience and an escape into the unfamiliar and the ambiguous. In the surreal world the poem provides, shackles have a hissing sound, they smell like a loaf of bread, or have the sound of an anklet on the foot of a woman (Haddad, Kafas 121-122). These chains, reminding us of the title of the play as well as the perpetuation of persecution throughout Kafas, also speak of a world of death as the exit point where persecution and oppression cease and the chains break. Death is viewed as the final station where all become equal regardless of their titles, positions, sex, or religion. There is a desire in this poem to give birth to the impossible as a possibility recalling women's childhood stories and songs in scene one. The power of these narratives and testimonies lies in the speaker's ability to recreate reality or to create a multiverse whose laws have nothing to do with the reality of the world we live in. Thus, by means of this poem, Haddad creates a new point of reference for herself and maybe for future generations. It is a song of herself in which she chooses to be the dreamer, the dream, and the witness; instead of surrendering to the past and its mockery, she decides to swim against the stream of victimization and hatred. By refusing to recycle past experiences,

Haddad chooses to break free from the vicious cycle of violence and stereotypes and embraces the unknown and the risks it takes.

To conclude, the battle of the sexes will not come to an end if men and women choose to fight each other. Without accepting our differences and working for gender equality, men and women will not be able to liberate themselves from oppression or deconstruct patriarchal myths or any other extremist systems. In Kafas, Haddad declares that human dignity cannot be divided and the oppression practiced against any group is an oppression against all. Like many post-feminists, Haddad states clearly that women's liberation is inseparable from men's and that the feminist struggle goes hand in hand with secularism and the call for freedom of speech for all people regardless of their political, religious, and ethnic background or sexual orientations. In this light of this inclusive approach, Haddad reminds us at the end of each scene that we are not the cages we are born into: the cage of social norms, the cage of male supremacy, the cage of sexism, the cage of honour, the cage of biological roles, and many more. She reminds us time and again that the humane should be our only drive for a better world, a world of equality and justice. The stories we heard in Kafas shed light on the importance of coming out of the cage or the closet of oppression into the liberating path(s) of enlightenment. The need to come together to share our stories of persecution and marginalization is essential. However, what is radical about this collective awakening is the fact that it is inclusive and may not happen until we drop all classifications and categorizations, stigmas and accusations because these are the actual bars preventing our growth, progress and liberation.

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