

## Article

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## Social Values Revealed in Egyptian Films: A Man's Dignity is Stronger than Love



One year after the 1952 revolution led by the army officers, Director Ezz el-din Zulfaqar, writer Mohammed Kamel Hassan and producer army officer Helmy Abdo who with the support of the army forces just took control of the country, produced *Stronger than Love* (1953), a film that promoted that the family should rely on the man to go to work and put bread on the table while the role of women in life is to provide the family with kindness and raising children.

First scene of the film was in a train. The husband Magdy, played by Emad Hamdy meets the woman that will change his life. After losing his hand in an accident, drawing the woman in the train while she is sleeping, awakes the dreams of the artist he used to be before his accident. The woman admires his drawing and tells him that she works at an art gallery and will arrange a meeting for him to show his works there. The film introduces this to be the example of the supportive woman that all women should be. Our hero leaves the station to find his wife's chuffer waiting for him to

take him home. We will get to know his proud wife, who is the bread earner for the family, works all the time for her husband and her children. But right then you think to yourself, 'why is that even wrong?' Director starts portraying this figure of a woman as an unnatural unemotional person that everyone fears even her own children. A woman whose first words to her husband is "in my office ... NOW".

The film goes on showing how this life is upside down when the woman is going to work, and the husband is staying home with the children. Even the house they live is the property of the hard-working wife. Magdy starts painting which is awfully very bad mediocre art work that lacks of talent which is common among amateur artists who can't evaluate their own work. But the painting is portrayed by the film maker as the amazing piece of work that will be the focus of the film. Magdy calls it 'The way of life'.

In the most naïve narrative Magdy starts explaining that since the creation of mankind

and until our modern days the righteous way of life is for the woman to support her man and raise the children. Family should only have luxury if he can provide it. He starts dating the woman he met at the train, an angel that keeps admiring the man. Film maker keeps pushing the idea that this admiration is the example of the good woman, the right woman, the way a woman should act. Though his successful doctor wife who is the bread earner for the family saved him when after his hand injury working for the police he lost his job is portrayed as the example of the misguided woman, the example of what men should be threatened by and fear.



The role of the wife is played by Madeha Yosry, an actress mostly playing the role of the proud woman acting like an emotionless heartless person in most movies, while the role of the woman on the train is played by Shadya, the princess with her heart capturing romantic songs like ‘you stole sleep from my eyes’.

The sarcasm of the ‘upside down’ life style in the house continue with scenes like even delivery guys use words like “Is this Dr. Amina’s House?”. But then Magdy sells his painting and his ego is recovered when he can finally afford to buy his children gifts. Strangely as Magdy keeps dating Sanaa the film doesn’t mind at all that he is a married man, because the story keeps pushing the strange concept that if the man cheats on the more successful

doctor wife then it is actually her own fault, because she didn’t take into account what a husband actually needed.

The affair escalades till the newspapers picks it up and then the wife became aware of her mistakes. She talks to Magdy who yells at her in the climactic scene, ‘Speak to me the way a woman should speak to her husband’, and the lines like, ‘The family should live on the money the husband is making’ which is strange since earlier in the story he said he can’t even afford his own cigarettes! He then sends her a mail telling her that she will live on his earning or he will divorce her. She burn the letter and for a second there I get a relief that one reaction in this whole film makes any sense but of course in the end she gives in to his demands and makes it in time before his wedding to a second wife Sanaa. So finally the woman should give everything up for which is a man’s ego.

The film have a ton of mistakes that went on for almost 110min. Children using melodrama that even adults cant process. One bad painting got sold. The husband is arguing that they should move into a hut and leave the villa which his wife bought, as if she earned it from some dishonorable illegal method and not being a great useful to society as a Doctor. But nothing matters, only one thing matters, one thing stronger than love, a man’s sole insecurities and desire to be superior for nothing whatsoever but being a Man.

Decades passed, and in Egypt now over 40% of the households are provided for by women, and in the other 60% women have to work and support in providing for the family, to enhance the luxury of the family and to make her children’s life better. Women achieving their goals became more important than earning her husband’s blessing. Women needs what is *Stronger Than Love*.

*Translated by Tarek Metwally from the article published in Arabic in Rose El Yosief Magazine 4804: Art Section*

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