

## **RESOLUTION OF FAMILY CONFLICTS THROUGH LITERATURE**

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## Summary

To find the resolution of a family conflict is an imperative of nowadays society, where each day many married couples are divorced, disintegrating a social cell and producing the sickness that affect all our human environment. Divorces are said to be necessary sometimes, but in general statistics call our attention about the traumatic experience that involves for the minors. Is the prevention of divorce the clue to find some day a secure peace to all humanity? Not only this family critical situation is a producer of neurosis for childhood. Also child abuse, maltreatment to women and kids, and in general the bad or insufficient resolution of family conflicts which grow enormously till they explode leaving the members isolated, destroyed and full of hatred and resentment.

Family therapy can be complemented with this new methodology that is born, partially in Poetry Therapy, partially in The Transactional Theory and other psychotherapies, partially in Literature itself as the fantastic world of words, creator of well expressed messages that may help, alleviate or even heal a family conflict, especially those which are born in a bad communication.

But this methodology is also born in the experience I have accumulated through thirty years treating family conflicts, which necessity of resolution undoubtedly generated my own vocation as a writer, a poetess and an interpreter of those psychological sufferings. Perhaps, the voice of those mute participants in a painful and confusing crisis: The victims of a broken family group:

The children

## 1. Introduction

Family conflicts are related to human love, and literature is about human feelings and behavior, also love and romance. That's the reason why both elements are associated in the collective unconscious of the population of all times. Literature is about conflicts. Life is a conflict itself. Although the conflict itself is not necessarily negative, its serene resolution is an imperative to continue the peaceful family continuity. The bad resolution of those disagreements through violence and rage, bring the family, and specially the children to a vicious circle of maltreatment, trauma and disadvantages for the rest of their lives. This vicious circle is like that one of the hen and the egg, or the

dog biting its tail. It will endure forever and will contaminate all humanity for many decades, centuries and perhaps millenniums. One of the illness of our society which is conducting the world to a possible self destruction, is to have abandoned the protection of the society cell: the family.

In this era, this cell is going through a severe crisis involving its concept, conformation, roles and significances. The judges and legislators are in debate around the definition of human family. The present essay is referred only to the traditional structure of a family group. Father, mother and their descendents, in order to maintain the contraction in the matter of the resolution of conflicts, and also because we think that traditional family is the unique society cell that will support all the social pyramid on its back, without collapsing.

On the other side, family life is the perfect environment to analyze the conflict as a phenomenon, from different perspectives: sociological, psychological and even philosophical. The conflict in the family group, has a curious quality, to be constructive in the line of healthy development of the relationships involved. Conflicts when resolved are the secure steps of a solid structure that bring fulfillment and happiness to the members.

The violent behavior of some integrants of the group seem to be destructive but its existence obeys to neurotic rules, inserted in the unconscious world and most of the times, learned in past experiences of the adults.

The resolution of conflicts in family life can be accomplished by the systematic use of literary tools, such as reading of books, writing letters one to another, writing poems and many more. All these techniques must be supervised by an expert in groups therapy, who, at the same time, is a writer.

If we want to find some day the routes toward international peace, we need to start from here: Family conflicts, because they are the experimental habitat where violence and peace are ingredients easily observed and healed.

Society is conformed by family cells. In the study of new methods to make them grow and to make them substantially firmer, we will create, step by step, a better world where to live and let the others live too, in peace and far from missiles, terrorism and any form of violence.

## **2. Family**

Family is a group of human beings who share a home and live all together. In a strict sense, a family is conformed by a man and a woman who are married, including the descendants. They live in the same house and simultaneously sustain individual and common projects.

Family life is a complex situation conformed by multiple daily moments. Lovability and animosity alternates in a continuous circle, as waves in a sea. Storms will not be absent in the daily scene, neither calmly and perfect Kodak instants. The variety of situations is

the happiest ingredient that makes family life a perfect ideal to be purchased. Fulfillment resides in these unexpected changes and surprises. Humor is a key to perceive savour of bitter and sweet in the middle of a family group. Any human group follows rules under the law of Psychology of Groups. Family is a special type into this classification. It has proper regulations and commandments. So, happiness for a family will be defined specifically in this way:

The capability to maintain serenity, sense of humour and optimism in the middle of troubles and partial struggles between some parts of the family joined to a dynamic equilibrium among personal growth and family growth.

Let us see the metaphor of the surfer.

Our lady wants to become a winner in her profession. She has not studied a career only to be a housekeeper since now. She needs to realize her dreams and obtain a good compensation. She wants to live in a good way, with an economical level of dignity. On the other side, she also needs to see her child grow in good health, happy and well. She also needs to uphold a perfect marital relationship. Cleverness will teach her the mood to reach the new targets that family life call: Happiness. The family group's rules seem to be very complicated but really they are very simple. The practice of good attitudes towards the partners in family life is a principal part of happiness. To have a happy family group is like to dominate the waves with a surfboard. Always at the top of the wave, making necessary movements to the right and to the left, keeping up the equilibrium constantly despite the adversity facts. But at the same time being aware of the existence of accidents that can force us to reconsider our role and to review our position.

### **3. Family Conflicts**

#### **3.1. Concept**

Conflict in a family group is the resultant of the dynamic forces and energies that flow in different directions among the members, through verbal and non verbal communication. The interaction of the members produce continuous conflicts, all the time, so the existence of a conflict is absolutely normal in the group. The presence of the continuous affluence of minor arguments and disagreements, is a signal of psychological health. The intensity of a conflict is a crisis. It is normal to find several crisis along the long term family life. Problem is to resolve or help to resolve the crisis and intense conflicts to avoid separation, divorce or disintegration of the group. The termination of the group always bring all a variety of symptoms in the youngsters and children.

The absence of divergences may be hiding severe disagreements or unhappiness, and repression and a frozen relationship will reign for some time, to unveil in the future, a broken relation.

#### **3.2. Causes of a family conflict**

### 3.2.1. Violence

#### The vicious circle of violence

Violence has many faces and many tails. Its monstrous expansion goes from beaten children and beaten women, delinquency and official repression, to international war and global terrorism. The exhibition of this violent international atmosphere through TV, produces an increment in the bad behavior of minors. Violence in television is another severe problem that converts children minds in time bombs. But, where to start in this extraordinary labyrinth?

#### The Egg and the Hen

Let us start from the very beginning of the problems, the family where a baby is born. But, those parents have been babies themselves in the past. So, this is the story of the hen and the egg. A child receives a violent treatment and when he or she becomes an adult, probably he or she will repeat the same story. Sigmund Freud has called this phenomenon as the Compulsion to repetition. Parents who are coming from an aggressive environment, will probably duplicate the same pattern of actions over their own children and couple. Parents who come from a neurotic family, will also manage conflicts from a neurotic point of view and similar dysfunctional strategies, that in general arrive to a bad end: the dissolution of the family group. In most of the cases, only the intervention of family counseling will be of some help, depending on the earlier or later phase of the conflict when they call for a consultation. Let us review some cases on my history as a family counselor and therapist.

The first consultation took place after the recommendation of another marriage that have passed through the processing with success in many aspects of the resolution of an old family conflict. I have attended marriages that previously concurred as parents of an anorexic daughter. Then they brought another child with learning disadvantages. Finally they brought another daughter who suffered bulimia and inconveniences of learning but on time, after a continuous assessment by me, they were becoming aware of the psychological root of the problem. Finally it was aroused the consultation for themselves, the parental couple who in fact were the authentic cause of all the inconveniences. In this case I worked with interviews to all, with the inclusion of literary techniques which are explained in the following chapters. In their final phase the parents concurred exclusively to treat the central theme, the troubled knot, that resided in a violent father and a fearful and submissive mother. The main problem of the marriage was based on physical violence. The mother was submitted and generated violence toward the children. The father finally assumed the pathological load, originated in bad experiences at his infancy. But he only insighted the necessity of a Psychiatric consultation for himself, after reading the moving letters of his children and wife about his annoying behavior.

In another case, there was a female child of six years old with problems of behavior at school. The marriage assumed quickly the problem and I worked simultaneously with the child and the marriage. By means of the technique of reconciliation, it was achieved that the father began to work, after six years without working because of his

depression. He was derived to psychiatry. In general, at first, is not clear the motive of consultation. They can express things as diverse as:

“I have to fix a problem with my husband and they spoke me of you”

“We are at the very edge of the divorce. But before going to a lawyer we decide to test this. They told us that you can help us. “

“This is the last intent. I am going to divorce him although he does not agree. Already we have done couple therapies but here we are.”

“The boys are doing symptoms. Before consulting for them I prefer that we go first. I know that the problem resides in us, because we are on the verge of separation”

### **3.2.2. Causes of Marital Conflict:**

The conflict in a married couple is normal, but when it is qualified as a problematic conflict, it is produced, in general by lack of communication. The crisis will arrive after a drop fills the vase. When an incident makes the ill relationship to come to a breaking point or explosion. The tension is increased slowly, and the thread is ready to be disarmed when, according to my professional experience, some of these situations happen to appear:

- Differences of: background, opinions, personality, interests, sociability.
- Misunderstanding of the other's vocation, necessities, circle of friends, attitudes.
- Verbal and physical violence, Explosions of anger or anguish.
- Offences: Gossip, calumny, immoral behavior, lack of responsibility.

Also

- Too much work:

This is the typical case of an absent husband or wife, because they spend many time at their job, without taking notice or worry about the others at home.

- Too much house cleaning:

The standard case of a neurotic housewife whose husband hate to arrive home because she does not allow him to sit in the sofa.

- Too much parenting conversations:

The case of parents who spend many time talking about children problems and they don't take the moment to dialogue about their own troubles.

- Too much indoors moments:

Some couples are reluctant to visit friends or go together to the outside. They prefer to go out alone, each one to different places.

- Boring routines:

There are personalities that love routines, but perhaps they are not easily understood in a family group daily life.

- Money is not enough:

The marital problems many times start in this point. Materialism of nowadays is destructing many marriages because of the disagreements produced by money management.

- He or she spends too much money in a selfish way:

Egocentrism is one of the problems that hide below a divorce or a family disagreement. Immaturity to live in a couple may be prevented in child education since the very first years.

- The discovering of a flagrant infidelity:

This is a common cause of divorce, although many couples prefer to look to other side and not to react immediately. Instead, they start to take vengeance and also see other persons till their marriage is totally empty of sense. The lack of dialogue is one of the causes of this kind of vindictive attitude.

- Aggressive verbalizations:

Some people are very provoking when answering and may be extremely hurtful. Their tongue is like a sharp knife. This bad habit finalizes many marriages. Forgiveness is not easy when a heart is full of resentment and there is no time for a healthy interchanging of opinions. Bad language is like a hard stone wall among the opponents in conflict.

- Mute:

The lack of communication sometimes ends in a total silence.

- Affective indifference. Coldness is one of the most usual reactions when a person is very upset with the other. In this case, an ice wall stands in the middle of the couple. Not always is a sincere reaction.
- Professional competition:

Nowadays it is very common to see divorces caused by a sustained competitiveness between husband and wife. This attitude has the finality to make the other feel inferior in order to easily dominate him or her. Power has a lot of meaning for these couples.

- A new vocation:

In the film *Kramer versus Kramer* the woman leaves home because she feels misunderstood by her husband in a new vocation.

- A trip that endures too much:

One of them is cheating to the other. Mistrust starts when trips endure too much.

- Smoking:

Nowadays we have enough conscience of the negative effects of tobacco in daily living compulsive smoker can be a headache.

- Drinking:

Alcoholism has many grades and levels. A compulsive drinker can end isolated, although he or she is not still a declared alcoholic .

- Excessiveness of sociability or solitude:

The personalities strike many times in this point.

- Incompatible characters:

This sounds like an excuse for many divorces, but in fact there are couples that are very representative of this expression.

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(See image1.jpg)

[This is the second book of poetry by Azcona. It includes images of oil paintings by the author. The introduction is a short essay on post modern philosophies. Also there are quotes and aphorisms about the same theme. There are ecological, social, lyrical and philosophical poems about the problems of post modern times.

The English version of this book is still unpublished by partially, it has been published at India and USA newspapers and literary journals or anthologies].

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[This is the first novel by Azcona. The novel has been inspired in the sociological characters, stereotypes and archetypes of post modern Argentinean society, findable at the two books of poetry by the same author. The book is substantially impregnated by the spirit of respect towards human rights through the defense of family rights and children rights, although the story is a fiction. The book is a sample of the communication of high human values through literary work in prose].

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Headmaster of a School, wrote together this essay. This is a self-help book dedicated to parents who are worried about sexuality of their sons and daughters. The book develops a critical view on post modern philosophies like “New Age” and the danger to a healthy family life. This book is directly related to the present article because it has many didactic references, metaphors, poems and short stories dedicated to conflictive family groups].

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### **Biographical Sketch**

**María Cristina Azcona** (LCP, LPC) is an internationally published novelist and poetess. She is a bilingual writer and editor. She has received two university degrees in: Educational Psychology and Family Counselling, one in Argentina and the other in the University of Navarra, Spain. Since then, she works as a Family Psychotherapist in Buenos Aires, to several official institutions like the Social Institute for Judicial Employees, and in the past, at the Ministry of Public Health.

She has also served as an educational psychologist and family advisor to several private institutions, colleges and universities in Argentina. In the last thirty years she has attended thousands of cases related to family conflicts and husband and wife relationship conflicts.

Also she is an expert in psycho diagnosis and has participated in many family trials giving her expertise to the correct judgment of those cases.

She was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina in 1952. She obtained her title as a Teacher in 1968, in English and Spanish.

She received her university degree (LCP) as Educational Psychologist in 1975.

In 1977 she married Ernesto Castellano and had two children. Her daughter is nowadays a lawyer and bilingual writer. Her son is a Computing Systems expert, and is still studying at the University.

In 1998 she won First Prize in poetry at one of the most important contests of her country, organized by the Academic Circle for Argentinean Writers (C.A.D.A.N.). Since that moment she has had published four printed books in Argentina, one of them entirely dedicated to poetry therapy, and other a self help essay about courtship's troubles.

Also has participated in many international anthologies around the world, especially at USA, India, Jordan and Spain. Her work is also known in Algeria, Pakistan and Chile. Also at UK, her poetry will be published at the Once Orange Badge Poetry Supplement, this year.

The City of Milwaukee Department of Health (Employees Assistance Program), IL, USA, has published her bilingual therapeutic poetry since 2001.in several bulletins.

In 1999 she obtained her second university degree in Family Counselling (LPC) in University of Navarra, Spain.

María Cristina Azcona is permanently consulted about Education and Literature for Peace. Recently she became Director in Argentina for IFLAC, International Forum for Literature and Culture of Peace.

During the last five years she has been gaining increasing recognition and international awards, not only because of her social poetry and peace poetry, written originally in English and Spanish by the author, but also because of her fulltime dedication to the promotion and diffusion of the work by international writers for peace, through her non profit bilingual websites.-

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