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Built up Emotions Due to Life’s Authority

With authority comes responsibility. This responsibility is given or thrust upon certain people. People of a higher stature like; presidents, parents, teachers, and supervisors are those that possess authority amongst other living things. One chooses to obey and believe in what people of authority tell them. If someone else is in control of your own life and destiny, then when does one establish his/her own authority? In the novel *Lucy,* written by Jamaica Kincaid, Lucy struggles with the various authorities she is placed under because she cannot deal with the fact that one can own another. People operate off of how they feel; this is why Lucy’s emotions confuse and control her well being. She lets her emotions take over her because she does not know what it is, or how to get control of it herself. This is why she struggles with the authorities of being her mother’s child, being from an island that is controlled by another country, and working for an American family who wants for nothing. Lucy is a rebellious kind of person, and because she is she has built up hostility towards the people in her life.

Being hostile comes from built up anger from within oneself. The emotion of anger provokes one to be hostile to other people as well as to the people they care for. Lucy reflects a lot of hostility when she speaks about her mother as well as when she is speaking to her mother. When she tells Mariah about her mother all her anger and hostility is revealed in her tone of voice. The situations that are revealed in *Lucy* show the underlying hostility that Lucy herself has for other people as well as self. In the novel how she felt about the daffodils in the spring was so hostile because of her story behind it. Lucy had never seen daffodils before, but because her school made her memorizes a poem about them as a child, she has an angry emotion built up about it. This causes her to be hostile towards Mariah when she speaks about it. It is not so much about the actual daffodils it is much more to it. The hostility is with her island and the rules they have to abide by because they do not belong to themselves; they belong to the British. Lucy’s hostility lies within the British rules making her as a child memorize something she had never seen before and never would have seen if she remained on the small island. Lucy does not accept her own problems she likes to place blame on something and someone else just like any other human being.

“Blame is conceived of as a relatively sudden and uncontrolled out-burst of hostility, the culmination of irrational and fortuitous processes” (Rue Bucher 468). Hostility is a blaming game; one becomes hostile because they are put in a position to blame someone or something for how they feel or what they have done. It is a long process of bad happenings that build up as anger and is released as hostility. Bucher’s belief that hostility comes from blaming and blaming comes from a disaster that one has encountered. One could attest to that because much of Lucy’s hostility comes from something that has happened to her in her child hood. Her issues that she has with her mother; makes her a hostile person. She blames much of what happens to her and why she is the way she is on her mother. She feels neglected in a way; even though she does not come from a broken home, she does not feel loved. Because she does not feel loved or knows how to express her love; she becomes hostile. Lucy then expresses her hostility to the people who have some type of authority over her, as a child and as a woman.

Authority is placed upon a person. People who possess authority are people that have been placed in powerful positions. People like parents, teachers, and bosses accept their authority and are suppose to use it wisely.Lucy does not know how to deal with authority, because she continues to want her freedom. By leaving her mother back in Antigua she felt that she would be free of her authority and rules. While arriving in the U. S. and going to work for Mariah and her children she feels a since of limited authority. Mariah treats Lucy as her own child. Lucy is just the children’s nanny but she is treated as if she is a part of the family. In this case there is no real authority issues, even though Mariah is the boss, they have a healthy relationship. This is all new to Lucy because she is in fact use to someone or something of money having authority over her life as well as people of her culture. A person of her nationality knows what it is like to be controlled.

Patrick Wilson says, “We develop our “initial stock” of authority beliefs in childhood, and how this set of attitudes and experiences serves as a foundation for our lifetime of learning and inquiry.”(Eric Meyers 2) This is to say that authority is set forth a person in childhood; one understands what authority is and how to become a person of authority from learning as a child. One is taught that your elders have authority over you and one day as you become the elder of another you to will become a person of power and authority. It is important as a grown up in power that you have a positive influence on the child because misusing your authority corrupts the child into thinking they too can do the same thing. Childhood and adolescence is an emotional development that is not to be taking lightly, at this time a child can respect or undermined ones authority. Lucy figured out early on that she can pay her mother no attention and it would not matter. As a child she realized her mother’s authority over her was a joke because her mother put her husband and other children ahead of Lucy.

The only authority Lucy has experienced is that of her country being owned by another. Since Lucy has not really experienced a firm authority she could not possibly take Mariah seriously. Mariah tries to be in charge sometimes but she can see that her being firm has no affect on Lucy because she has already become her friend or has become too comfortable with Lucy. She did lay down the law when she said that Lucy could not leave until she finished up her year as the children’s au pair. After the year was up, Lucy moved out and became to be her own authority. She ends up getting another job as a secretary with a boss that also does not want to see her as just a worker. Again Lucy does not experience a structured authority. With authority Lucy feels as if she is enslaved but in actuality Lucy has the right to do whatever she pleases because she is on her own, in a new country, with no one to tell her what to do. Her problem with authority is non-existing as long as she remains in the United States. She has no mother, no boss and no teachers demanding her to do what she does not want to do. Due to the fact that she does not listen to or respects her mother’s authority or any other person’s authority for that matter; Lucy feels a sense of guilt for feeling and acting the way she does.

Guilt is a state of being. One feels guilty after doing or participating in something they know is not right. One becomes guilty when they do nothing to prevent what has occurred. Lucy feels guilty of how she treats her mother. The guilt gets to her after she reminisces on her child hood and how she has treated her mother and others that were supposed to be there for her. When she told her mother she wish she would die and that she hated her, she felt guilty when her mother took ill with headaches that were incurable. She does not apologize but she did feel bad that she feels this way about her mother. She also feels guilty that she knows about Mariah’s husband Lewis cheating on her with her best friend. Lucy witnesses this deceitfulness and yet she says nothing, she does nothing about it. Lucy has sex with different men but has no emotional connection to them. Her relationship with Paul was out of spite because her friend Peggy told her not to talk to him. She felt guilty that she continued to see and sleep with Paul behind Peggy’s back. Guilt is not unexpected when it comes to Lucy because she finds a way to do the opposite of what she has been told, even though she understands, she does it anyway out of spite and then she feels guilty about it later on. She hides her guilt but it is expected from what she has done and plots to do. “Both shame and guilt are experienced in interpersonal relationships, and the negative events that generally cause them are similar” (Akbag Imamogiu 3). Lucy experience her guilt because she feels a shame or that she should be a shame of what she has done to undermine her mother’s teachings. She deliberately goes against what she knows her mother taught her not to do. This emotion of guilt tries to surface and get the best of Lucy but she does not let it get the best of her; she continues to do whatever she wants to do.

People deal with their hostility and guilt in many different ways. Some people develop hostility and guilt due to certain authority that are placed in their lives. Lucy overall struggled but dealt with her situations to the best of her ability. She did not allow it to eat her alive. She got control of it even though she is not really aware of her emotions. For one who does not know how to deal with hostility and guilt; she did well. One can have authority over another human being; it takes a strong person to be able to rebel against such strong authorities. Lucy rebelled against her mother’s authority and by her migrating to the U.S. she felt as if she was rebelling against the British for controlling her island. Lucy expressed all her emotions to her boss Mariah who in return confided in her. Life’s authority can cause deep emotions to arise in one’s life.

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