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THE ROLE OF HEREDITY IN THE FORMATION OF A PERSON'S CHARACTER (BASED ON WILKIE COLLINS' NOVEL *NO NAME*)

“Mom’s smile, but dad’s character” – similar statements everyone has heard more than once. Children can be similar to or unlike their parents not only in appearance but also in the way they behave. Therefore, humanity has always been interested in whether character traits are inherited, as well as whether the environment affects personality development. These questions were especially acute when it came to mental illnesses.

Today, the scientific and technological revolution continues in the world. Biology and ecology have become one of central areas of knowledge in the science of nature. This was facilitated by scientific discoveries of an epochal scale – deciphering the genetic code, gene synthesis, and others. In the 1950s, the dominant role of genetics was clearly defined. It was placed at the forefront of modern natural science by the creation of the doctrine of the essence of genetic information.

And these topical scientific events, directly related to the existence of a human, could not but be reflected in prose fiction. Thus, Wilkie Collins, always keenly interested in the life of contemporary science and followed its discoveries, raised in his novel the question that could not but excite the intelligentsia who widely discussed the latest hypotheses regarding the processes of heredity. Thus, illegitimacy is a major theme of the novel.

This is an action-packed novel with a detailed social motivation for all the events that take place. We are talking about how, due to the most difficult combination of unfavourable circumstances, two daughters of a very rich and respected person, having lost both parents almost simultaneously, face the stunning fact of the “illegality” of their birth, since their parents were not married

officially. Declared, according to the laws of those days, “no one’s children” – people without rights and even without a name – they could not inherit the parental fortune. As a result of the disaster, all the money and land of Mr Vanstone (Norah and Magdalen’s father) go to his older brother and worst enemy Michael and his son, and the girls are thrown out of the door of the house where they were born and raised, deprived of any means of subsistence.

The social and critical motives in the novel are extremely strong. At the same time, there is one more theme in the book that excited the author, who kept pace with the scientific thought of his era and sometimes even outstripped it.

Siblings are very different from each other. Magdalen Collins, the younger of the two orphaned sisters, is ready to do anything to take revenge and win back her inheritance, no matter what it costs her. Using her dramatic talent and assisted by wily swindler Captain Wragge, Magdalen plots to regain her rightful inheritance. Her elder sister Nora does not have any idea what her younger sister can be capable of. Nora only passively endures the blows of fate. But if one is the bearer of Evil, then the other one – of Good, how to solve the equation, in which Magdalen and her hated cousin Vanstone – Mike’s son – can be on the same side?

W. Collins’ novel by raises the questions that are being discussed today both in the scientific literature and even in the general press around the world: What does our character depend on? Are character traits inherited? Does the environment affect personality development? These questions were especially acute when it came to mental illnesses. A few centuries ago, it was believed that character is a manifestation of the struggle between God and the devil in the soul of each person. Then, with the development of natural sciences, people found the relationship between character and heredity. And the more the human genome is studied, the more obvious this connection becomes.

Today, genetics has come close to explaining the phenomenon depicted in chapter one of the novel and developed in subsequent chapters – the complete dissimilarity of two siblings, both external and internal (due to the splitting of traits in offspring, in the language of modern geneticists). Collins wanted to explain this phenomenon, but he did not look for its causes in the area where they actually lie.

He rejected their religious interpretation, but, at the same time, could not decisively break with the Christian myth: Evil – Good.

It is hardly worth saying that a person's character is completely programmed at the genetic level. But the more scientists investigate the connection between genes and a character, the more parallels they find. A new experimental branch of psychology has already appeared – biopsychology, which studies the connection between the features of the body and human behaviour. It is possible that it will develop the field of genopsychology, which will study the influence of genes on character.

The issues raised in the novel *No Name* sound surprisingly relevant today.

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