

Identity as a Birthright

Identity is a component of biological characteristics that individuals inherit from their ancestors. Based on this statement, the identity an individual possesses is mainly constituted of their inborn characteristics which they acquire from their parents or the earlier generations. The stories *Young Goodman Brown* (Hawthorne 2005), *The Cask of Amontillado* (Poe 2008) and *The Yellow Paper* (Gilman 1973) discussed in this paper will support the statement that people are endowed with their identities since the moment of their birth.

As the story *Young Goodman Brown* by Hawthorne (2005) shows, the character possesses the traits that revolve around certain religious matters; it is interesting that these traits are portrayed as being inborn. In contrast to the message that the name "Goodman" implies, Goodman, the protagonist of the story, is associated with various evils. At first glance, Goodman seems to be a pleasant responsible young man who is highly respected in the society; during the course of the plot, he turns out to be a very evil man, which causes people's indifferent attitude towards his burial. This situation can be illustrated by the quote, "...And when he had lived long and was born to his grave...they carved no hopeful verse upon his tombstone for his dying hour was gloom" (Hawthorne 18). This is the depiction of how strongly the "fame" that Goodman deserved during his life contrasts to his religiosity, noble name and imaginary piety.

The fact that Goodman turned out to be evil though he was a religious person is the most interesting part of the story. From this perspective, it can be clearly seen that Goodman's evil nature is predetermined by his inborn characteristics which are portrayed as inherited from his grandfather. On this basis, it is possible to claim that

characteristics of one's personality are biologically acquired and that individuals possess a strong correlation between their identities and those of their previous generations.

As it follows from the story *The Yellow Wallpaper* (Gilman 1973), the protagonist who is described as cruel and hard-hearted passes these traits to her daughter who also turns out to be evil. The character's cruelty can be clearly seen when she unfeelingly tramps her fainted husband not understanding how to take care of him. This characteristic of the person is further depicted as far-rooted, as the sister is also described as unfeeling and cruel, which a reader notices from her communication with other people. In this respect, it can be seen that the story unveils the strong relationship between biological traits and identity development.

In addition, it is possible to state that various characteristics in our diversified cultural backgrounds seem to be initiated by biological matters. For example, in the story titled *The Cask of Amontillado* (Poe 2008), Montresor is described as vengeful as his father; he is shown to be a person who never forgave and sought to revenge for the wrongs others did to him. Due to his genetically inherited unforgiving nature, he continuously haunts Fortunato and finally kills him. However, despite the fact that murder of Fortunato is not the key theme of the book, it helps a reader understand that Montresor is a very vengeful individual who never forgives. Moreover, this is portrayed with relation to his father who in turn was also very vengeful to the people who did wrong to him.

As it can be clearly seen from the abovementioned stories, identity development seems to be very much connected with the factors that are biologically acquired.

Therefore, it can be generally concluded that biological traits control identity development to a large extent.

Works Cited

Gilman, Charlotte. *The Yellow Wallpaper*. Old Westbury, N.Y.: The Feminist Press, 1973.

Hawthorne, Nathaniel. *Young Goodman Brown*. Rockville, M.D.: Wildsite Press, 2005.

Poe, Edgar. *The Cask of Amontillado*. Mankato, Minn.: Creative Education, 2008.