

Bourne toWrite...

creative writing
workshops

Genetics

(a timed exercise – write about an interest)

by Zoé Carroll

Genetics. Our genes. Codes passed on through generations of families, evolving and changing through the combining of two separate helixes of DNA to create the code for how a person will look, how they will grow and, perhaps, aspects of their personality.

Millions of people are born around the world every day and the genetic codes for all each of them swirls inside each of their cells. Like cars on the road, you wonder how there aren't more collisions than there are, and how things go well so often. Very often, people are born with their genes in order. The codes allow for their brown hair, their blue eyes, their empathetic nature.

Sometimes though, the code glitches, and a genetic syndrome occurs. A single line of code is disrupted and life suddenly takes a change of direction. A gene mutates. A gene that perhaps controls the rate of creation of a certain protein or enzyme that nobody has studied before but later discover is necessary for brain development or sensory regulation. People walk among us who carry pre-mutated cells, completely unaware of their status.

We try to fix the problem in the DNA with gene therapy or prevent it occurring with IVF, choosing only unmutated cells. But what if these aren't mutations at all but a process of evolution? Perhaps genes are experimenting with increasing the processing speeds of certain parts of human brains to accommodate living in a digital age where data processing is more

valuable than holding a pen. Where human emotions need to be experienced in greater magnitude to reduce the effect of blunting social interactions. Where being able to perform, shopping, financial business and work itself can be done without any human interaction whatsoever. Natural selection may be working to identify the parts of genetic code best suited to life in a data age where physical prowess is not a requirement.

It is also seen that those with some genetic mutations can have children who are unaffected by their mutation - it reverses itself. Is this some complex natural control measure to ensure that the evolution doesn't happen too quickly? What triggers the genetic expansion between some generations and not others? What skills do those mutations bring to their owners? Science has to examine the physical, genetic issues as well as the social and personal ones before we will know the answers.

We are all teachers. It is important that we learn the lessons that those with genetic syndromes are here to teach us, rather than aim to eradicate difference altogether. After all, we would not want to eradicate our own future.