Nature vs. Nurture: The Development of Voldemort as a Villain in J. K. Rowling's "Harry Potter" Novels

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Abstract

Both nature and nurture have a great impact on a child's development. Nature includes everything a child inherits from their parents; personality traits, behaviour, predispositions for diseases and physical traits. Nurture consists of all the environmental factors and the traits a child develops throughout its life. The discussion on whether nature or nurture has a bigger impact on the development of a child has been going on for years. The aspect of the discussion that this paper explores is the influence of nature and nurture on the development of a child into a villain as exemplified in *Harry Potter* fantasy novels, specifically through J.K. Rowling's character Tom Marvolo Riddle (Lord Voldemort). In the first chapter, the paper provides a general overview of the nature vs. nurture discussion and the theory behind both concepts giving a basis for the in-depth analysis of Tom Riddle's becoming a villain presented in chapter two. Chapter two deals with Tom Riddle's nature and nurture, his heritage, parentage, years in school, friendships and so on, intertwined with possible theoretical explanations of his behaviour, the reasons for his misbehaviour and his eventual villainy. The final chapter completes the first two chapters and leads to the conclusion that Tom Riddle's nature and nurture combined led to him becoming one of the most notorious wizards of all time, Lord Voldemort.

Keywords: character development, villain, J.K. Rowling, Lord Voldemort, nature, nurture, Harry Potter.

Contents

Introduction

When it comes to child development, there has been a long discussion on the impacts of nature and nurture. Nature refers to the genes inherited from the child's parents and the biological basis for a child's development, whereas nurture regards the environmental factors that influence a child's development. Each of these aspects have their supporters and theories concerning one's dominance over the other abound, but there is no actual proof that one is more influential than the other. Both environmental and inherited traits greatly influence a child's development. The discussion usually revolves around positive outcomes; great parenting and good genes equal a good child, but what if some or all of these factors were negative, and the child ends up a villain? The aspect of the nature vs. nurture theory that this paper will explore is the development of a villain, that is how both the inherited and the developed negative traits made Tom Marvolo Riddle become Lord Voldemort, as described in the *Harry Potter* novels written by J.K. Rowling, and which of these traits had a greater impact on his becoming a villain. Fantasy literature typically deals with coming-of-age and developmental stories which makes its characters particularly adequate for this type of analysis. In the first chapter the paper will introduce the ideas and theoretical backgrounds for nature and nurture theories: what traits represent them and which scientific disciplines support them, first separately, and then joint discussions of nature vs. nurture. The second chapter deals with the development of Tom Riddle into a villain through the analysis of the story of his ancestors, his parentage and his early childhood, leading up to him becoming the notorious Lord Voldemort. The last chapter will aim to connect the first two chapters in order to conclude whether Tom Riddle's nature or nurture had more impact on him becoming a villain.

1. Nature vs. Nurture theory

The influence of nature and nurture on child development has been a major part of an ongoing discussion in pedagogy, psychology, cultural studies, literary studies, sociology, biology and other scientific disciplines for years. Firstly, it is important to understand what the terms "nature" and "nurture" stand for. Nature can be defined as the biological basis for a person's development, that is the inherited genes or genetic makeup. A person inherits genes from both of their parents and with that every person has a different genetic scheme. The genes that are inherited are genes that determine gender, eye colour, hair colour, but also risks for diseases, certain abilities and even some behavioural traits: "The concept of nature thus refers to biologically inherited tendencies and abilities that people have and which may get revealed later on as they grow up" (Mojica). In contrast, nurture is defined as the environmental factors (immediate and larger societal contexts) that influence a child's development. Nurture usually stands for the effects that society has on a child but it can also show the influence of the actual physical environment the child is in. If the physical environment is not fit for raising a child, it will have negative effects on the child's development. Social environment includes the child's family, peer group, the school, the government, mass media and other external factors in a child's life. According to Mojica, "Environmental factors involve many dimensions. They include both physical environments (a good example is prenatal nutrition) and social environments (such as the neighborhood, media and peer pressure.) Also, environmental factors (...) involve multiple layers of action, ranging from most immediate (families, friends, and neighborhoods) to bigger societal contexts (school systems and local governments)".

1.1. Nature

Genes are the basis of life and the genetic makeup of a person is what makes them absolutely unique since no two people have the exact same genetic code (except for identical twins where the only thing that can distinguish them is, in fact, nurture). Besides inheriting visible traits like eye colour from their parents, children also inherit certain behavioural traits, intelligence, personality characteristics, and predispositions for psychoses and addictions. This is thought to be the result of evolution: "Genetic research has consistently shown

heritable influence in traditional areas of psychological research such as mental illness, personality, cognitive disabilities and abilities and drug use and abuse. Some areas showing strong genetic influence may be more surprising, such as self-esteem, interests, attitudes, and school achievement" (Asbury and Plomin 88). According to Asbury and Plomin, research conducted on children coming from the same family or siblings has shown that siblings are often similar, but their similarity is rooted in their genes rather than in the environment they share (89).

Throughout history there have been many supporters of the "nature" theory. Many philosophers like Plato and Descartes also argued that many things are inborn and that they cannot be changed (Cherry, "What is Nature vs. Nurture"). There is a whole branch of psychology that emphasizes the importance of biology in human development called biopsychology: "Biopsychology is a branch of psychology that analyzes how the brain, neurotransmitters, and other aspects of our biology influence our behaviours, thoughts, and feelings" ("What is Nature vs. Nurture"). The definition shows that biopsychologists focus more on the biology behind the development of a child than on the environmental influences. Nativist theories also claim that inherited characteristics are more important in the development of a child than any form of environmental influence, the most famous of the theories being LAD. LAD or language acquisition device is Noam Chomsky's theory that all children "are born with an instinctive mental capacity that allows them to both learn and produce language" ("What is Nature vs. Nurture").

However, the problem with the nature theory is that many children whose parents are criminals or addicts can be considered to be lost causes by the society because of the presumed negative traits they inherited. This can set a self-fulfilling prophecy in motion: with everyone thinking they will end up just like their parents and no one believing in them, they usually lose faith in themselves and fall into the assigned (expected) role. If a child is presumed to be genetically "bad", it will be *a priori* treated as "bad". Eugenics, the study of or belief in the possibility of improving the qualities of the human species or a human population, especially by such means as discouraging reproduction of persons having genetic defects or those who are presumed to have inheritable undesirable traits (negative eugenics), went as far as trying to "purify" nations of people with negative inherited characteristics (Wilkins). Eugenics lead to forceful sterilization of criminals and patients of mental health facilities, and it led to genocide: "The slow but steady growth of genetic science was stopped abruptly by a world sickened by Nazi war crimes and all that was associated with them. The

Nazi regime's abuse of genetics was high-profile and terrifying to a world in mourning, a world whose way of life had been threatened" (Asbury and Plomin 87).

1.2. Nurture

As opposed to the previous theory that focused solely on the biological foundation of human development, the proponents of "nurture" theory claim that a child's development is influenced not only by his genetic make-up but also by the society and every group of people s/he ever encounters. The first social group a child knows is its family, but with making friends, learning social norms and adjusting to society, the child can develop separately from his/her family and differentiate from them. In part, the child chooses its nurture in a way that it chooses its friends, subculture groups it wants to belong to, its exposure to media content, and with that it can influence its own development: "Environments can be considered as extended phenotypes, reflecting genetic differences between individuals as they select, modify and construct their own experience of the world" (Asbury and Plomin 92).

Behavioural psychology teaches us that children also learn by observing others. They learn by watching adults and their peers, by imitating their behaviour. This is best shown in Albert Bandura's *Bobo doll experiment,* conducted in the 1960s, in which he demonstrates that children can be aggressive towards the doll because they saw other people be aggressive to it as well ("Bobo Doll Experiment"). Behaviourists also think that all actions are results of conditioning and that everything can be learned by everyone: "Theorists such as John B. Watson believed that people could be trained to do and become anything, regardless of their genetic background" ("What is Nature vs. Nurture"). Other scientists and thinkers like John Locke claim that nurture has more influence on a child's development than nature. In his *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Locke claims that a child is born as a "tabula rasa" or with a "blank state" mind, and that everything they learn is determined by their environment and experience (qtd. in "What is Nature vs. Nurture").

Furthermore, there are many environmental factors that influence a child. The parenting style has a significant impact on their development. If a child is born into a strict or a highly controlling family, it will not be able to be as free as other children. If a child is raised by parents who have a permissive style of parenting, it will be spoiled and use its parents to get

everything it wants. If a child is raised by indifferent parents, it will start acting in destructive ways and is at risk of developing different behavioural problems. Parenting style with the best outcomes is the authoritative, which is important because it allows the child to participate in making the decisions, learn social norms and responsibility without being punished, and get a lot of love and support for being obedient: "Parenting styles are associated with different child outcomes and the authoritative style is generally linked to positive behaviors such as strong self-esteem and self-competence" (Cherry, "Why Parenting Styles Matter When Raising Children"). Parents also lead their children towards peers who are a good influence and away from the ones who are not, and by that they actually help their child choose a good peer group and influence their child's development even when they are not around (Bornstein 227). The influence of peers is the strongest in adolescence and remains so until the end of high school. It starts when children become a part of a peer group, that is when the influence of their parents is, seemingly, not visible anymore. Other influences include culture which a child has to accommodate to, the children in the neighbourhood, the media telling children how they should act, dress, what they should look like and so on: "Nurture in some way or another speeds up an individual's capacity to study and learn new things. There is the common saying that 'practice makes perfect'. Therefore, an individual can improve knowledge by practicing to adapt to all creations in these circumstances or environment" (Mojica).

1.3. Nature and Nurture

It can be argued that no amount of positive social interactions can save a child that was predisposed to be bad based on the genes it is carrying but it can also be argued that everyone can become good if they work hard and have the right support system. There is a lot of research that shows that genes influence a child's development more than environment, and vice versa. Consequently, the debate should not focus on the competition between the two (nature vs. nurture), but it should take into account the ways in which both of these factors (nature and nurture) contribute to a person's development, because they seemingly have an equal role in a child's development: "Nature is responsible for the normal development of the fetus into a normal and healthy infant, but it cannot entirely develop that fetus into an intelligent, knowledgeable or athletic adult. This is possible only through the exposure that

nurture gives a person" (Mojica). In modern times, most psychologists are interactionists because they believe that both nature and nurture are important:

> People are beginning to realize that asking how much heredity or environment influence a particular trait is not the right approach. The reality is that there is not a simple way to disentangle the multitude of forces that exist. These influences include genetic factors that interact with one another, environmental factors that interact such as social experiences and overall culture, as well as how both hereditary and environmental influences intermingle. ("What is Nature vs. Nurture")

2. The development of Voldemort as a villain

2.1. Voldemort's ancestry

Tom Marvolo Riddle's, later known as Lord Voldemort and He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named, family tree is not thoroughly explained in any of the Harry Potter novels, but the readers get a glimpse of it through a memory mentioned in *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*. The memory showing Tom's family is collected and explained to Harry by Professor Dumbledore. Tom's mother, Merope, lived in a shack with her brother Morfin and her father Marvolo, they "were the last of the Gaunts, a very ancient wizarding family noted for a vein of instability and violence that flourished through the generations due to their habit of marrying their own cousins" (Rowling 178). Her father was an abusive and arrogant old man who had developed a sense of pride thanks to the fact that his ancestors were rich and powerful, but he was just a magically mediocre, poor man who only had a few heirlooms, one of them being the ring of Salazar Slytherin which later became one of Voldemort's horcruxes. "Lack of sense coupled with a great liking for grandeur meant that the family gold was squandered several generations before Marvolo was born. He, as you saw, was left in squalor and poverty, with a nasty tamper, a fantastic amount of arrogance and pride, and a couple of family heirlooms that he treasured just as much as his son, and rather more than his daughter" (Rowling 178). The similarity between Tom Riddle and his grandfather and uncle is that they can all speak Parseltongue, the language of serpents that Salazar Slytherin could speak, which proves that they are true descendants of the Slytherin line. Marvolo emphasizes the fact that the ring has been in their families for a very long time and that all of their ancestors were pure

blood, showing thus his hatred towards Muggles and half-bloods which Voldemort also expresses in his life later on: "centuries it's been in our family, that's how far back we go, and pure-blood all the way" (Rowling 174).

Lord Voldemort clearly inherited the ability to speak Parseltongue, but did he inherit the thirst for blood and a superiority complex from his ancestors as well? As was mentioned earlier, a child can inherit abilities, character traits and attitudes. Marvolo and his son Morfin were clearly bad people; they harassed Merope and banned her from speaking to Muggles; they hated everyone who was not pure blooded, spoke to serpents, were proud and arrogant, and were seeking power and glory they thought they deserved. Lord Voldemort despised Muggles, killed many people, and stopped at nothing to get power. His hatred towards Muggles is best exhibited in the opening chapter of *Deathly Hallows* when Voldemort kills Professor Burbage, in front of his Death Eaters, in the most horrible way (feeding her to Nagini) simply because she taught Muggle Studies at Hogwarts.

> Yes… Professor Burbage taught the children of witches and wizards all about Muggles… how they are not so different from us. … Wizards, she says, must accept these thieves of their knowledge and magic. The dwindling of the pure-blood is, says Professor Burbage, a most desirable circumstance... she would have us all mate with Muggles.. or no doubt, werewolves. (…) there was no mistaking the anger and contempt in Voldemort's voice. (*Deathly Hallows* 18)

He even went as far as putting a part of his soul into a serpent, the symbol of the Slytherin house, that he could control just because it proved that he was a descendent of Salazar Slytherin (Stojilkov 135). The similarities between Voldemort, Marvolo, and Morfin are uncanny, the only exception being that Voldemort actually succeeded in getting praise, glory, disciples and power.

2.2. Voldemort's parentage

In the previously mentioned memory, the reader learns that Voldemort's mother has a child with a Muggle called Tom Riddle. Her genuine love for Tom was not reciprocated. Merope and Tom were together for a short period of time, and only because she lured him in with a love potion and got pregnant. When the potion wore off, she thought he would stay, but

he left her and their unborn child because he did not love her. She went to an orphanage and gave birth to the baby, dying an hour after the birth. According to the memory of one of the caretakers from the orphanage, the only information she gave them was that the baby was to be named "Tom, for his father, and Marvolo, for her father (…) and she said the boy's surname was to be Riddle" (*Half-Blood Prince* 222). He lived in the orphanage until the age of eleven, when Dumbledore came to visit him and invite him to come to Hogwarts.

Lord Voldemort was very curious about his parents; he was certain that his father was a wizard and that his mother must have been Muggle born because she died after child-birth: "those whom I could persuade to talk told me that Riddle was obsessed with his parentage. This is understandable, of course, he had grown up in an orphanage and naturally wished to know how he came to be there" (*Half-Blood Prince* 302). He tried finding a trace of his father being in Hogwarts but no traces appeared:

> Finally he was forced to accept that his father had never set foot in Hogwarts. I believe that it was then that he dropped the name forever, assumed the identity of Lord Voldemort, and began his investigations into his previously despised mother's family – the woman whom he had thought could not be a witch if she had succumbed to the shameful weakness of death. (*Half-Blood Prince* 305)

This happened at the age of sixteen, and after he changed his name, he wanted to retaliate to his father for being a Muggle, and to his mother's family for her death: "There he murdered the Muggle man who abandoned his witch mother, and, for good measure, his Muggle grandparents, thus obliterating the last of the unworthy Riddle line and revenging himself upon the father who never wanted him" (306). He set up his uncle Morfin for the murders and obliterated his whole family tree from existence. This was an act of spite and anger, which helped him erase his connections to the Gaunts line, yet he kept the ring of Salazar Slytherin: "No one had ever known him to be related to the Gaunts, he had hidden the connection, the killings have never been traced to him" (Rowling, *Deathly Hallows* 444).

His keeping the ring shows that he is proud to be a descendant of Salazar Slytherin and probably even of his connection to the pureblood Gaunts, but he distances himself from them because they abandoned him. It is clear that he had many mixed feelings about his family. His genetic make-up is made up of "impure blood" on the one side, the powerless side, and of the purest, evilest blood on the other, the true "pure-blooded" wizards who descended from Slytherin himself. These two sides clash in every way possible, even within him, which is

evident in his admiration only for the pure blooded when he himself is a half-blood. He thought that he was special; he did not want to be just another half-blood wizard and he did not want anyone to know about his "impure blood", so after killing his father, he shed the name of Tom because it was too ordinary and made an anagram of his name calling himself Lord Voldemort:

> There he showed his contempt for anything that tied him to other people, anything that made him ordinary. Even then, he wished to be different, separate, notorious. He shed his name, as you know, within few short years of that conversation and created the mask of "Lord Voldemort" behind which he has been hidden for so long. (*Half-Blood Prince* 230)

All his life he felt that he was different. He was different from the young wizards at Hogwarts as well as from the children at the orphanage, but instead of trying to blend in, he decided to detach himself from society completely. This is a very common act among villains; they believe that they are better than everyone else, so they do not want to be associated with anyone who would be considered normal or ordinary:

> To believe oneself to be absolutely other than the rest of the world destroys the sense of fellow feeling upon which sympathy and empathy depend. To see ourselves as unconnected to the world – as technologically driven Western culture has tended to – encourages us to use the world, to seek to dominate and manipulate our environment rather than live as part of it. (Alsford 148)

2.3.   You are a wizard, Tom

Tom Marvolo Riddle, a boy who lived in an orphanage until the age of eleven, found out that he was a wizard when Professor Dumbledore came to visit him. Dumbledore explained and showed his visit to Harry in a memory. Upon entering the orphanage, he was told that Tom "scares the other children and (…) that there have been incidents" (*Half-Blood Prince* 222). The caretaker also mentions that the other children are afraid of Tom because of these incidents, and that no one wants to socialize with him. When Dumbledore first enters Tom's room, Tom immediately starts saying that he is not crazy and thinks that Dumbledore is a doctor. This shows that he had been traumatized by the people the orphanage sent to evaluate

him, which evidently happened frequently. In that moment, the readers see that he is just a parentless child, a lot like Harry himself.

Dumbledore proceeds with caution, so as not to scare him even more, and shows him that he knows he is special and different from the other children, and that it is not a bad thing. He tells him that he was a professor at a wizarding school and Tom wants proof. Dumbledore sets fire to his wardrobe and finds out that there are some stolen items inside of it. Later he realizes that those were Tom's "trophies": "The young Tom Riddle liked to collect trophies. You saw the box of stolen articles he had hidden in his room. These were taken from victims of his bullying behavior, souvenirs if you will, of particularly unpleasant bits of magic" (*Half-Blood Prince* 231). Even at such an early age, Tom liked using dark magic and he liked to hurt people who would do wrong by him. The articles he stole from his victims were proof of his power and his victory.

Unlike Harry who was shocked when he received the news that he was a wizard, Tom was not surprised at all: "His face was transfigured (…) his finely carved features seemed somehow rougher, his expression almost bestial" (*Half-Blood Prince* 226). From the first moment he met him, Dumbledore saw that Tom was different from other young wizards; he saw something dark in him:

> His powers, as you heard, were surprisingly well-developed for such a young wizard and- most interestingly and ominously of all- he had already discovered that he had some measure of control over them, and begun to use them consciously. And as you saw, they were not the random experiments typical of young wizards: he was already using magic against other people, to frighten, to punish, to control. (*Half-Blood Prince* 230)

It is hard to say whether the darkness Dumbledore saw in Tom was coming from his heritage or from the influence of the environment he was in. He has inherited "evil" traits from his ancestors, as was mentioned earlier, but the environment he was in could also be one of the reasons he developed the urge to punish people by using magic. He sat cooped up in a small room in an orphanage where he never felt like he belonged; he had abilities that made him different from other children; his caretakers sent doctors and psychiatrists to have him evaluated because they thought he was crazy, and he felt abandoned and alone. His magic came up when he was angry or sad, and this happened so often that he learned to control it at a very early age. He felt powerless, so all he wanted was to be in control.

2.4. Years in Hogwarts

Tom was well-liked in Hogwarts. He was a great student, talented and bright: "As an unusually talented and very good-looking orphan, he naturally drew attention and sympathy from the staff almost from the moment of his arrival. He seemed polite, quiet and thirsty for knowledge. Nearly all were most favourably impressed by him" (*Half-Blood Prince* 300). He enjoyed his classes but he also used Hogwarts for the research of the dark arts. He, as was mentioned, did research about his parents, but he also researched the darkest spells and potions. There, he learned all about Horcruxes, which later made him almost immortal, and the forbidden spells that will later help him truly become Lord Voldemort. He also gathered a group of dedicated followers: "they were a motley collection; a mixture of the weak seeking protection, the ambitious seeking some shared glory, and the thuggish, gravitating towards a leader who could show them more refined forms of cruelty" (*Half-Blood Prince* 301), who will later become the Death Eaters. This is very important because it is a clear step he took towards becoming a villain. The hunger for forbidden knowledge and the army of followers made him the One-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named:

> True villainy has to do with the desire to dominate, to subsume the other within the individual self and that without compunction. The villain would appear to lack empathy, the ability to feel for others, to see themselves as part of a larger whole. The villain uses the world and the people in it from a distance, as pure resource. (Alsford 133)

It can be said that at Hogwarts Tom was finally happy, but, unfortunately, for all the wrong reasons. He felt like he belonged in the school, like Hogwarts was his home: "Firstly, and very importantly, Voldemort was, I believe, more attached to this school than he has ever been to a person. Hogwarts was where he had been happiest, the first and only place he had felt at home" (*Half-Blood Prince* 359). As the years went by, Voldemort became more powerful and more dangerous even though Dumbledore kept an eye on him the whole time he was there. His plans and mischievous behaviour were never evident, but Dumbledore never believed his act:

> Tom Riddle, as Voldemort was named in his childhood, turned into an embittered, revengeful, sadistic, and sickly ambitious teenager. Under the pretence of a brilliant,

charismatic, and charming student, Riddle managed to gain both practical and theoretical knowledge, which allowed him to go "further than anybody else along the path that leads to immortality". (*Goblet* 653, qtd. in Stojilkov 135)

The school could have been a very positive environmental influence on Tom Riddle. He was finally surrounded by people who are like him; being able to do magic freely and learn about it could have changed him for the good, but it did not. Arguably, both his heritage and the environmental influence of the orphanage damaged him so badly that there was no turning back.

3. Nature or Nurture?

According to Alsford, "To collapse into villainy is not to be taken over by the 'beast within' but to have our connection with others compromised. This can happen gradually, even while apparently combating other forms of villainy and evil" (121). Tom Marvolo Riddle is a descendant of Salazar Slytherin who was one of the most notorious wizards in the world. His grandfather and his uncle were Parseltongues, hated Muggles and had a great sense of pride in their heritage. They were malicious, evil people who kept to themselves and even reproduced by incest in order to not dirty their pure blood. His mother was not a saint either, but she was not as corrupt. She fell in love with a Muggle, and when that love was conceived and destroyed by a potion, she gave up on magic and gave birth to her son, dying immediately after it. His father was an innocent Muggle who was oblivious to the magical world around him. Tom inherited many bad traits from his ancestors, but with proper guidance in his early childhood, they could have been alleviated.

According to Rothman, "[t]he Marvolo family, stunningly depraved, provided him with aptitudes and a heritage of dark powers and motives which he discovered as much as learned or invented" (204). Already in his early childhood, Dumbledore saw that Tom is very powerful and that he is different from other young wizards. However, Dumbledore did not know what Tom will use his powers for, because, simply having power does not mean that they will be used for evil.

> The point is that the possession of power – either in the form of knowledge or physical force – is in some respects a trivial matter compared with the issue of its legitimate application (...) each one of us can be said to possess power by virtue of our very

existence, it is what we do with it, or choose not to do with it, that renders us either heroic or villainous. (Alsford 94)

What triggered Dumbledore into thinking that Tom will take the path of dark magic is that he wanted power and dominance over others, even as a little boy. That behaviour is very similar to the one displayed by his grandfather and uncle, and it is possible that those abilities were inherited rather than developed, which points to the conclusion that his villainy was more effected by his heritage than his nurture.

Tom Riddle's life started when he was abandoned by his parents and left in an orphanage. Abandonment can have a strong impact on a child's development. It usually results in low self-esteem and low self-worth. Children with low self-worth often seek recognition and power, and Tom Riddle is no exception to that. He sought power and control from a very early age and he found it in dark magic. When he was in Hogwarts, he sought recognition from Dumbledore and for that reason he practised magic that the other students could not even imagine. "The child with low self-esteem often tries to be extra well behaved. She may become a perfectionist or seek to validate her self-worth with achievements" (Nugent). Children who are abandoned also exhibit attachment issues; they do not want to be close to anyone because they are afraid of being abandoned again. Tom had acquaintances at Hogwarts but none of them were actually his friends, as mentioned earlier, they were a means to an end. He was never close with anyone, be it at the orphanage or at Hogwarts. According to Nugent,

[c]hildren who are abandoned may also develop attachment disorders. These may be more likely to develop if the child was abandoned by both parents at a very young age. Because he was prevented from attaching to his primary caregivers, he does not know how to connect with anyone else. This child is likely to be withdrawn and isolated. He often does not trust others. He may keep a very close eye on the activity going on around him, but he is unlikely to engage or try to join in.

The first environment he found himself in was an orphanage, where he was left without anything to hold on to. The caretakers were afraid of him because of his abilities, as were the other children, and he started using his powers to get back to them for not accepting him. It can be argued that he did it out of spite, but it can also be said that he was defending himself because he felt threatened. When asked by Dumbledore what his abilities are, he says: "I can make animals do what I want them to do, without training them. I can make bad things

happens to people who are mean to me. I can make them hurt if I want to" (*Half-Blood Prince* 225). This shows that he used magic as a way to stand up to people who are harassing him, which is inarguably self-defence. The inconsistency in his story can be seen in the way his caretaker talked about him. She said that he was the bully, that there were incidents with him, and as proof of that Dumbledore found his stolen "trophies" taken from the bullied. There are always two sides to a story, in this case, Tom's and the caretaker', and it is always difficult to say which one is the truth. Inarguably, being alone all the time, plotting against others and exploring his magic, consumed him and he started using it even when it was unnecessary. It is difficult to say whether it was just a child's way of acting out to gain attention, or whether there was an actual malicious intention behind those actions.

> To define ourselves in isolation from others, to see our humanity as residing purely and simply in our autonomous self somehow disconnected from the rest of the world is, in my view, a dangerous thing. History has shown us that villainous and inhuman acts are considerably easier to justify when a person, culture or race understands itself as being unrelated to the rest of humanity. (Alsford 109)

He finally gets to Hogwarts where he can be himself. He is seemingly polite and benign, but he uses his free time to study dark and forbidden magic, collects an army of followers and grows stronger. It was in Hogwarts that his systematic development into a villain commenced. His power, as well as his army, grew slowly but steadily. And in the end he went from a boy who sought knowledge and acceptance to a super villain who had a soul shattered into seven pieces and no humanity left in him.

Conclusion

It is difficult to say whether nature or nurture had a greater impact on Tom Marvolo Riddle's development into Lord Voldemort. He inherited some evil traits from his grandfather and uncle, including their hatred towards Muggles and their sense of pride for being descendants of Salazar Slytherin. He inherited his ability to speak to serpents and his love for dark magic. But, nature is not all that influenced him. If he had grown up in a loving home, would he have become a villain? No one can know that, because he did not. He grew up in an orphanage where no one really took care of him, the caretakers treated him badly because he was different from the rest of the children and they isolated him. He grew up without parents who abandoned him at birth, leaving him with self-worth and attachment issues. He wanted to show everyone how powerful he was in order to finally get some recognition. His life did not get better even when he went to a school where he could have fitted in. In Hogwarts he chose to be alone most of the time, never had any real friends because he could never open himself up and make himself vulnerable. In conclusion, Tom Riddle's development into Lord Voldemort was not influenced solely by nature or nature. It was a development equally influenced by both genetic and environmental factors, which is likely the case with all people, too. So in the end, it seems that the discussion should not be revolving around the conflict of nature vs. nurture, but should strive to understand how nature and nurture are intertwined, as they were in Voldemort's case.

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