Uninvolved Parenting as Presented in Marina Carr's *The Mai* and Frank McGuinness's *The Hanging Gardens*

صورة الآباء غير المكترثين كما تقدمها

مسرحية "زا ماي" لمارينا كار ومسرحية "الحدائق المعلقة" لفرانك ماكجينيس

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Abstract

The present study examines the depiction of uninvolved parenting in two contemporary Irish plays; Marina Carr's *The Mai* (1994) and Frank McGuinness's *The Hanging Gardens* (2013). Guided by Diana Baumrind's Pillar Theory, the paper considers comprehensively three neglectful parental figures; a mother in Carr's play and two parents (a mother and a father) in McGuinness's play with particular emphasis on the fraught relationships between the three parental characters and their adult children as well as the destructive impact of neglectful parenting on parent-child relationship and the children's outcomes. The two playwrights focus on the strained relationships within the two families through recollections retrieved by the three forebears and their adult children, direct accusatory fingers at their parenting style, and highlight the destructive effects of their under involvement by showing their children as adults and by offering no resolution. The study attempts to provide a

critical analysis of the negligent parenting style adopted by the three stage forebears; its manifestations, causes and detrimental consequences.

Key Words: Baumrind – Uninvolved parenting – Strained relationships – Resentment – Detrimental outcomes.

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المخلص

يهدف البحث إلى القاء الضوء على نمط التنشئة الأسرية الذي يتسم بالإهمال وعدم الإكتراث من خلال نقد وتحليل مسرحيتي "زا ماي" لمارينا كار و"الحدائق المعلقة" لفرانك ماكجينيس. استناداً إلى نظرية ديانا بومريند الخاصة بأنماط التنشئة الأسرية يتناول البحث بالتحليل والنقد شخصية الأم في المسرحية الأولى وكذلك شخصيتي الوالدين في المسرحية الثانية مع التركيز على العلاقة المتوترة بين الآباء والأبناء وأيضاً التأثيرات السلبية على سمات شخصية الأبناء واختياراتهم وقراراتهم المصيرية. هناك العديد من نقاط التشابه بين العملين المسرحيين حيث اعتماد الكاتبين على استرجاع الشخصيات المسرحية لذكريات الماضي وإلقاء اللوم على نمط التنشئة الأسرية والذي يتسم بالإهمال واللامبالاة وذلك من خلال عدم اقتراح أي حلول لمشاكل الأبناء وأيضا من خلال إبراز النتائج السلبية لممارسات الآباء وتأثيرها على الأبناء. تقوم الدراسة بتحليل ونقد نمط التنشئة الذي يمارسه الآباء من خلال إلقاء الضوء على المظاهر المختلفة لهذا النمط والأسباب المؤدية إليه وأيضاً النتائج المترتبة عليه.

الكلمات المفتاحية: بومريند – الآباء غير المكترثين – علاقات متوترة – استياء – تأثيرات سلبية.

The objective of this paper is to analyse Marina Carr's *The Mai* and Frank McGuinness's *The Hanging Gardens* as both have emotionally unavailable parental figures; Grandma Fraochlán, the matriarch of the family in Carr's stage piece, and Sam Grant and his wife Jane, the parents in McGuinness's play, are depicted as detached, unconcerned and have the least involvement in the lives of their offspring. By adopting Diana Baumrind's seminal theory on parenting styles, the present study compares and contrasts the three parental characters in terms of the manifestations of their under involvement, its reasons and how their parenting practices strain their relationship with their adult children. Of primary importance is the negative impact of uninvolved parenting on developmental outcomes and the overwhelming destruction that occurs when uninvolved parenting is practiced.

The two plays differ in context and have a time gap of about two decades; *The Mai* was first performed in the Peacock Theatre in October 1994, and *The Hanging Gardens* premiered at the Abbey Theatre in October 2013. Yet, they have more than one thing in common. Both share one concept concerning the role of family heads and focus on family crises concomitant to abandoning parental responsibility. The two playwrights address the suffering endured by the two families' adult children and the fact that the five of them fare the worst as a result of being raised by uninvolved parental figures. In order to assert the drastic effects of such parenting, neither playwright offers a resolution. Within the two families' circles, no reconciliation is achieved. The paper is divided into two parts. It begins by laying out the

theoretical background of the research and then proceeds to a discussion of the two plays under consideration.

Baumrind's Theory : A Survey

Parenting style is defined as a "constellation of parents' attitudes and behaviors toward children and an emotional climate in which the parents' behaviors are expressed" (Darling and Steinberg 490). As early as the 1960s, developmental psychologist Diana Baumrind originally identified three different parenting styles: authoritarian, authoritative and permissive parenting. In 1971, after intensive study and research, Baumrind augmented her parenting style model with a fourth typology known as uninvolved or neglectful parenting, as Donna Hancock Hoskins argues, "to address extremely uninvolved and emotionally distant parents" (510). According to Baumrind, uninvolved parenting is defined as follow:

> A style of raising children where the parent is negligent towards the child's emotional and developmental needs. The uninvolved parent is preoccupied with their own desires and is unavailable to provide any guidance or nurturing to the child. A child raised by an uninvolved parent is often self-conscious, antisocial, immature, depressed and lonely. ("The Influence" 62)

Baumrind's Pillar theory, derived from extensive observations and interviews with preschoolers and their parents, is based on the two assumptions that there is a significant association between parenting styles and children's behaviour and that these styles definitely affect children's lives and development or what Baumrind

describes as "a wide range of child outcomes" ("Current" 62), including achievement, self-efficacy and psychological wellbeing of children.

The "conceptual structure", delineated by Eleanor Maccoby and John Martin, categorises parents according to whether they are "high" or "low" on two key dimensions; "parental responsiveness" and "parental demandingness". This means that the four parenting styles that Baumrind proposed are determined by measuring parental control and warmth (35). Parental responsiveness (the nurturing aspect of the child) basically refers to a combination of parental warmth, acceptance and supportiveness. Baumrined defines responsiveness as "the extents to which parents intentionally foster individuality, self-regulation and self-assertion by being attuned, supportive and acquiescent to children special needs and demands" ("The Influence" 62). In other words, responsiveness is related to how much or how little parents respond to their children's needs. On the other hand, parental demandingness or behavioural control refers to the requests and demands that parents enforce on their children to follow. In more details, demandingness, as defined by Baumrind, refers to "the claims parents make on children to become integrated into the family whole by their maturity demands, supervision, disciplinary efforts and willingness to confront the child who disobeys" (61-62).

Uninvolved parenting is arguably perceived to be the worst and most harmful among Baumrind's typology. It "has been associated with the most negative developmental outcomes" (Crowley 226) in children. The ample reason for this adverse impact is the indifferent

attitude adopted by such parents. Uninvolved parents typically demonstrate "low responsiveness and low demandingness". They do not respond well to the emotional needs of their children, and they provide little to no affection, support or love. They also make few to no demands on their children as they rarely "set rules" and hardly "offer guidance or expectations for behaviour" (Cherry). These parents do not monitor their children and, as Baumrind warns, they have "the least amount of emotional involvement" ("Rearing" 355) and response towards them. While they, more commonly, provide the basic physical necessities of life like "food, clothing and shelter" (Kirsh 183), they disregard other equally essential needs like "love, understanding and care" (Hoskins 515). Because negligent parents are indifferent to their children's emotional and social needs, they are emotionally distant from their children's lives. As a logical corollary, there is no attachment or emotional connection between the children and their parents.

The fact that uninvolved parents show "little affection" toward their offspring and "rarely communicate" with them yields, what Alberto Alegre describes as, "a lack of closeness in the parent-child dyad" (56). In addition to being characteristically undemanding and unresponsive, as supposed initially, neglectful parents are often seen as being dismissive, detached, unavailable and, in some extreme cases, deliberately avoiding and rejecting their children outright. They simply refrain from bearing the necessary responsibility of child rearing. Adhering to the fallacy that children are instinctively independent, self-reliant and capable of raising themselves, these parents expect children to develop without their care, assistance or

involvement. They, therefore, provide the minimal supervision and nurturance – in other words, they adopt what Maccoby and Martin call a "hands-off approach" (56). In consequence, the children are eventually left to "fend for themselves" (Nelson 55). Children raised in such emotionally void environment with no expression of love, guidance, support or positive communication, are by consensus likely prone to a myriad of personality, emotional and psychological difficulties that extend through their teen and adult years.

In order for children to acquire the "appropriate" emotional and social "skills"; e.g., the tools enabling them to develop healthy relationships, "connect with other individuals, understand the rules of social communication" and interact with the society harmoniously, Támara Hill asserts, they "need the experience of a nurturing parent". The unavailability of such a person "can lead to a lifelong journey of unstable or failed relationships, emotional neediness, identity confusion, poor attachment to others, low self-esteem and self-efficacy". As aforementioned, neglectful parenting is severe and extremely detrimental. Not only does it result in unhappy and incapable children "with frequent behavioural problems", but also, and more devastatingly, it has "long-term negative impacts on children [that] extend through adolescence and adulthood" (Martin and Colbert 40). Children of negligent parents usually "fare the worst in adulthood" (59) as they often exhibit deficits in attachment and poor achievement. They have difficulty engaging in any type of healthy relationships. As a result, they "end up lonely, disconnected and rank low in happiness" (Burns 153). Children raised by emotionally void caregivers develop into emotionally needy adults

yearning for the love, security and affection they never received.

Analysis of the Two Plays

Emotional detachment is defined as "an inability of the parent to meet the children's emotional needs, relate to them, or provide support or comfort" (Hill). Such detachment is made explicit from the very beginning of the two plays through the three parental figures' failure to value or respond to emotions. They all tend not to regard emotional closeness with their children as being of special importance and they consciously keep an emotional distance between themselves and their children. Those children, in consequence, endure what Alegre calls "an outrageously pervasive element of emotional disconnect" (57). Within the two stage families, there is an emotional gap between the two generations and the communication trait is almost non-existent. The three parental characters as well as the children are almost unwilling to discuss or even talk about pertinent issues.

The three adult children in McGuinness's stage family, Charlie, Rachel and Maurice, "have at best a distant relationship with their parents" (Morse 86). Not surprisingly, the word "distance" is specifically used by both Sam and Rachel to describe her relationship with her mother and to comment on how such a dismissive mother, who ignores emotions, has missed the opportunity to connect to and create a close relationship with her daughter when she needed her most. When Sam asks his daughter whether her mother is "excited about" her pregnancy, Rachel replies "she's barely mentioned it. We're not that kind – we keep our distance" (Scene III

40). Sam, though not less uninvolved than his wife, could not hide his astonishment of the way the pregnant daughter is repudiated by her emotionally void mother. He retorts "her daughter is pregnant with her first grandchild and there's keeping your distance" (Scene III 41).

Jane's intolerable detachment is exhibited in her insensitivity to the emotional need of her daughter and in her reluctance to be demonstrative and communicative with her other children. A key incident in scene four reveals her character as an extremely avoidant mother who is adamantly reluctant to even speak with her youngest son. Maurice, in a desperate attempt to persuade her to "sit down and talk" with him "for once", reminds her that she has "barely spoken" to him since he has "come home". Meanwhile, she remains obdurate in her determination and sternly replies "I'm not sure I want to – there's nothing to say" (Scene IV 63). Through his mother's rejecting attitude and her unwillingness to communicate with him, the disregarded son gets the message that he is not worth listening to.

Since the father practices the same style of parenting, Sam – in the same way or even worse – has always been undemonstrative, cold and reserved. The problem is compounded by the fact that he has never been emotionally available to provide any paternal affection, support or guidance. His parenting is a strange combination of emotionlessness, unsupportiveness, and apathy. His strained relationship with his children is rather complicated by showing no inclination to be either warm or firm. Ironically enough, Sam Grant grants his children neither affection nor guidance. This indifferent

conduct reflects what Alegre calls “a self-indulgence and an overall lack of care” (57). As an inevitable result of Sam’s extreme withholding of emotions, none of his children “has been able to form a loving relationship” or to “express the love that they all so palpably feel”. The three of them “seem somehow frightened of him” (Longergan), but what hurts them most is their inability to share or even show him any sign of love and tenderness:

Charlie Did he let you kiss him?
Maurice I didn’t try.
Rachel You didn’t dare.
Maurice No, I didn’t. (Scene IV 61)

In addition to his being incapable of love, Sam is unfortunately undemanding. His failure to guide his children and monitor their behaviour stems from the fact he has never practiced his fundamental parenting duties including supervision and disciplining. Rachel, commenting on how they were not provided any structure or control, sneers “[M]yself and Maurice have been on the receiving end of his wit and wisdom” (Scene III 43). Sam’s parenting reveals total lack of emotion and counselling. His incapability of love and guidance is a symptom of his under involvement.

While Jane and Sam’s detachment is seen and evidenced in several situations revealing the lack of interaction, communication and closeness with their children, Grandma Fraochlán and her husband’s unavailability is explicitly stated and shamelessly acknowledged. Grandma Fraochlán does not find it difficult to admit the dominance of absence in the family home. Near the end of the play, she tells her eldest

daughter, Julie, "I know he was a useless father, I know, and I was a useless mother. It's the way we were made" (Act II 182). Though Tomás is an off-stage character, the influence of his non-existence in his children's life is immense. The nine-fingered fisherman's permanent absence – caused first by his seafaring and then by his early death – has eventually turned her into an emotionally distant mother. When he was alive, she was so engaged in their romantic love, which was "paramount in her life" (*Pastures* 56), that she did not concern herself with her children and "all her energy went into pleasing their father" (O'Gorman 122). After his death, which had extremely disturbing and devastating effects on her, she has become too "unhappy and opiumed" (Act I 145), as Julie complains, to care for them.

None of her daughters feels loved or wanted since she has never shown them love or affection. Grandma Fraochlán's obsessive love for her husband, which she describes as "the most rare and sublime" (Act I 143), Mika Funahashi suggests, "seems to be the only love consummated and cherished" (73). Carr's mother figure could be best described as an avoidant mother who has distanced herself from her children and has even become resentful of them. Therefore, her relationship with them is extremely passive. The non-existence of maternal unrequited love is lamented by her granddaughter, The Mai, who complains "If there was less talk about love in this house and more demonstration of it we might begin to learn the meaning of the word" (Act II 152). Grandma Fraochlán's unresponsiveness to her children's need for love and warmth renders her emotionally unavailable and her children emotionally starving for a murky love they can neither receive nor demonstrate.

Rigidity – unwillingness to be flexible when needed – is also one of "the symptoms representative of emotionally immature and detached parents" (Hill). Because of their low adaptation, resistance to change and adherence to severe rules, negligent parents are commonly perceived as inflexible and unreliable. Both Sam and Grandma Fraochlán emerge as callous and severe when needed by their children. Their rigidity, which translates into their unwillingness to show any sympathy towards their youngest children's dilemma, has two reasons. While the former's stringency is attributed to personal motivation which is his apathy, the latter's strictness is attributed to her concern for societal convictions and values.

The way Sam dealt with his realisation that Maurice might have homosexual inclinations is undoubtedly evident of his lack of flexibility. When Maurice, struggling for his father's validation, suggests that his father could have helped him understand and accept his sexual identity, the intransigent father evenly replies "and I did – by doing nothing. No tears – no screaming match – no blaming anyone – Aren't you better off neglected?" (Scene III 36). Instead of having practiced his essential paternal duties of offering guidance and advice or showing his son how to behave, Sam tends to be neither sympathetic nor willing to help. In response to his son's plea for help, he gives the astounding retort "what did you expect from me exactly? Don't tell me that it was pity – I despise pity" (Scene III 35). The father's resolute response to his son's ordeal might seem to be a strange combination of indifference and unresponsiveness, which are all symptoms of his unreliability.

Grandma Fraochlán adopted the same unyielding attitude towards Ellen's unwed pregnancy. The mother has been aware that Ellen, her youngest daughter, endured shame and irrevocable regret. This is made clear when she openly tells Beck "Oh Ellen – She was heartbroken, at where she had arrived and no one nor nothin' could console her" (Act II 169). Nonetheless, when Ellen desperately tried to convince her mother that "she didn't have to marry" and that she "could have the baby on her own" (Act II 139), she was heartlessly ostracised and her pleas were dismissed. The mother, who might have been expected to offer motherly comfort, support and commiseration, showed more concern for social norms that regard unwed motherhood as a disgrace or "a scandal" (Act III 169) as she states, and abortion as morally unacceptable. As a victim of her mother's merciless rigidity, Ellen was forced to "marry that man" though he "wasn't her steam at all", Julie laments, only "because Grandma Fraochlán saw he did" (Act I 145). The disinclined mother is, therefore, perceived to be strict and severe due to her failure to be flexible when needed.

Though raising children is a paramount parental responsibility, negligent parents "often show disengagement from such responsibility" (Hoskins). They indifferently avoid it for various reasons ranging from adhering to the faulty reasoning that children are independent and self-reliant to having other priorities. Both Carr and McGuinness are concerned with showing their parental figures while discarding this responsibility as well as their children's awareness and concomitant pain. Sam has expected his children to develop separately with minimum parental interference. Consistent with this attitude is, what Mathew Kolb calls, Sam's "fierce

dedication to independence" and his "unflinching insistence on self-reliance" (41, 48). At the outset of the play and during an intimate exchange between his three siblings, Maurice sarcastically mocks his father's adherence to the principle of self-reliance or what Sam himself calls "the power to stand on your own two feet" (Scene I 17). Sam, taking pride in Rachel's comportment, tells her "You have always been capable of standing on your own feet and getting what you want" (Scene III 42). The irony lies in the fact that he has always expected his children to raise themselves, despite their having neither the perspective nor the experience to develop such capacity, while he himself is an unreliable father who has never assumed his full responsibility is raising his children.

Though Jane and Grandma Fraochlán have different experiences and backgrounds, the two of them expected their children to develop by themselves without their involvement and both are eventually indifferent to the implications. As a result, their children were left to fend for themselves while internalising a severe sense of pain and loneliness. This explains why in both plays any reference to how those children were raised provokes their anger, sorrow and resentment. Rachel, in an early altercation, bitterly tells her mother "You reared nobody" (Scene III 55). Analogously, the grudge Julie bears against her mother is expressed in her retort "You did not bring me up" (Act I 141). As children of neglectful mothers, the two daughters realise how unimportant they are in their mothers' lives and develop the sense that other aspects of their mothers' lives are more important than they are. Such feeling definitely exacerbated the two daughters' bitterness and resentment of their mothers.

Rachel, full of venom, discloses how her mother has not nurtured her children, but "planted a bloody garden and mended a run-down house" (Scene III 55) instead. Julie in like manner reveals how her mother has never taken care of her seven children as she was "at the window pinin' for the nine-fingered fisherman!" (Act I 141). Julie's resentment of her mother's negligent attitude is much more furious than that of Rachel, it is especially intensified by her parentification. While her mother was in the depth of her overinvolvement with her husband, Julie, at the age of "thirteen", was left with the enormous responsibility of tending to her sisters' needs and the emotional support their mother did not provide. Experiencing uncomfortable and heartbreaking combination of sadness and pride, Julie defiantly screams at her mother "I brought myself up and all the others" (Act I 141). Julie's childhood innocence was disrupted by this role reversal which has left long-lasting emotional scars on her.

Often parents who are emotionally detached and unavailable are too "overwhelmed" by their own problems to have time and motivation to devote to child rearing. Negligent parents are so involved in their needs and issues that they are simply unable to provide the emotional support their children need. According to Carole Martin and Karen Colbert, some "neglectful parents are consumed with their own life problems, stresses and needs so much that they ignore or neglect the needs of their children" (40). Others actually fail to see how uninvolved they are with their own children. They "do not even realize that they are not providing the emotional support their children need [and] even if they do realise that they are not engaged with their children,

they continue to prioritise their own needs above the needs of their children" (Sooriya 60). This may explain why such uninvolved parents are seen as neglectful, disconnected and unconcerned and why uninvolved parenting is unanimously regarded as a form of neglect.

While positive parenting is an arduous process that requires considerable time and effort, the three stage forebears are depicted as being overinvolved and self-absorbed to such an extent that they have discarded their essential parental responsibility. According to Patrice DiQuinzio, "essential motherhood" refers to "women's exclusive and selfless attitude and care of children based on women's psychological and emotional capacities of empathy, awareness of the needs of others, and self-sacrifice" (xiii). As a quintessential neglectful mother, Grandma Fraochlán contradicts all these traits and seems consistently unwilling to acquiesce to the essential motherly requirements of endless devotion, self-sacrifice and unconditional love. She is primarily concerned with her own personal problem – her excessively extreme love for her husband – which caused her depression and negligence of her maternal responsibility. Her intolerable overinvolvement with her husband and her desire to meet her own emotional needs empty her of her maternal instinct and drive her to abandon her maternal identity. She was the first to draw attention to the perception that she is rather a "lover" than a "mother" because "maybe parents as is lovers is not parents at all, not enough love left over" (Act I 144).

"Throughout her obsession with her husband", Siobhán O'Gorman argues, the oldest matriarch of the family is "characterized as the most un-motherly woman

in the play" (122). She lacks the ability to nurture her children and selfishly places her own emotional needs and desires before those of her children. Confirming her romantic rather than parental involvement, she tells Julie "there's two types of people in this world, them as puts their children first and them as puts their lover first and for what it's worth, the nine-fingered fisherman and meself belongs ta the latter of these" (Act II 182). Such non-traditional classification is certainly an unacceptable justification of her negligent attitude.

To the detriment of her children, her love for her husband, which is extraordinarily overwhelming, is a sad metamorphosis in her relationship with her daughters. As a typical neglectful mother, Grandma Fraochlán has exhibited the least involvement in her children's life as she devoted all her "time", "energy" and love to her husband. To make matters worse, she became volatile, capricious and irresponsible. Characterising Grandma as a mother, Julie bitterly recounts "she was fiery, flighty. She had little or no time for her children except to tear strips off us when we got in her way. All her energy went into my father and he thought she was an angel" (Act I 145). Because her love for her husband, described by Funahashi as "excessive and unbalanced" (69), is clearly stronger than her motherly instincts, she definitely prioritises her own needs and desires and pines for her husband instead of her daughters, all of which could be considered characteristics of an unmaternal and self-indulgent mother. She explicitly divulges her willingness to purchase her romantic love at a very high price; killing her seven children, those symbolically blocking her emotional attachment. In an honest but shocking exchange with Julie, she states "I would gladly have

hurled all seven of ya down the slopes of hell for one night more with the nine-fingered fisherman" (Act II 182). Such astonishing confession portrays an image of a selfish, unnatural and abusive mother.

While Grandma Fraochlán is preoccupied with her emotional attachment, professional life is the primary concern of Jane and Sam who have been "wholly taken up with their work; Jane with tending to the garden and the gardening books" and Sam with "his [novel] writing" (Kolb 47). The uncommonly busy couple have neither practiced their fundamental parenting duties nor paid attention to their children for they devoted all their time and strength to their work. Their three children occupy a fragile insignificant place in their consciousness accordingly.

The matriarch of McGuinness's stage family, unlike the sentimental Grandma Fraochlán, is exceptionally practical. The titular garden, Jane's lifetime's work, "denotes her success" (Morse 89) as a distinguished gardener and lauded author. Meanwhile, her obsession with the garden evidences her failure – in other words, her neglectful failure to attend to the emotional and psychological needs of her children as well as her deliberate withholding of affection and warmth. As a typical neglectful mother, Jane has always responded to the physical needs of her three children, but little else. Her gardening books, which "have sold as well as Sam's novels" (McKeown), and the earned royalties, described by Rachel as "serious dough" (Scene IV 54), have enabled her to "finance the family" (Morse 89). Meanwhile, she has always been an absentee mother: she

has never involved herself in the life of her children in spite of her presence.

The family's overestimation of the significance of the mother's garden is reflective of Jane's obsession with it. According to Donald E. Morse, these gardens are "treated not as means to an end, such as providing an income for the family, but as ends in themselves" (89). The garden is not perceived merely as a workplace for Jane's gardening ideas and experiments, but it is rather perceived by all the family members as an essential part of Jane's life and identity. Sam, recognising his wife's identification with the garden, tells her "you are the gardens" (Scene II 28). Jane herself, despite having a beautiful house (a mansion), a loving husband and three children, considers her garden, which she genuinely cherishes, as her real passion, "only pleasure" (Scene I 14), and her "only pride and joy" (Scene III 47).

According to Sarah Gilmartin, the "lush garden feeds nicely into the play's twined themes of need and neglect". This brings into consideration the fact that Jane neglected her children not out of the garden's need for her as it may apparently seem, but rather out of her own need for the garden. Such astonishing fact is declared by Jane herself when she wonders "what would I have done without the gardens?" (Scene I 14). In addition to her inability to continue without them, Jane admits the inevitability of her involvement. When Sam finds her overcome with her "toiling and murderous effort" and suggests that she should "take a holiday", Jane reluctantly replies "I couldn't stay away from the gardens" (Scene II 28).

Structured as an archetypal uninvolved mother, Jane continues to prioritise her own needs above those of her children. Consequently, her motherhood comes second to her profession. She has become increasingly a "busy" (Scene III 40) and depleted woman not because she is a mother, but because "she has so much work to do" (Scene III 34), as Sam observes. Having dedicated all her effort to nurture and sustain her garden, leaves no availability for her to spend much time with her children and, to their detriment, she even lost interest in spending time with them. Justifying the reason she cares more for the gardens than for her children, Jane herself admits that she "prefer[s] plants to human beings" (Scene IV 61). Sam, in a warm exchange with Rachel, tells her that her mother shows no concern for them because she is "more interested in her trees than in her own children" (Scene III 41). Rachel is also aware that her mother's obsession has turned her into a stoical mother who is neither sentimental nor even sympathetic. She sarcastically says to her two brothers "I believe that woman would be happier if I had a bunch of dahlias growing inside me" (Scene I 18).

All the three children, who have suffered considerable neglect, are aware of the fact that their mother's extraordinary involvement in her profession is the cause of their dilemma. They are firmly convinced that they have been not only abandoned, but also rejected. Expressing their deep dissatisfaction with their mother's preoccupation, Charlie and Rachel reveal how she has always been unapproachable because she had "important work to be done" and that "it was done at all costs, no matter who was neglected" (Scene IV 62).

Likewise, the terribly busy father, as a "prolific novelist of achievement and considerable fame" (O'Kelly), always has important work to do. The intriguing writer has always been wholly immersed in his fictional world and his "acclaimed, awarded prizes books" (Scene I 17). Sam's identity", Morse argues, "is bound up almost completely with his profession" (88). Novel writing, his primary concern, is conceived by him neither as a mere profession that provides an income nor as a passion that fills a void in his heart. His writing and artistic creativity are the whole world for him. For this reason, when Jane observes how he is withholding his creative activity, she warmly entreats him to "go back to the world" (Scene II 28).

Sam's fierce obsession with writing is identified by his own children as the cause of his neglectful parenting. "Throughout his working life, as soon as he finished one novel, he began another" (Morse 87). In this way, a vicious circle of work and neglect has been maintained. The three siblings' talk about their father's heavy work-load in scene one is remindful of the fact that they, as children, needed his attention and love, but he was emotionally unavailable. Rachel, Charlie and Maurice still remember how they grew up in an emotional vacuum where the father was too busy. Their father was not only disconnected and distracted from them, but also unapproachable and all their endeavours to engage with him were unsuccessful:

> Maurice The book must be finished.
> Rachel And when the book is finished, what then?
> Maurice Start another one.

Rachel Start immediately.
Charlie And he did – frequently.
Rachel He did always. So, he wrote his books – (Scene I 17)

Sadly, there is no discrepancy between this version of reality and Sam's for he identifies himself as "a man [who] spent his life writing stories" (Scene V 69).

Because Sam is uncomfortable with the distant and strained relationship with his children, he does not deny his parental neglect. He even acknowledges his inability to share and express love and affection to his children. His resentment of the fact that he was a present but absent father who sold his spirit to his profession while rejecting his children is indicated in the folktale he tells his family at the final scene. The story of a father "who sacrificed his own children to construct a great house that would be a mansion, fortress and palace" (Scene V 75) is obviously analogous to Sam's sacrificing everything including his children to be a novelist while having no idea about the damage he was inflicting on them. The story, according to Kolb, "may appear as a psychological allegory to the Grant family's predicament" (50). Moreover, the feeling of sadness and disappointment that overwhelmed the "stupid, stupid man" who "fashioned his house out of his children's flesh" as well as his begging to the sky "give me back my little ones" (Scene V 76) reflect Sam's deep feeling of remorse and regret for his emotional abandonment of his children in favour of his artistic creativity.

To be a neglectful parent is not a decision, it is a learned behaviour. One of the legacies of neglectful

parents is another generation of neglectful parents. According to Albert Bandura's "cycle of abuse", "abusive and neglectful parenting are learned behaviours passed on from parent to child" (97). This means that uninvolved parenting in particular is easily inherited from one generation to the next. "Parents who experienced neglectful parenting habits during their lifetime", Wallace Dixon argues, "are more likely to engage in indifferent and dismissive attitude towards their children" (22). Uninvolved parents tend to perpetuate the way they were raised for two main reasons. It is the "only style" they "witnessed and experienced" with their parents and it is "difficult to break" or eradicate this "vicious circle" of toxic inheritance "unless some conscious effort is made" (Nelson 99). Carr's stage mother and McGuinness's stage father have inherited their neglectful parenting and, more importantly, both of them are aware of this legacy and its concomitant outcomes.

Grandma Fraochlán's early revelations that Robert, The Mai's husband, has absented himself from the "life of his children" in the same way his "father did" with him and her shocking understanding that "history repeats itself in our lives" (Act I 123) are significant. They are reflective of her awareness of the fact that parental neglectful patterns of behaviour are unintentionally repeated due to parents' inability to challenge or reject this cycle of neglect and abuse. Yet, neither this awareness nor her realisation of what Melissa Sihra describes as "her shortcoming and domestic deficiencies as a mother" ("Nature" 139) prevented her from perpetuating the same neglectful conduct.

Unfortunately, Grandma Fraochlán has repeated what she was exposed to by giving her children the same unhappy childhood and the same emotionally void life her mother gave her. What is most painful for her and what she herself describes as her "unmotherly feelin'" (Act II 182) is, thus, a learned behaviour. This means that she inherited her failure as a mother, her inevitable inability to form a healthy and loving relationship with her own daughters and the subsequent absence of "any demonstration of love" (Act II 152) in this relationship from her mother. During a conversation with Beck, Grandma Fraochlán reveals her mother's "unmothely" attitude and how she alienated herself from her maternal responsibility. She bitterly recounts "she wouldn't let me call her Mother, no, the Duchess, that's what I had to call her, or Duchess for short" (Act I 169). This simple but symbolic incident, according to O'Gorman, "highlights the idea that destructive mother-daughter relationships are cyclical" and that "Grandma Fraochlán is cold and unnurturing because her mother was cold and unnurturing" (125). The Duchess's denial of her maternal identity expressed in her refusal to be called a mother, in addition to reflecting a lack of nurturance as well as a troubled mother-daughter relationship, is comparable to Grandma Fraochlán's declaration that she was a "useless mother" (Act II 182) and her willing abandonment of her maternal identity.

Sam, who himself endured toxic parenting and emotionally abusive relationship with his father, is able to recognise how his imitative behaviour and his subsequent negative feelings are still impacting his relationship with his youngest son. In a moment of honesty, he overtly states that he has inherited his cynical attitude towards

Maurice's academic achievement from his father and that he himself, like his son, was raised by a stoic and self-centred father who was not only thoughtless, but also critical of his son's success. Sam, a renowned novelist, and Maurice, a "lecturer" (Scene III 33), held the conviction that they could garner their fathers' validation and approval through good education as well as academic and professional achievements. Meanwhile, instead of having had their success appreciated, the two sons were underestimated, scorned and got the message that they are unworthy of appreciation. Both fathers, lacking concern and empathy, belittled their sons and devalued their achievements. When Maurice told his father about his Ph.D. "degree" in semantics and the "philosophy lectures" he is "giving in college" (Scene III 33), Sam responded exactly as his father had done with him. He sarcastically called Maurice "a good philosopher", "the brainy one" and then bitterly recounted:

> That's how my old boy used to describe me, when he saw fit to dismiss the books I wrote. That's if he ever took time to read a word of them … Everything was of no matter. In that respect, you resemble me. Our fathers both thought us useless. (Scene III 33)

Sam's father made him feel helpless, empty and dismissed and Sam, in turn, is automatically perpetuating the same cruel conduct.

A parent may also become uninvolved due to substance abuse. Some parents, in order to cope with intolerable pain and sorrow, turn to substances that "take them away" or "dull the pain" (Hill). Parents addicted to

alcohol, drugs or other abusive substances are not concerned for anybody including themselves. The life of children raised in a household with an addicted parent becomes more problematic and complicated as family relationships no longer seem important to the substance abuser. This sad situation severely affects children's life, emotional health and future development. Addicted parents do not involve themselves in the life of their children because they "have little competence or desire to take responsibility for raising their children" (Nelson 83). In consequence, children are neglected and, in some cases, parentified. Moreover, addicted parents experience "emotional withdrawal"; they become insensitive, unresponsive and emotionally inattentive without intending to be so. This creates an emotional distance between the parents and their children. Substance abusing parents are also more likely to adopt harsh and aggressive parenting and their children are the most affected victims of their physical abuse and violence.

Substance abuse is the most "distinctive characteristic" of Grandma Fraochlán as an uninvolved mother. She "never apologises for her addiction to opium and alcohol" (Trotter 63). Despite the limitations and prohibition God has placed on wine and drug abuse, Grandma Fraochlán remains steadfast to the idea that "Tha Lord put grapes and tobacco plants on the earth so his people could get plastered at every available opportunity" (Act I 138). Within the family circle, her opium smoking is perceived not as a stigma but as a de facto norm that is neither judged nor condemned. At the early beginning of the play, she informs her granddaughters that she spent the "hundred pounds" given to her by the "President" for her centenarian

birthday on "tobacco and pipes" (Act I 114-15). Upon her arrival to The Mai's house, she stubbornly refuses to go to bed without her tobacco pipe. "*Being led away by Beck and Agnes*", she persists "I'm not sittin' beyond in the room without me pipe!" (Act I 144). At the very onset of act two when the house reeks of opium, The Mai describes it as "an old familiar smell" (Act II 171).

The grandmother's sixty-year addiction to opium dates from the death of her husband. The "heartbroken" (Act I 145) widow has turned to opium in a desperate attempt to respite from reality and relieve or numb the intense pain, sadness and grief that followed her overwhelming loss. Julie, who was "thirteen" then, recounts how her mother, shocked with grief, immediately turned to opium: "when she was left with all of us, she was a madwoman. She spent one half of the day in the back room pullin' on an opium pipe, and the other half rantin' and ravin' at us or starin' out the window at the sea" (Act I 145). Instead of having alleviated the grief-induced pain, Grandma Fraochlán's self-medicating rather intensified her negative emotions (frustration and anger) towards her children, damaged her relationship with them and turned it into a very problematic and painful interaction. Opium abusing has eventually rendered her a mentally disturbed and emotionally unavailable mother who turned her daughters' lives into a nightmare. Her opium habit, that serves to align her with escapism, turned her into a "depressed, suicidal mother" tormenting her children and "providing only a life of neglect, violence and abuse" (*Pastures* 132). Julie's revealing passage about her unhappy childhood portrays a shocking image of an addicted mother: "several nights I dragged her from the

cliffs, goin' to throw herself in, howlin' she couldn't live without the nine-fingered fisherman, opiumed up to the eyeballs. She was unhappy and she made our lives hell" (Act I 145).

Audience expectations are challenged in the two plays not only by the three parental characters' uninvolved attitude towards their children – that has been recently discussed – but also by the children's unforgiving attitude towards their forebears. A bitter feeling of grudge is held by all the adult children who blame their forebears for their own misfortunes though their resentment can neither effect change nor cause redemption. Such resentment is not suppressed or ignored, but is openly acknowledged and voiced. In both plays, feelings of anger and frustration that children have accumulated for years are expressed through showing no regard for the families' heads as well as blaming and complaining from them.

"What is revealed upon" the first appearance of Julie and Agnes is the "frustration they feel toward their mother" (Trotter 74). Julie, in particular, could be best described as a chronic mother blamer who spares no chance to hurl blame and accusations against Grandma Fraochlán. In their first encounter, the daughter unearths all the venom and bitterness held against her mother when she – with no decency or consideration – calls her "a vicious auld bitch!" (Act I 143). On another occasion, she tells Agnes that their mother "'ll have to be shot" (Act I 137). Julie considers her status as Grandma Fraochlán's daughter a burden. She is overwhelmed by rancour and does not try to defuse her resentment as she holds her mother personally responsible for having

caused Ellen's misery and subsequent death. Julie openly tells her mother that Ellen's death "was all her fault" and that "she should've looked after her better" (Act I 139). In another incident, she informs The Mai that Grandma Fraochlán – "not miscarriages and pregnancies" – is to blame for her daughter's death since she "filled the girl's head with all sorts of impossible hope and more longing and that's what killed her, her spirit was broken" (Act I 146). From Julie's perspective, Grandma's unattainable hopes left Ellen, who was overwhelmed with sorrow and disappointment, in a state of despondency that certainly caused her demise.

Grandma Fraochlán, "the oldest of the women, receives much of the blame from the other characters" as well "for the family's unhappiness" (Maresh 183), chagrin and suffering caused by their clinging to far-fetched hopes. It is worthy to note that she is not unaware of her daughters and granddaughters' dissatisfaction and their troubled relationship with her. At the very beginning of the play, she states "You blame me for everythin'! You always have and y'always will!" (Act I 144). Grandma Fraochlán is chided by her two granddaughters who hold her ultimate responsibility for "filling their heads" (Act I 142) with illusions and false dreams, that she knew, would never be fulfilled. Beck attributes her being a "hopeless romantic" to "too much listenin' to Grandma Fraochlán and her wild stories" (Act II 163). The Mai berates her grandma for having them "filled with hope – too much hope maybe – in things to come" and for "her stories" that made them all "long for something extraordinary to happen" (Act II 163) in their lives. The deep resentment and frustration they all experience are rooted in their clinging to unattainable dreams and in

their inability to accept reality, all of which have been instilled in them by Grandma Fraochlán.

The Grants' three adult children also cannot resist the resentment and bitterness they feel towards their parents. Their anger, which is a common response to their frustration, is intense and poorly controlled. In an early encounter between the two, Rachel, giving a heart-wrenching account of having a thoughtless mother, tells Jane "you are a thoroughly nasty woman … my mother is a dangerous piece of work" (Scene IV 55). Unfortunately, the father as well "does not fare much in his children's appraisals" (Gilmartin). The disrespectful language both Rachel and Charlie use while talking about their father is reflective of not only their resentful attitude, but also of a prevailing sense of emotional estrangement and alienation:

> Charlie [f]etch him his breakfast. That him is your father, in case you've forgotten.
>
> Rachel [w]ould you like me to make breakfast for our genius. (Scene I 16-17)

Each one of these three children has his/her private reason for being terribly disappointed with not having been given sufficient tenderness, support or appreciation by both parents. In a long scene at the beginning of the play, the three of them seem painfully hurt and unforgiving while complaining about their parents. Rachel blames her parents for having neither emotion nor sympathy for her when she argues that the "two were not perfect" (Scene III 43). Charlie, though a "pro bono

caretaker of the elderly Grants" (Keane), regards his relationship with them as an unbearable burden and a source of anxiety and stress that he could no longer tolerate. He challenges his siblings to stay at home and to take care of their parents, he tells Rachel "stay here with the two of them and you wouldn't last a month" (Scene V 70). He complains of being "very tired and exhausted" (Scene V 67) and the reason is disclosed when he blames his father in particular for his ungratefulness and lack of recognition. At an early exchange with Maurice and Rachel, he bitterly reproaches his father's audacious display of ingratitude: "Sam Grant has always maintained gratitude is the worst of all human vices – take gratitude from no one, show it to no one" (Scene I 17).

In the two plays, the two mothers adopt the same attitude to their children's anger. They seem deliberately unresponsive and simply snub their frustrated children. Instead of understanding and responding to her children's anger and frustration, Jane – like Grandma Fraochlán – is reluctant even to listen. She uncomfortably asks Rachel "what is worse than adults whining about their parents" (Scene IV 62). This entails the fact that, in both plays, the children's suffering is perceived as childish and immature ranting.

Nonetheless, among the three parental figures, the one-century old Grandma and the elderly Sam are inflicted with an irredeemable sense of regret and guilt while approaching death. Though neither of them gives their children an apology, they are destined to recognise and resent their selfishness and indifference towards their own children. As the events of the two plays unfold, they are found to be dissatisfied with their parental

insufficiency as well as providing only a life of neglect and abuse. In their subconscious, they are frightened, worried and guilty and their inner painful thoughts and feelings of regret are brought to the surface.

Though Sam could be described as "a tormenter of his family" (Longergan), who "has been doing nothing" – as Jane complains – "[E]xcept tortur[ing]" her and their "children" (Scene III 51), he himself is being tormented and his undistorted awareness of his hurtful parenting keeps him panicked. His hysterical pleas for Satan "let me enter the kingdom of darkness and fire – let me in, let me die. Let me paddle in your pools and shit and drink the piss of the damned" (Scene V 69), represent his struggle with guilt. In the same way, Grandma Fraochlán "struggles with feelings of selfishness and guilt towards her deficiencies as a mother" since she "identifies her motherly failure as sinful" ("Nature" 139) and she feels terribly sorry and guilty about it. Her grievances manifest in her calling herself "one of Lucifer's wicked old children" (Act I 118) and in her dreams about being in hell tortured alongside Satan. She tells her granddaughters "I keep dramin'. I'm in hell and I'm the only one there apart from Satan himself –" (Act I 118). On the part of the two conscience-stricken parental characters, Satan – the epitome of evil – is a sign of their worries and feelings of guilt and sorrow.

The damaging effects of negligent parenting permeate the two plays since the two playwrights do not just depict uninvolved forebears and the fraught relationship with their children, but also accentuate the detrimental consequences that occur as inevitable outcomes of uninvolved practices. Both Carr and

McGuinness reveal the lingering destruction that transpires and perpetuates when their stage parental figures do not acquiesce to the requirements of parental responsibilities. Consequently, the five adult children are perceived to be encountering multiple problems such as underachievement, low self-esteem, erroneous decisions, emotional neediness and longing for the love and affection they have been deprived of.

The long-lasting impact of Sam and Jane's dysfunctional parenting is best epitomised in Charlie's sarcastic comment "look at what you've reared – You have them now to tend you all your days – The stupid donkey, the whore and the queer" (Scene V 72). Charlie is an apathetic under-achiever who rarely accomplishes anything. His "low self-esteem" (Gilmartin), incompetence and lack of self-confidence and self-efficacy are affected by his parents' under-involvement. The emotional withdrawnness of Sam and Jane and the minimal appreciation they offer him contribute significantly to his inability to develop a separate self with feelings of value or confidence. Lacking personal strength and perseverance, the Grants' firstborn is depressed, "always in pain", and his "heart is sore" (Scene IV 59) as he confides to his mother and sister. In a lengthy exchange with the two, he expresses his feelings of unworthiness and frustration towards himself in self-criticism. He explores his negative perception of himself and lack of self-esteem and motivation when he bitterly describes himself as a "beast of burden", a "stupid one", and "Donkey Charlie, doing the donkey work" (Scene IV 58, 59).

Among the three siblings, he is the only one who has stayed at home and "has given his parents his life" (Scene V 58). Charlie was, thus, deprived of the opportunity to discover his own personal desires, strength and weaknesses and rendered quite helpless and dependable. Compared to the other ostensibly successful siblings, he is found to be "the lazy bollocks living off his parents" (Scene III 44), as he himself admits. Though only Sam and Jane are to blame for their son's vulnerabilities, they ironically "see him as a contemptible under-achiever" (O'Kelly). His parents are neither proud nor pleased with him, and he is even second-rated by his father who considers him "a bit slower than the other two" (Scene III 42).

In addition to his financial dependence on his parents, which is incongruous with his status as the eldest son, Charlie develops a strong desire for money and acts immaturely for his age. He needs his sacrifices to be acknowledged. He believes that he is entitled to his parents' wealth, the house and the garden, or what John McKeown describes as "the largest slice of the family pie", and he feels resentment when it is not given to him. In scene four, he is asking for "the house and the hanging gardens" (Scene III 49) which he considers his "share", "what is owed to" him and what he "deserve[s]" (Scene IV 57). When his odd request is not answered, he childishly pleads with his mother "[K]ick the other two out. Make me the only one. Let us live as we've always lived, me, you and Da" (Scene IV 60). According to Paul Martin, an individual's "great need for external reward in the form of material wealth could be response to feelings of insecurity engendered in childhood by cold, uninvolved parents" (63). This means that both Jane and

Sam are responsible for their eldest son's underachievement, low self-esteem, materialism and immaturity.

Though the other two younger siblings, Maurice and Rachel, may seem to be relatively more mature, successful and financially secure, neither of them is quite independent or strong. Throughout the play, they are seen in situations that affirm their dependence and need for help despite the fact that they have professions and lead independent lives. Additionally, their poor life decisions and choices reflect moral deviation, personal weaknesses and insecurity.

Maurice is unable to take decisions for himself and is in need for someone else to guide him. Deprived of affection, guidance and supportiveness, he finds it difficult to form a trusting and secure relationship with his father. He has been "travelling around the world" (Scene III 34), searching for solidarity and support and he found them in homosexuality; he found another "man" with whom he can establish a close relationship. Because the father ignored Maurice's plea for help and remained apathetic and reluctant to offer "pity" or empathy, the son, who has been unable to choose a right path for himself, resorted to another man's love, guidance and counselling. Maurice's declared homosexuality, that in his father's assessment "brought shame on the house" (Scene V 72), is ironically a response to his father's rigidity and unresponsiveness. With no sense of shame and despite his family's disapprobation, the youngest son explains the reasons he needs that man and depends on him: "he made me face up to myself. He made me stop telling lies, lies that I've lived a long time. With him I

began to tell myself the truth… I need him. I loved him" (Scene V 71). Maurice's lover helped him reach self-recognition and reconciliation when the father was unexpectedly empty-handed and refrained from playing that role.

Rachel's awkward decision to become a single mother outside the marital confines proves her selfishness, immaturity and dependency. Despite residual ethical concerns, she opted for "artificial insemination" (Morse 87), has no regrets and is even proud of her single motherhood. With a feeling that she has accomplished a milestone, Rachel calls her "unorthodox pregnancy" (Gilmartin) "my little miracle. My business, strictly my own work" (Scene III 39), and even "wants to be congratulated on it" (Scene I 15). Despite her happiness, her apparent self-sufficiency and confidence of her biased choice that does not conform to standards of society, she lacks the essential requirements of single motherhood; strength and resilience. It is very noticeable that she is neither independent nor secure. Her dependency and her need for her parents' assistance are made apparent when she finally confides to Maurice "I'll need help. I'll want a hand with the baby" (Scene V 71). This means that her pregnancy, which she considers a source of satisfaction and happiness, uncovers her frailty.

Rachel is a thoughtless daughter and a selfish mother. She is inconsiderate to her parents' disappointment and sense of shame caused by her non-traditional route. Though she is cognisant of the fact that her "mammy and daddy are broken-hearted" (Scene I 13), she disparages their astonishment. In a tone not free from sarcasm, she tells Maurice "[W]hen I told him, my father

looked at me as if I were speaking gibberish … Ma coughed – A cough more in sorrow than in anger" (Scene I 14). Rachel has no reservation that the father of her baby is anonymous and that her baby would never know who its father is. Her main objective, which she is striving to achieve, is that she does not have to deal with a father. When Sam, shocked, asks her "You don't worry not knowing its father?", she *starts to laugh* and sarcastically retorts "I know my father – that's why I'm smiling" (Scene III 43). Her father's uninvolved parenting in particular gave her the courage and determination to have a fatherless child and to parent solo though she is certainly unqualified to handle the implications. The false security Rachel feels resulted from her lack of concern for the major consequences of her choice.

Rachel believes that she could find her forte and security in celibacy, the elderly Julie and Agnes by contrast believe that they could find theirs within the institution of marriage. Millie, their niece, openly states that "marriages were their forte" (Act I 135). From their first appearance on stage, their sensitivity to problems of marriage and divorce, which is made very apparent, is seen as a response to their mother's unresponsiveness. Because Julie and Agnes are emotionally drained and deprived of maternal love and affection, they firmly adhere to the conviction that emotional guidance and reassurance, they are starving for, are to be found in marriage, *albeit* the former is a widow and the latter a spinster. Both women are unhappy and dissatisfied with their being free from the constraints of marriage because their freedom and the absence of men in their lives render them insecure and in need for love.

Arguing for the sanctity of marriage, Julie tells The Mai "I can't be seen to be supportin' a divorce" (Act I 146). Trying to impose her view on her niece, Julie also warns Beck that "None of ours ever got a divorce!.. In my day you got married and whether it worked out or it didn't" (Act I 140-41). Since both Julie and Agnes view marriage not as a tradition but as a sacred institution worthy of great respect and honour, they consider it their duty to protect Beck's marriage by preventing her from pursuing divorce. "As bastions of the Connemara click", Millie sarcastically observes, the two aunts are determined and they "decided not to take the prospect of divorce in the family lying down … and if they had anything to do with it, Beck would stay married even if it was to a tree" (Act I 135). Carr's representation of the two sisters as single women is remindful of the very fact that their search for an emotional framework where they could receive and demonstrate love and warmth is evidently abortive.

To sum up, the three parental characters are presented as being uninvolved regarding the emotional aspects of their offspring. They are not only self-obsessed, but also characterised by a lack of responsiveness to their children's emotional needs. As disengaged forebears, Grandma Fraochlán, Jane and Sam are too occupied in their emotional or professional lives to concern themselves with their children. They adopt a hands-off approach, provide neither guidance nor nurturance and intentionally ignore their children's need for assistance and guidance. It is not surprising then that, in both plays, they are perceived by their offspring to be indifferent, dismissive and completely neglectful. The consequences are far from ideal. The absence of parental

monitoring, warmth and communication has its adverse effects on the parent-child relationship and on the five adult children who have become helpless victims of a vicious circle of neglect.

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