

## “Parents Who Cause Harm”: A Study of the Attachment Theory in Christopher Durang’s ‘The Marriage of Bette and Boo’

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### Abstract

**Objectives:** This study aims to examine toxic parental behavior and its impact on children based on the attachment theory. It also explores how early parental relationships influence future relationships with partners and children. The research assesses types of toxic parenting (dysfunctional, harmful, and psychologically damaging parenting behaviors) and their resulting insecure attachment patterns—avoidant, ambivalent, and disorganized—through the characters in *The Marriage of Bette and Boo*.

**Methods:** Toxic parents play a decisive role in children’s lives, affecting how they view themselves and impacting their behavior. The study uses a psychological evaluation method that relies on the attachment theory (1978), first presented by John Bowlby and later developed by other theorists. It examines the type of attachment that a child forms with his parents in his early years and how that pattern will affect his future relationships.

**Results:** The play’s analysis of toxic parenting, framed by the attachment theory, affirms that insecure parenting environments can lead sons to develop an avoidant attachment to their parents and their beliefs. Matt’s avoidant attachment, which stems from his relationship with toxic parents, has shaped his idiosyncratic worldview and religious beliefs through emotional detachment from others.

**Conclusions:** The study demonstrates how toxic parenting causes insecure attachment patterns in children. It concludes that toxic parenting affects every aspect of a person’s life, including their relationships with their partners and children. It also demonstrates that insecure parents raise insecure children.

**Keywords:** Attachment; family; matt; parenting; toxic.

## "الآباء الذين يتسببون في الضرر": دراسة نظرية التعلق في رواية كريستوفر دورانج "زواج بيت وبو"

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### ملخص

الأهداف: الهدف من هذه الدراسة هو فحص سلوك الوالدين السام وتأثيره على أطفالهم باتباع نظرية التعلق. كما تكشف عن كيفية تأثير العلاقات الأبوية المبكرة على العلاقات المستقبلية مع الشركاء والأطفال. يستكشف البحث أنواع الأبوة والأمومة السامة (سلوكيات الأبوة المختلة والضارة والمدمرة نفسياً) وأنماط التعلق غير الآمن الناتجة عنها - المتجنب والمتناقض وغير المنظم - من خلال الشخصيات في "زواج بيت وبو".

المنهجية: يلعب الآباء السامون دوراً حاسماً في حياة الأطفال، مما يؤثر على كيفية رؤيتهم لأنفسهم ويؤثر على سلوكهم. المنهجية هنا عبارة عن قراءة نفسية تعتمد على نظرية التعلق (1978) التي قدمها لأول مرة جون بولي ثم طورها منظرون آخرون. والتي تدرس نوع التعلق الذي يخلقه الطفل مع والديه في سنواته الأولى وكيف سيؤثر هذا النمط على علاقاته المستقبلية.

النتائج: يؤكد تحليل المسرحية للتربية السامة، والذي تم تأطيره بنظرية التعلق، أن البيئات الأبوية غير الآمنة يمكن أن تؤدي إلى تطوير تعلق متجنب لدى الابن تجاه والديه ومعتقداتهم. إن ارتباط مات المتجنب، والذي ينبع من علاقته المختلة مع والديه السامين قد شكل نظريته الخاصة للعالم ومعتقداته الدينية من خلال الانفصال العاطفي عن الآخرين.

الخلاصة: أظهرت الدراسة من خلال نظرية التعلق تأثير الآباء السامين على أطفالهم في تكوين أنواع مختلفة من التعلق غير الآمن. وخلصت الدراسة إلى أن التربية السامة لا تضر فقط علاقة الفرد بوالديه، وإنما يمتد تأثيرها إلى جميع جوانب حياته، بما في ذلك علاقاته مع الشرك والأبناء. وتخلص أيضاً إلى أن الآباء الذين لديهم ارتباطات غير آمنة سينتجون أطفالاً ذوي ارتباطات غير آمنة أيضاً.

الكلمات الدالة: التعلق، الأسرة، "مات"، التربية، السامة.

## Introduction

Christopher Durang (1949- ) is an American writer and actor whose primary preoccupation has always been societal challenges and failing institutions. Durang is famous for his family-centered plays that concentrate on the American family institution and express his worry about the dysfunction and dissolution of the family in the late 20th century. Durang employs irony, exaggeration, parody, and double entendre in his caustic satire to demonstrate how the family fails to cope with the difficulties of the times, resulting in sorrow and dysfunction (El-Shormilisy, 2019).

Many of the characters in Durang's plays, as well as many of the subjects that he has addressed, are based on his real-life experiences, and mimicked to fit his satirical purpose. Durang's family's ongoing failures served as the inspiration for his plays about family. He was raised by a drunken father who abused his mother as she experienced “psychological pain as a result of multiple stillbirths” (Greene, 2011, p. vii), eventually they get divorced.

Durang's *The Marriage of Bette and Boo* premiered at Joe Papp's Public Theatre in 1985. He has been taking on the character of Matt in his play. Shortly after its premiere, the play received Obie nominations for Durang in playwriting. In an interview with Durang, he asserts that the play is “based on my parents, it's more emotionally close to me than some of my more surreal plays...I like the balance of the comic and the sad. It should play as funny, but you should care about the characters and feel sad for them” (Holmberg, 1999).

Previous studies examined the play from different perspectives. Robert Spivak, in Chapter 5 of his book *Christopher Durang: Satire and Beyond* (1991), examined the satirical elements in *The Marriage of Bette and Boo* to illuminate the absurdity of this family. In her thesis entitled *Performance Study and Analysis of the Role of Soot in The Marriage of Bette and Boo* (2008), Coleman studied Soot's character in this play, proving that she is not a dumb woman and examining the inner and outer reasons for her unusual responses to insults. In El-Shormilisy's *Family Dysfunction through Bowen's Theory and Durang's Satire: An Interdisciplinary Approach* (2019) Bowen's family systems theory was adopted to *The Marriage of Bette and Boo* and other plays to examine the dynamics of dysfunctional families.

Bette and Boo start their marriage life together with the promise of a happy future ahead of them. Soon, their son, Matt, is born. Matt, the narrator in the play, depicts the agony of growing up in a toxic family and provides insight into the common family problems in American culture. Bette is a long-suffering wife, mother, and constant nag, while Boo is an alcoholic and passive husband. Because Bette's pregnancies have resulted in several stillborn kids, the family has become more apart from one another. Bette and Boo have communication issues that arise mostly from Boo's drinking, as they ultimately split and divorce. Durang brings further complications into the picture via Bette's mother, who takes a hands-off approach to raising kids, and through Paul, Bette's father, who suffers from difficulties with speech due to a stroke. Additionally, Durang brings the scenario to a whole new level by adding Boo's father, who is a heavy drinker who verbally assaults his wife via his behavior.

## Exploring Familial Toxicity and Its Theatrical Portrayals

Violence has ravaged our planet. While wars and natural disasters have become more frequent and devastating because of globalization, violence has always been a part of being human. Its impact can be found in people's minds, bodies, and communities (Muhi, 2020). Toxic may seem excessively harsh when defining a parenting style at first. On second thought, harmful parenting techniques are akin to dangerous things. Poisonous chemicals are complicated in that they are not necessarily dangerous and may even be beneficial in some conditions. Similarly, parenting actions might be beneficial in some contexts, but they can also have negative consequences if not delivered appropriately (Dunham et al., 2011). Paracelsus, a 16th-century physician who is considered the father of toxicology and who has dedicated much energy to defining what is poisonous, said, "While a thing may be a poison, it may not cause poisoning... [and] every cathartic is a poison if not administered in the proper dose." (Deichmann et al., 2011, pp. 210–211). In other words, depending on the amount taken and the environment, a specific component could make anything harmless, curative, or toxic. The same is true for parenting.

Parents do not need to be saints to become ordinary parents; rather, they should focus on whether these toxic behaviors are consistent or not, because if they are, it means those parents are toxic, but if not, they are normal parents. Parents may

not always be emotionally available. It is very common for parents to yell at their kids occasionally. Some are more controlling. That does not make them toxic; rather, it is normal since "parents are only humans and have plenty of problems of their own. And most children can deal with an occasional outburst of anger as long as they have plenty of love and understanding to counter it" (Forward & Buck, 2010, p. 5). All that is applicable except for "sexual or physical abuse can be so traumatic that often a single occurrence is enough to cause tremendous emotional damage" (p. 5).

Toxic parents are those who fail to meet their children's basic physical and emotional requirements, which may have long-lasting negative effects on their children's development (Forward & Buck, 2010). Physical harm can be seen in a study by Wasan Almirhij & Ban Diab (2020); they mention how child abuse and neglect can impact the oral habits of adults. The study concludes with the result that children who experience more severe forms of abuse tend to have worse oral habits than those whose abuse levels are lower. Oral habits include nail-biting and digit sucking. Emotionally immature parents are similar to toxic parents in their behavior. They both have long-term negative effects on their children's self-esteem and relationships. Kids of those parents feel emotionally invisible and lonely (Gibson, 2022).

In *The Marriage of Bette and Boo* (1985), Matt has been neglected by his parents, just like his parents have been mistreated by their parents. Karl, Boo's father, bullies everyone around him, including his son's wife Bette; he always annoys her by offering Boo alcohol. He always makes fun of her because she wants more babies; he even calls her "baby-maker" (Durang, 1985, p. 332). He is making fun of her due to her nagging habit. He tells her, "Your baby's going to be all mouth if you keep talking so much?" (p. 332). Karl offends Soot by describing her as the stupidest white woman alive. When Karl makes fun of Soot, she does not get angry; on the contrary, she has been laughing, which is her way of escaping her miserable life. The emotional harm that is caused to a person who is the target of laughter is the line that separates joking from bullying. Bullying affects people all over the world and has terrible consequences for everyone (Jassim and Ahmed, 2021). If people make a person the figure for their laughter, that means this is bullying, not joking. Bullying and joking are different (Nabat, 2021). Thus, Karl bullies his wife and Bette; though the emotional harm can be seen in Bette only, Soot has that too, yet Soot reacts in a different way than she feels.

Stress can be managed with humor. This coping method is adaptable (Carver, 1989). It is used in many therapies (Malik, 2021). Traumatized people try to escape pain, shame, and confusion (Jaber, 2020). Soot's laugh is an escape since she is not thrilled with Karl's negative behavior toward her. She is a delicate character and cannot stand reality; consequently, she responds to everything with a smile on her face. When Karl portrays her as the dumbest lady and when he informs Boo that Soot has never said a rational thing throughout their marriage, she replies with laughter. Bette struggles with Karl, telling him she does not allow Boo to drive her to the point of collapse, like Karl does to Soot. Soot's response to this is likewise laughter. Bette and Boo argue about vacuuming the gravy; Soot cannot fix the matter between them, so her reaction is also humorous. Hence, she turns to laugh if the situation is humiliating or puts her in a position where she should respond like a mature lady. Another example reveals her escape from reality when Bette asks Soot if Karl drinks too much. Despite knowing Karl is an alcoholic, Soot claims she has never considered it since she cannot change it.

Names are crucial to identity. Personal, cultural, and historical identities are deeply ingrained in names. Mispronounced words might hurt a person's feeling of belonging (Baobeid, 2016). Another piece of evidence that Soot avoids reality is her name. Karl calls her Soot to make her his doll. Accepting that has made her forget her true name. The name is less important than how the pair remembers it, yet it draws them together, so they renew their memories (Al-Jamani, 2021). Soot tells Karl she wants to know her name's meaning when Bette asks. Everyone in the play is known as her Soot, indicating her dullness. Matt questions Karl about Soot's name after her death. Karl does not know it either, proving she lives and dies in Karl's ego. Karl nicknamed his kid Boo Bore, and Boo never complains. The Cambridge Dictionary defines Bore as a lack of interest or boredom, and Boo's acceptance of that label demonstrates his acceptance of his father's negative habits.

Boo, like his father, is an alcoholic. Boo avoids reality like his mother. His mother laughs as he drinks when bad things happen. The family encourages Boo to drink. Drinking helps him escape problems and find pleasure. Boo hears Bette has miscarried for her fourth baby at the hospital. He informs his parents, "I should probably see Bette, but I don't think I can face her" (Durang, 1985, p. 349). His mother advises him: "Why don't you go get a drink?" (p. 349). When Bette has been

nagging Boo, Karl tells him to have another drink. Boo's inflexibility and addiction lead him to destroy his family by divorcing his wife.

Boo's parents forgot his age due to negligence. Karl asks Boo his age in his marriage since he cannot verify his son's age. In the hospital, when Bette has a miscarriage, Boo tells his parents he dislikes jokes, but they keep making them until he departs. Toxic parents' abuse, neglect, or criticism weaken their children's ability to depend on others. These children may be poisoned and carry the bitter taste of a broken bond into future relationships (Dunham et al., 2011). Boo does the same to Matt, his son. The fact that Matt and Boo never spoke as children shows that he is a negligent parent. Matt refuses to kiss his father when Bette urges him to, showing his attachment to him. Without Matt's consent, Boo uses Matt to speak about his issues and how he misses Bette as he grows older. Ultimately, Matt leaves, leaving Boo chatting with the chair.

Bette, Matt's mother, and her family resemble Boo's toxic and immature family. Paul, her father, stroked. His speech is severely affected, yet he is the play's most intellectual character. Durang's satirical portrayal of Bette's father depicts how damaged families lack role models. Bette's immature mother, Margret, plays favorites. Children may compare themselves to others if their parents play favorites. These parents make sibling rivalry harsh. Negative comparisons may cause lifelong sibling hatred and envy (Forward & Buck, 2010). Immaturity and comparison harm children, and toxic parents are “the parents who do the harm” (Forward & Buck, 2010, p. 5). Margret says, “Bette was always the most beautiful of my children. We used to say that Joanie was the most striking, but Bette was the one who looked beautiful all the time. And about Emily, we used to say her health wasn't good” (Durang, 1985, p. 315). She plays favorites and treats her kids like toys, making her a toxic and immature mother. Margret wants her kids together, no matter what. She likes watching her children struggle and fail because she feels needed. Margret says, “I'm afraid if I had to choose between having my children succeed in the world and live away from home or having them fail and live at home, I'd choose the latter” (p. 345). Margret calls her daughter Betsy instead of Bette, and Bette does not complain, showing that she is submissive to her mother like Boo is to his father.

Bette has Margaret's characteristics. She is like her mother in playing favorites over everything. Bette tries to rival Bonnie, her friend, and Joan, her sister. Margaret has only played favorites over her children, unlike Bette, who plays favorites over everyone and everything to receive more attention from others, not for comparison. Attention-seeking behavior is done to get attention or praise. Jealousy or loneliness may cause it. A jealous person may feel intimidated by a person who is getting all the attention. Thus, attention-seeking may alter the focus (Frothingham, 2020).

Bette and Joan dispute parenting in front of their mother. Bette states that Matt gets A's in school, unlike Joan's daughter. Margret says, “poor Joan” (Durang, 1985, p. 346) as Bette tries to compete with her sister for her mother's attention. Bette concludes, “Everything's always ‘poor Joanie.’ But her baby's going to live” (p. 346). Bette's jealousy is evident in her phone call with Bonnie, her friend. She questions her friend's marriage, kids, and everything. All these questions compare and demand attention. Bette views Bonnie as competitive. Bette has always compared herself to Bonnie since school. Each was the class's stupidest. Bette's teacher famously says, “Bonnie, your grade is eight, and Betsy, your grade is five” (p. 333). Bonnie beats Bette despite having the lowest class grades. Bette asks about Bonnie's children. After realizing Bonnie had two children, Bette tells her she is miscarrying two out of envy and attention. She asks Bonnie whether her husband drinks or comes home early; she contrasts. She says Boo sometimes stays at the pub until it closes. She hangs up after discovering Bonnie's life is better than hers and not giving her the attention she desires. After Bette asks Joan, “Do you think when I have my baby, it will make Boo stop drinking and bring him and me closer together?” (p. 323). She makes it clear that her goal is to attract his attention, not to stop drinking for the baby.

Bette is like her mother in comparing and amusing herself with her children. All her motives for wanting multiple children are immature. Bette asks her father whether having a kid would improve her relationship with Boo. Paul says no. So, her first motivation is to have children to save her marriage. Then, when Bette tells Boo she wants numerous children named after A. A. Milne characters, she begins with Pooh Bear and concludes with Tigger: “My family is going to be like an enormous orphanage” (p. 337). Moreover, Bette believes in miracles. Father Donnally, the priest, informed her that miracles are unusual. Her miscarriages are medical, but she wants miracles. She's a childish mother who wants to have

children for immature reasons.

Bette uses Matt as a toy to instruct. Bette calls Boo off and tells Matt he is concealing a bottle beneath the furnace. Ten-year-old Matt tells Bette to stop shouting because he does not need to hear this. She wonders whether he smells his father's breath. Since she does not come close, she begs Matt to kiss his father to check whether he is drunk, but Matt refuses. Even though she does not ask him to kiss his father out of love, she labels him unloving for not doing so. After discussing, he sets the table as she advises. She says, "Your father's gone away. All the babies are dead. You're the only thing of value left in my life, Skippy" (p. 363). She does not say he is the only important person for her; she views him as something that fails to meet her expectations. Like her mother, she compares her child to others. Bette compares Matt to neighbors because he does not have siblings to compare with. Bette invites Matt to stay because he entertains her, not because she wants a mother-child bond. She becomes bored and compares him to others when he does not do what she wants. She says, "Polly Lydstone's son goes to her house for dinner twice a week, and her daughter Mary gave up her apartment and lives at home, and Judith Rankle's son moved home after college and commutes forty minutes to work" (p. 342). Matt refuses to do what she wants and warns her that some boys in his school murder their parents. He wants her to know that comparisons are terrible. If he compares himself to others like she does, he might kill her like those boys do. He concludes his comments by declaring that he does not want to hear about anyone. He is tired of comparisons. Because of her comparative habit, she is constantly unhappy with what she has and wants what others have. Bette is a toxic, immature mother because playing favorites harms children. The most common impact is low self-esteem. Children with low self-esteem doubt themselves and their talents. Parents' comparisons damage their relationships with their kids (Bunag, 2022).

Many sequences in the play show Matt's invisibility. He keeps telling his mother the oven is burning, but she ignores him. Then he turns off the oven and leaves. Bette is nagging Boo to wake him up, but Matt tells her not to since they will fight again, but she does not listen. He hates it, unlike his father, Boo, who accepts it. Boo has experienced the same thing when waiting in the hospital for Bette's stillborn child. Boo does not like that, but all he can do is leave them to enjoy their jokes alone. Matt rebels, unlike his parents, who accept their role. Bette and Boo do not mind their nicknames, but Matt does.

Names influence children's ideas of personal continuity throughout life. Many young people's sense of continuity from the past to the present and future is dependent on their name. Younger children are more likely to identify with a name that fits them. Younger children's "nominal realism" may be intentional. Which is the idea that something cannot exist without a name. Young children typically think an object or concept's name determines its existence. Some argue that without a name or label, anything loses its identity (Piaget, 1965). Mohammed's and Berzenji's (2023) study confirms that naming is tremendously significant in the construction of people's identities, as it unavoidably defines them. The oppressed characters have been given nicknames by their oppressors, and they have never complained, Matt rejects his nickname because he disagrees with his parents. Matt asks his mother to use his true name. She has named him Skippy after her favorite film then she has ended their conversation by saying she does not want to call him "Matt." He hates being called Skippy by his relatives. They deprive him of himself and his longing for his original name; it's either his effort for another identity or his wish to make them approve of his own identity, not theirs.

Adults who grow up with emotionally immature parents still carry inner emptiness with them, even if their lives seem perfectly normal on the outside (Gibson, 2022). The impact of a toxic and immature family has two results in the play. The first one can be seen in Bette and Boo, who imitate their parents and make the cycle continue, unlike Matt, who represents the second result: he has suffered from his family, but that does not make him repeat their personalities; instead, he breaks all his parents' cycles. Matt is not like his mother since he does not play favorites. He says that "Boo is an alcoholic, and Bette is a terrible, unending nag in reaction to his drinking so much" (Durang, 1985, p. 333). Attending his parents' divorce, Matt is asked by the judge whether he has drunk before or not. Matt denies that. He breaks the cycle of drinking, which starts with his grandfather.

#### ***Unveiling Attachment: Behaviors as Clues to Patterns***

Attachment theory is based on the thinking that humans are born with a need to build a close emotional link with their parents. This bond emerges during the first six months of a child's life. Although John Bowlby's studies focus on infants



and their relationships with their parents, that does not mean it does not deal with adults. Bowlby in 1979 said "attachment behavior is held to characterize human beings from the cradle to the grave" (p. 129); Mary Ainsworth in 1989 presented a life-span viewpoint. Indeed, a greater emphasis on attachment in adulthood has supplemented studies on attachment in children. The theory focuses on the experiencing, expression, and control of emotions in humans (Simpson & Beckes, 2017).

Bowlby has long believed that attachment is crucial to human conduct throughout life. Cindy Hazan and Philip Shaver, adult attachment pioneers, published a "love quiz" in the late 1980s to confirm their hypothesis. The quiz asked people about their attachment styles with their parents and then with their partners. As kids, most respondents were "secure," and the rest were anxious or avoidant. The attachment theory is based on the child's attachment to his parents during childhood, which affects his personality as a partner and a parent. 30% of people alter their attachment types as they grow older, whereas 70% stay the same (Levin & Heller, 2012).

Ainsworth created the Strange Situation Classification (SSC), or what others called the Strange Situation Procedure (SSP), a widely used research instrument for evaluating children's attachment to their mothers in the laboratory. The SSP paradigm is used to explore the security of attachment in children under the age of three to identify the basis for attachment behaviors and attachment patterns. A person's ability to make good personal relationships and be good depends on his early relationship with his mother, which has never been considered part of ethics (Holmes, 2014).

There are four attachment styles that have been developed for newborns. They are important to understand since the child's attachment style. It has a dramatic impact on how they socialize and take risks, as well as how they will parent their own children in the future (Firestone, 2023). In 1978, Ainsworth and her colleagues discovered three attachment styles: secure, ambivalent, and avoidant (Ainsworth et al.). In 1990, Main and Solomon discovered the fourth attachment style, which is the disorganized or disoriented style (Granqvist, 2017).

Secure attachment style calls infants the four S's—safe, soothed, seen, and secure (Siegel & Bryson, 2020). Children in this style use their parents as a stable foundation to explore the world (Fraley & Shaver, 2008). With parental support, this style may be achieved. Meanwhile, nobody always watches their child. If parents can heal ruptures with their children, a strong bond may be maintained (Firestone, 2023). In the play, secure attachment does not occur; rather, insecure attachment patterns (anxious, ambivalent, and disorganized) occur. They are similar to toxic parents' lack of love, attention, and time for their children, so adults raised by toxic parents tend to repeat these patterns. Few can stop this cycle to start a secure one.

The study by Jonathan Norton (2003) found that the ambiguous nature of infant behavior allows cultural beliefs about human nature to influence how observers interpret "attachment-like" behaviors, which may not actually reflect innate social tendencies in infants. However, the concept of "working models" for early significant relationships remains relevant to understanding later social and emotional development, including adult intimate relationships. Questioning the notion of attachment theory's power does not mean ignoring the importance of a child's first significant relationships or the influence of later important relationships on development. Attachment theory's clinical relevance lies in its emphasis on the robust yet modifiable nature of feelings arising from experiences in significant relationships. In other words, the highlighted limitations emphasize the need for nuance in applying attachment theory while preserving its valuable insights about the impact of early and ongoing relationships on human development.

Anxious/ambivalent children (also referred to as “ambivalent-anxious,” “anxious-preoccupied,” or simply “anxious attachment”) are nervous and tend to attach to their parents (Fraley and Shaver, 2008). It is characterized by inconsistent and unpredictable caregiver responsiveness. Parents with this style are sometimes present or then unexpectedly gone, confusing their child. When parents do not address children's emotional needs, children may become clingy, disorderly, or anxious. Children with this attachment style have problems trusting people. These youngsters are concerned about their surroundings and continually seek their caregivers' approval out of fear of abandonment (Yassin, 2020). They may feel needy or uncomfortable in adult relationships (Firestone, 2023). Bette has an anxious/ambivalent style. Adults in this style need too much affection and attention. Anxious people stress about their relationships and worry about whether their partners share their sentiments (Levin & Heller, 2012). Bette is obsessed with getting Boo to stop drinking so he can give

her attention. When he does not, she divorces him and marries someone else to get his attention. She longs for a constant feeling of being desired. In the last scene of the play, when Matt informs her he wants to leave the hospital, she urges him to wait for the nurse and asks him to pray, though she knows he does not believe in God. Even though he is thirty, she does not respect his beliefs or needs. Ambivalent mothers may care for their children inconsistently once they are emotionally available, and other times they are absent. Ambivalently connected parents may raise insecure children who struggle to form solid relationships and manage their emotions (Brumariu & Kerns, 2008).

Avoidant attachment style children show little sadness at parting and little desire to attach when reunited with their parents. Most avoidant attachment-type people are self-confident. Avoidant attachment-style parents often demonstrate the following: Believe that children should learn independence early, expect them to be tough, and avoid emotional display. Avoidant adults tend to raise their children the way they were raised ("Avoidant Attachment Style: Causes and Adult Symptoms", 2022). Since Matt's parents are toxic and have insecure attachments, he exhibits avoidant behavior in the play. He is mature enough to escape the cycle of toxic behaviors from both his parents. Avoidant adults try hard to avoid closeness because they fear losing their independence (Levin & Heller, 2012). Individuals with this style isolate themselves rather than seek support from others (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2021). Matt can take care of himself without parental assistance. When he visits his parents, he wants to leave since he is frightened of getting intimate. When Boo talks about his difficulties to Matt, Matt immediately leaves Boo talking alone since he is unwilling to hear about his troubles. Matt resists his mother's request to remain longer. Even when his mother is dying, he wants to escape. His numerous unanswered questions contribute to his avoidant attachment style. He asks his father, "Why did you drink?" (Durang, 1985, 367). He then asks his mother, "Why did you keep trying to have babies?" (p. 367). He looks at both and asks, "Why didn't Soot leave Karl?" Why was she her name, 'Soot'?" (p. 367). He receives no responses. Having more problems with family can make a person more mentally stressed, angry, and unhappy with their life (Alsaadi & Alomosh, 2023).

Religion as an attachment provides a paradigm for evaluating religious beliefs, feelings, and behavior. As for God being comforting, believers see their connection with God as an attachment bond. This link might provide a solid basis or safe refuge. God is presented as an attachment figure at both theological and experiential-affective levels (Kirkpatrick and Shaver, 1990). Religious people regard God as an intimate, dialogical companion during personal prayer, according to neuroscientific studies (Schjodt et al., 2009). Matt's family wants him to do things he does not want to. His mother wants him to kiss his father, but he refuses. She wants him to pray for her, despite his atheism. Matt doubts everything, even God. His mother talks about God punishing people for specific actions. He first tells her that God punishes everyone, but then he says he does not believe any of that. Without respecting his views, she begs him to pray for her. She calls him cold and unresponsive. He suggests she does not ask him to pray since he does not believe. This style has caused him to withdraw from others, even God.

Main and Solomon claim the final attachment style is disorganized or disoriented. Children combine anxious/ambivalent and avoidant attachment patterns (cited in Granqvist, 2017). These newborns act far too ambiguously when they see their parents again. Their behavior is erratic. They tried to reach their attachment figure but stopped halfway (Berman and Sperling, 1994). This attachment type's adults are unreliable and hostile. These individuals may also have drug or depression issues ("Disorganized Attachment Style: Everything You Need to Know," 2023). Depression is defined by a low mood, feelings of isolation, and low self-esteem (Siwan & Huusein, 2022). Adults with this pattern want emotional connection, but if they get it, they will be afraid of it. Previously, their parents, then their partners, were both unexpected to them. They break up early because they struggle to be accepted by their partners ("Disorganized Attachment Style: Everything You Need to Know," 2023). Boo acts this way in the play. He sways like a compass in a magnetic storm between two options. He wants to have a stable family. After getting what he desires, he becomes bored. He dislikes Bette's nags. In addition, he ignores Matt. He drinks without considering his family's happiness. He refuses to stop drinking, no matter how many times Bette takes him to church. When Bette leaves him for another person, he gets upset and tells Matt how much he loves and misses her, showing he wants her back. Disorganized parents may struggle to provide reliable care. Fathers may be unpredictable and struggle to meet their children's needs. Inconsistency may affect the child's ability to create a secure bond with their father, which may lead to future relationship issues (Jagoo, 2022).

## Conclusion

Toxic parents create insecure attachment to their off springs. This can be seen by Boo, Bette, and Matt. The difference is that Bette and Boo repeat the same cycle of their parents, unlike Matt, who rebels. Bette uses Matt to make herself feel important and entertained. Her favoritism is to get his attention. Boo has a drinking problem, does not listen to his family, and uses Matt as a means to express his feelings. They are toxic and immature parents, and neither of them realizes it. They believe they love and treat their kid wonderfully, but Matt's attachment style proves them wrong. Their actions are not occasional. He grows up being unable to tell the difference between a happy and miserable marriage, so it is constant. Therefore, he creates an avoidance attachment to everything, even God. He does not want to believe in anything or depend on anyone. This predisposition toward skepticism is ingrained in him at an early age and continues to deepen as he matures. Poisonous behavior mimics poisonous seeds. Toxic seeds will grow up to become a toxic tree, much like a harmful family. They will grow up as poisonous kids who are not only harmful to others but even to themselves.

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