

## **Grief and Recovery**

Ryan Preston-Roedder

Occidental College

Erica Preston-Roedder

Occidental College

ABSTRACT: Imagine that someone recovers relatively quickly, say, within two or three months, from grief over the death of her spouse, whom she loved and who loved her; and suppose that, after some brief interval, she remarries. Does the fact that she feels better and moves on relatively quickly somehow diminish the quality of her earlier relationship? Does it constitute a failure to do well by the person who died? Our aim is to respond to two arguments that give affirmative answers to these questions. The first argument, which is developed by Dan Moller in “Love and Death”, states that recovering relatively quickly from grief over the deaths of people who are close to us is deeply regrettable, in one respect, because it means that these people were relatively unimportant to us. The second, which derives from some classic literary discussions of grief, states that such a recovery is regrettable because it amounts to abandoning the person who died. Responding to these arguments promises to dissolve certain anxieties about whether we do well by the people we love when they die. Beyond this, it promises to help us better understand what it means to cultivate good relationships with these people during their lives.

## Introduction

Imagine that someone recovers relatively quickly, say, within two or three months, from grief over the death of a spouse whom she loved, and who loved her. Imagine, in other words, that within two or three months, the bereaved person's emotional well-being and her ability to work and to perform other vital tasks return to the levels they were at before her spouse died, and she regains her ability and desire to form new relationships, including romantic relationships. Does the fact that this person's grief is neither prolonged nor highly disruptive indicate that her relationship was deficient in some way? More broadly, is adapting to the loss and getting on with our lives shortly after the deaths of people who are close to us in tension with the aim of having good relationships with these people, or doing well by them?

Cases in which someone feels such tension are familiar from literature and from ordinary life: In *Upheavals of Thought*, Martha Nussbaum reports that much of her daily life, including much of her professional activity, resumed, more or less without alteration, shortly after her mother's death.<sup>1</sup> She found her quick return to normal activities comforting in some respects, but also viewed it "with suspicion, as a possible sign of deficiency in love."<sup>2</sup> In the poem "Home Burial," Robert Frost depicts a bereaved mother who becomes overwhelmed with resentment as she describes respects in which her husband has been absorbed in "everyday concerns" since their child's death.<sup>3</sup> And in *A Grief Observed*, C.S. Lewis reports that his initial recovery from grief over his wife's death brought "a sort of

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<sup>1</sup> Martha Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 25–28.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Frost, "Home Burial," in *The Poetry of Robert Frost: The Collected Poems*, ed. Edward Connery Lathem (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2002).

shame.”<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, Anglophone philosophers have largely neglected the significance of our grief over the deaths of people we love, despite the fact that philosophers since antiquity have devoted enormous attention to our attitudes toward *our own* deaths.<sup>5</sup>

Though neglected, the project of figuring out what our grief indicates about the quality of our relationships is important. Bereavement research shows that, contrary to what many assume, people who grieve over the deaths of their spouses, children, or others who are close to them often — perhaps typically — prove *resilient*; that is, they recover from grief within just

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<sup>4</sup> C.S. Lewis, *A Grief Observed* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994), p. 53.

<sup>5</sup> The literature on attitudes toward one’s own death includes Epicurus, *Letter to Menoeceus*; Lucretius, *On the Nature of the Universe*; Bernard Williams, “The Makropulos case: reflections on the tedium of immortality,” in *Problems of the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), pp. 82–100; Thomas Nagel, “Death,” in *Mortal Questions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 1–10; Ben Bradley, *Well-Being and Death* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); and Samuel Scheffler, “Fear, Death, and Confidence,” in *Death and the Afterlife* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 83–110. Discussions of grief include the following: Martha Nussbaum (*Upheavals of Thought*, Chs. 1 and 3) appeals to claims about grief in order to characterize the structure of several emotions. Troy Jollimore (“Meaningless Happiness and Meaningful Suffering,” *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 42 [2004]: 333–347) appeals to claims about grief to challenge the view that suffering is always intrinsically *dis*-valuable. Robert Solomon (“On Grief and Gratitude,” in *In Defense of Sentimentality* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004], pp. 75–107) argues that grief is, in some sense, morally obligatory. Dan Moller (“Love and Death,” *Journal of Philosophy* 104 [2007]: 301–316) argues that there is something regrettable about recovering from grief shortly after a loved one’s death. And Michael Cholbi (“Grief’s Rationality, Backward and Forward,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* [forthcoming]) develops an account of the rationality of grief. We will discuss Moller’s argument below.

two or three months. For our purposes, recovery from grief has two dimensions: first, it involves recovering from the sadness associated with grief and returning to one's emotional baseline, and, second, it involves returning to one's baseline functioning.<sup>6</sup> As the above examples illustrate, anxieties about feeling better and getting on with our lives shortly after the deaths of people we love are commonplace, and these anxieties may yield guilt or resentment, heightening whatever suffering accompanies the loss. So, on the one hand, if recovering from grief shortly after a loved one's death diminishes the quality of one's relationship with her, then thinking about the significance of grief and recovery may help us confront hard truths about our relationships with people who are close to us. And on the other hand, if, as we believe, recovering quickly need not diminish the quality of one's relationship, then thinking about grief's significance might undercut one common source of pointless suffering.

Beyond this, thinking about the nature and significance of grief deepens our understanding of the topic of this volume, namely, the moral psychology of sadness. Sadness, together with certain characteristic patterns of attention and motivation, is an essential aspect of grief, but the sadness associated with grief has some distinctive features. Someone may, to borrow an example from Robert Solomon, simply wake up in the morning feeling

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<sup>6</sup> See G. Bonanno et al., "Resilience to Loss in Bereaved Spouses, Bereaved Parents, and Bereaved Gay Men," *The Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 88 (2005): 827–843; S. Zisook et al., "The Many Faces of Depression Following Spousal Bereavement," *Journal of Affective Disorders* 45 (1997): 85–94; A. Futterman, J. Peterson, and M. Gilewski, "The Effects of Late-Life Spousal Bereavement over a 30-Month Interval," *Psychology and Aging* 6 (1991): 434–41; and Dale Lund, "Impact of Spousal Bereavement on the Subjective Well-Being of Older Adults," in Lund et al., eds., *Older Bereaved Spouses* (New York: Hemisphere, 1989), pp. 3–15. Moller cites these studies in "Love and Death," pp. 301–3. For an accessible overview of bereavement research, see George Bonanno, *The Other Side of Sadness: What the New Science of Bereavement Tells Us About Life After Loss* (New York: Basic Books, 2009).

sad, without being sad “about anything in particular”<sup>7</sup>; but, unlike the sadness that one experiences in Solomon’s example, the sadness associated with grief is “about something more or less specific.”<sup>8</sup> When someone grieves, she is sad about some specific loss, for example, the death of her parent, the breakup of her marriage, or the dissolution of some organization to which she was deeply committed. And in the cases we will discuss, the person who grieves is sad about the death of someone to whom she bears some personal relationship. So our examination of the nature and significance of grief is, in part, an examination of a common, and often debilitating, form of sadness about the deaths of those who are close to us.

We will respond to two related arguments for the view that when someone recovers relatively quickly from grief over her beloved’s death, the fact that her grief is not prolonged or highly disruptive indicates some grave deficiency in her relationship with the person who died. For simplicity’s sake, we will focus mainly on cases where people survive the deaths of their spouses, but much of our discussion also applies to cases where people survive the deaths of their children, parents, siblings, or others to whom they bear certain personal relationships.<sup>9</sup> First, we will discuss what we call the *argument from unimportance*, which Dan Moller develops in “Love and Death.”<sup>10</sup> Put roughly, this argument states that when someone recovers relatively quickly from grief over her beloved’s death — and so, the be-

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<sup>7</sup> Robert Solomon, *In Defense of Sentimentality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 81.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.

<sup>9</sup> Mark Alfano pointed out, in discussion, that although the professional literature on grief discusses the loss of spouses, children, parents, and friends, it almost entirely neglects the loss of siblings. One exception to this trend is Elizabeth DeVita-Raeburn, *The Empty Room* (New York: Scribner, 2004), which provides an illuminating discussion of grief over a sibling’s death.

<sup>10</sup> “Love and Death,” pp. 308–310.

loved's absence fails to make a prolonged, debilitating impact on her life — her recovery is troubling in one respect, because it means that the person who died was relatively unimportant to her. Then we will discuss what we call the *argument from desertion*, which appears in some classic literary discussions of grief, but does not, as far as we know, figure prominently in any philosophical work.<sup>11</sup> This second argument states that when someone feels better and gets on with her life shortly after her beloved's death, her recovery is regrettable in one respect, because it constitutes a form of desertion, a serious failure of solidarity with the person who died. These two arguments represent two complementary strategies for vindicating anxieties about feeling better and adapting to the loss shortly after the deaths of people who are close to us. The former argument states that reacting to the loss in this way reveals that, prior to their deaths, our loved ones failed to occupy certain significant roles in our lives, while the latter states that reacting in this way constitutes a failure, on our parts, to do well by our loved ones *after* their deaths.

To be clear, the scope of these arguments is limited in two important respects. First, the degree to which people care about exhibiting certain emotional reactions after their loved ones die may vary considerably from one culture to another. People in industrial Western countries tend to regard grief as primarily a psychological phenomenon and, accordingly, tend to care about the character and duration of the bereaved person's sadness. By contrast, people in many other countries tend to emphasize bodily manifestations of grief, and tend to care not about the individual bereaved person's psychological reactions, but rather about whether and how she performs mourning rituals that reinforce her ties to the community.<sup>12</sup> It may be that some differ-

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<sup>11</sup> See Frost, "Home Burial" and Lewis, *A Grief Observed*, p. 53.

<sup>12</sup> For discussion of bodily manifestations of grief in non-Western cultures, see Arthur Kleinman, *Social Origins of Distress and Disease: Depression, Neurasthenia, and Pain in Modern China* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986). For discussion of mourning rituals in

ences between Western and non-Western attitudes toward grief derive from reasonable disagreements about the relative significance of personal autonomy on the one hand, and one's relation to the community on the other.<sup>13</sup> In any case, the arguments that we will discuss, and our responses to them, are most appropriately addressed to Western audiences.

Second, these arguments concern cases where someone who survives her spouse's death experiences grief, but recovers relatively quickly. So we will focus on that common type of case, as opposed to the rarer class of cases in which someone who survives her spouse's death does not experience grief at all. Cases of the latter sort, in which grief is entirely absent, may have objectionable features that cases of the former sort, in which grief is short-lived and minimally disruptive, do not possess. To begin with, according to a generally accepted view, evolution selects for bonds of emotional attachment between mates, parents and children, and so on; and when death severs these relationships, survivors' grief serves largely to express such bonds.<sup>14</sup> Because grief is so deeply embedded in human life, a person's failure to experience grief at all after her spouse's death may seem profoundly alien, in ways that experiencing short-lived grief does not.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, according to a widely accepted view, experiencing certain emotional reactions is part of appreciating the goodness or badness of our circumstances. So when someone merely judges, in a detached way, that she survived her spouse's death, but fails to grieve, this failure may prevent her from appreciating the loss, in a way that experiencing brief,

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non-Western cultures, see Bonanno, *The Other Side of Sadness*, Chs. 4, 10, and 11.

<sup>13</sup> See Bonanno, *The Other Side of Sadness*, p. 47.

<sup>14</sup> See John Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss*, Vols. 1–3, (London: Hogarth Press & Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1969, 1973, and 1980).

<sup>15</sup> See Douglas Maclean, "Pain and Suffering" (unpublished manuscript).

but intense, sadness over the loss does not.<sup>16</sup> We do not have space to discuss these considerations in detail, and so we will set aside cases in which surviving spouses fail to grieve altogether.

The argument from unimportance and argument from desertion purport to show that when someone recovers from grief shortly after her spouse's death, she thereby shows that her relationship with her spouse was deficient in some significant respect. We claim, roughly, that both arguments overlook relevant circumstances in which someone whose relationship is good in all relevant respects may nevertheless recover from grief, and go on to form a new romantic relationship, shortly after her beloved's death; and so neither argument succeeds. Nevertheless, as we will explain in the closing section, the arguments make salient some vexing concerns about recovery that cannot simply be dismissed. We said above that responding to arguments that purport to vindicate people's anxieties about feeling better and adapting to the loss shortly after a loved one's death is apt to undercut a source of needless suffering, and our discussion serves this aim. But beyond this, responding to these particular arguments serves another, more constructive aim, namely, clarifying what it means both to be important to people who are close to us and to stand in solidarity with them. So responding to these arguments does not just promise to quell anxieties

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<sup>16</sup> Jesse Prinz defends this view of emotions in *Gut Reactions: A Perceptual Theory of Emotion* (New York: Oxford, 2004), Chs. 3 and 10. Jollimore ("Meaningless Happiness," pp. 339–342) argues that failing to grieve at all over a loved one's death prevents one from adequately appreciating the loss. Moller ("Love and Death", pp. 310–313) defends the stronger claim that failing to grieve *for an extended period* prevents one from adequately appreciating the loss. Contrary to what Moller assumes, brief, but intense, sadness over a loved one's death may yield deep, lasting insight into the nature of the loss. See, for example, Bonanno's (*The Other Side of Sadness*, Ch. 4) descriptions of interview subjects who were resilient after the deaths of family members.

about whether our relationships with now deceased loved ones were deficient in some way, or whether we failed to do well by them after they died; it also promises to deepen our understanding of what it means to cultivate good relationships with our loved ones *during* their lives.

But before we discuss these arguments in detail, we should briefly distinguish them from a different worry about recovering quickly from grief over the deaths of people who are close to us, namely, the view that such recoveries are regrettable because they show that we did not care deeply about the people who died. Though this view is mistaken, it is familiar and, we believe, intuitively plausible. Acceptance of something like this view helps explain both Nussbaum and Lewis's unease about their respective recoveries from grief, and it helps account for the distress that the mother in "Home Burial" feels when she considers her husband's recovery.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, this view may seem to derive support from plausible claims about the nature of love. To love someone is, in part, to want her to flourish and to be invested in her flourishing. But being so invested renders us vulnerable to suffering "psychic harm" when people we love suffer misfortunes, and so the fact that someone suffers relatively little after her spouse's death may seem to show that she did not care deeply about her spouse.<sup>18</sup>

Dan Moller presents decisive grounds for rejecting this view. First, he cites a wealth of psychological studies, many of which we mentioned above, which show that it is common for people who survive their spouses' deaths to recover from grief within just two or three months.<sup>19</sup> He suggests, plausibly, that in many

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<sup>17</sup> See Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought*, p. 28; Lewis, *A Grief Observed*, p. 41; and Frost, "Home Burial," lines 91-97.

<sup>18</sup> See Harry Frankfurt, "The Importance of What We Care About," in *The Importance of What We Care About* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 80-94.

<sup>19</sup> We mention these studies in Note 6.

such cases, the survivor already demonstrated her concern for her spouse during the spouse's lifetime, say, by making personal sacrifices in order to promote his interests, or by feeling pain when he suffered even minor misfortunes. So the fact that she recovers quickly from grief does not cast serious doubt on the quality of her love.<sup>20</sup> Second, Moller points out that our responses to the deaths of people who are close to us form part of a broader pattern of reactions to loss: we tend to return quickly to our emotional and functional baselines, that is, we tend to be resilient, after the loss of all sorts of goods that we otherwise seem to care about deeply. This pattern holds not only in cases where people survive their spouses' deaths, but also in cases where they survive the deaths of their children<sup>21</sup>, lose their jobs<sup>22</sup>, sustain debilitating injuries<sup>23</sup>, and suffer other severe health problems<sup>24</sup>. Often, we can account for people's resilience

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<sup>20</sup> "Love and Death," p. 307. A fascinating project called the Changing Lives of Older Couples study provides additional grounds for denying that resilience after the deaths of people who are close to us reveals deficiencies in our love for them. Researchers interviewed roughly 1,500 married people and followed them for nearly ten years. When participants died during the course of study, researchers interviewed surviving spouses at regular intervals. They found that "the quality of the marriages of the resilient people were not much different from anybody else's"; that is, "the relationship was not a factor in determining who would cope well after the loss" (Bonanno, *The Other Side of Sadness*, p. 70). For a detailed description, see the project website <http://cloc.isr.umich.edu/>.

<sup>21</sup> Bonanno et al., "Resilience to Loss."

<sup>22</sup> Dan Gilbert et al., "Immune Neglect: A Source of Durability Bias in Affective Forecasting," *The Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 75 (1998): 617–38.

<sup>23</sup> P. Brickman, D. Coates, and R. Janoff-Bulman, "Lottery Winners and Accident Victims: Is Happiness Relative?," *The Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 36 (1978): 917–27.

<sup>24</sup> J. Riis et al., "Ignorance of Hedonic Adaptation to Hemodialysis," *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General* 134 (2005): 3–9.

in such cases, without making the counterintuitive claim that they did not care deeply about what they lost, by appealing to psychological adaptive mechanisms that tend to help humans cope with misfortunes. One such mechanism involves contrast effects: recent misfortunes contrast sharply with vivid memories of earlier, better states and have substantial negative effects on our emotional well-being, but “after a short while, this contrast effect wears off and we get used to what we now regard as the new baseline.”<sup>25</sup>

Moller rightly concludes that, given the ways that many people demonstrate their concern for their spouses during the spouses’ lives, and given the availability of plausible alternative explanations of the resilience that people tend to exhibit after their spouses die, the fact that someone recovers relatively quickly from grief over her spouse’s death does not, by itself, provide good evidence that she failed to care deeply about the person who died. If there is something problematic about being resilient after the deaths of people close to us, it cannot be — despite the initial plausibility of this suggestion — that reacting to the loss in this way reliably indicates some deficiency in our *love*. The argument from unimportance and argument from desertion both purport to show that the problem lies elsewhere — that if someone proves resilient after her spouse’s death, then, even if she loved her spouse dearly, the fact that she does not experience prolonged, debilitating sadness over the loss is still deeply regrettable.

#### The Argument from Unimportance

Moller’s argument from unimportance states that when someone recovers from grief, and goes on to remarry, shortly after her spouse’s death, her reaction to the loss is deeply regrettable because it means that her spouse was relatively unimportant to her. On one natural interpretation, the claim that certain people are unimportant to us means that we do not care about

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<sup>25</sup> Moller, “Love and Death,” p. 306.

these people; but, for reasons we just described, this cannot be what Moller has in mind. Rather, he claims that someone's reacting in this way to her spouse's death shows that the spouse was unimportant in a different sense, which has two main elements. First, the fact that the survivor returns, within a month or two, to her emotional and functional baselines means that her spouse's presence did not make a *significant difference* to her life. More precisely, she did not need her spouse; to the contrary, the spouse's absence made only a comparatively minor impact on her. Second, the fact that the survivor enters into a new, lasting, and similarly fulfilling romantic relationship after some "depressingly brief interval" means that her now deceased spouse was, to a considerable degree, *replaceable*; that is, any significant roles that the spouse did play in her life — for example, providing security, sexual intimacy, or companionship — could be played, more or less equally well, by someone else instead.<sup>26</sup>

Moller clarifies this conception of importance by citing examples of the following sort:

Our importance to an organization like a baseball team or Congress is great when we make an enormous difference to its operations, when our absence wrecks havoc, and when we are unique and irreplaceable in what we do. Conversely, claims of importance or significance are inflated when it turns out that nothing we do really matters or that a year's leave of absence would go unnoticed and we could be easily replaced.<sup>27</sup>

We have great importance, in this sense, to other people when our absence would have "a profound and lasting effect on them, just as the sudden injury of a key baseball player should have a

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 301.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 309.

disruptive and debilitating effect on the team.”<sup>28</sup> Severing our relationships with these people “would make a deep impact on their ability to continue to lead happy worthwhile lives”.<sup>29</sup> In short, when someone has great importance, in this sense, to another person, she makes a difference to that person’s life that is well worth caring about, *and* which no one else, or few others, could make. So the argument from unimportance states that being resilient after the death of one’s spouse is deeply regrettable because it means that the spouse failed to make such a difference to one’s life.<sup>30</sup>

The mere fact that this argument rests on a conception of importance that does not essentially involve being an object of someone’s care, but rather involves making a difference to someone’s life that is worth caring about, is not, by itself, problematic. To the contrary, there are familiar, appealing conceptions of a good marriage according to which each spouse makes some significant difference to the other’s life. Rather, the problem is that the more precise characterization of importance on which the argument rests overlooks relevant ways in which spouses in good marriages can make significant differences to each other’s lives. Once we recognize these *other* ways of making a difference, we can see that there may be cases in which

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> To be clear, Moller views these considerations from the perspective of someone who contemplates her own death and imagines her surviving spouse’s reaction to the loss. By contrast, we view them from the perspective from which, it seems, anxieties about recovery typically arise, namely, the perspective of a survivor. But our response to the argument applies no matter which perspective we adopt. Put roughly, the argument fails to show that a resilient survivor’s relationship with her now deceased spouse was deficient in *any* significant respect, and so it fails to show that such resilience is regrettable, whether it is viewed from the perspective of the now deceased spouse or from that of the survivor.

someone proves resilient after her spouse's death, even though her spouse made some difference to her life that was well worth caring about. Moller's account of what it takes to have great importance to someone has two main elements: one must play a significant role in the person's life, and one must be irreplaceable in that role, or in other words, one must perform better in that role than any available substitute would perform. We can best respond to the argument if we first consider the roles that confer importance and then turn to irreplaceability.

Moller's argument rests on the assumption that in order to have great importance to someone — that is, in order to make a difference to someone's life that is worth caring about — one has to play a role in enabling that person to function, or to function at some high level, in some respect that is worth caring about. Someone who, by Moller's lights, has great importance to her spouse might give her spouse the emotional support or physical assistance that he needs, say, in order to maintain some level of psychological health, perform well at his job, or maintain some level of contentment with his life as a whole. In her absence, her spouse would fare substantially worse in one or more of these respects for an extended period. He would not just get on with his life, say, by relying in different ways on other people who were close to him, by acquiring new skills that enabled him to achieve a comparable level of flourishing on his own, or by focusing on some narrower and more manageable, but similarly fulfilling, set of projects. In short, a person who has great importance to her spouse plays an indispensable role in bringing it about that the spouse leads some life or other that is worthwhile, or highly worthwhile. To be clear, this need not mean that the person's spouse is incapable of living even a *minimally decent* life without her — perhaps he could scrape by on his own. Rather, it means that, at the very least, the person's spouse needs her in order to maintain some high level of flourishing.

This view about the role that one must play in someone's life in order to have great importance to her seems to rest on the

more fundamental view that, to be important to more or less anything at all, one must help determine whether or how well that thing functions. This underlying view may seem initially plausible when we consider whether someone is important to an organization. Organizations have functions: a function of Congress is to make laws, a function of a baseball team is to win baseball games, and a function of a business corporation is to make money for its shareholders. It may seem, in some cases, that all we care about with respect to an organization is whether and how well it functions, and so it may seem, in such cases, that the only way to make a significant difference to the organization is to enable it to serve one or more of its functions better than it could do otherwise. So, if we clarify our conception of importance, as Moller does, by thinking about what it means to be important to an organization, like Congress or a baseball team, then it may seem natural to adopt the underlying view that we just described. But once we move from the institutional to the personal sphere, it becomes clear that this view is too restrictive, and therefore mistaken.

A person functions well insofar as she leads some life or other that is worthwhile, or in other words, insofar as she flourishes in some way or other. But with respect to our own lives, we do not just care whether we flourish in *some way or other*; we also come to value particular characteristics that help make us distinctive, and in virtue of which we flourish in some particular way. So one can make a significant difference to a person's life not only by playing a role in enabling her to function, or to function well, but also by playing a role in determining what kind of person she turns out to be. Someone who makes a difference to her spouse's life by playing this latter role might, for example, cultivate her spouse's love of modern dance, awaken his sense of adventure, or prompt him to reconsider convictions that he had never seriously questioned. In other words, she helps shape concerns, convictions, or other patterns of thought, behavior, or emotional response that constitute her spouse's character, and more generally, constitute his way of being in the world. For that matter, spouses are not the only people

who exert such influence on each other: friends define and adopt aims that they pursue together; parents teach their children to embrace certain ideals; and children, in a very different way, radically alter their parents' sense of what matters.<sup>31</sup> In each case, someone cultivates a relationship of care and trust with another person, and in so doing, helps determine, in some way that is worth caring about, what kind of person her beloved turns out to be.

Once we distinguish these two ways of making a significant difference to someone's life, namely, helping determine whether or how well someone functions and helping determine what kind of person she turns out to be, we can see that the argument from unimportance fails to show that when someone manages to recover quickly from grief over her spouse's death, her reaction to the loss is regrettable. Of course, the fact that this person returns relatively quickly to her emotional and functional baselines shows that she can get on relatively well, in some respects, without her spouse, and so it shows that her spouse failed to make one type of significant difference to her life. But, crucially, her recovery does not show that her spouse failed to make *any* significant difference at all — it does not show that her spouse was unimportant to her, full stop — because the spouse may nevertheless have helped determine, in relevant ways, what kind of person she is.

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<sup>31</sup> In the cases that we just described, someone plays a causal role in enabling her beloved to acquire or maintain certain valued character traits, or other valued characteristics. Mark Alfano and Joshua August Skorburg (“The Embedded and Extended Character Hypotheses,” in *Philosophy of the Social Mind*, ed. J. Kiverstein [New York: Routledge, 2017], pp. 465–478) argue that we also determine, in a rather different way, what kinds of people our loved ones turn out to be. They argue that a person's character traits may be partly constituted by features of her social environment, including features of her relationships with those who are close to her. So, on this view, our relationships with our loved ones not only *cause* them to have certain character traits, but also help *constitute* those traits.

On one familiar, deeply plausible conception, spouses can have a good marriage partly in virtue of the role that each plays in helping determining what kind of person the other turns out to be, whether or not each plays some indispensable role in enabling the other to function, or to function well.<sup>32</sup> Recall that, on Moller’s view, when we have great importance to people in virtue of our roles in improving their functioning, these people do not just rely on us to achieve certain particular aims, or trust us in ways that render them vulnerable to betrayal. They also need us in such a way and to such a degree that our absence would have “a profound and lasting ... impact on their ability to continue to lead happy, worthwhile lives.”<sup>33</sup> Of course, being a good spouse may require *standing ready* to support one’s beloved if she comes to need one in this way, say, because she suffers an injury that renders her unable to function without assistance. But the fact that someone’s spouse does not need her in this way does not, according to the view that we accept and which we are now considering, constitute a deficiency in the relationship. Playing a vital ongoing role in shoring up a spouse’s ability to function, or to function at some high level, is not essential for having a good relationship with her.

To the contrary, on this view, spouses who play no such role in shoring up each other’s functioning may nevertheless cultivate a good marriage partly by working together to build a shared life.<sup>34</sup> In marriages that conform to this ideal, each spouse *does*

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<sup>32</sup> To be clear, we do not assume that there is one authoritative conception of a good marriage; there may be many conceptions that are worth valuing. Also, we cannot present anything like a complete conception of a good marriage here. Rather, we will discuss relevant features of one conception that is, we believe, widely accepted and well worth valuing.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 309.

<sup>34</sup> See C.S. Lewis, “Friendship,” in *The Four Loves* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1960), pp. 57–90 and Benjamin Bagley, “Loving Someone in Particular,” *Ethics* 125 (2015): 477–507 for more detailed dis-

make a significant difference to the other's life, but she need not do so in the way Moller describes. Rather, she helps define and pursue aims that she and her spouse share; she helps foster her spouse's commitment to projects, practices, and convictions that make up their shared existence; and so on. In short, she helps determine, in just the ways we described above, what kind of person her spouse turns out to be and what sort of life they share. So the fact that someone who survives her spouse's death manages, after a brief period, to build some new life that is roughly as happy and worthwhile as her old one is not, by itself, troubling in the way that Moller claims. Provided that, in the course of cultivating a relationship of care and trust, the now deceased spouse helped determine what kind of person the survivor turned out to be, the spouse made a significant difference to the survivor's life in a way that helps make for a good relationship. To be clear, this does not mean that helping determine what sort of person one's spouse turns out to be is *necessary* for having a good marriage. Rather, our point is that, together with other features of the relationship, this can be sufficient for a good marriage, whether or not one plays a vital role in improving the spouse's functioning.<sup>35</sup>

Now that we have articulated Moller's assumptions about the roles that our spouses must play in order to make a significant difference to our lives, we can better grasp what it means, on Moller's view, for our spouses to be irreplaceable in such roles; and we can assess the significance of such irreplaceability. Our spouses provide us with security, sexual intimacy, and other goods that contribute to the quality of our lives. Moller claims that when someone who survives her spouse's death remarries after a brief interval, she thereby shows that, although her pre-

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cussions of related conceptions of good friendships and good romantic relationships respectively.

<sup>35</sup> Lewis expresses a similar view in *A Grief Observed* (pp. 60 and 61) when he describes respects in which his now deceased wife helped determine how, and in what circumstances, he experiences joy.

vious spouse might have played significant roles in promoting her flourishing, the spouse was replaceable in those roles — they could have been played, roughly equally well, by someone else.<sup>36</sup> We might say that the previous spouse was *instrumentally replaceable* from the survivor’s perspective. That is, the previous spouse served as a means of securing certain goods, for example, having a sense of security, that the survivor valued as ends; or he served as an instance of certain goods, for example, having some companion or other, in which the survivor had a general interest. And the fact that the survivor remarries quickly shows that someone else could serve, roughly equally well, as a means of securing the former goods, or as an instance of the latter.

But once we recognize that this is the sense in which the previous spouse was replaceable, the fact that he was replaceable does not seem particularly troubling. To begin with, the fact that he was replaceable in this sense is unsurprising. It is commonplace for people who fall in love with each other to enter into a fulfilling romantic relationship; break up, say, due to strain associated with financial hardships or career demands; and go on to form comparably fulfilling romantic relationships with other people. Similarly, someone who survives her spouse’s death may find that there are others who could, in the right circumstances, provide her with comparable security, companionship, and so on; it seems unreasonable to expect otherwise. But the banal truth that there may be multiple people who could make us happy is not just unsurprising; it is also relatively insignificant. Of course, some may greatly value romantic relationships in which each person is instrumentally irreplaceable to the other.<sup>37</sup> But, according to the conception of a good marriage that we accept, and which, we believe, is widely shared and well worth valuing, our spouses’ irreplaceability as

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<sup>36</sup> “Love and Death,” pp. 309–310.

<sup>37</sup> See The Platters’ song “Only You (And You Alone),” written by Buck Ram (New York: Polygram Records Inc., 1960).

mere means of securing our ends, or as mere instances of goods in which we have some general interest, contributes little to the quality of our relationships with them. Our spouses are irreplaceable in the respects that matter most, not in virtue of their relation to *other* things we value, but rather, in virtue of attitudes that we adopt toward *them*, in their particularity.

More precisely, in marriages that conform to the ideal we are now describing, each person adopts at least two attitudes toward her spouse that — we might say, speaking somewhat loosely — give the spouse a somewhat different kind of irreplaceability. But, crucially, the fact that someone remarries shortly after her spouse’s death does not show that her previous spouse lacked this sort of irreplaceability.<sup>38</sup> To be clear, it may be that, in a good marriage, one also adopts other attitudes that, in some sense, render one’s spouse irreplaceable, but the two attitudes that we will describe seem especially important in this regard. First, in a marriage that conforms to this ideal, a person loves her spouse, say, in virtue of his beautiful smile, his wry humor, and so on; but her love does not simply derive from a more general interest in these qualities, wherever they crop up. Indeed, she may find some of these qualities intimidating, or off-putting in some other way, when she encounters them in other people. Rather, she is, in large part, captivated by these qualities as they appear in her spouse’s particular case. Similar remarks apply to a loving parent’s attitude toward her child. Such a parent may be captivated by her own child’s pluck and preciousness, though she is generally indifferent to these traits, or even slightly annoyed by them, in other children. In each case, a person values her beloved in the beloved’s particularity.

Second, in such a marriage, someone opens herself up to experiencing and appreciating her spouse’s qualities directly, without regard to their ranking relative to other people’s qualities. In

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<sup>38</sup> Our discussion of this point is indebted to Robert Adams, “Grace,” in *Finite and Infinite Goods* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 150–171.

other words, she cultivates an immediate, non-comparative appreciation of her spouse, though, of course, she might appreciate her spouse's comparative excellence as well. So, if she loves her spouse, in part, in virtue of his sense of adventure and the warmth of his embrace, then she is apt, in certain kinds of circumstances and certain phases of the relationship, to contemplate these qualities; and they are apt to seem uniquely wonderful to her. But she does not view her spouse in this way, say, because she has conducted a careful study of *other* people's traits and concluded that her spouse's traits are more worthy of esteem. Rather, her spouse's qualities tend to fill her mind, driving other people — including people who may be suited to serve as instrumental replacements for her spouse — from the center of her attention.<sup>39</sup> Again, a loving parent tends to adopt a similar attitude toward her child. To take an example from Robert Adams, such a parent may tend to contemplate her baby's smile and find it utterly enchanting, even though countless other babies have smiles that are no less wonderful.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, one might adopt a related attitude toward beloved works of art. Someone who loves Miles Davis's "Blue in Green" and Count Basie's "One O'Clock Jump" may sometimes become so immersed in the melancholy beauty of the former that, during these periods, she is incapable of appreciating the joyful exuberance of the latter, and uninterested in determining which is the better tune.<sup>41</sup> In each case, someone tends to devote a kind of focused attention to a beloved object, and her attention renders that object, in certain respects, beyond comparison.

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<sup>39</sup> See Adams, "Grace," pp. 168–171 and Troy Jollimore, *Love's Vision* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), pp. 41–44 and 82–88. See also The Flamingos' song "I Only Have Eyes for You," written by Al Dubin and Harry Warren (New York: End Records, 1959).

<sup>40</sup> "Grace," p. 169.

<sup>41</sup> Miles Davis, "Blue in Green," written by Miles Davis and Bill Evans (New York: Columbia, 1959); William "Count" Basie, "One O'Clock Jump," written by William "Count" Basie (Santa Monica: Verve, 1957).

So, in marriages that conform to the ideal we are now describing, our spouses are irreplaceable to us in the following loose sense: we love them largely in virtue of their particular characteristics, and we are apt to attend to them in ways that render them beyond comparison in some respects. But, crucially, the fact that someone recovers from grief and remarries shortly after her spouse's death does not show that the previous spouse lacked this sort of irreplaceability. Someone who loves her spouse in virtue of the spouse's particular qualities might *also* love other people, for example, her friends or siblings, in virtue of their particular qualities. And if she survives her spouse's death and, through the operation of the kinds of psychological adaptive mechanisms that we discussed above, proves resilient after the loss, then she may, after a brief period, come to love some new romantic partner in virtue of that new partner's particular qualities. Similarly, someone who, on some occasions, devotes focused attention to her spouse's characteristics might also, on other occasions, devote such attention, say, to her child's characteristics. And if she survives her spouse's death and, shortly thereafter, adapts to the loss and remarries, then she may devote such attention to the new spouse's characteristics as well. Put another way, the attitudes that render our spouses irreplaceable in this sense are aspects of a kind of love that we expect to find in a good marriage. It seems reasonable, in light of the bereavement research that we described above, to believe that people who love their spouses in this way are likely to remarry relatively quickly when their spouses die. So the fact that someone adapts to the loss and remarries shortly after her spouse's death does not show that she failed to regard her spouse with a kind of love that is characteristic of good marriages, nor does it show that the previous spouse lacked the sort of irreplaceability that is associated with such love.

So the argument from unimportance fails to show that there is something regrettable about someone's recovering from grief and remarrying shortly after her spouse's death. The argument's main claim, namely, that the survivor's reacting to the loss in this way shows that her now deceased spouse was unim-

portant to her, rests on something like the following assumption: to be important to someone, or in other words, to make a significant difference to her life, one must play some indispensable role in improving her functioning and be instrumentally irreplaceable in that role. But this assumption fails. On one familiar, plausible conception, there are other ways in which spouses in good marriages can be important to each other, and irreplaceable to each other. And our spouses can be important to us, and irreplaceable to us, in these ways, regardless of whether we prove resilient and form new relationships shortly after they die.

### The Argument from Desertion

Some classic literary discussions of grief present another, related argument for the view that when we recover from our intense sadness and get on with our lives shortly after the deaths of people who are close to us, we manifest grave deficiencies in our relationships with them. This second argument, the argument from desertion, states that reacting to the loss in this way is regrettable, in one respect, because it amounts to abandoning the person who died. As we said above, the argument from unimportance and argument from desertion express complementary worries about resilience: according to the first argument, recovering quickly from the debilitating sadness of grief over the deaths of our loved ones shows that, before their deaths, these people failed to occupy certain significant roles in our lives; and, according to the second argument, such recoveries constitute failures, on our part, to do well by our loved ones after their deaths.

Both Robert Frost and C.S. Lewis offer poignant expressions of this second view of grief's significance. In Frost's "Home Burial," a mother who grieves inconsolably over the death of her child bitterly describes the "everyday concerns" that occupied her husband shortly after the child's death.<sup>42</sup> She observes, with

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<sup>42</sup> "Home Burial," line 86.

deep regret, that when a person is sick and approaching death, he is “alone,” and when he dies, he is “more alone.”<sup>43</sup> Of course, the deceased person’s loved ones may go through the outward motions of standing by him, say, by attending a memorial service in his honor; but inwardly, their minds turn almost immediately to the concerns of everyday life. And so, she concludes, before the deceased person has even reached the grave, the people who are closest to him have begun to abandon him. But the mother resolves that her own grief will be different; she will not turn away from her deceased child if she can avoid it.

Lewis describes a related attitude in *A Grief Observed*. He reports that when his wife died, she seemed to go “Alone into the Alone,”<sup>44</sup> and he worried that recovering quickly from grief would amount to forgetting her.<sup>45</sup> Though he later rejected this view, he was initially tempted to view his recovery as a failure to remain faithful to his wife, a form of “desertion or divorce.”<sup>46</sup>

The argument underlying these grim remarks is best reconstructed, we believe, in the following way. Part of being a good spouse, parent, or member of certain other personal relationships is standing in certain characteristic forms of solidarity with the other member of the relationship. Four forms of solidarity, which may overlap, seem especially important, though there may be other relevant forms as well: (1) We might stand in solidarity with our loved ones by taking on their projects as our own to some degree; for example, someone might set aside certain of his career ambitions in order to help his spouse pursue demanding personal goals. (2) We might harbor certain hopes for people we love or have certain kinds of faith in them, as when a parent clings to the hope that, with determination

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., line 101.

<sup>44</sup> *A Grief Observed*, p. 9.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 42.

and the right sorts of encouragement, her child can master his college coursework, even though he has gotten off to a rocky start. (3) We may be delighted when our loved ones flourish and saddened when they suffer misfortunes. (4) We might stand in solidarity with loved ones by being present with them. Sometimes this involves being physically present, as when someone sits by the bedside of a sibling who has had major surgery; but it can also involve being present in thought, so to speak, as when someone finds herself thinking repeatedly about a friend who is undergoing a difficult divorce. These are all ways in which we cast our lots with people we love, and our failure to do so sometimes constitutes a grave form of desertion, a kind of betrayal.

Someone who feels better and adapts to the loss shortly after, say, her spouse's death may seem to desert her spouse in just this way. Recovering from grief involves returning to one's emotional and functional baselines, and when someone recovers quickly from grief over her spouse's death, each of these aspects of her recovery may seem to constitute a failure of solidarity. First, as we just said, part of being a good spouse is standing in solidarity with one's beloved by being delighted when she fares well in certain respects and saddened when she suffers certain misfortunes, or in other words, by being emotionally invested in her flourishing. In the absence of factors that make a loved one's life intolerable, the loss of her life is among the greatest losses she can sustain.<sup>47</sup> So it may seem that when someone recovers quickly from the intense sadness of grief over her beloved's death, her emotional reaction does not adequately reflect the magnitude of the beloved's misfortune. Second, part of being a good spouse is being present with one's beloved in some way, especially when highly significant events occur in the beloved's life. So it may seem that when someone who survives her beloved's death becomes absorbed, shortly thereafter, in

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<sup>47</sup> Nagel defends this view in "Death," pp. 1–10.

everyday concerns, she does not adequately attend to the person who died.

To be clear, this argument concerns cases in which someone recovers *too quickly* from grief over her beloved's death; it does not imply that recovering from grief is regrettable no matter when it occurs. The argument rests on the view that part of being a good spouse is standing in certain forms of solidarity with one's beloved. Of course, standing in relevant forms of solidarity sometimes involves making considerable personal sacrifices, but on any plausible conception of a good marriage, there are limits to what a good spouse must do to stand in solidarity with her beloved: she need not abandon her own projects every time they conflict with her beloved's aims; she need not cling to favorable judgments about her beloved, no matter how overwhelming the evidence to the contrary becomes; and she need not endure endless, debilitating sadness when her beloved dies. In short, the argument states that when someone recovers within two or three months from grief over her beloved's death, her reaction to the loss is regrettable, not because she recovers from grief, full stop, but rather because she recovers too quickly and her grief is only minimally disruptive.

The argument from desertion comprises two main branches, the first concerns the emotional aspect of recovery from grief, and the second concerns the functional aspect. We can best respond to the argument if we discuss each branch separately. The first branch rests partly on the view that, generally, when someone experiences prolonged, intense sadness over her beloved's death, she thereby stands in a valuable form of solidarity with the person who died. We find this view plausible, and will suppose, for argument's sake, that it is correct. Nevertheless, this branch of the argument fails because, contrary to what it assumes, experiencing prolonged sadness is not the *only* way to stand in this form of solidarity with loved ones who have died, nor is it, in any relevant sense, the best way to do so.

This becomes clear when we consider, on the one hand, some patterns of thought, behavior, and emotional response that are common among people who recover quickly from sadness over the deaths of their loved ones, and on the other hand, some patterns that are common among people who experience prolonged, intense sadness after such deaths. Often, when someone proves resilient after her beloved's death, she does not dwell primarily on the beloved's misfortune, her own misfortune, the fact that the relationship has ended, and so on; at least, she does not dwell primarily on these matters for an extended period. Consider George Bonanno's description of a resilient mother whom he interviewed after her daughter's death in the September 11 terrorist attacks:

Karen was able to summon calming and soothing recollections: reminiscences from [her daughter] Claire's childhood, images of her accomplishments, or simply memories of daily life together, at the dinner table, walking in a park, or caring for their dogs. She seemed to have an endless variety of memories that she could call up to help her feel that Claire was still with her.<sup>48</sup>

This sort of a resilient survivor experiences an initial period of intense sadness, punctuated by moments of reprieve, and then starts to attend not only, or even primarily, to her beloved's misfortunes, but also to features of her beloved and her beloved's life that comfort her, or even make her happy.

To be clear, this does not mean that the resilient survivor fails to grasp the magnitude of her beloved's misfortune, that she ignores the misfortune, or that she suppresses her emotional reaction to it; to the contrary, resilient survivors are no more likely than other, more distraught survivors to rely on avoidance or distraction to cope with loss.<sup>49</sup> Rather, the resilient survivor tends, first, to alternate between attending to comforting

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<sup>48</sup> Bonanno, *The Other Side of Sadness*, p. 71.

<sup>49</sup> Bonanno et al., "Resilience to Loss."

features of her beloved's life and attending to distressing facts surrounding the beloved's death, and second, she tends to think about these troubling facts when she can best deal with the associated negative emotions, for example, during periods of relative calm.<sup>50</sup> To take an example of the latter disposition, Bonanno provides the following description of a resilient college student whom he interviewed after her father's death: "Julia Martinez used photos to help remind her of her father ... She would decide on a good time to remember her father, a time when she was unlikely to be interrupted. She would close the door to her room, carefully get out the photos, and let her eyes and her mind roam over them."<sup>51</sup> By alternating between comforting and distressing thoughts about her beloved, this sort of resilient survivor manages, on the whole, to keep her emotions "on an even keel."<sup>52</sup> By contrast, in many cases where someone experiences prolonged, intense sadness after her beloved's death, the survivor dwells for an extended period on the beloved's misfortune, on her own loss, on the loss of the life that she and her beloved built together, and so on; and she finds it hard to attend to positive memories of the beloved.

When someone who survives her beloved's death exhibits these patterns of thought, behavior, and emotional response that are associated with resilience, and as a result, returns within two or three months to her emotional baseline, she does not thereby abandon the person who died. Rather, other things equal, she stands in the very same form of solidarity, to roughly the same degree, as her more distraught counterpart, who is dominated by intense sadness for many months, or even years, after the beloved's death. Like her counterpart, the resilient survivor reacts to her beloved's death in a way that manifests her emo-

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<sup>50</sup> We might say — using a description that was suggested, in discussion, by Anna Gotlib — that there is a sense in which the resilient survivor "compartmentalizes" her sadness over her beloved's death.

<sup>51</sup> Bonanno, *The Other Side of Sadness*, p. 71.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74.

tional investment in the beloved's existence, and in his having a good life; to use Robert Adams's phrase, her reaction to the death manifests her "*being for*" the person who died.<sup>53</sup> Provided that the resilient and distraught survivors devote similar levels of attention to their loved ones, and do so for similar periods of time, the only differences between them concern, first, which aspects of their loved ones' lives they attend to and, second, the valence of their emotional reactions. The resilient survivor alternates between attending to comforting facts about her beloved's life and attending to distressing facts about the beloved's death, and, accordingly, she alternates between positive and negative emotional reactions. By contrast, the distraught survivor dwells mainly on the beloved's misfortune and her own loss and, accordingly, experiences prolonged, intense sadness. But these differences do not provide any reason to judge that, while the distraught survivor stands in some valuable form of solidarity with her beloved, the resilient survivor does not. Both survivors stand in the same form of solidarity with their loved ones, though they adopt different and incompatible, but similarly effective, ways of doing so. So this first branch of the argument from desertion does not show that there is anything regrettable about being emotionally resilient after the deaths of people who are close to us.

The second branch rests partly on the following view: generally, when someone who survives her beloved's death becomes so absorbed in thoughts about the beloved that her own ability to work and perform other vital tasks is substantially undermined for an extended period, she thereby stands in a valuable form of solidarity with the person who died. Put another way, such a survivor devotes a kind of focused attention to her beloved, and so she is present with him in some sense that is well worth caring about. Again, we find this view plausible, and will suppose, for argument's sake, that it is right. But this branch of the argument also assumes that when someone survives her beloved's

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<sup>53</sup> Robert Adams, *A Theory of Virtue: Excellence in Being for the Good* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 15–18.

death and then manages, after a brief period of substantial disruption, to focus on her job, her other relationships, and so on, she thereby fails to attend adequately to the person who died. And this assumption fails. Someone who attends to such everyday concerns shortly after her beloved's death may nevertheless avoid any serious failure of solidarity with the person who died.

When someone returns to her functional baseline shortly after her beloved's death, she may remain present with her beloved, not by devoting so much attention to him that she cannot attend to other matters, but rather, by pursuing the right kinds of aims, with the right kinds of attitudes. More precisely, she may remain present with the beloved, and so, stand in solidarity with him, in at least the following respects, which can overlap: (1) She might adopt, to some degree, certain of her beloved's projects as her own; for example, she may volunteer for a charitable organization that he avidly supported. (2) She may continue to pursue, by herself, projects that she and her beloved once pursued together. She might, say, start a business that she and her beloved had planned to open together, or she may carry out some artistic project that they had begun. (3) She may take on new projects that serve to commemorate her beloved, for example, making a quilt from his clothing, or reading his favorite books. (4) Finally, she may remain present with her beloved in a limited, but important, way by adopting certain attitudes that help form the background against which she pursues her aims. For example, she may recognize that her beloved would be delighted or proud if he could see the range of new skills that she acquired in order to lead a happy, worthwhile life in his absence, and she may derive comfort and encouragement from that recognition.

Of course, there is a sense in which, even if she adopts such aims and attitudes, someone who survives her beloved's death and returns, within two or three months, to her functional baseline gets on with her life fairly quickly. The crucial point is that getting on with one's life in the way we just described is not a form of desertion. So this second branch of the argument,

like the first, fails to show that someone who proves resilient after her beloved's death thereby fails to do well by the beloved. We might say, drawing on our responses to both branches of the argument, that we can remember deceased loved ones, and have appropriate emotional reactions to their deaths, whether or not we experience prolonged, debilitating sadness over the loss.

### Anxieties Revisited

Nevertheless, we — the authors — remain somewhat uneasy about the prospect of recovering from grief within two or three months after a loved one's death. So we will close by briefly considering the relation between our responses to the arguments that we discussed, and the anxieties about grief and recovery that we described in the opening section. One obvious suggestion is that, although the arguments considered above fail to show that there is something regrettable about resilience after a loved one's death, there are other considerations that establish this conclusion. Though we cannot rule out this suggestion, we do not find it promising, and we will set it aside.

But, even in the absence of further considerations that identify something regrettable about being resilient after a loved one's death, some anxiety about such resilience may be appropriate. First, the arguments that we discussed, including the argument concerning deficiencies in love that we discussed in the opening section, fail to show that someone's resilience after a loved one's death reliably indicates some deficiency in her relationship with the beloved; but they still raise the *possibility* that the survivor's relationship was deficient, say, because she failed to care deeply about the person who died or because she deserted him. And entertaining this possibility in the course of demonstrating that it does not obtain in one's own case may be initially unsettling. Second, confronting the possibility of deserting a loved one who has died might also be unsettling in another way. As we just argued, being resilient after a loved one's death need not constitute a failure of solidarity with the beloved; neverthe-

less, to avoid such a failure, a resilient survivor must carry out the often difficult task of determining just how much she must do, and just how long she must do it, in order to attend appropriately to the person who died. This task may be daunting, perhaps more so in communities that lack established mourning rituals that help shape people's views about how to attend to the dead, and when to return to normal life.

So our discussion bears on anxieties about recovering quickly from grief over a loved one's death, but not, as one might initially expect, by helping show that such anxieties are wholly inappropriate. Rather, the discussion provides grounds for hope that if someone experiences such a recovery, and as a result, begins to doubt the quality of her relationship with a loved one who has died, she may find, looking back over the course of the relationship, that it was good in relevant respects; and she may find, looking forward, that it remains possible for her to stand in solidarity with her beloved.

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