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Becoming Alive: Reimagining the Post-Divorce Self as a Work of Art

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Using the character Bobby from the Stephen Sondheim musical *Company* as a unifying device, I describe how I moved past the restrictive codependency of my first marriage to become more present in relationships, more capable in my professional life, and, ultimately, more alive. Embracing the concept of the self as what psychologist Jerome Bruner calls our greatest and most intricate work of art, I suggest that we, through experience and reflection, continue to draft, revise, and refine that work of art in a lifelong pursuit of meaning and understanding.

Any divorce is a critical event in a life, what I refer to as a moment of significant wobble. Such occurrences cause people to pause and consider the portent of these events going forward. The wobble caused by my first divorce felt demoralizing at the onset, but ultimately proved to be liberating and self-enlightening.

In this autoethnographic sharing, I use my experiences prior to and post divorce to provide an example of how divorce is as much a start as an end. Using dialogical self theory (Hermans and others), dialogical theory (Bakhtin and Nikulin), and narrative theory (Bruner), I unpack the story of my divorce and the ways I subsequently dialogued through the uncertainty. In doing so, I illustrate how being vulnerable and open to contradictions can bring nuance and new complexity to events that, though distant in time, remain present in our lives. I argue that our efforts at shaping the self as a work of art are never completed. Rather, we remain engaged in an unfinalizable shaping of that art, a continual process of becoming alive.