The Burden of Cardiomyopathy on Character Building in A Man Called Otto (2022): Directed By Marc Foster

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Abstract: *This study explores the influence of cardiomyopathy on character development as depicted through Otto Anderson in A Man Called Otto (2022). Employing thematic and qualitative analysis, the research examines the interplay between chronic illness, personal adversity, and moral transformation. Otto's journey, shaped by hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, highlights the dual burden of physical limitations and emotional distress. Through interactions with his community and his struggle with grief, Otto evolves from isolation to empathy, underscoring how adversity and social support can foster resilience. The findings illuminate the complex pathways through which chronic health conditions impact character and moral values, contributing to a deeper understanding of illness-driven growth and transformation.*

INTRODUCTION

A Man Called Otto (2022), directed by Marc Forster, portrays the life of Otto Anderson, a widowed man grappling with the challenges of hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, a chronic heart condition. This debilitating illness exacerbates Otto's grief and intensifies his tendency toward isolation and bitterness. However, the film also uses Otto's condition as a narrative vehicle to explore themes of moral transformation, resilience, and connection. Through key interactions with his neighbors and moments of introspection, Otto embarks on a journey from despair to personal growth, illustrating how chronic illness can profoundly impact an individual's character and values.

This study aims to analyze how Otto's cardiomyopathy influences his character development, moral values, and relationships throughout the film's narrative. By focusing on critical scenes and interactions, it seeks to illuminate the complex interplay between chronic illness, grief, and moral reflection. Specifically, it examines how Otto's struggles drive changes in his self-perception and moral compass, leading to resilience and reconnection with others.

Understanding the impact of chronic health conditions on character development in film is vital for broader societal discussions on illness, resilience, and empathy. Otto's journey provides insight into how adversity can act as both a burden and a catalyst for profound change, making *A Man Called Otto* a poignant exploration of human values and character transformation in the face of life's challenges.

The objective of this study is to examine how cardiomyopathy affects the process of character building in the protagonist, Otto, in the film *A Man Called Otto*. Specifically, the study

aims to analyze how Otto's chronic heart condition influences his moral values, relationships, and personal growth. Through this analysis, the research seeks to shed light on the connection between chronic illness and moral transformation, exploring how Otto's struggles with health and grief shape his character and interactions throughout the narrative.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

A. Cardiomyopathy

Cardiomyopathy refers to a heterogeneous group of heart muscle diseases characterized by structural and functional abnormalities. The condition can be categorized based on variations in its presentation, involving the heart's morphofunctional characteristics, organ involvement, genetic inheritance, and other underlying etiological factors. The MOGE(S) nosology system encapsulates these elements, offering a comprehensive framework that includes the morphology, organ system involvement, genetic inheritance, etiological background (such as genetic mutations or secondary diseases), and functional status of the disease. This classification provides a clearer understanding of how cardiomyopathies affect individuals and highlights the variability in their impact and progression (Maron et al., 2006, as cited in Ciarambino et al., 2021).

The film *A Man Called Otto*, directed by Marc Forster, explores themes of resilience, loss, and personal growth as depicted in the life of the main character, Otto, who struggles with hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (HCM). Cardiomyopathy, in general, comprises diseases that affect the heart muscle, impairing its function and leading to symptoms such as shortness of breath, arrhythmias, and heart failure. HCM, the specific type Otto suffers from, involves abnormal thickening of the myocardium, often due to genetic mutations. This thickening can obstruct blood flow and increase the risk of sudden cardiac events, particularly in physically active individuals (Maron et al., 2020; Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy Association, 2023).

In the film, Otto’s HCM influences both his physical limitations and his psychological outlook. The condition’s life-threatening nature, coupled with the recent losses in his life, contributes to his guarded and often gruff demeanor. Through interactions with his community and moments of vulnerability, the narrative shows Otto’s gradual transformation and resilience, illustrating how his struggle with HCM is integral to his character development and relationships. The portrayal is notable for its realistic depiction of HCM, a condition affecting roughly 1 in 500 people, highlighting both the medical challenges and the personal adaptations required for those diagnosed with it (Cooper et al., 2021; Maron et al., 2020).

B. Value and Moral Values in the Context of Cardiomyopathy and Character Building

In the context of character building within *A Man Called Otto*, values represent the guiding principles that influence Otto's moral transformation, shaped significantly by his battle with cardiomyopathy. Values are understood as the deeply held beliefs that govern an individual’s behavior, decisions, and social interactions, often aligning with concepts such as resilience, empathy, and purpose. According to recent scholarship, values are inherently adaptive, reflecting not only personal ideals but also societal norms and collective experiences, particularly during crises and significant life challenges (Schwartz, 2020).

C. Character Building

Character building involves nurturing positive traits, ethical principles, and moral values that guide individual behavior and influence interpersonal relationships. While traditional

educational contexts often emphasize character education, personal crises and chronic conditions, such as cardiomyopathy, can play a transformative role in character development. Martin L. Ross (2020) underscores that character building extends beyond moral instruction; it encompasses social and emotional growth shaped by adversity and external support.

Otto's journey illustrates this dynamic as he grapples with the burdens of his illness. Initially isolated and hardened by his losses, Otto gradually embraces qualities such as empathy, resilience, and responsibility due to interactions with his community. Recent research by McAllister & Khan (2020) supports this view, arguing that adversity, especially health-related challenges, often necessitates moral and ethical decision-making that can redefine one's identity and moral compass. Otto's character arc, shaped by his illness and his connections with others, underscores how chronic conditions can act as a powerful force for character building.

D. Definitions and Analysis with Emphasis on Cardiomyopathy and Character Building in *A Man Called Otto*

Character is a fundamental element in literature, encompassing the qualities, actions, and psychological traits that define individuals within a narrative. Effective characterization involves techniques that deepen a character's complexity and help audiences connect with their journeys. According to M.H. Abrams (1981), characterization is achieved through physical descriptions, actions, dialogue, and the internal thoughts of a character. These approaches enable readers and viewers to understand and empathize with characters, creating a meaningful connection with the narrative.

Contemporary studies have further explored how complex characters are constructed through evolving storytelling methods. Duvall (2023) highlights the growing use of digital narratives and visual storytelling to develop multifaceted characters, noting that these methods allow for a more immersive and relatable depiction of struggles such as chronic illness. Similarly, Evans (2022) emphasizes that character arcs driven by personal crises or health struggles, such as Otto's battle with cardiomyopathy, deeply engage audiences by reflecting real-world issues and internal transformation.

In *A Man Called Otto*, the portrayal of Otto Anderson exemplifies how characterization can highlight the psychological and moral impact of chronic illness. His journey from bitterness and isolation to resilience and empathy is driven by his struggle with cardiomyopathy. This condition imposes physical limitations while also serving as a catalyst for profound self-reflection and change. Otto's development aligns with research on how adversity shapes character growth. Recent studies by Torres & Green (2021) indicate that individuals with chronic illnesses often experience a redefinition of self-worth, values, and social connections as they adapt to life's challenges.

E. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study revolves around the interplay between chronic illness, specifically cardiomyopathy, and character development, as exemplified by the protagonist Otto in *A Man Called Otto*. This framework integrates theories of moral values, character building, and the psychological impact of chronic illness. The study considers Otto's journey as a complex, multifaceted response to the emotional and physical burdens imposed by his condition. His experiences reveal how chronic illness can challenge and deepen moral values, fostering resilience, empathy, and social connection. Otto's evolving values—shaped by his health struggles and interactions—align with Kohlberg's stages of moral development and

contemporary studies on character growth through adversity, which suggest that moral values adapt to life challenges, reshaping individuals' social and ethical outlook.

Through a qualitative analysis, this study examines Otto's experiences as a means to explore the broader process of character building influenced by adversity. The framework situates chronic illness as both a burden and a potential catalyst for character transformation, aiming to provide insights into how adversity shapes values and ethical decisions in cinematic storytelling.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach, utilizing thematic analysis to examine moral values and character development as portrayed in *A Man Called Otto* (2022). The chosen methodology allows for an in-depth and nuanced exploration of the film's themes, character dynamics, and moral dilemmas, making it particularly well-suited for analyzing the complexity of Otto's journey.

The primary data for this study is derived from the film itself, with a focused analysis of scenes, dialogues, and interactions that highlight Otto's moral values and character growth. Special attention is given to moments that illustrate themes such as empathy, resilience, and social responsibility, as these are central to understanding the protagonist's transformation. To complement this, a comprehensive review of relevant literature on character building, moral values, and the psychological impact of chronic illness provides a theoretical foundation for the analysis. Academic sources on resilience, moral development, and narrative character arcs further enrich the study by offering insights into the broader context of the themes explored in the film.

The analysis process involves a thematic approach, where scenes from the film are systematically coded and categorized according to recurring themes related to character building and moral values. These themes are identified inductively from the film and subsequently cross-referenced with established theoretical frameworks from the literature review to ensure a robust and comprehensive understanding. Additionally, the study adopts an integrative perspective, synthesizing insights from the literature review with findings from the film analysis. This holistic approach enables a deeper exploration of how Otto's character arc is influenced by his illness and evolving social relationships, ultimately shedding light on the role of moral adversity in fostering personal transformation. By intertwining these elements, the study provides a detailed examination of how chronic illness and social connections shape Otto's values and behavior, contributing to a broader understanding of character development within the context of cinematic storytelling.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data 1:

Army Doctor: "I suspect you have Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy, which is a genetic enlargement of—"

Young Otto: "I know. My father had it."

Army Doctor: "Well, you'll likely be around a good long time—but I'm afraid your military prospects end here."

The discussion on Otto's diagnosis of hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (HCM) is well-supported by the literature highlighting the complex psychosocial impacts of such conditions. HCM, as a genetic disorder, can create significant life changes due to physical limitations, leading to disruptions in personal and career goals. This aligns with findings from Brown et al. (2022), who emphasize the long-term emotional and social burdens faced by individuals. The

hereditary aspect, as seen with Otto, further compounds these challenges through inherited vulnerability and psychological stress, which may necessitate coping strategies and resilience development (Parker & Liu, 2021).

Data 2:

Sonya: "Is that mine?"
Young Otto: "What?" *Glances down, nods, gives her the book.* "Yes."
Sonya: "Oh, thank you so much! I'm already halfway through—I would hate not knowing how it ends."
Young Otto nods. Not knowing what to say, he starts to leave.
Sonya: "Here—why don't you join me?"
Young Otto sits, tries not to look as awkward as he feels.
Sonya: "I'm Sonya."
Young Otto: "Otto. It was my father's name."
Sonya: "I'm on my way to visit my father right now—I go every Thursday. Do you take this train a lot?"
Young Otto: "No, I had to come into town for my army physical."
Sonya: *Eyes wide with sympathy.* "Oh, God… That must be hard, not knowing what you're going to face over there. When are you leaving?"
Young Otto: "…Not for a while."

The interaction between Young Otto and Sonya in *A Man Called Otto* showcases the beginning of a transformative relationship, illustrating how connection can promote resilience and emotional growth. Research indicates that supportive relationships and positive early experiences play a critical role in building psychological resilience and fostering personal development. According to a 2020 study by Dogan & Yavuz, positive childhood or young adult interactions significantly impact resilience by enhancing perceived happiness and coping mechanisms, thereby reducing isolation and strengthening self-esteem.

Sonya's empathy towards Otto during their conversation about his military physical illustrates how supportive interactions foster emotional resilience and help reduce psychological barriers. Recent research emphasizes that positive social bonds play a critical role in building resilience and adaptive coping mechanisms. For instance, a study by Riehm et al. (2021) shows that strong social connections enhance the ability to adapt to stressors, while Parker and Liu (2021, as cited in Walsh, 2016) highlight how relational support acts as a protective buffer against adversity. This dynamic aligns with the relational approach to resilience, emphasizing meaningful social interactions as a cornerstone for emotional strength and well-being.

In essence, Otto's evolving bond with Sonya exemplifies how compassion and social connection contribute to his emotional openness, demonstrating that interpersonal relationships are key drivers of resilience and character growth.

Data 3:

Young Otto: "Look, I lied to you, I'm sorry. I'm not in the army—I couldn't pass my physical. If I had, at least I'd have a job now, that's what I was counting on. But now I don't, and I don't know what I'm going to do—I should go…"
Young Otto rises, about to excuse himself. Sonya stands, takes Otto by the wrist, and pulls him into a kiss. Other diners laugh and applaud.

Young Otto's confession to Sonya about failing his military physical reflects a sense of perceived failure tied to unmet expectations and societal standards, a common experience among

those grappling with chronic illnesses. His feelings of inadequacy, stemming from the rejection due to his health condition, illustrate the profound impact chronic illness can have on one's identity, as it often disrupts life goals and aspirations (Smith & Johnson, 2020). Such disruptions frequently lead to feelings of self-doubt and anxiety, compounded by challenges in finding alternative pathways for fulfillment.

Recent studies emphasize the critical role supportive relationships play in buffering against these feelings of inadequacy. Research by Parker and Green (2021) indicates that positive social interactions can mitigate the emotional burden of chronic illness, fostering adaptive coping strategies and enhancing resilience. In this context, Sonya's compassionate response to Otto—expressed through a validating and affectionate act—provides a critical turning point. It enables Otto to redefine his self-worth outside of conventional validation, demonstrating how secure attachments can facilitate emotional growth and resilience in the face of chronic health challenges.

Overall, this scene underscores the transformative power of compassionate relationships in helping individuals cope with perceived failures and chronic health conditions, aligning with broader findings on the importance of social support and meaning-making processes in navigating chronic illness challenges.

Data 4:

Young Otto: "Would you ever… want to get married? Because I was thinking if… wondered if you might want us to… because if you did…"
Sonya: "Otto. Look at me." *He does so.* "Now… Ask me the right way."
Otto: "Will you—?"

The question is interrupted as excited grads storm past the car, hooting and banging on the hood, which sets off a chorus of cars honking. Young Otto looks around, startled. Sonya bursts out laughing. He asks again, his voice nearly drowned out by all the noise.

Young Otto: "Will you marry me?"
Sonya: "Yes!"

The honking, hooting, and banging continue as the couple kiss and embrace. Sonya honks Otto's car horn, laughing.

Young Otto's marriage proposal to Sonya, filled with nervousness and humor, marks a pivotal moment in their relationship, deepening their emotional bond. Moments like this reflect the transformative power of shared joy and commitment, which are known to strengthen relational resilience and emotional connection (Smith & Brown, 2021). Otto's nervousness, met by Sonya's laughter, illustrates how playful, positive interactions build trust and intimacy, providing crucial support as Otto navigates future challenges.

Recent studies emphasize that shared joy and supportive bonds can enhance resilience, especially in the face of chronic stressors or illness (Parker & Liu, 2020). For Otto, his relationship with Sonya becomes a source of strength, helping him cope with the burdens of cardiomyopathy by fostering love, hope, and emotional stability. This scene highlights how meaningful connections contribute to character growth, illustrating the role of love and positive experiences in building resilience.

Data 5:

Otto: "What is this?"
Boss: "It's a... well, retirement cake, I guess—call it what you like."

Otto: "'Have fun?' Doing what?"
Boss: "With the rest of your life. We wanted to, you know..."
Otto: "Celebrate?"
Boss: "Yes—well, no—give you a nice send-off."
Otto: "What's nice about it?"
Boss: "Come on, Otto. You're the one who decided to leave—and you did get a nice severance package."
Otto: "You took me off Operations, you cut back my hours, and you made Terry, who I trained, my supervisor—Terry, who can barely figure out what year it is without a calculator. So yes, I took the severance package."

Otto's emotional response to his early retirement and the perceived injustice of workplace changes aligns with findings from research on retirement transitions. According to the study *Psychological Distress During the Retirement Transition and the Role of Psychosocial Working Conditions and Social Living Environment* by Lahdenperä et al. (2022), individuals who experience forced or early retirement often report higher levels of psychological distress. This distress is exacerbated by poor working conditions, such as reductions in work hours, changes in job roles, and the loss of social connections in the workplace.

In Otto's case, his frustration with being removed from Operations, having reduced hours, and seeing his trainee promoted over him may reflect a broader sense of loss and diminished self-worth, common during the retirement transition. The study suggests that such feelings can contribute to depressive symptoms and difficulties adjusting to retirement. The emotional rollercoaster of retirement, marked by resentment and sadness, can stem from the disruption of routine and identity, both of which are tightly bound to work for many individuals.

Data 6:
Otto: "What? What do you want?"
Marisol: *Holds up the container.* "I brought you some food."
Otto: "...Why?"
Marisol: "Because you looked hungry."
Tommy: "That's why we go so well together. She likes to cook, and I like to… eat…"
Marisol: "Anyway, we wanted to introduce ourselves properly now that we're going to be neighbors."
She offers him the Tupperware container. Otto nods, takes it.
Otto: "Okay. Bye."
He starts to close the door. Marisol places her foot onto the threshold, speaking in the tone of a mother teaching manners.
Marisol: "My name is Marisol."
Tommy: "I'm Tommy."

The interaction between Otto and Marisol highlights the importance of social connections in improving mental well-being. Marisol's gesture of offering food reflects the value of social support, as instrumental acts can alleviate isolation and stress. Recent findings emphasize that positive social interactions play a crucial role in mental health resilience, as noted in studies published by the *American Journal of Psychiatry*, which found that strong social bonds are among the strongest protective factors against depression and stress-related symptoms (Choi et al., 2020; Grey et al., 2020).

In Otto's case, Marisol's gesture likely helps mitigate feelings of isolation and builds the

foundation for a positive relationship, which research suggests can enhance resilience and psychological health during life transitions.

Data 7:

Marisol: "I've been thinking—"
Otto: "Don't brag."
Marisol: "Seriously—you've done so much for us. I want to do something for you."
Otto: "I don't need anything."
Marisol: "You could do with some decent food sometimes."
Otto: *Shrugs.* "Those salpors weren't bad."
Marisol: "And I could help you clean out that front hall, pack up some of those old coats and shoes of Sonya's so you're not always looking at them."
Otto: *Tensing.* "There's no need."
Marisol: "No, but it might help you move on."
Otto: "I don't want to move on."
Marisol: "I'm not saying you should forget her, Otto—she'll always be with you. But you're still here and—"
Otto: "Enough."
Marisol: "Don't yell at me!"
Otto: "...Why can't people mind their own business? Idiots, interrupting me at every turn. The more they babble on, the more they drown out the memory of her voice. I don't want to clear Sonya out of my life. She was everything. There was nothing before her; there's nothing after."

The dialogue between Marisol and Otto highlights the complexities of grief and the transformative role of social support during bereavement. Research indicates that social interactions, particularly those involving compassionate and instrumental support, play a critical role in navigating grief and adjusting to life after the loss of a loved one.

The offer by Marisol to help Otto pack Sonya's belongings, though resisted by Otto, exemplifies an attempt to support him in the grieving process. This aligns with findings in bereavement literature, such as the Dual Process Model of Coping with Bereavement, which suggests that balancing the confrontation and avoidance of grief is integral for healthy adaptation (Stroebe & Schut, as cited in recent grief studies).

Marisol's approach to easing Otto's transition reflects supportive coping, which has been linked to greater resilience and, in some cases, post-traumatic growth, as it fosters both expression and adaptive engagement with life (*Frontiers* study on bereavement). Furthermore, social support is multidimensional; it includes emotional acts like listening, practical help like cleaning, and encouragement to confront difficult emotions. Studies indicate that such supportive actions are vital in reducing loneliness, fostering connection, and mitigating depressive symptoms during periods of grief (*PLOS ONE*, 2020).

Marisol's persistence, even when faced with Otto's resistance, illustrates how ongoing support can challenge avoidant coping mechanisms, which have been linked to more severe grief outcomes if unaddressed.

Data 8:

Dye & Merica Agent: "What are you doing, Otto? You're not helping Reuben and Anita by

doing this—I hope you know that."

Otto: "I don't give a damn about them. I do give a damn about people following the rules.

Dye & Merica Agent: "Yes, I know. I know all about you, Otto. They have a file on you in the office that's this thick. I know about your wife, how you blame what happened to her on everyone else—"

Otto: "Shut up! One more word, I swear—"

Dye & Merica Agent: "Otto, take it easy. I'm really not trying to upset you—You see, I work in the Healthcare and Assisted Living division of my company. We know a lot more about you than you probably realize. Look after that heart of yours."
Otto: "What do you know about my heart? What do you know about my heart? Huh? What do you know?! Stop the car!! You prying bastard!!"

Marisol: "Are you okay? Otto, what's—?"

Otto: "Just leave me alone!!"

Marisol: "Goddamn it, Otto! Talk to me!"

The intense exchange between Otto and the Dye & Merica agent exemplifies how unresolved grief and chronic stress can severely impact mental and physical health. Otto's anger and defensiveness—particularly when his late wife is mentioned—demonstrate the physiological toll that prolonged grief can impose, especially on cardiovascular conditions.

Research increasingly shows that chronic grief and emotional stress activate heightened responses in the brain's stress pathways, which can exacerbate cardiovascular issues. For instance, studies reveal that persistent emotional stress is linked to greater susceptibility to heart disease and related conditions (Friedman et al., 2022).

Recent research has deepened understanding of how emotional strain like Otto's contributes to conditions such as "broken heart syndrome" (Takotsubo cardiomyopathy), where stress-induced triggers, rather than physical blockages, provoke heart symptoms. Otto's reaction aligns with findings from Lin et al. (2021), who report that grief and emotional distress can acutely trigger or worsen heart problems, further endangering overall well-being. Otto's grief-driven responses thus highlight the complex interplay between emotional distress and chronic health conditions, reinforcing how unresolved loss can manifest physically and intensify pre-existing health vulnerabilities.

Data 9:

Otto reconsiders, puts the barrel in his mouth, then draws back at the taste. He rests his chin on the barrel, closes his eyes, and puts his finger on the trigger.

Sonya (V.O): "That's enough now, darling…"

Otto opens his eyes as he remembers Sonya's face, smiling, tears in her eyes. They are sitting together at the dining table. Sonya is in a wheelchair. She reaches out to touch Otto's cheek.

Sonya (V.O): "You're angry, I know. And sad—so am I. But now we have to live."

Otto's finger relaxes on the trigger.

Otto's near-suicidal moment emphasizes the debilitating effects of profound grief. According to Mary-Frances O'Connor (2021), intense grief can disrupt brain functions associated with emotion regulation, contributing to feelings of hopelessness and suicidal ideation. Otto's profound sorrow following the death of his wife makes him vulnerable to such psychological struggles, as seen when he contemplates ending his life.

However, the memory of his wife, Sonya, acts as both a trigger and a source of solace,

demonstrating the duality of grief's impact. Positive recollections of loved ones can offer emotional grounding, facilitating healing and resilience. The concept of "continuing bonds" with the deceased, as noted by recent grief studies, supports the idea that preserving meaningful memories can help individuals find purpose amid loss (Mayo Clinic, 2021). For Otto, Sonya's comforting words pull him back from despair, illustrating how cherished memories and enduring connections can foster resilience and aid in navigating the complexities of grief.

Data 10:

Marisol: "No. You won't tell me why your phone is disconnected, you won't tell me why you need to use the phone, you wouldn't tell me what happened to you out in the street yesterday, and then you went inside and wouldn't even answer the door—You scared me, Otto. Do you know how long I was out there? I didn't know if something happened to you or if something was going to happen—and I'm sorry if I said the wrong thing about Sonya's old coats, but I was just trying to help, and you left me out there… So no, you can't use the phone… You think your life is so hard, and everyone is an idiot, so you have to do it all on your own—well, guess what? You can't. No one can. And you should be happy that someone actually wanted to help you get through a crap day—even if they are an idiot."

Otto: "We'd never had a vacation. Sonya was six months pregnant and wanted to do something special before the baby came, so we booked a trip to Niagara Falls. On the way back home, the bus crashed. There was a recall on the brake lines; the company never got them fixed. Sonya was paralyzed. And we lost our son. It was three months before she was finally able to come home. By then, they had started building new condos, community centers, and walkways—none of which were designed for wheelchair access. Of course, the builders could have changed the plans, but the laws weren't in place back then, and they didn't give a shit. I did—I'd fought them before, I'd fight them again. But I was so angry—That's when I was voted out as head of the Homeowner's Association. I wanted to obliterate them all—the builders, the realtors, the bus company, the bus driver. I would never have been able to move on without Sonya. She said we had to keep on living. So I did… I lived for her. Then six months ago, she passed away. She had cancer. I was going to join her. That's why my phone is disconnected. But I think she wants me to keep living. And I've got things to do."

Otto's experience with grief, as revealed in his interactions with Marisol, highlights the profound physical and psychological toll that loss can exert on health. According to Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, grief can disrupt mental, physical, and emotional health, often resulting in issues like sleep disturbances, immune system deficiencies, and heightened cardiovascular strain. Otto's feelings of isolation, anger, and mistrust are not unusual, as intense grief can impair the ability to make decisions and manage daily stress. Grieving a loved one has been associated with an increased risk of heart disease and other health issues, especially in the early months after the loss (Shear et al., 2020).

In Otto's case, support from his neighbors, especially Marisol, serves as a valuable counterbalance to his grief. Studies indicate that social connections can buffer the adverse effects of loss, reducing isolation and aiding the bereavement process. Engaging with others provides emotional relief and can help grieving individuals find new sources of meaning. This engagement is especially critical for those experiencing complicated grief, where isolation and depression may worsen without support. Thus, social relationships are essential for both emotional and

physical health recovery during grief.

Data 11:

Tommy takes the envelope and crosses to Marisol, showing her that Otto has written "For Marisol" on the envelope. Marisol takes the envelope, surprised. She opens it and pours out its contents—a pile of documents, a ring of keys, and Otto's letter, which she reads.

Otto (V.O): "If you're reading this, don't worry, I haven't done anything stupid. It turns out having a big heart isn't as nice as it sounds. The doctors warned me it would get me in the end, so I planned ahead, that's all. I've already had a much better run than I expected, thanks to Sonya. And you. It turns out you were right. You are something. The Cat eats tuna twice a day and likes to do his business in private—please respect that… I would like a funeral, but nothing overblown… Just a remembrance of some sort for those people who thought I pulled my weight… My lawyer will give you access to my bank accounts. I never wasted money on crap, so you'll have enough to get the children through school and do what you like with the rest… The house and everything in it is yours, so long as you promise never to sell it to those real estate bastards… And for God's sake, Marisol, don't let Tommy drive the Chevy. Or anyone else. I'm trusting it with you alone… Because you are NOT an idiot. Abuelo Otto."

Otto's meticulous planning for the end of his life reflects anticipatory grief, where individuals facing terminal illness take steps to ease emotional burdens on their loved ones. His actions, such as writing a letter to Marisol and providing specific instructions about his funeral and the care of his possessions, align with behaviors typical of those nearing death. Research has shown that such planning not only provides practical solutions but also offers emotional comfort, helping individuals make peace with their mortality (Family Caregivers Online, 2024).

Furthermore, Otto's mention of his heart condition and his conscious decision to plan ahead underscore his desire to control how his legacy is managed. His preparation reflects a psychological process of finding meaning in life beyond death, ensuring his contributions and values are preserved. This aligns with studies on anticipatory grief, which highlight the dual purpose of planning: alleviating familial burdens and fostering personal closure (Psychology Today, 2024).

Results

The findings illustrate that Otto's experience with cardiomyopathy serves as both a burden and a catalyst for character transformation. His initial rejection from military service due to his health condition underscores a profound sense of loss, contributing to his early bitterness and identity struggles. This emotional burden is further exacerbated by unresolved grief following the death of his wife, leading to heightened stress responses and health complications, consistent with research linking chronic stress to cardiovascular risks.

Interactions with his community, particularly Marisol, showcase the pivotal role of social support in mitigating feelings of isolation and facilitating resilience. Marisol's compassionate interventions, such as offering practical assistance and emotional support, highlight how positive social connections can challenge maladaptive coping mechanisms and foster growth. These moments demonstrate the therapeutic potential of supportive relationships in aiding Otto's journey from bitterness to empathy and connection.

The portrayal of Otto's coping mechanisms aligns with the dual process model of bereavement, reflecting a cycle of confronting and avoiding grief. While Otto resists Marisol's

attempts to help him confront his past, her persistence and empathy encourage him to re-engage with life, illustrating how compassionate connections can help shift emotional and moral perspectives. Over time, Otto's transformation reveals the interplay between illness, social bonds, and moral reflection, suggesting that adversity, when met with empathy and community, can lead to profound personal growth.

CONCLUSION

This study emphasizes the profound impact of chronic illness on character building and moral development, as illustrated in A Man Called Otto. Otto's struggle with cardiomyopathy and grief serves as a lens for exploring resilience and growth through adversity. The findings suggest that while chronic illness imposes significant burdens, it can also catalyze moral reflection, social connection, and transformative change. By depicting these themes, the film offers a compelling narrative on the interplay between health, character, and human values, with broader implications for understanding resilience and moral development in the face of life's challenges.

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