

# Lost in Transition: The Use of Role Objects in Today's Postmodern Organizations

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'Many emigrants try to carry with them all their belongings: old furniture which gets knocked about on the way, clothing they no longer wear, or obsolete articles. Small objects or ornaments of slight practical utility fulfill this symbolic function, which is highly significant for the sense of identity'

(Grinberg and Grinberg, 1999, p. 160)

'Familiar objects with emotional significance for the immigrant, which he brings with him, permit him to recognize his continuity with his own past' (*ibid.*, p. 163)

## Abstract

Based on Winnicott's theory of the transitional object and its essential role in the healthy development of infants and on contemporary organizational and immigrant studies, this paper examines the important potential function of 'role objects' in helping role holders in vast global organizations to manage the transitory, detaching qualities of their experience. The hypothesis of this paper is that in today's organizations role objects are primarily 'things' rather than meaningful objects that help contain losses during change. Contemporary working life is characterized by permanent transience and detachment from familiar workspaces and work objects. This paper explores in particular five different ways in which objects are used in contemporary organizational life that illustrate and illuminate the basic hypothesis of this paper. It closes with some suggested general guidelines for promoting healthier use of transitional objects in today's organizations.

*Key words:* Transitional object; object-relations; mourning; role objects; postmodern organizations.

From the eighteenth to the twentieth century, immigrants from all over the world emigrated to the USA. They brought with them precious

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objects, some of which are on display at Ellis Island. These objects – elegant clothes, bibles, cooking utensils, combs, games, photos, etc. – were significant sources of comfort and continuity for millions who came seeking a new life. Many had a special meaning beyond their utility; they were, for example, linked emotionally to family history, tradition, or to special events. As symbols of personal and family history, they helped these immigrants manage the losses and fears of the future, by being tangible reminders of a stable past.

It can be said that every transitional space needs a transitional object from which security can be drawn. The psychoanalytic underpinning of this idea comes from Winnicott's concept of the transitional object. This paper offers a further extension of this basic concept by applying it to the world of contemporary organizational role holders. It explores the way that objects do and do not function to help people in vast global organizations manage the transitory, detaching qualities of their experience.

Imposed transience is more and more the daily reality of contemporary working life. Job permanence and life identification with one company enjoyed by earlier generations is no longer; continuity and a sense of giving and receiving loyalty to one's company is something of the past. As 'job nomads' (Heismann, 2005, p. 47), role holders must cultivate the ability to be ever flexible and to reinvent themselves at each crossroad (Siltala, 2003). Globalization has meant that one must be a citizen of the world and not depend on history and attachments. New technological developments, takeovers, and economic fluctuations force role holders into 'a state of perpetual new beginning and fresh start' (Bauman, 1996, p. 51).

The hypothesis of this paper is that in today's organizations role objects are primarily 'things' rather than meaningful objects that help contain losses during change. 'Role objects' (Beumer, 2005) are the specific objects of focus here. These are the physical (and sometimes symbolic) entities with which role holders undertake their tasks or which they associate to their work. In stark contrast to the developmental and containing function of past transitional objects, material objects in today's organizations are clone-like, easily replaced, and disposable. In some cases, such as office furniture, they have disappeared altogether. As a result, role holders cannot rely on them to assist in their constant mourning for what is lost.

This paper is based on the assumption that object attachment is, in principal, a good thing. The act of attachment is a statement that meaning exists; that something of value internally is represented in the object beyond its functional purpose (worn-out teddy bears are an enduring testament to this). This paper posits a link between

attachment to significant objects associated with organizational roles and the experience of work as a meaningful experience. It assumes that when work is experienced as meaningful, a role holder sustains a healthier and more productive relationship with an organization, which is of benefit to both.

The title of this paper refers to the recent movie *Lost in Translation*, which is about two jet-lagged Americans stranded at a sterile, technologically challenging Tokyo hotel. Complete strangers to one another, they have tenuous connections to home, organization, and partners. Separately and together, they attempt to cope with the overwhelming strangeness of their new environment. Not only are they physically 'lost' in this strange and large city, but they become even more disorientated when they individually realize that important parts of themselves had already been lost before they arrived. Neither seems to have brought personal objects, and the first tangible sustaining connection is a large stuffed animal. I think of this movie as a metaphor for the strangeness and alienation that role holders often experience in new and unfamiliar organizational environments and the consequent effects on their internal reality (Grinberg and Grinberg, 1989). My question is: where is the counterpart of the organizational teddy bear?

In the next section, I summarize psychoanalytic theory related to object attachment. Then I explore five different ways in which objects are used in contemporary organizational life that illustrate and illuminate the basic hypothesis of this paper. I close the paper with some suggested parameters for promoting healthier use of transitional objects in today's organizations.

### PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORY REGARDING TRANSITIONAL OBJECTS

Winnicott (1953) writes that the child's transitional object (one of texture and auto-erotic comfort) is the first non-me object. As a connection between internal objects and external objects, the transitional object provides a kind of binding holding space into which the infant projects its fragmented, unformed, and unresolved internal processes, which can be held on a temporary basis. The object, which helps sustain the child during times of chaos and uncertainty, loses its potency when the new reality is integrated. According to Volkan (1981) and others, objects take on a similar function for adults during times of regression, anxiety, and great change.

I am reminded here of a client, Mark, who was suddenly and rather brutally fired from his marketing job for a company that manufactured

spectacle frames. During a difficult two-year job search, he built and tended to an extravagant garden in his back yard. This garden became a place of solace for him, a place of some constancy under his control – in other words, a holding place for himself and his chaotic feelings, both about being fired and about whether and when he would be hired again. This garden – both in what it contained and how it was tended – was similar to one his mother had grown and tended when he was a child.

Harold Searles (1960, p. 330) hypothesizes an important link between the way a patient as an infant may have related to an earlier non-human object and his/her current presenting issues, what he terms 'the transference of feelings from early life nonhuman environment to adult-life nonhuman environment'. I think of Mark's garden as a good example of what Searles termed 'a harmonious extension of our world-embracing self' (*ibid.*, p. 39).

An emphasis on the developmental aspects of object attachment are the main thrust of this paper, but it is also important to bear in mind that object attachment can also become a regressive force. When, for example, a traumatic break mobilizes 'primitive defenses' (Volkan, 1981, p. 373), one may hold on to an object 'for dear life' in such a way that feelings of despair and the resolution of the loss may never be worked through. Volkan terms this 'pathological mourning' (*ibid.*, p. 66), which functions to protect the individual from facing the 'unthinkable anxiety' (Winnicott, 1966, p. 369) associated with this experience.

The psychology of the perennial mourner sometimes expresses itself in the newcomer's inability to find a home in a new environment. This was my experience of one client, Leslie, whose success took her from one organization to another (Mersky, 2005). Except for her original employer (the prestigious university that granted her a medical PhD), where she was in fact treated in a very brutal and demeaning way, all subsequent organizations were found by her to be inadequate. Her primary complaint was that they did not recognize or sufficiently honour her credentials. All her leavings were sudden, precipitous, and designed to keep at bay any ambivalence or sadness. One could hypothesize that the PhD functioned as an 'object', which 'cushioned' her against her moves, but on the other hand prevented her from evolving a richer and more integrated professional identity.

If, instead of being frozen in a perennial inability to mourn, when consciously or unconsciously one feels that one will never be able to recover what is lost (Grinberg and Grinberg, 1989, p. 88; Grinberg and Grinberg, 1999, p. 160), these feelings may be sufficiently contained and managed with the help of an attachment to an object that offers

comfort and familiarity during times of great stress and loss. This is what every mother hopes for her child.

What is ultimately wished for, even in part, is that one somehow returns to one's normal self, albeit altered due to the achievement of integrating the lost parts of oneself (Grinberg and Grinberg, 1999, p. 154). Once again one experiences 'the pleasure of thinking and desiring and of the capacity for making plans for the future' (*ibid.*, p. 169). There are many terms for this re-established state, such as 'hyphenated identity' (Akhtar, 1995, p. 1060), remodelled sense of identity (Grinberg and Grinberg, 1989, p. 98) and 'a more evolved sense of identity' (*ibid.*, p. 169). All suggest an enrichment, the result of the 'work of working through' during the long mourning process (*ibid.*, p. 96).

To summarize, then, important objects can function as transitional objects for adults during times of stress and great change. In such situations, in the process of working through the experience, various internal parts are projected on to, and contained by, the object. They 'hold' the chaos while at the same time helping to sustain the person's sense of identity and link to his/her past.

When the degree of anxiety overwhelms the capacity to cope, objects can become 'frozen' vehicles for holding on to the past, thus leading to a state of pathological mourning. When it is possible to work through the losses, one can ultimately develop full integration of one's past, present, and future.

### OBJECT RELATIONS IN POSTMODERN ORGANIZATIONAL LIFE

During more stable times, people worked in organizations for life and these systems provided much of the containment, attachment, and certainty that workers needed. In the USA, the retiree's quintessential gift after a lifetime of service was the gold watch.

We now exist in a globalized community, where changes are happening fast, role-holders are expected to hold multiple role relationships and identities and where – as Sennett (1996, p. 184) points out – 'One has to make oneself.'

Both Howard Stein (2008) and Yiannis Gabriel (2008) write extensively about the impact on organizational life of the inability to mourn changes at all levels. Gabriel describes the 'miasma' characteristic of certain troubled organizations that have gone through highly traumatic transitions. Stein goes further, to state that some losses can never be redeemed and continue to live in the fabric of a system's unconscious life.

With so many changes, it would be natural to focus on the ways that objects relating to one's work (role objects – Beumer, 2005) could support continuity. My inquiries into this topic have led me to identify five different ways that objects are used and related to contemporarily in organizations. In various ways, they illustrate my central hypothesis. They are:

1. The fewer role objects, the better (travel; hot-nesting);
2. Defensive use of objects (e-mail; working over the phone);
3. Ubiquity of corporate objects (corporate logo; company stores);
4. Diminishing boundary between personal and private in the workplace (office as living room; personal objects not permitted);
5. Comfort of personal passions (garden, jazz).

*The fewer role objects the better*

For today's on-the-go and ever-flexible role holder, the tangibility and physicality of objects – often the very aspect that provides their soothing and containing transitional function – appears to have become less and less an asset and more and more an encumbrance. The more functions that can be crammed into one device (the easier to carry and the less to keep track of), the better.

In a recent e-mail, a colleague helped me to understand it this way:

My impression is that a core competence nowadays is this capability to constantly re-invent yourself from within with minimal outside resources (objects) to support & contain you. I have trained myself for years to be able to 'travel with less' (the benchmark is 'only hand luggage!').

She continues:

When talking to managers, who are constantly on the move, I always ask the question: what is the (one) thing that needs to remain constant to make you feel comfortable (secure, contained, etc.) during this transition/change/move etc. Answers frequently fall into one of these categories

Bodily fitness	(running/gym/yoga etc.)
Social interaction	(mobile phone/e-mail access/bars)
Cultural reflection	(books, films, time to think)

Interestingly e-mails can nowadays be accessed via the web (you don't even have to drag your lap-top computer around with you any more – its function as 'transitional object' in business has increasingly been replaced by Blueberrys [*sic*] or has entirely become obsolete due to the – highly containing – web-access functionalities some providers or companies provide) and most gyms around the world in top-range health clubs provide

identical machines for your work-out, just as much as top-range hotels seem to be identical – no matter whereabouts in the world you happen to be. Books and DVD's – as with all the other objects from this category – can be picked up at any international airport.

As objects lose their special qualities and become interchangeable, one may hypothesize that the link to these 'role objects' (Beumer, 2005) becomes more and more tenuous and, therefore, so does the link to the role and the meaning of one's role in one's organization. This is further illustrated by at least one revolutionary trend in the organization of the workplace, i.e., Hot-nesting. This expression comes from a naval term for sharing bunks on board ship. As translated to the office, it means that one desk can be shared by more than one member in an organization. What is lost in this construction is the idea of the office and its contents as a 'holding space' for the role holder, to provide a sense of continuity and identity.

Sam Warren (2006) studied a web design department of a large IT firm in the UK where 'seating patterns and workspaces were envisaged by management as "fluid"' (*ibid.*, p. 2) and where designers were continually 'uprooted' from their normal workspaces to work with other similarly uprooted colleagues working on the same project.

Ironically, the manager of the department favours this system because it 'helped her staff to be more innovative and prevented them "stagnating"' (*ibid.*, p. 6). This view that a lack of familiar objects leads to creativity turns on its head the Winnicottian notion that more (not less) object certainty would allow role holders to cope with change. All the anxiety and uncertainty about where one's physical space would be today or this week has nowhere to go and is left in the role holder to confront on his/her own.

This is confirmed by Warren's interviews with employees, who revealed their 'sense of instability and transience' (*ibid.*, p. 28). As one said 'it gave me a severe sense of dislocation to not actually have an area you could call home' (*ibid.*). Even those not involved felt their sense of security affected.

Continually upgrading and consolidating one's objects appears to have one severe side effect: they are often lost. In 2005, the Paris lost and found department named the cell phone, which came in at forty per day, as their most prevalent lost item. They had more than 3,500 at that point (Tagliabue, 2005). A *New York Times* article estimated that '85,600 mobile phones, 21,500 P.D.A.'s [*sic*] or Pocket P.C.'s [*sic*], and 4,425 laptops disappeared into Chicago's 25,000 cabs' in the last six months of 2004 (Garfinkel, 2005). They attributed this phenomenon to a 'plague of forgetfulness' by

road warriors on hectic travel schedules. It turns out that people are losing more and more things because they are lugging so many additional gadgets and communications devices – and often misplacing them in airplanes and airports, hotel rooms, restaurants, cabs and rented cars' (*ibid.*).

These articles and more recent ones make clear the degree to which critical role objects are out of synchronization with patterns of behaviour.

### *Defensive use of objects*

As the quest for the ideal object continues, this moment's technological objects do their best to keep us in contact 24/7. They make it possible, on the one hand, to stay connected and, on the other, to stay apart. Our common experience of crashed computers and lost cell phones and the attenuate confusion and heartbreak speaks to all of us about our dependency on these objects. On another level, however, these experiences may also inform us of the slender thread between functionality and dependency that these objects afford.

The theme of replacing personal contact with electronic contact is illustrated by a recent consultation with a corporate estate agency firm that was seeking ways to work more seamlessly between sub-groups. One major finding of my initial diagnostic work was that there were very strong feelings about how things are asked for and how things are delivered, and whose priorities come first. At the retreat, sub-groups were asked to identify a specific problem/incident that illustrates this theme and to think about how this could have been done better.

One group focused on the general issue of e-mail in the company. The notes of their report to the group at large were as follows:

- E-Mail – Tone, what people are talking about.
- Want to get back to personal conversations.
- Distinguish what is really needed to be discussed in e-mail or face to face.
- Difference between face to face communication and e-mail.
- You can follow up with an e-mail for clarification and to provide details.
- You can't communicate excitement with an e-mail; you can face to face.
- What is the right use of e-mail?

Linking their report to the presenting problem of the consultation (deteriorating working relationships in a poor economic environment), I began to develop a hypothesis that e-mail was being actively

used to defend against the trauma of recent losses of a number of major tenants. Role holders used e-mail both to participate in charged and ever-escalating exchanges and also to denigrate other groups in the system. This process was perpetuating a social defence system that treated the leasing group as the identified failure in the system, as its members were not bringing in enough new tenants. The chief 'problem' employee, according to this defensive construction, was in fact the director of marketing and leasing.

They presented their findings 'as if' they had just discovered something new and important, i.e. direct human contact. At the retreat, participants experienced evident pleasure in just talking to one another. It seemed almost as if they had only just 'discovered' one another as people.

Linking this to my original hypothesis, it might be said that the reliance on e-mail communication was a way of projecting out from the group the internal experience of loss and anxiety related to the external threat to the business. Alas, this was only too true, as six months later the holding company announced that it was selling this unit.

Even such an old-fashioned technology as the telephone can function defensively. Many of us work with clients by telephone nowadays, due to our supercharged schedules. In my paper about my client Leslie, whom I had only met once and with whom I had worked by telephone for four years, I wrote:

I believe that in many ways working over the phone provides Leslie with a sense of safety and control. First and foremost, there is the actual physical separation. Leslie is someone who keeps her relationships at a distance in the workplace and the phone serves the same function for this consultation. As psychoanalyst Linda Larkin (2000, p. 3) writes, this medium affords 'the distance and sense of control to manage her fears of being in a relationship'. (Mersky, 2005, pp. 117-118)

By extension, then, one can say that the use of the object of the telephone may have been developmentally all that Leslie was capable of, or, for her, the developmentally best 'object' by which she could face her traumatic losses and changes. This consultation still continues after eight years, across oceans and time zones, and always by telephone.

#### *Ubiquity of corporate objects*

No one can fail to notice the trend towards corporate logos on every imaginable item that can be manufactured and in almost any place

that one might notice (e.g., product placement in films). Brand recognition is today's 'god' in terms of making a company successful and – ironically – confirms the perspective that what matters in transitions is something kept constant on which to project one's sense of insecurity. (For me, now living in Europe, seeing a box of Ritz crackers in a German supermarket immediately brought back memories of home!)

Role holders are encouraged to identify with their organizations through these brand images. Many large corporations have 'company stores' where one can purchase mugs, pencils, pens, key rings, T-shirts, sweatshirts, hats, portfolios, clocks, umbrellas, decals, bar sets, napkins, *et al.* While possibly encouraging role holders to identify with their organizations by buying such an object, they are not primarily role objects, used to undertake their work. They are largely utilized outside the work environment. They are 'gifts', extras, and are sometimes termed throw-aways. They are not individualized or customized. The same object can take any logo and can be stored in warehouses for decades. They are not tied to any important moment or event, and, as such, have no intrinsic meaning for the user, employee or otherwise. They fail as objects of attachment and as transitional objects.

Even specialized corporate objects, however, can be misused. A client of mine once worked for a small IT company that held a formal ceremony in which all employees were given a key ring with the corporate logo. The clear message was to use this key ring (and only this key ring) from now on as an expression of one's loyalty and connection to the company. After this event, employees were spoken to as actual 'belongings' of the company. 'We felt like munchkins', said my colleague, who described how offended his colleagues were at this presumption of ownership.

*Diminishing boundary between personal and public in the workplace*

The distinct meaning of 'role object' is threatened by the increasing trend towards personalizing one's work and bringing work tasks into the personal environment. This pattern varies for all of us taking up contemporary working roles. Some versions are more extreme than others. For example, key innovative engineers in Silicon Valley (e.g., Sun Microsystems, Intel Corporation, and Silicon Graphics) reported how they 'altered the impersonal office unit known as the cubicle in order to claim it as their own' (Hassink, 2003, p. 193). To counter what they saw as the pervasive sterility of corporate environments,

their offices became their 'living room' (*ibid.*, p. 116), which contained objects such as couches and even personal pets. She writes,

These small, highly impersonal spaces symbolize the ultimate place in which private and public are no longer separated. The workspace becomes private space and the private space becomes workspace. (*ibid.*)

One consequence of this type of boundary permeability is that objects that represent purely the work role and that relate directly to the organization and the meaning of the role holder's work in the organization, become less and less recognizable. The more easily objects cross the boundaries, the less containment they provide.

The opposite tendency, i.e., the sterile and uniform work environment, can stimulate another break in the boundary between work and person. The corporate offices of a client organization of mine – a large global corporation – are physically organized in wide spaces with a series of cubby-holes that people pass by regularly. Each cubby-hole has a fairly wide opening, so that when one passes, one can see most of the contents of each person's space. Recently, a general rule had been imposed that one may not display anything personal in one's space, with the exception, perhaps, of a family photograph (presumably to demonstrate that one's personal life is synchronized with the values of the company). As it was explained to me, it was necessary to make this rule in order to control what had been deemed to be previously over-the-top decorative flourishes – which one might presume to have been an expression of role holders' desires to counter the effect of the impersonal physical environment.

There was a lot of bitterness about the policy of no personal artefacts and – as one can imagine – people engaged in various subterfuges to undermine it, e.g., arrangements of furniture, disguising with other objects, etc. The creativity that went into the various attempts to create a space that had meaning for role-holders was actually quite inspiring. It seems that the sterile office environment had provided no meaningful objects to which role holders could relate.

#### *The comfort of personal passions*

It appears that for many current role holders, passionate private interests have become more and more predominant. These collections of motorcycles or whisky bottles or great wines may reflect a failure of objects in the workplace to provide meaning. If we accept the idea that possessions are 'parts of ourselves' (Warren, 2006, p. 20), that

provide a 'sense of permanence, belonging and stability' (*ibid.*, p. 25) and that parts of them go inside us as soothing function, then one can hypothesize that this attachment to possessions (especially as contrasted to throw away cell phones, etc.) facilitates a mastery of change and transition for these role holders and is not just a way of showing off one's wealth. Mark's garden, for example, could be seen as providing this soothing function by bringing him back to a more stable time of personal identity.

A colleague who was recently fired from a position and looked for six months before finding a new one, told me about the role of jazz music during this transition. Here's what he said:

Between jobs, I had a good half year. What was I doing in this time? More than ever before, I was going to concerts and listening more to music. What I can say as I look back, my love for jazz music intensified. I really can say before that, I listened to all kinds of music, but last year I concentrated mainly on jazz. A couple of weeks ago, I went through my CD collection. I have a bookshelf. Rock and pop is on the left; jazz and classical on the right. At least 80 or 90 per cent was jazz music I listened to last year. (April 2005: phone conversation)

One might hypothesize that for my colleague, jazz was more than a personal pleasure to enjoy, but functioned as a way for him to return to his self – a way of centring and reminding him of who he was, in order to strengthen him in his search for his new position. It may also have functioned as an instrument to recover much of what had been 'starved' or 'betrayed' in the previous position. Music is cited as one of the most important 'memories' for immigrants, and supports them in their transition to the new environment (Volkan, 1993, p. 67).

#### **SUGGESTED PARAMETERS FOR BETTER CONTEMPORARY OBJECT-RELATIONS**

Returning to the perspective that object attachment is a positive thing, and that role objects can create a meaningful link between the role holder and the organization, I would like to close by suggesting some guidelines for promoting a healthier use of role objects.

*Symbolic objects:* a symbolic object is not the same as a logo. A symbolic object (often physical and historical) is designed to inspire and often bears a strong relation to the primary work of an organization or to an important and vital aspect of its history. In the 1980s, for example, the New York Stock Exchange gave desk-top

statues of bulls with the name of the stock exchange as corporate gifts. (I know this from a family member who headed this office.) This was a weighty statue in brown metal. At the time, the bull was the logo of the company, but the bull is also a significant symbol of the Exchange, because it stands for the bull market, meaning one that is always going up and up. The gift says at the same time, 'We are bullish on our success' and 'We stand for doing our work well'.

*Historic objects:* what goes back in time in a tangible way can be a living statement of continuity and connection. To counter the way of thinking that objects are made to be replaced, saving and displaying previous products and role objects suggests a history of meaning and, therefore, a history of meaningful work experience, beyond the individual user. A participant in a recent workshop, who works with church communities that are merging, notes that they always make a point of placing an important icon or painting from the closed church in a prominent location in the new one.

*Keep objects within the work boundary:* as opposed to key chains and products of the company store that cross over into the personal domain, objects related to the specific work of a group or the organization as a whole may carry special significance. They may mark an event, a milestone achieved, or they may be prized gifts for good performance, but they mean something within the system. As an example, to commemorate a weekend off-site retreat, the organizer gave each participant a luggage tag with a gold insert with the name and date of the meeting and the logo of the company. These tags adorned the travel luggage of these role holders, who travelled constantly, and became a familiar and concrete symbol of a particular event with a particular group doing a particular task. The details of the work itself may have been forgotten, but the honouring of an event was remembered. (As the consultant to this event and an honoured recipient of one of these luggage tags, I still use it on my luggage!)

*Differentiated and tactile:* to the extent that an object provides some sort of sensory experience (a beautiful painting; a shiny luggage tag), it takes on a quality beyond its function. If it feels a certain way or moves in a typical style, it takes on its own special qualities that can resonate with its internal counterpart in the role holder. Newly developed computerized books, that store more than one book and that open like 'real' books, contribute to the goal of fewer and fewer objects. They may make possible a convenient read, but can they ever replace the feel of a familiar cover as one reaches for one's book, or the flutter of the pages, or – for that matter – the artwork of

the bookmark? When her furniture finally arrived from her native country, an immigrant put it this way:

I felt that I was surrounded by 'my' things; it was thrilling to find myself with them again. Each object brought the memory of a situation, a moment, a past. I feel more like myself. (Grinberg and Grinberg, 1999, p. 160)

We are a long way from the early days of immigration, both in time and in experience. Now it is 'a piece of cake' to move across boundaries – be they country, continent, or organization. But the experience of these moves – their attenuate losses and confusions – remains a primary human experience. We may be living in a society under the delusion that all can be coped with and all can be managed, but psychoanalytic theory and numerous studies of contemporary organizational cultures give us a different picture. The more we can imagine ourselves linked to our forefathers and foremothers (rather than completely separate from their old-fashioned ways) perhaps the easier it would be to remember that for all of us, object attachment is essential for healthy transitions.

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