As You Desire Me: Mothers, Babies and Football Managers

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Abstract
> 'I think you've got to have a good relationship with your team and with your players – you've got to have a good trusting relationship with them…there has to be a balance – whether you call it respect or trust. Our job is to make the team better and to make the players better – individually and collectively. Our job is to make…to get success we need to put it together to make it better. And the players need to trust what you're telling them is right.'
> Manager 10

All human life exists within football, and especially within football management.
This paper outlines themes that emerged in a four-year study into the development and training of managers operating in fast-paced change: one which utilised the critical case of English football managers. One of the main and unexpected findings occurring in the research was that the manager and his charges were involved in reproducing elements of the most primal of relationships – that of the mother/infant. It transpired that the manager's ability to reproduce good mother features was crucial in terms of holding the anxiety generated by the location of the football environment in turbulence. The paper will outline how this relationship was manifest within the data and provides a short case study indicating what can occur when this relationship between the manager/mother and infant/player is absent and the 'good enough' mother is replaced by a castrating father.

1.   Introduction
When considering the 'traditional' syllabus approaches taken by management educators towards the effective management of people, there is much similarity in the syllabus content across institutions – be they university business schools or other providers. Such approaches, which rely on a mainstream coverage of Organisational Behaviour and Human Resource Management discourse, have and continue to come under attack (Clarke, 1999) as being unsuited to the preparation of managers when dealing with behavioural and organisational complexity, ambiguity and change. One

of the major areas of failure within these areas of discourse concerns the impact of open-ended, exponential change on organisational and human dynamics. Commentators such as Stacey (2000) posit that one of the major reasons why Organisational Development (and by implication Human Resource Management) approaches towards change fail in practice (and in theory) is due to their failure to consider this issue – especially at the level of the individual and group.

What will be argued within this paper is that there is a need to investigate other areas of theorisation in relation to this issue; arguing that the over-reliance on psychological models of motivation does not reflect human complexity in this area. What will be posited here is an alternative view drawn from a different field of discourse, based on a four-year study of management within a turbulent organisational environment – a study which utilised the critical case of English football managers. The outcomes of this research suggest that distinctly different skills and knowledge are needed in terms of motivating, sustaining and nurturing the management relationship: skills and knowledge which have their roots in the mother/infant relationship. The argument is developed through a short, illustrative critical case of Ruud Gullit's brief tenure at Newcastle United Football Club which shows what can occur when the 'good enough' mother is absent – both physically and emotionally.

2.   Mother-infant relationship

During the process of the research into the training and development of football managers, an unexpected theme began to emerge in response to questioning as to the nature and content of their work. Although responses referred to expected themes and experiences that dovetailed with Work School theorists (Kotter, 1982; Hales, 1986, 1993; Mintzberg, 1973, 1990) it was noticeable that the most important aspect of their work diverged considerably from this discourse. For them, this was concerned with the holding and exploration of anxiety; involving the most primal of relationships – that of the mother/infant – in order to cope with the anxiety generated by the creative learning process at the heart of the team's work (indeed its raison d'etre) and created by the location of the sport in a state of bounded instability (Stacey, 2000) which holds a dynamic balance between stability and explosive equilibrium.

Such responses clearly have resonance with a very different discourse; one that leans more towards the psychoanalytical. Indeed, if one were to apply the discourse of psychoanalysis to the 'inside' of the football environment, then the manager would operate as a symbol of the child's first object as represented by the mother's breast. Such object relations theories – as initially developed and defined by Klein (1952, 1975, 1988, 1989) – emphasise the relationships with and between objects; stressing the anxieties about (and for) the people and things which the child is related to. According to Klein (1952) in the early months of an infant's life it feels itself to be as one with the mother – the child's first object.

> 'The infant's early experience is one without boundaries: there is no boundary between the child and the world; instead, the child experiences the mother's love for it directly and without mediation. And the mother is, at least in the beginning, the whole world to the infant; and the infant is, at least at the beginning, the central focus of her attention.'
> (Gabriel, 1999: 22)

This relationship is one characterised by dependency, love, reverence and hatred.

> 'The mother, first of all her breast, is the primal object for both the infant's introjective and projective processes. Love and hatred are from the beginning projected onto her, and concurrently she is internalised with both these contrasting primordial emotions, which underlie the infant's feeling that a good and a bad mother (breast) exist.
> (Klein, 1952: 310)

The ability of the mother figure to hold the child's emotions in all their extremes (as indicated above) is of vital importance.

> 'The more the mother and her breast are cathected – and the extent of the cathexis depends on a combination of internal and external factors, among which the inherent capacity for love is of the utmost importance – the more securely will be the internalised good breast, the prototype of good internal objects, be established in the infant's mind.'
> (*ibid*)

> 'I also suggested that internalisation is of great importance for projective processes, in particular that the good internalised breast acts as a focal point in the ego from which good feelings can be projected onto external objects. It strengthens the ego, counteracts the processes of splitting and dispersal and enhanced the capacity for integration and synthesis. The good internalised object is thus one of the pre-conditions for an integrated and stable ego and for good object relations. The tendency towards integration, which is concurrent with splitting, I assume to be from earliest infancy, a dominant feature of mental life. One of the main factors underlying the need for integration is the individual's feeling that integration implies being alive, loving and being loved by the internal and good object; that is to say, there exists a close link between integration and object relations.'
> (Klein, 1952: 312)

The work of Winnicott (1986) gives further insight as to the environment needed for the integration mentioned by Klein to take place.

> 'A facilitating environment must have a human quality, not a mechanical perfection, so the phrase 'good-enough mother' seems to me to meet the need for a description of what the child needs if the inherited growth processes are to become actual in the development of the individual child.'
> (Winnicott, 1986: 144)

This 'facilitating environment' is accompanied by holding – both physically and psychically:

> 'You will see that a great deal that a mother does with an infant could be called 'holding'. Not only is actually holding very important, and a delicate matter that can only be delicately done by the right people, but also much of infant nurture is an ever-widening interpretation of the word 'holding'. Holding comes to include all physical management, in so far as it is done in

adaptation to an infant's needs.   Gradually a child values being let go…The family continues this holding, and society holds the family.'
(Winnicott, 1986: 107)

It is this process of holding that is key to the facilitation of the movement of the infant from the paranoid-schizoid position where splitting, projection, introjection and projective identification occur to that of the depressive position where the infant can integrate its objects, which take on both good and bad aspects, cope with the guilt generated by the paranoid-schizoid position and endeavour to make amends. Therefore, a child ultimately separates itself from its mother by achieving what Klein (*ibid*) described as 'object related ambivalence' – a recognition that the world can be both good and bad at the same time and that the baby is not omnipotent; it is not the whole world. However, even as adults we still proceed with this process:

'In my view, these basic conflicts profoundly influence the course and force of the emotional lives of individuals…The struggle between love and hate, with all the conflicts to which it gives rise, sets in, as I have tried to show, in early infancy, and is active all though life.'
(Klein, 1988: 309)

For Winnicott, the difficulties of life arise from 'the fundamental clash between (the) two types of reality, that of the external world which can be shared by everyone, and that of each child's personal inner world of feelings, ideas, imagination. From birth, each baby is constantly being introduced to the fact of the external world.' (Winnicott, 1957: 128). Throughout life there must always be distress connected to this essential dilemma. 'Even the base external reality is disappointing because it is not also imaginary, and although perhaps to some extent it can be manipulated, it is not under magical control.' (*ibid*). So, for those who are engaged in caring for the child, they need to assist in this process of transition from illusion to disillusion, and that is achieved by simplifying as far as possible the problem immediately in front of a child at any one moment.

'…the players will want the freedom to express themselves and feel they can say something but then they want certain decisions to be taken for them, they don't want confusing…It's (about) putting a structure in place and I've found that people are happier with that…(because) they're susceptible to so many outside influences, Sarah, that you have to be aware of yourself and you're almost battling because most of those outside influences are negative ones. Very few are positive. Yes, if we play well, we'll get clapped, but if we play badly, we'll get booed. Now, somewhere along the line, I've got to protect that situation but on the same basis I've got to let them see that if they play badly I can't be protecting that consistently.'
Manager 6

'Much of the screaming and the temper tantrums of infancy range round this tug of war between inner and outer reality, and the tug of war must be reckoned normal.'
(Winnicott, 1957: 128)

In summary, new and different situations take us back to childhood states – our adult defences being merely a temporary, vulnerable socialised version of our childhood defences. For those operating within the dynamic world of football, exposure to 'new and different situations' is a common occurrence.

3.   Sources of anxiety

The wider environment of football is marked by key features of late modernity – discontinuity, the extreme rapidity and scope of change, the intrinsic nature of modern institutions and the themes of security versus danger and trust versus risk (Giddens, 1990). One where 'the social positions and conflicts of a wealth producing society begin to be joined by those of a 'risk distributing society' (Beck, 1992:20). For the adult football player, he is operating within an environment that can genuinely be described as chaotic (Stacey, 2000) where clubs (indeed the whole industry) could be said to hold a dynamic balance between stable equilibrium and explosive instability. For theorists such as Stacey who utilise the science of chaos and complexity to analyse and describe organisational and human dynamics in fast-paced environments, operating within such an unstable, unpredictable milieu will automatically raise levels of anxiety. The wider football industry has experienced (and continues to experience) exponential change – with little indication of this change either slowing or ceasing. Indeed, the predictions (especially within the employee relations arena) are for continued change at micro and macro levels as the mediaisation of the sport increases, the symbiotic nature of the relationship between clubs and media organisations continues to grow – seeing companies such as NTL and Sky becoming major shareholders in Premier League clubs and thus investing what they effectively feed off. Major stakeholders such as Directors, Chairmen, fans and media are increasingly demanding instant and continued attainment of clear-cut success at club and national level and the employer/employee relationship between players and clubs continues to remain volatile, with the balance of power moving inexorably towards the player as the demand and price of football talent continues to rise and agents consider the use of litigation to demand enhanced freedom of movement for their client players – effectively ending decades of semi-feudal relationships between players and their employers.

However, the developments outlined above need to be juxtaposed with a parallel scenario where nearly three quarters of Football League clubs continue to make operating losses and two thirds make pre-tax losses. The 'trickle down' economics of transfer income from the Premier League to the Football League is reducing - meaning that these lower division clubs will need to engage in survival strategies such as ground sharing, feeder leagues etc. in order to continue and there is an increasing realisation that the 92 club league cannot be economically supported by current mechanisms. Therefore, the difference between the Premier League and lower division clubs has become less of a gap and is more of a chasm. The clubs in potentially the most precarious financial position are those who are 'cuspular clubs'; i.e. those like Nottingham Forest or Manchester City who have a history of tenure within the higher echelons of the game but whose recent past has seen their tenure slip and then be regained only to slip once more. The desire to continue to attempt to bridge the gap and gain promotion to the Premiership once more can tempt such clubs to live beyond their means, often with disastrous consequences if this gamble does not yield positive, sustained results.

However, the rewards for continued success at the highest levels are huge. Deloitte Touche show that the top five finishers in the Premier League in the 1997/8 season (Manchester Untied, Newcastle United, Arsenal, Liverpool and Aston Villa) have a combined turnover greater than that of *all* the 72 Football League clubs.

> 'Manchester United generate more revenue on a single match day excluding TV (£1.2m) than at least 22 Football League clubs generate from all sources in a full year. Manchester United also generate more revenue from merchandising alone than the whole of Division Three takes from all revenue sources.'
> (Deloitte & Touche, 1998: 10.)

As the Deloitte Touche Annual Report on football finance notes in its 1998 introduction:

> '...Some welcome that and work to channel that dynamic force into business efficiency which creates profitable activity and generates cash for investment in players, stadia, training facilities and complementary activities to the core football club. Others bemoan the passing of a more egalitarian age when 'market forces' was an irrelevant concept. Whatever your point of view, the Pandora's box of business structure and market competition in football has been opened and cannot now be closed.'
> Deloitte & Touche, 1998: 3)

Research data carried out by the League Managers Association indicates that the average lifespan of a manager at a club is approximately…years with the current turnover rate in managerial jobs being… Many of those who lose their jobs fail to gain re-employments within the game, indicating that the outcomes for 'failure' within this industry can be harsh. But although the club manager is likely to be the most accountable officer for actual or perceived failure at club level, this does not mean that individual players are thereby either exempt or protected from criticism, blame or subsequent action following a poor streak of results, performances etc. Like the football managers, their failings are highly public and exposed to the same (if not an enhanced) level of scrutiny as the manager's given that games are played before league audiences usually counted in their thousands and that at the higher echelons of the sport, both mistakes and exceptional play are dissected and exposed through numerous media outlets selling their 'product' via the inclusion or headlining of sports coverage with football as the sport of choice. Finally, although the pendulum of power swinging between employer and employee is currently favouring the latter, this does not mean that clubs will not consider or sell even their most prized assets should their asking price be appropriate, the club's financial situation necessitate such a sale, or the club seek to profit from a player's value whilst he is still under contract.

On a physical and mental level, players – however talented – can find their careers ended by injury (single or continuous ones) or mental incapacity (as the recent history of Stan Collymore testifies). Although improvements in fitness, diet and sports psychology being have contributed to players extending their playing careers and improving consistency in terms of their performance such advances will not assist should a player suffer persistent injury or a series of operations where recovery to full

levels of fitness diminishes as the operations accumulate. Not all will be able to find employment within the industry as managers, coaches, pundits etc. and even some of the sports stellar players (such as Van Basten) find it hard to apply their abilities to such roles when playing has been such a dominant part of their lives and continues to remain a much loved activity even when players are retired. It is a career where a player's career peaks for a relatively short period of time (usually between the ages of 26 and 30) with few players operating as such beyond their mid 30's.

So, the overall and specific environment of football is highly volatile with the fates of individuals and teams being affected by small alterations in their environment – alterations that can have an outsized impact. Given Winnicott's analysis as to the sources of difficulty within life, key skills for managers will potentially involve attributes that are omitted from motivational discourse.

4.   Managers as mothers

However, all new relationships reproduce aspects of this original primary relationship between mother and child, a relationship where the mother needs to provide both 'good enough' mothering combined with holding – an adaptation to the infant's needs in order for that child to progress through the difficulties inherent in the paranoid schizoid position. The data suggests that the manager is 'everything' to his players and there is evidence that managers are both aware of that dynamic and that representation, and also *actively intervene* to create it – it is, or becomes, the modus operandi of choice.

As indicated previously in this paper, research undertaken into the training and development of football managers revealed that - from a psychoanalytic perspective - the manager needs to fulfil the mother role for those he manages. He needs to hold the anxiety produced by the infant/player who has to operate – *and operate creatively* – within open-ended, fast-paced change. But that mother role is one that is simultaneously provoking, instigating further change and reassuring as well as involving holding. Such processes therefore requires a delicate balance between these behaviours – as indicated below:

Manager 13:   'One of the ways I've put it is that you need a skin as a manager or leader that's thin enough to let things through so you know what's going on – you feel this pull towards being part of this paranoid group or you feel the flatness or the anxiety, but it's thick enough for you to be able to have your own point of view within in, to stand out against the view of the group.'

Interviewer: 'So some very fine balancing?'

Manager 13:   'Of course, of course, as a good mother would have with the child. I'm not saying it's all thought out and calculated or intellectual…'

Interviewer: 'Oh no, it seems very much from within.'

Manager 13:   'Exactly, exactly…there are…two aspects – one of which is empathy which is connected with reassurance…the other is confronting, facing,

standing in your own shoes, looking at the other person and tackling them, drawing their attention to something…'

One manager, who is a relatively new recruit to management, stated that he had initially miscalculated the behaviour needed for such balancing and indicated how he altered his approach when he encountered a similar situation at his second club:

Manager 11:   'When I first got the job at…I made mistakes straight away. I went in and tried to change things too fast – upset one of two of the players and that's one of the things I didn't do here. I just said 'look, do your best for us, that's all' and that was it.'

Interviewer: 'So you didn't instigate that many changes here immediately?'

Manager 11:   'To be honest, when I came here we had 5 points out of 28 – a disaster. But now we've put on 34 in the last 19 games so we're picking up nearly 2 points a game which is nigh on championship form. I mean it's the players…they weren't relaxed before. The manager…he upset a lot…and I don't think you can. I think you have to have them on your side, without a doubt.'

As stated by Manager 13, the process of diagnosis requires both investigation and active intervention. For that manager what underpins that process being successfully achieved is his ability to hold anxiety and engage in paradoxical forms of behaviour – achieving a synthesis of both and operating from the depressive position – exerting a profound emotionally balancing capability which stems from the manager's intuitive rather than his cognitive abilities:

'The first thing is noticing that something is changing for the worse…In some way it's more hysterical, it's more cruel, it's more flat, or dead or something of that kind. So that's the first thing, as with the child, noticing that something is wrong and the mother is particularly well placed to do that…so the same would be true of the team…the other thing is trying to put your finger on it – what is it? Are they scared? Are they complacent? Is there a split in the team? Anxiety is caused by all sorts of things: are there superior people who are becoming more superior? Is there a sort of a devil may care attitude? It's pinpointing the problem and then of course there's the chance of addressing it in some way and in terms of finding out what's going on in some of the people's minds in terms of confronting. The other thing you do apart from reassure is confront.'
Manager 13

An example of a manager engaging in such processes can be found in Manager 5's data where he and his Assistant together with the club's Counsellor, decide that they need to provoke an established team of relatively older players. The manager had very limited financial resources and could not provoke or disturb the team by bringing in new recruits. Instead he opts to follow the advice of the Counsellor (his unofficial mentor).

'I think you should get all the team together and disturb them.'
'Why's that?'
'They've lost their way a little bit.'
'What makes you say that?'
'Well, the results have wavered…you've the same group of players. You can't buy anybody in, you've got to find another method to motivate them.'
So I said 'right, how're we going to do it?'
'Get them in at 8:30 in the morning,' 8:30 in the morning! 'You've got to get the players in at 8:30 in the morning. I will sit in the dressing room. I want a desk in there, I'll take pen and paper. Don't let them change. Ritchie, your coach has got to sit in there – you can tell him what we're doing. Nobody changes and nobody leaves the dressing room until you tell them' he says. 'Minimum 20 minutes.' I says 'you're joking, 8:30 in the morning…'

That's what we did. I got Ritchie in. 'What's all this?' he said.
'Ritchie, that's it. You sit in there. Don't come out until I tell you.'
Quarter of an hour there's a knock on the door.
'Ritchie, I told you not to come out. What did I tell you?'
He says, 'I'll tell you something,' he says, 'they're steaming in there. You get them in at 8:30, you won't let them change. Dennis is in the corner writing notes. What's it all about?'
'Ritchie, go back in there and I will…'

Just as he went back in what Dennis was after happened. Suddenly, there was a moaning devil in the team, …'What the fuck is all that?'
…says 'Trust it to be you, you fucking ignorant bastard.' They hated each other. And then it all happened. Then he started and he started. Thomas is at Ritchie. 'It's all fucking your fault, all that. When we were coming back from playing that match, we stopped and had fish and chips. We're supposed to be a professional club.'
Ritchie says 'you haven't kicked a fucking ball for ages' (laughs). They were all at it, right? Then all of a sudden, …says 'eh, what's going on here?' and they started to make pals. At that minute Dennis got up and walked out. He says 'you can go in now.' (laughs)

Although the provoking sustained in the example is highly risky, it seemed to have been successful due to the provision of an appropriate holding environment.

'The moment I took over as manager I said to all the players, 'if you've got any problems, just come and see me, that's what I'm here for'…I like to think of myself as a father figure. I also like to think that I was there for the staff to come and say if they had any problems…'
Manager 3

As stated, even as adults we go through this process of primary dynamics when experiencing new environments, so their existence within organisational life is to be expected. In football terms this can also be seen in the relationships between managers and 'difficult' (and often *highly creative*) players, notably Roy Keane at Manchester United, or Patrick Viera at Arsenal. It is the function of the manager when dealing with these players to accept their vision of themselves whilst ensuring that the

team (standing for the family) is not harmed. It is in the success or otherwise of the manager to deal with this that long-term managerial suitability can best, perhaps, be judged.

> 'Well then, how about Rodney Marsh? City were top of the league when he joined them: two weeks ago they were practically bottom. Was he perhaps the wrong kind of player for this team?
>
> 'No', said Allison, 'that's nonsense. You can't blame anything on Rodney Marsh. It may be that because he came here with a reputation as an artist, a brilliant ball player, the others felt they ought to show the crowds that they can play a bit, too. That might have upset the rhythm a little but it's hardly Marsh's fault, is it?
>
> 'I bought him because he's got more skill than anybody else in English football, he can score goals and he's just got that thing. He affects people – like Bestie, Cassius Clay or Tom Jones. I don't know what it is but he's got it. Besides, I like his originality. He's got the sort of footballing brain that can spot the other team's pattern of play and know just where and how to break it up.'
>
> (Norman, as cited in Kelly (ed), 1992: 351)

Bion (1961) also provides an explanation as to how these processes can operate within a group setting, stating that heightened anxiety could provoke regression to the infantile mechanisms of dependence, idealisation, denial, splitting, projection etc. that have been learned as an infant and laid down in the unconscious. When mature people come together as a group, each individual brings along these mechanisms.

> 'Success here has to do with the management of the context or boundary conditions around a group. The main factors that establish the context are the nature and use of power, the level of mutual trust, and the time pressures on people and the group. The purpose of managing the context, or the boundaries is to create an emotional atmosphere in which it is possible to overcome defences and to test reality rather than indulge in fantasy. In other words, the context must be managed to create an atmosphere that enables double-loop learning.'
>
> (Stacey, 2000: 213)

However, there are difficulties presented by individual players which cannot be overcome by the 'good enough mothering' of the manager or the management of the boundary conditions as related by Stacey above. These situations point to a more elementary problem with socialisation and to the specific characteristics of the individual manager as mother and will not be dealt with here.

5. Differentiation

As stated, the child separates itself from the mother by attaining object related ambivalence, although even as adults we still proceed with this process of differentiation when facing new and uncertain environments. But this process has a particular divergence from Kleinian discourse when a competitive team environment is analysed – as it is here – where individual members are crucial to team success. Within such an environment, it is functionally necessary here that they should not achieve the full process of differentiation and therefore retain a sense of themselves as being part of the external environment. This is by definition a process of self-delusion

that denies the independent existence of the individual, but it is a necessary part of teamwork and teambuilding because ultimately an individual's excellent performance within a match (although it might be encouraging and bode well for his club and his future there) is of reduced consideration is the team has lost.

This heightened form of differentiation is still short of full mature adulthood for two separate reasons: the first is that the child/player's relationship with the rest of the team encourages infantile behaviour because of the nature of competition and the manifest need for players to subsume their individual identities into that of the team. The second reason is much simpler – it is that none of us reaches full differentiation and where footballers are concerned, they seem to reside between the points of undifferentiated ego mass at one end and the formation of autonomous, separate identity at the other (Bowen, as cited in Fritz et al, 1985). Bowen describes the former state as 'a conglomerate emotional oneness that exists in all levels of intensity' (*ibid*). Whereas the latter, as denoted by Fritz et al as an individual in the course of his or her development formulating a concept of self that is differentiated from the identity of other individuals and is autonomous in itself. Here 'self' is defined as the set of all ideas and perceptions of one's own being as they are developed in the course of individual development and are then more or less integrated into and perceived as a functional whole (identity). But, as indicated, where football and team sports are concerned, the manager needs to keep the players closer to Bowen's undifferentiated ego mass to ensure that identity remains grounded within the team.

This was frequently seen in the data (as evidenced below by two managers of very different age and experience as players and as managers) when managers talk about developing and scouting: selecting would-be recruits on the basis of how they would fit in with the team's system of play and as a person; the latter being important because of the highly enclosed, tightly-knit nature of the football side of a club.

> 'I think working especially with young players because you're building their character for the future; you're building their confidence up for the future…I was fortunate; I could work with my players for two years – to be able to improve them…knowing that I could make them into better players if they had the essentials…hopefully you can see in a few games whether the potential is there. You believe in them and they take things on: the knowledge that you give them.'
> Manager 9

> 'The secret is, you can go to a game and spot the best player, but he's not going to fit into your particular way of playing or your team. And you go to a game and spot someone who doesn't stand out but think, 'he's perfect for me.' And that's the art…John Barnes wrote something quite interesting at the weekend. He said that his teams are going to know exactly what they've got to do and how they're going to do that. And I can understand that…That's not taking away someone's individuality…John Barnes is one of the top players ever. Individualist…but it means that every single one of those Man United players last night knew what their jobs were. And there's an art to do that. There's not many can do that.'
> Manager 11

From the player's perspective, the football literature and post-match interviews are littered with statements pertaining to the importance of the team's performance and the team's result – frequently dismissing personal performance as being secondary and of reduced importance.

6.   As I desire you

As stated, within such an organisational setting such as a football team, the infant/player needs the manager/mother to hold the anxiety it feels. But this process is simultaneously accompanied with the infant sexual drive that is object related and directed towards the mother/manager.

> 'The boy enters the Oedipus phase; he begins to manipulate his penis and simultaneously has phantasies of carrying out some sort of activity with it in relation to his mother, till owing to the effect of a threat of castration and the sight of the absence of a penis in females, he experiences the greatest trauma of his life and this introduces the period of latency with all its consequences.'
> (Freud, 1940: 386)

Not surprisingly, the data indicated that managers are sometimes unconscious of the mother role. At this point it needs to be stated that although many managers described themselves as 'father figures' or as operating in a parental role with their players, when the data was analysed and explored further, the dynamics of the relationship adhered far more closely to the mother-child relationship as seen in the psychoanalytic literature than it did to a more paternalistic one – hence the adoption of the manager as operating in the mother as opposed to the father role for this paper. Such a response to the mother role is not necessarily problematic if the manager is comfortable with himself and his sexuality, but it becomes problematic if he is not. If managers are comfortable with their sense of self, sense of identity and sexuality then unconsciously there is no issue of being an object of sexual desire (as the mother) from players. However, should this 'comfort' not exist, then although managers will be unaware of these processes, there will be an unconscious effect in terms of the relationships he will form with players which could result in prejudicing conscious behaviour. Therefore, it is perfectly workable for a manager to see himself as father, be other to players and consequently be an unconscious object of infant sexual desire because there is an individual denial of the unconscious processes involved here – these issues are never surfaced or raised. So, from a psychoanalytic perspective, the sexual attraction of the player/infant to manager/mother can be worked through as part of healthy infant development or as part of the stunted process previously outlined.

However, where the manager actually takes the *father* role, not as a result of good management practice where it might have a place, but in response to anxieties he is unable to hold (the good mother attribute), he becomes the Oedipal castrator. The rest of this paper will now focus on this 'castration complex' and the need for the manager to possess the 'good enough mother' features. This will be achieved through the critical case of Ruud Gullit's tenure as manager at Newcastle United Football Club (NUFC) and his eventual replacement by Bobby Robson – the 'good enough mother'.

The paper will then make the case for a wider organisational translation – of relevance to those who work in teams experiencing fast-paced change.

7. 'Cool Ruud Says it for the Underdogs'

> 'It is not new for me to come to clubs with little recent success,' says Gullit. 'Chelsea had not won anything for years and it was the same at Milan, even Eindhoven. All had been in the doldrums for years.' Gullit left out the words 'until I arrived' because he does not want to advertise himself as a miracle cure…'I want Newcastle to have an identity, but not my identity. They won't play like I played, but hopefully they will play with pleasure, with a lot of ball contact, and they will play winning football.'
> (Wilson, 1999: 4)

Ruud Gullit came to Newcastle following a two-year tenure as Manager at Chelsea, during which time the club won the FA Cup and finishing 6th in the Premiership and setting up a potential Champions League place after having achieved little for at least 20 years. However, Gullit's departure from Chelsea was controversial and the grounds for his departure from that club were to be closely mirrored at NUFC, thus indicating that either a very serious failure to learn from experience had taken place, or that a more fundamental issue was involved in terms of the dynamic set up between manager and players at Newcastle and at Chelsea.

As evidenced in the quote above, NUFC had *flirted* with success but crucially not achieved it:

> 'Yes there were the ups of the Nineties, the romance of the Kevin Keegan years, the coup of signing Alan Shearer and the mass blubfests after losing vital games to Manchester United and Liverpool, but the trophy cupboard has been bare for 30 years.'
> (*ibid*)

But this flirtation had been achieved at an extraordinary financial cost, mostly born by the massive benefaction of the Hall family. Therefore, the pressure for Gullit to deliver clear-cut success was enormous – exacerbated by NUFC's entry onto the Alternative Investment Market of the Stock Exchange.

Gullit's achievements and standing as a player are indisputable and even at Chelsea his skills (albeit in his twilight years) had been regularly displayed for an *English* football audience – not just highlighted in the occasional international match for Holland or for AC Milan. This marked a break with the previous two Newcastle managers, who although they possess legendary status with an English – and to an extent a wider public – their playing careers were very definitely in the past. Gullit was also decidedly different in terms of his race, his background and his ability to market himself.

> 'Black, Dutch and the epitome of cool, Gullit is a master of six languages…'
> (Lindsey, 1998: 7)

> '...he wasn't slow to appreciate his marketing appeal. Utterly at home in front of the camera, with discreet good tailoring and relaxed, intelligent manner, Gullit knocked the spots off cliché ridden football commentary...he was offered a £100,000 contract with Pizza Hut and showed he wasn't afraid of the catwalk...'
> (*ibid*)

The British press also made much of his personal history. His then (and current) girlfriend, Estelle Cruyff was nineteen years old when she gave birth to their son (Gullit's fifth child).

> '...He's a bit of a hit with the ladies – well that's no surprise – but after the hit comes the burn and he's been severely stung by costly wrath from the women he's scorned. A £1.5 million divorce settlement with his first wife, Yvonne de Vries, and demands for another from his second ex, Cristina Pensa, on top of the stress of missing his four children, might, just might, weigh heavily on a 33 year old man's mind...'
> (*ibid*)

His comments when commentating on Euro 96 cemented the image of sexuality allied to football flair.

> ''I am looking forward to seeing some sexy football,' said Ruud Gullit during the BBC's coverage of Euro 96. 'Sexy football, eh?' echoed Des Lynam, eyebrow at 45 degrees as if wondering what the DG might be thinking this early in the evening. It became Gullit's catchphrase and it is why he is now the manager of Newcastle United.'
> (Ridley, 1998: 5)

But by August 1999 it was all over: after just over a year he resigned. The reasons for his failure at Newcastle – as denoted by the media – were reasonably straight-forward: they were staring relegation in the face, Gullit had managed to alienate a local heroes, the striker and England Captain, Alan Shearer and former Captain, Rob Lee, his signings had failed to match those he had attained at Chelsea or perform with any consistency. What this paper will postulate is that whilst not wishing to denigrate this analysis (indeed some of it will be utilised here) the main reasons for Gullit's failure here (and potentially at Chelsea) were more complex and had their roots in his failure to possess the good mother features and his unconscious adoption of the role of the castrating father.

8.   Holding Anxiety

When considering the need to hold anxiety, the ability to do so comes from the ability to operate from the depressive position which tests the individual's ability to cope effectively with paradox. Our ability to do so as children and as adults is dependent on the ability of the mother to provide an inherent capacity for love and to hold the child's early emotions in all their extremes when in the paranoid-schizoid position. This concept, as stated previously, was further developed by Winnicott with the importance he bestowed on the 'good enough' mother and the vital importance of holding. He defined this process as one with a fine judgement as to how much to gratify the child to provoke exploration of and relation to the environment. This

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balance and its achievement are what constitute holding and comes from the instinctive empathy the mother has with the child.

Gullit introduced squad rotation into the English game as manager of Chelsea, arguing that it kept players' legs and minds fresh and that given the number of matches played within the English domestic league system (without even considering European commitments) the need for rotation would increase in order to rest players and to have slack in the system to cover for inevitable injuries. Squad rotation, whilst it might now be seen as an inevitable and a permanent feature of football at the top flight, is unpopular with players, suggesting that if a player were to be dropped from a game, then careful handling of that player would be required – as Managers 4 and 12 indicate below. The former indicating the importance of an individual discussion concerning his decision, the latter showing the harder edged nature of the football environment – that if a player does not perform (i.e. play well or actually *play*) then his tenure at a club is at risk. Gullit's rotation system is therefore a highly risky strategy and needs to be accompanied with delicate treatment of the players concerned because his failure to choose that player has potentially serious consequences for the player's career in the short or medium term.

> 'If I'm leaving a player out of the team then I won't delegate that, that's my responsibility to tell him. That's probably the only area where I wouldn't delegate.'
> Manager 4
>
> 'You're everything (to the players). I've got a player coming in today with family problems which I now have to sort…to sort him out. Because people want to see him perform. There's an old saying in football 'you are just a number within a club' and that number has to perform. If you don't perform, then you're gone.
> Manager 12

As can be seen from Thorpe, Gullit failed to exhibit these 'good mother features' at Chelsea – exacerbating the inherent anxiety experienced within a football squad:

> 'Far from cool, Gullit's method of letting people know they are not performing is decidedly cold: he drops them, and with little explanation. Players are silently urged to look at themselves. Gullit met their resistance to his idea for a squad system with the same hatchet diplomacy: anyone who did not like it could go.'
> (Thorpe, 1998: 14)

This 'cold' form of management behaviour was repeated at Newcastle. Again, his treatment of certain key players - the then captain, Robert Lee and local boy/hero, Alan Shearer – mirrored his treatment of other local heroes at Chelsea – Gianlucca Vialli being the most prominent – and it could be alleged that this failure to hold the anxiety created by the rotation system coupled with the perceived ill treatment of the favoured son(s) led directly to his downfall at both clubs.

> 'I wasn't one of Ruud's lovely boys,' explained Lee…'we didn't have a massive row. We had disagreements rather than rows. The problem was that,

because I was the captain, I was the one player he really talked to. At the start,
I thought Ruud liked me, we seemed to get on, but he didn't like being
disagreed with and, as captain, my job was to put forward the players'
viewpoint. By the end, he didn't speak to me at all. He didn't want me
anywhere near the training ground.'
(Taylor, 2000: 3)

As Lee himself testifies, the stripping of his captaincy role and Gullit's refusal to give
him a squad number only served to unite public and local media opinion against the
manager – despite his best attempts to positively engage with both at the start of his
tenure.

'Ruud didn't realise that I'd played for Newcastle for seven years, and that
counted for something…I think he wanted the supporters to love him more
than Alan (Shearer), but he didn't realise the exceptional support Alan has
here…in the end they showed they loved Alan more…He wanted the fans to
love him more than any player. He couldn't accept that Alan was a local hero.'
(*ibid*)

This seems to suggest the following. Firstly, that Gullit is an overly narcissistic
mother – someone who (according to Freud 1953) prefers loving to being loved:

'The subject's main interest is directed to self-preservation; he is independent
and not open to intimidation. His ego has a large amount of aggressiveness at
its disposal, which also manifests itself in readiness for activity. In his erotic
life loving is preferred above being loved. People belonging to this type
impress others as being 'personalities'; they are especially suited to act as a
support for others, to take on the role of leaders and to give a fresh stimulus to
cultural development or to damage the established state of affairs.'
(p. 363)

But although there is much here that is of use to managers, the problem Gullit faces is
that as a narcissistic mother, preferring to be loved more than loving, he also needs to
be loved more than anyone else by his children. So that the child, when s/he looks into
the mother's eyes sees the mother reflected back, not themselves. As an overly
narcissistic mother, Gullit fails to hold his *own* infant anxieties (something that the
mother has to do) which consequently leads to playing failure on the pitch and a
negative run of matches culminating in Newcastle losing a local derby with
Sunderland.

As part of the splitting process that accompanies the failure to hold anxiety, and the
narcissistic nature which derives from the infantile introjective and projective
processes, the ego-ideal (according to Klein) is projected onto another person who
becomes predominately loved and admired because she or she contains good parts of
the self.

'Similarly, the relation to another person on the basis of projecting bad parts of
the self into him is of a narcissistic nature, because in this case as well the
object strongly represents one part of the self. Both these types of a narcissistic
relation to an object often show strong obsessional features. The impulse to

control other people is, as we know, an essential element in obsessional neurosis. The need to control others can to some extent be explained by a deflected drive to control parts of the self. When these parts have been projected excessively into another person, they can only be controlled by controlling the other person.'
(Klein, 1988: 13)

In this case, it could be argued that the bad parts of Gullit were projected onto Alan Shearer who is partially 'blamed' for the poor run of performances – especially the catastrophic derby when as a substitute he is played and fails to score. In the press conference following the match, Gullit singles out both Shearer and Ferguson (another sub) for responsibility for the defeat. Before Gullit joined Newcastle, he criticised their expensive purchase of Shearer in the media as being 'a crazy price, a waste of money' (Walker, 1998:1) and spoke thus of him at his first press conference at the club:

> 'Shearer's an out-and-out goalscorer but he doesn't seem to get any joy from the game if he fails to hit the target. I prefer players who contribute in other areas and have a sense of fun…Alan is the captain of the national team and scores a lot of goals…he is important but a whole lot of players are important for the team. Nobody is more important than anybody else.'
> (*ibid*)

It is possible to argue that Gullit tried to forge an alliance with other stakeholders (media, fans, other players) to isolate Shearer – many of his criticisms of him were actually accurate – but that this strategy backfires. Instead, as at Chelsea, this castration of the local hero evidenced as a result of his splitting processes which invest Shearer with the bad parts of Gullit results in the 'children' bonding together to criticise and give voice to disquiet about the mother – assisted by local and national media who resurrect his failings at Chelsea and use events in his private life to illustrate his lack of caring.

> 'Gullit was finally derailed (at Chelsea) by two performances against Arsenal. One in the Coca-Cola Cup on January 28 when his abysmal playing performance cut the grounds from his demands for a new playing contract and led to a secret meeting of his team without his presence. And last Sunday's Premiership at Highbury, when he continually shuffled his tactical cards without coming remotely close to a winning hand.'
> (Collins, 1998: 2)

> '…word leaked from the Bridge that he really wasn't that involved, Rix and the backroom boys did everything; Gullit was just a figurehead, again most of the lads in the stand would hardly have accepted that as sufficient grounds for a P45, if he had done nothing else it was his presence which had delivered Vialli, Zola and Di Matteo. But then cam the crunch…Gullit didn't care enough. He was only interested in the club as a vehicle for his own ego…For the fan this is a crime deserving of punishment much greater than redundancy. Not caring about the club: that is the charge levelled at those asset strippers of Brighton and Doncaster.'
> (White, 1998: 25)

'Ammunition for the criticism that Ruud Gullit is a 'semi-detached' manager of Newcastle has been supplied a day after the club's stormy annual meeting with the Dutchman on a seven-day family break in Amsterdam.'
(Thomas, 1998: 22)

The research showed that English managers are expected to have a total focus on their work with parallels existing between English clubs and Coser's (1974) 'greedy institutions'. Gullit's semi-detachment is therefore used against him at both Chelsea and at Newcastle – he is the unfit mother/manager leaving his charges at home alone.

9.   Conclusion

One of the objectives of this stream is to re-introduce desire, the non-rational, the unreasonable as motivational forces. If we are genuinely seeking to recognise that 'all human life is there' within an organisational setting, then perhaps we also need to recognise that all stages of human life may exist within it and that includes the mother/infant relationship and the primary life experiences that are so crucial to our adult life and the development of our personality; our psyche. Should organisations and organisational studies continue to place a reliance on simple (and arguably simplistic) analyses as to what constitutes people's needs within their working lives, then failure will result as such approaches ignore the full range of behaviour drives which exist within us – drives and needs that are exacerbated during periods of change and uncertainty.

This is a small-scale, exploratory study which seeks to utilise aspects of the research project already alluded to. But the issue of the manager as mother is one that has resonance and application when considering motivating forces – especially in a team setting where the organisation operates within a turbulent environment; heightening unconscious infant anxieties. The manager's ability to hold these anxieties, to deal effectively (and publicly) with paradox provides the creative space needed by the infant/player(s) to explore, to play, to fail; to deal with the mess that is part of the creative process. For that to occur, the total focus referred to above has a peculiar role and is therefore akin to the devotion demonstrated by the mother towards the infant in the earliest stages of life and it is arguable that this total focus and maternal devotion holds anxieties not only of the players but of a wider range of football stakeholders. Should further studies replicate and extend these findings then the implications for the domains of organisational studies and management education could be interesting.

'Home is where one starts from. As we grow older
The world becomes stranger, the pattern more
   complicated
Of dead and living. Not the intense moment
Isolated, with no before and after,
But a lifetime burning in every moment.'
(Eliot, 1944: 19)

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