

Understanding Al-Mutanabbi's poetry: An application of Horneyan theory on neurotics

RATNA ROSHIDA ABD RAZAK*

ABSTRACT

This paper is concerned with the 'real self' of al-Mutanabbi, a great poet of the Abbasid period and a famous satirist in the Arabic literature. An effort has been made to discover the deeper aspects of al-Mutanabbi's personality, which constitutes an important aspect of his artistic expression. Using Horney's theories we will explore how al-Mutanabbi, as a neurotic person, overcomes the conflict inherent in his relationship with Kafur, his second patron. A biographical perspective is extremely useful for an understanding of the work of a poet such as al-Mutanabbi and through an analysis of his poems. It is possible to reveal how the poet adopted various strategies to achieve his goals. In al-Mutanabbi's case we try to unearth how the effect of his neurotic conflict had on his motivation. His neurotic conflict might be utilized as a temporary incentive. However the creative urge and creative power can only stem from his desire for self-realization and these energies are only fully utilized in its service. Al-Mutanabbi was distinguished by his ability to live with anxiety, even though a high price might be paid in terms of insecurity and sensitivity.

Self-realization does not exclusively, or even primarily, aims at developing one's special gifts. The centre of the process is the evolution of one's potentialities as a human being; hence it involves – in central place – the development of one's capacities for good human relations.

Karen Homey

INTRODUCTION

This article is concerned with the 'real self' of al-Mutanabbi, a great poet of the Abbasid period. An effort has been made to discover the deeper aspects of al-Mutanabbi personality, which constitutes an important aspect of his artistic expression. Many modern studies on Arabic poetry have

* School of Humanities, Universiti Sains Malaysia, 11800 Penang, Malaysia. E-mail: ratna@usm.my

been more attracted to al-Mutanabbi's verses, concentrating on the construction of the poems and the instruments employed by the poet to compose his polythematic poetry, while ignoring the poet's humanitarianism¹. Few studies of the poet himself exists and these do not, to any great extent, examine the features of his character of his psychological make-up².

Al-Mutanabbi traveled to Egypt at the invitation of its ruler, Kafur, an able Negro eunuch slave of the royal household who had usurped power from the legitimate king. He addressed his first panegyric to his new patron in 346/957, but the panegyrics which he devoted to him barely concealed his regret at losing the favour of Sayf al-Dawlah³. His action was compelled by a desire to attain security of the office of governor of the Ikshidid principality. It is generally thought that the poet only agreed to praise his patron because he had promised al-Mutanabbi the governorship of Sayda⁴. For three years the capital held him, while he lectured and courted the great and mighty of Egypt. However, in 350/960, on the day of the Feast of Sacrifices, with a multitude of diversions taking place, he decided to flee from Fustat, after writing a satire against Kafur. Before making his final decision to leave Egypt, al-Mutanabbi did try to 'win the heart' of another Ikshidid general, Abu Shuja' Fatik (d. 350/961), whose merits had been reckoned by the Ikshid Muhammad b. Tughj⁵. Al-Mutanabbi knew Abu Shuja's reputation and vis-à-vis. Thus, we could consider that each other recognized the advantage to be obtained from their relationship. Unfortunately the bond of their friendship was not lasting. In 350/961, Abu Shuja' died and al-Mutanabbi was grief-stricken.

KAFUR'S PATRONAGE OF AL-MUTANABBI

The question that arises is why he chose to be a panegyrist to Kafur, who was originally a black slave and a eunuch. It is difficult at first to see the attractions of Kafur for al-Mutanabbi, especially since his new patron was a rival of Sayf al-Dawlah, and twice the victor over the Hamdanid⁶. In fact no evidence apart from the poems themselves has been found that al-Mutanabbi had any admiration or respect for Kafur. However, we have to bear in mind that Kafur is a significant figure in Islamic history. His importance lies in the fact that, during the twenty-two years of his rule, he successfully protected the Ikshidid establishment against dangerous outside pressures stemming from the Fatimids, the Carmathians, the Nubians and the Hamdanids.

Kafur's kunya (agnomen), Abu I-Misk, owed its origin to the Caliph of Baghdad. He was from Lab in Nubia and the nisbah (genealogy) al-Labi was given to him by al-Mutanabbi.

كان الأسود اللابي فيهم غراب حوله رخم ويوم

The black Labian among them is, as it were, a raven surrounded by vultures and owls⁷.

¹ (Geert Jan Van Gelder, (ed), 'Al-Mutanabbi's Encumbering Trifles', *Arabic and Middle eastern Literatures*, 2, No. 1, 1999, 0.5).

² (J.E, Montgomery, 'Al-Mutanabbi and the Psychological Grief', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 115, ii, 1995, pp. 285-292).

³ With this fact, it strikes us to understand al-Mutanabbi's poetry in depth particularly, from a psychological perspective. As far as we know, panegyric is composed to the patron. Whether the poet has to be honest or not, is not in question. But the question is why al-Mutanabbi submitted himself to Kafur, if he thought that he could not devote himself wholeheartedly as a panegyrist? See also chapter five: 'Moving Toward People'.

⁴ Al-Badi'i, *al-Subh al-Munbi*, p. 6.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 131-132.

⁶ R. Blachere, *Un poete arabe du iv^{ème} siecle de UHegire (x^{ème} siecle de J.-c): About – Tayyib al-Motanabbi* (Paris, 1935), p. 191. All classical sources agree that it was Kafur who started and, initiated the relationship when he knew the famous panegyrist had left Aleppo and was already in Damascus, Ikshidid territory.

⁷ Translation by K. Khalaili, 'Al-Mutanabbi in his Role as Eulogist and Satirist of Kafur', poem no. 22.

Kafur was brought to Fustat as a young slave. He was bought and sold by several masters until he finally entered the wealthy household of Banu Abbas. It was here that Muhammad al-Ikhshidi, the founder of the Ikhshidid dynasty, came into contact with him. Kafur was intelligent and had a good nature. He was very patient and never lost his temper; in fact he would laugh when he was slapped and teased by members of Banu Abbas's family⁸ whenever they found him in the market. The eunuch's intelligence and devotion flourished under his new master, Muhammad al-Ikhshidi. Tutors were appointed to educate him. Kafur was much impressed with his master, who sponsored his rise to positions of political and military influence. After he was freed, Kafur was appointed as an army officer, eventually being assigned as head of an army which defeated Sayf al-Dawlah at Qinnasrin in 333/945⁹.

Kafur proved himself to be a most cunning and resourceful politician. He was able to please both the 'Abbasids and the Fatimids by adopting a policy of rapprochement towards of Fatimid caliph, al-Mu'izz. He tried to maintain friendly relations with him, while at the same time displaying openly his allegiance to the 'Abbasid caliph at Baghdad¹⁰. He was also very generous, and a benefactor to many people, especially the poor. Nor was he aloof or reserved: his close friends witnessed that he enjoyed the company of boon companions, singing slave-girls and a great number of both black and white slaves. He also devoted much time to scholarly studies. Every night, scholars would read in his court the history of the Umayyad and 'Abbasid dynasties, and composed a history of Egypt for him¹¹.

Kafur's cleverness and effective diplomacy impressed al-Mutanabbi, and were highly praised in his verses.

يبيد دعوات البغاة بلطفه فإن لم تبد منهم أباد الأعدايا

"Destroying the enmities of aggressors by his gentility and if they do not perish from them, he destroys the enemies"¹².

إذا منعت منك السياسة نفسها فقف وقفة قدامة تتعلم

"If policy denies herself to you, just halt but once before him and you will learn"¹³.

Kafur was also rumoured to have been a highly religious and devout person. He would make himself available at his house at dawn and dusk, to receive people in need of his help. He would spend his nights in prayer, prostrating himself in the dust and saying: "My Lord, I pray to you, do not put me under the mercy of any creatures"¹⁴. The question arises however, whether these would be enough to satisfy al-Mutanabbi. There is little doubt that Kafur possessed not only political power but many admirable personal qualities. It can be argued that choosing a protector is not only a matter of safety. We believe that since al-Mutanabbi knew himself to be a great poet, so he would be willing to serve only a great patron who fully appreciated, and rewarded, his extraordinary talents.

Being aware of Kafur's good reputation, al-Mutanabbi had little hesitation in accepting him as his new patron. He anticipated that his life would improve at Kafur's court, and, more importantly,

⁸ Al-Badi'i, *al-Subh al-Munbi*, p. 110.

⁹ A.S. Ehrenkreutz, 'Kafur', *Encyclopedia of Islam*, E. Van Dunzel, B. Lewis, Ch. Pellat (eds.), (Leiden: E.J. Brill), vol. 4, 1978, pp. 418-419.

¹⁰ Ibn Taghribirdi, *al-Nujum al-Zahirah fi Muluk Misr wa al-Qahirah*, vol. 4 (Cairo, 1963), p. 6.

¹¹ *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 'Kafur', vol. 4, p. 418.

¹² A.J. Arberry, *Poems of al-Mutanabbi*, p. 92.

¹³ Translation by K Khalaili, 'Al-Mutanabbi in his Role as Eulogist and Satirist of Kafur', poem 7:19.

¹⁴ Ibn Taghribirdi, *al-Nujum al-Zahirah fi Muluk Misr wa al-Qahirah*, vol. 4 (Cairo, 1963), p. 6. 22.

that his political future would be more securely based than during the rather euphoric period of his youthful idealism.

Interpreting according to Horneyan theory, we might agree that when al-Mutanabbi's rejection by Sayf al-Dawlah was a catastrophe that aggravated his neurotic conflict: he realized that his relationship with his patron, which had fed his poetry, was not what he had thought. Al-Mutanabbi's strong desire to be accepted and appreciated by a powerful patron was the most visible sign of his need for safety. He did not hesitate to attack Sayf al-Dawlah, who had made his, situation unsafe, and accuse him of disloyalty and unfaithfulness.

Neurosis cannot be defined in terms of symptoms experienced, since these may be absent or unrecognized. In order to understand the neurotic conflict, it is necessary to understand the nature of anxiety. According to Horney, neurosis are brought about by cultural factors, meaning more specifically that neurosis are generated by disturbances in human relationships. She further notes that compulsive drives are specifically neurotic, born out of feelings of isolation, helplessness, fear, and hostility, and that the human being aims at safety more than sexual satisfaction¹⁵. These neurotic processes arise out of the need to fend off the onset of anxiety, which is related to the individual's feelings towards the environment:

Basic anxiety is centered on one's environment being dreaded as a whole because it is felt to be unreliable, mendacious, unappreciative, unfair, unjust, begrudging and merciless. The sufferer feels the environment as a menace to his entire development and to his legitimate wishes and strivings. He feels his individuality is in danger of being obliterated, his freedom being taken away, his happiness barred. He feels rendered helpless to defend himself adequately against any Infringements¹⁶.

Al-Mutanabbi's initial view of the environment was idealized and unrealistic. Sayf al-Dawlah's betrayal turned the environment (the court), into one to be 'dreaded' and therefore anxiety producing. It was not so much his physical safety that was threatened, but his self, his identity as a creative individual, which was intimately connected to his relationship with Sayf al-Dawlah.

The absence of love is a typical feature of basic anxiety¹⁷. It could be argued that al-Mutanabbi's basic anxiety brought about a conflict between his emotional and professional dependence on Sayf al-Dawlah, and his need to rebel against his patron's insensitive attitude. The source of such conflicts, according to a Horneyan interpretation, is to be found in a loss of capacity to wish for anything wholeheartedly, since the wishes are dispersed in different directions.

Al-Mutanabbi seems to have ardently wished for two connected things: to be a great poet and to be loved by Sayf al-Dawlah. Obviously, al-Mutanabbi saw both desires as legitimate and linked in his quest for self-actualization but the crisis in his relationship forced him to realize that they were incompatible. So he had to choose between a self-abasing dependence and autonomy. There is no evidence to prove that al-Mutanabbi's behavior was symptomatic of neurosis, but a Horneyan approach would tend to see his lack of insight as stemming from a false pride which makes unreasonable demands on the other, even if the image of the other is idealized rather than debased.

Al-Mutanabbi's suffering, therefore was largely self-inflicted. He experienced pain, unhappiness and gloom because of the abrupt end of his relationship with Sayf al-Dawlah which his pride and arrogance had made inevitable. Again, he expressed, with great psychological precision, the sense of being betrayed, together with longing for his beloved who has betrayed him.

¹⁵ K. Horney, *The Neurotic Personality of our Time*, p. 30. Storr further opines that the neurosis that emerges from the interpersonal relationships, "reveals a lack of maturity; an inability to love and lovable; a failure to achieve that relationship of whole person which is the outward sign of an inward integration".

¹⁶ K. Horney, *New Ways in Psychoanalysis* (New York: Norton, 1939), pp. 75-76.

¹⁷ Theodor Reik, *Of Love and Lust* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1957), p. 171.

From the line below, we could say that al-Mutanabbi is begging his heart to stop longing towards him, as he said:

حبيبك قلبى قبل حبك من نأى وقد كان غدارا فكن انت وافيا

“I loved you, my heart, before you loved him who is now distant; He has been treacherous, so you be faithful”

The poet then threaten to discard his heart if it keeps on complaining of being apart from his previous patron, Sayf al-Dawlah.

وأعلم أن البين يشكيك بعده فلست فؤادي إن رأيتك شاكيا

“I know that separation makes you complain after him, But you are not my heart if I see you complaining”

Implicitly, al-Mutanabbi referred to Sayf al-Dawlah as being disloyal.

فإن دموع العين غدر بربها إذا كن إثر الغادرين جواليا

“For the eye’s tears betray their master. If they run after the trail of his betrayers”¹⁸.

As we know, al-Mutanabbi was deeply wounded by Sayf al-Dawlah’s lack of support during his dispute with Ibn Khalawayh, when the latter hit him in the face with a key and injured him in the presence of his patron, who did not stand up for his panegyrist. He lamented Sayf al-Dawlah’s inability to return his devotion, arguing that he was sincere and others were disingenuous:

أقل اشتياقا أيها القلب ربما رأيتك تصفي الود من ليس جازيا

“Less passion, O heart, for perhaps. I’ve seen you give true love to one who is untrue”

Al-Mutanabbi again convinced himself that he was a loyal and devoted man, even to old age. He dared to yearn for Sayf al-Dawlah in spite of the poor treatment he had received.

خلقت أوفالو رحلت إلى الصبى لفا رقت شيبى موجع القلب باكيا

“I am by nature so devoted that, were I to travel back to youth again, With heavy heart and weeping eye would I leave grey hair behind”¹⁹.

He dared to separate and prepared himself to die just because of yearning

ما في هوادكم من مهجتي عوض إن مت شوقا ولا فيها لها ثمن

“Get on your way! May every swift she-camel convey you! For today every parting is safe from [the threat of source] on my part”²⁰.

¹⁸ al-Wahidi, *Diwan* p. 624. Translation by S.P. Stetkevych, ‘Qasida 6: 6-8’ in *Qasida Poetry*, vol. 2, p. 93.

¹⁹ al-Wahidi, *Diwan*, p. 624, S.P. Stetkevych, ‘Qasida 6: 11-12’ in *Qasida Poetry*, vol. 2, p. 93. S.P. Stetkyvech and Christopher Shackle, (eds.), *Qasida Poetry in Islamic Asia and Africa, Classical Traditions and Modern Meanings*.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, poem 10: 6-8. Anxious to please his new patron, and more importantly, like a rejected lover, who is primarily concerned to gratify his own psychological needs, al-Mutanabbi attacked Sayf al-Dawlah in the strongest terms, accusing him of faithless and disloyalty.

Al-Mutanabbi expressed his profound sense of betrayal. What he got in return for the love and devotion was hatred and malice.

جزاء كل قريب منكم ملل وخط كل محب منكم ضغين

“The reward of whoever is close to you is weariness and the portion of every lover from you is hatred”²¹.

From the Horneyan perspective, the neurotic process is a set of compulsive and conflicting drives to actualize and maintain the fictional idealized image. This sped-for glorious version of one’s self is substituted for the lost or hidden real self. Lacking an authentic sense of identity, the neurotic person purports to ‘be somebody’. The struggle for authentic self-development crumbles before the overwhelming compulsion to be special, superior and untouchable. Horneyan neurotic theory differs from Freud’s theory of neurosis in respect of the ego ideal, narcissism and the superego. This is because Freud was only concerned with certain aspects of the idealized image, and failed to see the person as a whole²².

In this poem al-Mutanabbi was not concerned with rejected lovers in general, nor was he speaking of his own beloved women; he was grieving over his betrayal by Sayf al-Dawlah. He believed he was not to be blamed for the separation between them. His lover’s mind was poisoned of by the poet’s rivals. The poet said that he was betrayed by a man lover, called Sayf al-Dawlah.

فلو كان بي من حبيب مقنغ عذرت ولكن من حبيب معمم

“Had my suffering been caused by a beloved in a veil, I could deem it forgivable, but its cause was a well-beloved [friend] in a turban”.

It can be argued that al-Mutanabbi, who was frustrated in his relations with Sayf al-Dawlah, became neurotic, i.e. he experienced a disturbance in his relation to himself and to the other, causing him to lose his healthy self-esteem, which led to the development of an unhealthy neurotic pride²³. This kind of neurosis takes over the functions of the real self and becomes a tyrannical force driving the person forward to strive after superhuman goals. Optimally, as we have seen, neurotic behaviour is driven by the need to feel safe and to eliminate situations that might lead to anxiety.

Horney also cautions that neurotic conflict is strikingly different from that of normal people, being considerably more severe²⁴. It involves a dilemma that appears to be insoluble, and is always deeply repressed²⁵. At Kafur’s court, we would expect al-Mutanabbi’s psyche to be fragmented by conflict and was driven by ‘inner dictates’.

From the Horneyan perspective, the poet’s action in leaving his patron solved nothing and, if anything, made matters worse. Al-Mutanabbi had to attempt to recover his inner freedom and strength, as well as emancipate himself from his conflicts. More importantly, he needed to regain the feeling of safety and once more experience satisfaction. So at Kafur’s court, Horneyan environmental

²¹ *Ibid.*, K Khalaili, ‘Al-Mutanabbi in his Role as Eulogist and Satirist of Kafur’, poem 10: 14.

²² S. Freud points out: “The artist has also an introvert disposition and has not far go become neurotic. He is one who is urged on by instinctual needs which are to clamorous, he longs to attain honour, power, riches, fame and the love of women; but he lacks the means of achieving these gratifications. So, like any other with an unsatisfied longing, he turns away from reality and transfers his *libido* too, on to the creation of his wishes in the life of phantasy.” See *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1962), p. 384.

²³ K. Homey, *Our Inner Conflicts*, p. 77.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

²⁵ K. Homey, *Neurosis and Human Growth*, p. 37.

factors were equally, if not more, productive of basic anxiety and neurotic conflict than during the later years with Sayf al-Dawlah. This is a clear disparity between Maslovian and Horneyan theories.

Keeping in mind Homey's theory, we will focus on al-Mutanabbi's actual anxiety and his immediate environment as well as his interpersonal relations with Kafur. Homey believes that it is only when the relationship is disturbed that the problem will deteriorate²⁶; what happened to al-Mutanabbi is a good case in point. We suggest that he probably never intensely experienced this kind of emotional problem until his relationship with Sayf al-Dawlah broke off. Obviously, this is a key issue.

There is no clear evidence to show how neurotic al-Mutanabbi was before his relationship with Sayf al-Dawlah. However, it can be argued that his failure to form a realistic judgement of his situation at the time of his youthful rebellion (when he gained the epithet al-Mutanabbi) was a sign of neurosis²⁷. We could also consider that the condition under which al-Mutanabbi was brought up is a sign of neurosis²⁸. As we know, he came from a poor Kufan family. His father was just a water-carrier. The fact that he had concealed his genealogy should also be taken into consideration. According to Horney:

Whatever the conditions under which a child grows up, he will, if not mentally defective, learn to cope with others in one way or another and he will probably acquire some skills. But there are also forces in him which he cannot acquire or even develop by learning²⁹.

Al-Mutanabbi unconsciously attempted to find a solution to his inner conflict, but, more importantly, to assert his independence. Horney's theory states there are three paths open to him in order to solve his problem – moving toward people, moving against people and moving away from people³⁰. Although it may seem to us that the three types of reactions are typologies, Horney denies this: "I definitely do not intend in this chapter or the following to establishing a new typology. A typology is certainly desirable but must be established on a much broader basis"³¹. She uses these types as convenient categories in order to make her approach easier to understand.

In leaving Sayf al-Dawlah, al-Mutanabbi moved away from his real self and began to develop in self-alienating ways which caused changes in his whole personality, since each of these three neurotic solutions is compulsive and inflexible³². Horney asserts that, in these three solutions, there are three main characteristics of basic conflict, namely helplessness, aggressiveness and detachment³³.

Al-Mutanabbi's helplessness, characteristic of what Horney describes as 'moving toward people', led to an excessive desire for protection from Kafur. After a certain period, his solution changed to 'moving against people' when his aggressive orientation led to pronouncing his strong wishes for domination and mastery over his patron. Lastly, when he found out these two strategies did not work, he then took the last option, which is 'moving away from people'. At this stage, al-Mutanabbi exhibited marked avoidance of and detachment from others, i.e. from his patron.

²⁶ K. Homey, *Our Inner Conflicts*, p. 19.

²⁷ See chapter one, p. 16, 'al-Mutanabbi (would-be prophet).

²⁸ See chapter one, p. 19. According to Homey, every neurosis begins in childhood. Although understanding the neurosis is impossible without tracing it back to its infantile conditions, a one-sided emphasis on childhood situations as causes of the adult neurosis will be equally ineffective.

²⁹ K.. Homey, *Neurosis and Human Growth*, p. 17.

³⁰ See chapter three, p. 88. See also note 23, 25, 26.

³¹ K. Homey, *Our Inner Conflicts*, p. 48.

³² Kierkegaard, the Danish philosopher, points out that the most common type of despair results from not choosing, or willing, to be oneself, but that the deepest for despair to choose 'to be another than himself- whereas to will to be that self which one truly is, is indeed the opposite of despair.

³³ See chapter three, p. 88, "... main characteristic of basic anxiety i.e. helplessness, aggressiveness, detachments".

THE HORNEYAN THEORY

Moving toward people

Al-Mutanabbi attempted to resolve his basic anxiety by gaining the protection and affection of Kafur. He was compliant, and strove to please his patron in order to consolidate his position, to be accepted as well as appreciated by Kafur. From the Horneyan perspective, we could say that al-Mutanabbi tried to convert his apparently inescapable inner weakness into an advantage by eulogizing Kafur, in the hope that Kafur would appreciate and protect him. He showed a marked need for affection and approval, and a special need for a 'partner' who could fulfill all his expectations of life, and who would take responsibility for his welfare. He attempted to master life through self-admiration and the exercise of charm. He might say: "If you love me, you won't hurt me". In his first panegyric to Kafur, his personal predicament is deducible from the content of the poem³⁴. Because he could not forget Sayf al-Dawlah, al-Mutanabbi mentioned 'Disease' and 'Death' at such an early stage of his relationship with Kafur. It is scarcely credible that he would have experienced any intensity of feelings of any kind towards Kafur. In the following lines, we can clearly see how al-Mutanabbi expressed his despair, sense of betrayal, and anguish over a lost love. It is all refers to his feelings for Sayf al-Dawlah.

كفى بك داء أن ترى الموت شافيا وحسبُ المنايا أن يكن أمانيا

"It is disease enough for you that you should consider death as a cure and it is sufficient fog the fates to be the goal of your utmost desires".

تمئيتها لما تمنيت أن ترى صديقا فأعيا أو عدوا مداجيا

"You desired it once you had desired to see a [true] friend, who defied you, or a dissembling enemy"³⁵.

Al-Mutanabbi's strong desire to be accepted and appreciated by his powerful patron was the most visible sign of his need for safety. He did not hesitate to attack Sayf al-Dawlah, who made his situation unsafe, and accused him of disloyalty and unfaithfulness. It could be argued that al-Mutanabbi's need was neurotic, that his love for Sayf al-Dawlah was based on an ideal image, a romantic illusion.

In the verse below, al-Mutanabbi clearly expresses his willingness to offer his loyalty to a new patron in order to regain the life and affection he had lost. Fustat was the ancient capital of Egypt and it was where the official residence of Kafur situated.

ولكن بالفسطاط بحرا أزرته حياتي ونصحي والهوى والقوافيا

"But in al-Fustat there is a sea to which I have brought as visitor My life, my good faith, my passion, my rhymes".

تماشى بأيد كلما وافت الصفا نقشن به صدر البراة حوافيا

"Moving in unison on limbs unshod and [so hard and firm that]when they trod on rocks they would engrave on them the breasts of falcons"³⁶.

³⁴ Instead of begin his *qasida* with erotic prelude, al-Mutanabbi chose to launch it with his true feeling i.e., his sorrows and conflicting emotions.

³⁵ Translation by K. Khalaili, 'Al-Mutanabbi in his Role as Eulogist and Satirist of Kafur', poem no. 1: 1-2.

³⁶ al-Wahidi, *Diwan*, pp. 624-625. Translation by K. Khalaili, 'Al-Mutanabbi in his Role as Eulogist and Satirist of Kafur', poem no. 1: 13 and 15.

His disappointment in Sayf al-Dawlah was clearly portrayed in his first panegyric to Kafur. From the verses below, we can perceive al-Mutanabbi's unending attachment to Sayf al-Dawlah, and witness the strength of his longing for his former patron, although reconciliation was now impossible. We firmly believe that although explicitly we can understand that al-Mutanabbi was astonishing at his strength to separate from Kafur as his object of longing, we are certain that al-Mutanabbi was actually referring to his relationship with Sayf al-Dawlah.

أغالب فيك الشوق الشوق أغلب وأعجب من ذا الهجر والوصل أعجب

"I contend with my yearning regarding you, and yearning prevails, and I marvel at this banishment, and this union were more marvelous".

For him, he would become the aim of hostile fate ever after.

أما تغلط الأيام في بأن أرى بغیضا تتانى أو حبيب تقرب

"Will not the days err concerning me, in that I may see them remove far the hated one, and bring near the beloved"³⁷.

From a Horneyan viewpoint, al-Mutanabbi's compulsives, and his need for an ideal partner are part of the same neurotic process, especially his longing to feel secure in the protective love of Sayf al-Dawlah. According to Horney's theory, love in this case comprises all forms of approval by the other, including admiration, friendship and acceptance³⁸. Being loved can be nonsexual, but can satisfy the wish to be accepted. Hence, al-Mutanabbi, who suffered from a lack of love, was willing to submit, comply and please, hoping to gain appreciation and esteem from his new patron.

قواعد كافور توارك غيره ومن قصد البحر استقل السواقيا

"Seeking Kafur, forsaking all others, For him who seeks the sea despises streamlets"³⁹.

As we have noted, compulsive drives are specifically neurotic; they are born of feelings of isolation, helplessness, fear and hostility, and represent ways of coping with the world, despite these feelings. Gradually we will see how his conflicts produced a state of chronic anxiety in al-Mutanabbi; consequently, his spontaneity was eroded and his behaviour became compulsive, inconsistent and contradictory. He might feel he would be neither sincere nor open in his relations with other people ever again⁴⁰.

Al-Mutanabbi initially fulfilled his duties as Kafur's panegyrist by making an extremely magnified appraisal of Kafur's merits.

³⁷ K. Khalaili, 'Al-Mutanabbi in his Role as Eulogist and Satirist of Kafur', poem 9: 1-2.

³⁸ The meaning and significance which 'love' has for the neurotic person varies according to solutions.

³⁹ S.P. Stetkevych, 'Qasida 6: 20-23', in *Qasida Poetry, vol. 2*, p. 97. According to Arberry's translation, this line says: "as though you viewed as unclear that you should see the air clear. It is ambiguous for what he intended to conveyed. Here 'the sea' represents Kafur's munificence, while 'streamlets' implicitly censures Sayf al-Dawlah lack of generosity).

⁴⁰ Horney notes: "The compulsive nature stems from the fact that the self-idealization is a neurotic solution. When we call a drive compulsive we mean the opposite of spontaneous wishes or strivings. The latter are an expression of the real self; the former are determined by the inner necessities of the neurotic structure." See *Neurosis and Human Growth*, p. 29.

أبا المسك ذا الوجه الذي كنت تائقا إليه وذا الوقت الذي كنت راجيا

“O Father of Musk, this is the longed-for face; This the hoped-for day!”⁴¹.

Kafur was not just one scent, but embraced all scents belonging to the generous. He was not just an early morning rain-cloud that passes with the day.

أبا كل طيب لا أبا المسك وحده وكل سحاب لا أخص الغواصيا

“Father of all Fragrances, not Musk alone, You who are every rain-cloud, not just the morning one!”.

يدل بمعنى واحد كل فاخر وقد جمع الرحمن فيك المهانيا

“When every proud man boasts a single virtue, The All-Merciful has joined in you all virtues”⁴².

However, in eulogizing Kafur, al-Mutanabbi was still obsessed by his lost relationship with Sayf al-Dawlah; his grief could not be – although he hoped it would be – assuaged by his new patron. For the most part, his first panegyrics to Kafur praise his patron’s generosity and intellectual refinement, as well as his past bravery, and clearly show that the poet was full of hope and expectation of being appreciated and rewarded.

The frustration of his self-imposed expectations deepened the misery into which his breach with Sayf al-Dawlah had sunk him⁴³. In the following verse, which was written at Kafur’s court, we could see al-Mutanabbi’s allusion to his despair, desolation and longing for Sayf al-Dawlah.

يضاحك في ذا العيد كل حبيبه حذائي وأبكي من أحب وأندب

“On this festival, everyone laughs with his own beloved here before my eyes, whilst I weep and bewail the one I love”⁴⁴.

If we view his situation according to Homey’s theory, we can argue that although al-Mutanabbi might claim that his desire for acceptance, approval and reward was justified, in reality, his demands were driven by his overriding urge to feel safe⁴⁵. The neurotic person’s need to gratify this urge is compelling and has to be attained by all means and al-Mutanabbi’s every action was oriented towards its fulfillment. According to Homey’s theory, the feeling of power for a normal person may be borne out of the realization of his own superior strength, whether it be physical strength or ability, mental capacities, maturity or wisdom. It could also be related to some particular factor: family, political or professional group. By contrast, neurotic striving for power is born out of anxiety, hatred and feeling of inferiority⁴⁶.

In the following verses al-Mutanabbi implicitly demands gifts from Kafur which included governorships, and generalships over armies he had defeated.

⁴¹ Abu al-Misk is a nickname for Kafur and it has been given by the Caliph of Baghdad.

⁴² Al-Mutanabbi is referring to how he was prepared to undergo dangers and overcome all difficulties to see Kafur, al-Wahidi, *Diwan*, p. 627. S.P. Stetkevych, ‘Qasida 6: 26-29’, in *Qasida Poetry*, vol. 2, p. 95.

⁴³ According to Storr, frustration is important in self-discovery because it leads to discover that one is not independent entity. Frustration when all wants are not immediately fulfilled leads us understand that we need and depend on others. See *The Integrity of the Personality*, p. 81.

⁴⁴ K. Khalaili, ‘Al-Mutanabbi in his Role as Eulogist and Satirist of Kafur’, poem 9: 25.

⁴⁵ What we mean by ‘to feel safe’ is to feel free from emotional problem, to get rid of his basic anxiety.

⁴⁶ K. Horney, *The Neurotic Personality of our Time*, p. 163.

“When men attain high rank through generosity, You among your generous gifts confer high rank”.

In the verses below, he hinted at his hopes of being entrusted by Kafur with a governorship:

وغير كثير أن يزورك راجلٌ فيرجعُ ملكا للعراقين واليا

“So it is not strange that a man may come to you on foot And return king of the two ‘Irag, and governor”.

Al-Mutanabbi tried to reveal his actual intentions by mentioning Kafur’s generosity even when Kafur defeated attacking armies, he handed over a whole army of defeated and enslaved foes.

فقد تهب الجيش الذي جاء غازيا لسانك الفرد الذي جاء عافيا

“And you may bestow an army that came attacking On one sole supplicant who came entreating”.

He celebrated Kafur’s military achievement.

وتحتقر الدنيا احتقار مجرب يرى كل ما فيها وحاشاك فاتيا

“You treat this world with the disdain of one who’s tested it And sees that ail that’s in it – except you – will perish.”

وما كنت ممن أدرك الملك بالمنى ولكن بأيام أشين النواصيا

“You were not one to gain dominion by mere desire, But by battle-days that turned the forelocks grey”⁴⁷.

In the hope of what he considered appropriate reward, al-Mutanabbi tried hard to live up to the expectations of his new patron, or what he believed to be his expectations, even though he had to suppress his own deepest feelings.

The question arises why al-Mutanabbi should insist on exaggerated and inappropriate material rewards. This obsession had a great impact on his life with Kafur. Basically, this is also the question of the claims and demands made by the false pride of the idealized self-image. Horneyan theory would hold that this was because he needed others to give meaning and zest to whatever he did. At this stage, his strategy was to appear ‘unselfish’, self-sacrificing, compliant, considerate, appreciative, and grateful. We could say that he tried to ignore his true feelings: he did not now care much for other people, except those he loved in the past. He praised Kafur at the expense of Sayf al-Dawlah – as is implied in the following verses. He made an attempt to defend the colour of Kafur:

إنما الجلد ملبسٌ وإبيضاضُ النفس خيرٌ من إبيضاض القباء

“The skin is but a kind of clothing – purity of soul is better than the whiteness of a qaba”.

For him, Kafur’s colour and appearance were the two things that white kings and rulers would love to have.

⁴⁷ Al-Wahidi, *Diwan*, p. 627. S.P. Stetkevych, ‘Qasida 6: 30-34’, in *Qasida Poetry*, vol. 2, p. 97.

من لبيض الملوك أن تبدلَ اللو ن بلون الأستاذ والسحياء

“Who can pledge that the white kings will replace their colour with that of the master and his mien?”⁴⁸.

Kafur was so committed towards his duty. He even felt that he should present himself arinook part at war, in spite of the dust and heat of battle.

ليست لها كفر العجاج كأنما ترى غير صاف أن ترى الجو صافيا

“You donned for them black swirling battle dust, As if you found it foul to find fair skies”⁴⁹.

According to Horney’s theory, a compliant type of person will have a double motivation. In al-Mutanabbi’s case, we would consider that when he subordinated himself, he did so because he was driven to avoid friction, and in order to achieve a rapport with the other. When he let the other ‘take advantage’ of him, i.e. by demanding that he panegyryze to order, in reality this was an expression of compliance and ‘goodness’.

We do not mean to imply, however, that al-Mutanabbi did not admire and was not attracted to Kafur, who, in his opinion, radiated the ruthlessness of selfinterest. Therefore Kafur’s military prowess, and courage were highlighted in his verses:

وانت الذي تعشى الأسنة اولا وتأنف أن تعشى الأسنة ثانيا

“You are the first to throw yourself before the spearheads, And disdain to be the second”.

In this line, the sense is that even though sword-smith may come out with two similar blades of good steel, Kafur would still be able to distinguish it. Kafur would transform his sword to superior level and his enemies’ to inferior level

إذا الهندُ سوت بين سيفي كرهبة فسيفك في كفّ تزيلُ التساويا

“If India should make two equal battle-swords, Your sword is in a hand that eliminates equality”⁵⁰.

Al-Mutanabbi’s exaggerated demands on Kafur constituted what Horney calls a ‘bargain with fate’. One aspect of this bargain is the externalization of his needs in the form of ‘claims’ on others. The poet’s claims became more insistent. His false pride allowed him to see himself as a special individual; because of his unique merits all his needs should be gratified and his wishes fulfilled.

In his panegyrics to Kafur, al-Mutanabbi subtly suggested a relationship between Kafur and himself that was beyond that of poet and patron. They have a blood relationship, which comprises mutual rights and obligations.

⁴⁸ K. Khalaili, ‘Al-Mutanabbi in his Role as Eulogist and Satirist of Kafur, poem 2: 17-19. The word *qaba*’ is originated from the Persian word *qabay*. It is an outer garment with full length sleeves and normally worn by men. It generally reaches the middle of the shank, and is divided down the front and made to overlap over the chest. It is bright in colour and normally made of satin or silk. See Dozy, *Dictionnaire detaille des noms des vêtements chez les arabes*, pp. 352-62; Lane, i, viii, 2984.

⁴⁹ Al-Wahidi, *Diwan*, p. 627. Translation by S.P. Stetkevych, ‘Qasida 6: 36’, in *Qasida Poetry*, vol. 2, p. 97.

⁵⁰ Al-Wahidi, *Diwan*, p. 629. S.P. Stetkevych, ‘Qasida 6: 42-43’, in *Qasida Poetry*, vol. 2, p. 97.

ومن قول سام لو رآك لنسله فدى ابن أخى ونفسى وماليا

“Sam would have said to his progeny had he beheld you ‘May my offspring, My soul, and my riches be ransom for my brother’s son’⁵¹.”

Al-Mutanabbi was also trying to persuade his patron to place great trust in him; his pride made him believe that he could do any task, no matter how hard; he felt capable of handling any challenge.

فأرم بى ما أردت منى فإنى أسد القلب آدمي الرواء

“Throw me whiher you wish, for I am lion-heated. though human in appearance”.

When hinting that Kafur should appoint him as a governor, al-Mutanabbi was indirectly trying to demonstrating his narcissistic preoccupation with his own superiority.

وفؤادي من الملوك وإن كا ن لسانى يُرى من الشعراء

“And my heart is that of a king, even though my tongue is seen to be that of a poet”⁵².

Narcissism is the psychic state of loving the attributes of one’s idealized image. The narcissist believes in his greatness, uniqueness, omnipotence, infallibility and freedom from limitations. He must impress others and needs their admiration. He overlooks flaws or transforms them into virtues. However, his relationships with others are poor; he imagines criticism and become easily enraged by it. He disregards the needs and feelings of others. His work suffers from being too grandiose in its aims. So he often incurs failure through his real limitations⁵³.

As a narcissistic personality, al-Mutanabbi could be generous towards and solicitous of Kafur, so long as Kafur fed his pride by responding with proper levels of gratitude and servile admiration. Thus, his admirers and devoted supporters would play an important role in his psychological development. For any failure to admire him, even on the slightest point, could result in a cutting retort.

Apart from that, he felt his needs, as well as his tasks were vitally important; therefore, he was eligible for every privilege. He never questioned his rights. He expected other people, especially his patron, to ‘love’ him ‘unconditionally’, even though he was actually trying to impinge on Kafur’s rights.

But as the months, and years, passed by, it became increasingly clear that Kafur had no intention of satisfying al-Mutanabbi’s political ambitions. The memory of the relationship of which al-Mutanabbi dreamed only made him more miserable. Kafur’s rewards were not up to al-Mutanabbi’s expectations.

Al-Mutanabbi could not bear to be confronted with his own shortcomings. He would feel utterly distraught if he were to be criticized; Kafur’s refusal to grant him high office resulted in a smoldering resentment towards his patron. As a consequence, al-Mutanabbi entered into a prolonged poetic silence on the subject of Kafur and it is believed that al-Mutanabbi did not even see his patron for nearly a year and half, and eventually planned to flee Egypt⁵⁴.

⁵¹ Translation by K. Khalaili, ‘Al-Mutanabbi in his Role’, poem 1:44. Sam was the son of Noah. He was believed to be the father of Semites. His brother, Ham was the ancestor of negroes. See *Encyclopedia of Islam*, vol. 2, Ham.

⁵² Translation by K. Khalaili, ‘Al-Mutanabbi in his Role’, poem 2: 23-24

⁵³ K. Homey, *Neurosis and Human Growth*, pp. 192-194.

⁵⁴ As a living thing, we have to accept the fact that change is a common characteristic of psychological flow. Activity and change are the laws of life. In relationship, we find ourselves sometimes drawing close to others and some time constant flow of images, ideas, memories, anticipation pulling away. So in al-Mutanabbi’s case, we believe that when he has a poetic silence, it is an indication of his psychological flow is interrupted.

Moving against and away from people

According to Horney's theory, the vindictive drive is a force for actual achievement and success. Its chief aim is to put others to shame or defeat them through one's very success; or to attain power, by rising to prominence, to inflict suffering upon them – mostly of a humiliating kind⁵⁵. It remains unconscious and can only be expressed indirectly and in a disguised form. In al-Mutanabbi's case, he was not able to be openly demanding, nor could he reprimand. In a typical self-effacing person, Horney argues, feeling abused is a common attitude⁵⁶. Because al-Mutanabbi could not assume responsibility for himself, he blamed Kafur for his own shortcomings. Kafur had to be defeated, because al-Mutanabbi wanted to fulfill his overwhelming need to triumph.

Horney perceives that self-effacement and 'goodness' will cause someone to feel abused, be 'stepped on' and 'taken advantage of' when his many unconscious claims are not fulfilled. It might then be argued that al-Mutanabbi felt abused or when his patron did not respond with the expected reward for his effort. This feeling of abuse played a crucial role, because it was the beginning of an expansive drive, which led him to feel secretly superior to the abuser. Horney further postulates that 'the crown of martyrdom'⁵⁷ cause people to see *themselves as* victims of circumstances. In reality, al-Mutanabbi had been the one who had failed his patron through his implicit demands, which he unendingly imposed upon Kafur. Therefore, we would expect, al-Mutanabbi's compulsive compliance disguised a neurotic need for power, prestige and was fed by ambition. The feeling of being abused would persist in a fluctuating manner, and would result in an increasingly vindictive resentment against the other⁵⁸. His conflict remained unresolved.

Al-Mutanabbi longed to leave Egypt, but abandoning his powerful patron would harm his ambitions. His first attempt to escape from his inner conflict had proved fruitless. He needed to adopt another strategy, that of 'moving against people', in which al-Mutanabbi's needs were expressed in the desire to dominate and control Kafur, to exploit and outsmart him, and to prevail over him⁵⁹. His struggle to fulfill his self-interest was his greatest driving force. Hence, his supreme need was to gain control over the other by any available means.

After four uneasy years of flattering Kafur, in 351/962, al-Mutanabbi succeeded in getting away from his patron. We could consider that apart from 'moving against people', al-Mutanabbi also adopted a 'moving away from people' strategy, simultaneously because after he composed the satire, he left Fustat.

The decision to leave Fustat was prompted by the death of Abu Shuja' al-Fatik, his close friend and also Kafur's governor of Fayyum, in 350/961. According to the authorities, Abu Shuja' who had kindred spirit, the valor and splendor, afforded the poet a relief from the ugliness of Kafur. It is worth noting that in lamenting his grief for Abu Shuja', according to J.E. Montgomery in his article, 'Al-Mutanabbi and the Psychology of Grief'⁶⁰, al-Mutanabbi displayed an "uncomplicated grief reaction" and "intense and conflicting emotions, such as sadness and anger (and) preoccupation with

⁵⁵ The need for vindictive triumph makes a neurotic person highly competitive. He cannot tolerate losing and when it threatens, he can be subject either to violent rage or to distrust of others; they are out to beat him. Therefore, he is constantly scheming to frustrate others.

⁵⁶ K Horney, *Neurosis and Human Growth*, p. 230.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 232. See also chapter three, p. 93, "... the Crown of Martyrdom".

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ K Horney, *Our Inner Conflicts*, p. 64. According to Jung, individuals stuck at the stage of exaggeration of power (known as *mana-personality*) try to be both more and less than they tend to believe they have become perfect, holy, or even godlike, but actually less, because they have lost touch with their essential humanity and the fact that no one is perfectly wise, infallible, and flawless. See Jung, *Letters to G. Adler*, (ed.) (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

⁶⁰ J.E. Montgomery, 'Al-Mutanabbi and the Psychology of Grief', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, p. 292.

the yearning for the lost person⁶¹. Obviously, these are true feelings of Al-Mutanabbi which he could not conceal, anger towards Kafur and yearning for Sayf al-Dawlah.

Al-Mutanabbi suffered from a compulsive need to achieve security by gaining factual power, prestige and recognition. We could say that his strongest need, however, was actually to protect against his basic anxiety. He might think that the only way of attaining what he wanted was through aggression⁶². He was driven by a desire to assert himself as the strongest, while at the same time he tried to cultivate a level of efficiency and resourcefulness in order to win the esteem of others. He might say to himself: "If I have power, no one can hurt me."

According to Horneyan theory, as a neurotic person al-Mutanabbi could feel at one moment highly esteemed, at another despised. His inner conflict forced him to see himself in extreme terms, for tedious mediocrity cannot be endured by the idealized self and its false pride. The loss of his true identity can be seen in his poetic expressions. His self-dramatization illustrates the divergent forces operating within him.

Al-Mutanabbi might see himself as a superior being when, in his strivings, he tended to be expansive and hold a strong belief in himself in regard to what he could accomplish. Consequently, he became openly arrogant, ambitious, aggressive and demanding. He felt self-sufficient and disdainful of the other. The appeal of his life "lay in its mastery and chiefly entailed his determination, conscious or unconscious, to overcome every obstacle in or outside himself and the belief that he should be able, and in fact was able to do so"⁶³.

It is possible to say that al-Mutanabbi needed to master the conflict in himself, as well as the adversities of his own fate, the complications of his life and the difficulties of his relations with other people. According to Horney's view, an expansive type of person will use his intelligence and power to achieve something. In al-Mutanabbi's case, he utilized his intelligence and will power to realize his idealized self, and to achieve his self-glorification, his ambitious pursuits and his vindictive triumph.

What is it that prompted al-Mutanabbi's claim to a governorship? It is possible to say that al-Mutanabbi misjudged his situation. He should have realized that, as panegyrist, he was a servant to Kafur, albeit an important and esteemed one. He owed Kafur allegiance, but it seems to us that al-Mutanabbi was driven to push the boundary of the poet-patron relationship as he had in Aleppo. Kafur's refusal to give him a better place to live was really a great blow to him.

He fled Fustat on the eve of the Feast of Sacrifices, when it was a reception at the court of Ikhshidid. We could consider that this would give a chance to al-Mutanabbi to show his hatred to his patron. Al-Mutanabbi began his satire to Kafur, by revealing the mood of monotonous disappointment.

عيد بأية حال يا عيدُ بما مضى أم بأمر فيك تجديدُ

"Id How is it you return, O 'id?⁶⁴. Bearing sorrows past, or bringing tidings new?"

⁶¹ Margaret P. Benner, *Mental Health and Psychiatric Nursing*, Springhouse Notes (PPnnsylvania: Springhouse Corporation, 1993), 26. Benner further notes that grieving is a universal reaction, which can affect every aspect of individual's life. Among the symptoms for it, is the preoccupation with image of the deceased person. Other people will regard this as hostile and personal disorganization and excess feelings of helplessness, fear and loneliness. whenever their loving impulses have been rejected or blocked.

⁶² Storr proposes that aggression arises only in response of frustration. Hate and violence will exhibit whenever their loving impulses have been rejected or blocked.

⁶³ K Horney, *Neurosis and Human Growth*, p. 189.

⁶⁴ This festival is the 'id al-adha, which is celebrated on 10 Dhu al-Hijjah. It is the day on which the pilgrim make a sacrifice in the valley of Mina. On this day as well, Muslims are expected to put on new or best clothes. So the id is a time of renewal of clothes, friendship, and so on.

لولا الغلى لم تجب بي ما أجوب بها وحناء حرف ولا جرداء قيودُ

He again expressed the feelings of loneliness, isolation and separation, contemplated the situation that he was in now. He wished that he could be as far away as possible from Kafur.

أما الأحبة فالبيداء دونهم فليت دويك بيذا دونها بيدُ

“Between those that I love and me there lies a barren waste. O that wasteland after waste”.

Al-Mutanabbi started to rebel against Kafur by producing such invective satire, saying that he did not come from all the ways on the expeditious courtly animals just to receive that kind of bad treatment from Kafur:

وكان أطيبَ من سيفي مضاجعة أشباه رونقه العيد الأماليدُ

“And sweeter than my sword in my embrace would be Those like it radiant, but lithe and tender”⁶⁵.

Al-Mutanabbi was so enmeshed in his neurotic compulsion, that he had to cope with anxiety *as a consequence*. In order to escape his self-hate it is possible that al-Mutanabbi created a “despised self”, and made it responsible for his shortcomings. Consequently, his contempt for his despised self served as evidence of the grandeur of his glorified self. He then began his ‘search for glory’, in which all his energies were transformed from actualizing the potentialities of his actual self to self-idealization – that is, the maintenance of the ideal self. Horney notes that this ‘search for glory’ is born from compelling inner necessities and it is a kind of creative process⁶⁶.

Therefore, in relation to his panegyric to Kafur, it can be suggested that al-Mutanabbi purposely eulogized Kafur, not for money,

وإني لفي بحر من الخير أصله عطاياك أوجو مدها وهي مده

“For sure, I am in a sea of bounty whose source is your gifts, which I pray will rise with them as its tide”.

but rather for something else which could make him feel proud, i.e. governorship.

وما رغبتني في عسجد أستفيده ولكنها في مفخر أستجدّه

“My desire is not for any gold that I may gain, but rather for some cause for pride that I may take at new”⁶⁷.

In the verses above, for instance, which are taken from his panegyric to Kafur, Mutanabbi praises Kafur for his generosity. But, after the poet was given less than he expected, al-Mutanabbi then told Kafur what he actually needed. Certainly, al-Mutanabbi was trying to use Kafur’s power and influence in order to fulfil his needs, to achieve success, prestige and recognition. Hence, it is possible

⁶⁵ al-Wahidi, *Diwan*, p. 691-692. S.P. Stetkevych, ‘Qasida 7:14’, in *Qasida Poetry*, vol. 2, p. 101.

⁶⁶ K. Horney, *Neurosis and Human Growth*, p. 176. See also chapter three, p. 97, “They set out on a ‘search for glory’ in which all their energies are transferred...”. According to Horney, *the development of pride is the zenith of the process of searching for glory. Initially the person will have a harmless fantasy in which he imagines himself in some glamorous role. For the second step he proceeds by creating in his mind for what he “really” should become. The next step, which is the decisive one is when his real self fades out and the energies available for self-actualization are transferred to actualization of idealized self.*

⁶⁷ Translation by K. Khalaili, ‘Al-Mutanabbi in his Role as Eulogist and Satirist of Kafur’, poem no. 4.

to view al-Mutanabbi's relations with Kafur as being based on coercion and greed⁶⁸. Taha Husayn notes in this regard.

Al-Mutanabbi was acting truly because he wanted to praise Kafur and aimed at nothing else, and he was acting falsely because he did not praise the man out of conviction, but out of greed and for selfish reasons, so that he had to praise Kafur by crediting him with qualities that he did not see in him⁶⁹.

Stetkevych, however, comments on Taha Husayn's charge as follows: "it seems rather arbitrary to credit al-Mutanabbi's madih to Kafur with insincerity and his hija' with sincerity; likewise his madih to Sayf al-Dawlah with sincerity and that to Kafur with insincerity"⁷⁰.

It seems then, that al-Mutanabbi's compulsive need was to dominate and control his patron, to exploit and outsmart him as well as to prevail upon him. Al-Mutanabbi prided himself on his self-confidence, ambition and power, and his pride drove his desire to attain mastery. That is why, when his long-cherished ambition was thwarted, his hatred for Kafur increased. Horney describes such a person in the following terms:

Al-Mutanabbi glorifies and cultivates in himself everything that means mastery. Mastery with regard to others entails the need to excel and to be superior in some way. He tends to manipulate or dominate others and to make them dependent upon him. Whether he is out for adoration, respect, or recognition, he is concerned with their subordinating themselves to him and looking up to him. He abhors the idea of being compliant, appeasing, or dependent⁷¹. And furthermore:

Mastery with regard to him means that he is an idealized proud self. Through will power and reason he is the captain of his soul. It disturbs him inordinately to recognise a conflict within himself, or any problem that he cannot solve right away⁷².

CONCLUSION

Drawing on the foregoing analysis, a few points can be made to cast some light on al-Mutanabbi's relationship with Kafur. However, we need to bear in mind that this Horneyan interpretation is tentative.

We have seen that various aspects of neurosis have been symbolically expressed in his poetry. In addition, his invective satire was composed as a means of alleviating his own misery. Al-Mutanabbi's 'moving toward people' or attachment to Kafur, was essentially based on his need for security, for in Kafur he believed he had found a powerful protector. His need to be esteemed and rewarded by his new patron, however, became compulsive, and the originality of his feelings diminished.

In the phase when he was 'moving against people', al-Mutanabbi's overriding desire was to be strong and 'defeat' his patron, but his perception of himself was unclear. Not only was he unaware of the truth about himself, but he was driven to blunt his sensitiveness regarding what was true and what was false in his relationships. Instead of making an effort to forge a good relation with Kafur, he insisted that his patron should fulfil his unreasonable demand.

We have found that Horneyan theory can be helpful in shedding some light on a complex personality like al-Mutanabbi. This is because, in spite of its recognition of the severity of neurotic

⁶⁸ S.P. Stetkevych, 'Abbasid Panegyric and Political Allegiance', *Qasida Poetry*, vol. 1, p: 41.

⁶⁹ Taha Husayn, *Ma'ca al-Mutanabbi*, p. 304.

⁷⁰ S.P. Stetkevych, 'Abbasid Panegyrics and Political Allegiance', *Qasida Poetry*, vol. 1, p. 42.

⁷¹ K. Horney, *Neurosis and Human Growth*, p. 214.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 215.

entanglements, it examines the influences which moderate the underlying conflicts, and is concerned with the possibility of their successful resolution. It thus discusses the processes, which led towards a realistic integration of personality. It must be borne in mind, however, that if a Maslovian approach were brought to bear on the Kafur episode, it would yield a very different interpretation.

Butt from a Horneyan viewpoint, we can argue that, because of his neurosis, the initial attachment of Al-Mutanabbi to Kafur was primarily the action of a man reacting to disappointment. If his capacity to be creative had not been damaged by his neurosis, he might have been able consciously, to recognise the realities of his personal life, and hence concentrate fully on a field in which he could have been more productive.

Al-Mutanabbi had ample potentiality in a variety of directions. One of these potentialities was raised to the level of accomplished fact, of great and unique achievement. However, the compulsive nature of his drive has been blurred, and replaced by a belief in innate qualities and gifts. In such a person this compulsive trend stems from a disturbed human relationship. Instead of having the drive to excel, there is the assumption of superior gifts. This is because the drives which in real life interfere with one another and prevent the fulfillment of potentialities, are promoted to the realm of abstract perfection, appearing as several compatible aspects of a rich personality.

Al-Mutanabbi's poetry disguised his neurosis. However, we may ask, if al-Mutanabbi's creativity was damaged by his neurosis, how could he continue to compose poems to Kafur and how did his inner tension elicit his urge to do so? To answer these problems we need first of all to understand how neurosis plays its role as a goad to creativity. Homey affirms that neurotic conflicts may be an incentive for a person's creative work. His conflicts and his search for a way out of them may be the subject of his work⁷³. Storr on the other hand, argues that the existence of a severe degree of neurosis does not prevent considerable success particularly in the conventional achievement. There is no connection between neurosis and intelligence, nor between practical effectiveness. There are many ineffective people in this world who are not neurotic, just as there are many neurotics who are far from ineffective⁷⁴.

In al-Mutanabbi's case we see the effect that his neurotic conflict had on his motivation. His neurotic conflict might be utilized as a temporary incentive. However, the creative urge and creative power can only stem from his desire for self-realization and these energies are only fully utilized in its service. But when these energies were transposed from the direct experiencing of life to having to prove – that he is something he is not – his creative abilities were bound to be weakened. Therefore, al-Mutanabbi could only retrieve his productivity if his desire for (his drive toward) self-realization were liberated. We could say that al-Mutanabbi created – poetry not because of his neurosis but in spite of it.

Al-Mutanabbi's unique body of work clearly influenced his successors, particularly Abu Firas al-Hamdani, whose early poetry strongly echoes that of al-Mutanabbi. Al-Hamdani also suffered inner turmoil, experiencing extremes of hope and despair. He was also tormented by grief, loneliness and frustration throughout his life, particularly when he was in prison. His poetry can be regarded as a means of obtaining consolation. Al-Mutanabbi was distinguished by his ability to live with anxiety, even though a high price might be paid in terms of insecurity and sensitivity.

⁷³ K. Homey, *Neurosis and Human Growth*, p. 331. The motivating force for creative activity is seen as the need to transcend the life that is defined in established configuration, whether conscious or unconscious. From this point of view, Ghiselin rejects the idea of creativity as an expression of neurosis because creation is not the exploitation of any fixation, hidden or overt. It is always to some extent an assault on fixation. See Ghiselin, B, 'The Creative Process and Its Relation to the Identification of Creative Talent', in C.W. Taylor (ed.), *The 1955 University of Utah Research Conference on the Identification of Creative Scientific Talent* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1956), pp. 195-203.

⁷⁴ A. Storr, *The Integrity of the Personality*, p. 167.

REFERENCES

- Geert Jan Van Gelder, (ed), 'Al-Mutanabbi's Encumbering Trifles', *Arabic and Middle eastern Literatures*, 2, No. 1, 1999, 0.5.
- J.E, Montgomery, 'Al-Mutanabbi and the Psychological Grief', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 115, ii, 1995, pp. 285-292.
- Al-Badi'i, *al-Subh al-Munbi' 'an Haythiyyat al-Mutanabbi*, Mustafa al-Saqqa, Muhammad Shita and 'Abda Ziyada, (eds.), (Cairo: n.p., 1963).
- R. Blachere, Un poete arabe du iv^{ème} siecle de UHegire (x^{ème} siecle de J.-c): About – Tayyib al-Motanabbi (Paris, 1935), p. 191.
- Translation by K. Khalaili, 'Al-Mutanabbi in his Role as Eulogist and Satirist of Kafur', poem no. 22.
- A.S. Ehrenkretz, 'Kafur', *Encyclopedia of Islam*, E.Van Dunzel, B.Lewis, Ch. Pellat (eds.), (Leiden: E.J. Brill), vol. 4, 1978, pp. 418-419.
- Ibn Taghribirdi, *al-Nujum al-Zahirah fi Muluk Misr wa al-Qahirah*, vol. 4 (Cairo, 1963), p. 6.
- Encyclopedia of Islam*, 'Kafur', vol. 4, p. 418.
- Arberry, A. J., *Poems of al-Mutanabbi" A Selection with Introduction, Translation and Notes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967).
- Ibn Taghribirdi, *al-Nujum al-Zahirah fi Muluk Misr wa al-Qahirah*, vol. 4 (Cairo, 1963), p. 6. 22.
- Horney, Karen, *The Neurotic Personality of Our Time* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1937).
- Horney, Karen, *New Ways in Psychoanalysis* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1939).
- Horney, Karen, *Neurosis and Human Growth: The Struggle Toward Self-Realization* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1950).
- Theodor Reik, *Of Love and Lust* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1957), p. 171.
- al-Wahidi, *Diwan* p. 624. Translation by S.P. Stetkevych, 'Qasida 6: 6-8' in *Qasida Poetry*, vol. 2, p. 93.
- S.P. Stetkevych, 'Qasida 6: 11-12' in *Qasida Poetry*, vol. 2, p. 93. S.P. Stetkyvech and Christopher Shackle (eds.), *Qasida Poetry in Islamic Asia and Africa, Classical Traditions and Modern Meanings*.
- A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1962), p. 384.

