

Narrating the Ancient Egyptian Glory: Psychological Immunity of Selected Royal Female Pharaohs as Depicted in Pauline Gedge's *Child of the Morning* and Michelle Moran's *Nefertiti*, an Interdisciplinary Study

Dr. Amal Galal Mohammad Morsy^(*)

Abstract

The increasing complexity of life and the biological disposition of humankind to seek happiness and avoid pain have attracted the attention of scholars to the significance of the Psychological Immune System. As the Biological Immune System defends the body against attacks by viruses or diseases, the Psychological Immune System serves a similar defensive function, allowing the individuals to overcome challenges and stressors, thereby preserving their sense of well-being. Remarkably, most studies conducted on Psychological Immunity belong to medicinal or psychopathological domains. Thus, this study aims to apply Attila Oláh's theory of Psychological Immunity to some prominent royal female pharaohs, namely Hatshepsut and Nefertiti. Oláh structured his psychological theory and designed a related psychometric tool, the Psychological Immune Competence Inventory, to measure the strength of individuals' Psychological Immune Competence System and adaptive capacities. Accordingly, Oláh's multidimensional model is adopted in this study to measure the psychological competencies of the selected royal female models and to examine the strength of their psychological immunity while fulfilling their royal duties. Two historical novels were selected: *Child of the Morning* (2010) by Pauline Gedge and *Nefertiti: A Novel* (2007) by Michelle Moran. Adopting the interdisciplinary approach, the study concluded that not all characters possess the same psychological competencies included in Oláh's psychological model. The study also elucidated the impact of the environment on the psychological immunity of the selected female models. This interdisciplinary study combines the magic of the Pharaonic history and literary creativity through a critical psychological framework.

Keywords: Psychological Immunity, Psychological Immune Competence Inventory (PICI), Royal Female Pharaohs, *Child of the Morning*, and *Nefertiti*.

^(*)Lecturer of English Literature, Faculty of Arts, Fayoum University

agm01@fayoum.edu.eg

Introduction

The Pharaohs' Golden Parade held by Egypt on the 3rd of April 2021 evoked to the entire world the greatness of ancient Egyptian civilization, which still baffles the mind with “the richest source of archaeological treasures on the planet” as well as its mysteries (“Lost Treasures of Egypt: Cleopatra & Egypt's Queens” 0:01-0:02). Archaeologists and researchers acknowledge that this civilization still holds many secrets despite its-related discoveries. The greatness of this civilization was reflected during the Pharaohs' Golden Parade and transportation of the twenty-two mummies from the Egyptian Museum to the National Museum of Egyptian Civilization with the existence of the mummies of some queens who ruled Egypt or who played a prominent role in shaping Egyptian political life alongside kings. This scene asserts the significant role women played in building ancient Egyptian civilization.

Ancient Egyptian history is full of exceptional and worldly female figures who became icons of strength, ambition, and determination throughout the ages and generations, as Kara Cooney celebrates these women in the following lines:

In one place on our planet thousands of years ago, against all the odds of the male-dominated system in which they lived, women ruled repeatedly with formal, unadulterated power. ... Ancient Egypt is an anomaly as the only land that consistently called upon the rule of women to keep its regime in working order, safe from discord, and on the surest possible footing. (4).

If academic historians, like Cooney, focus on historical events and facts related to historical figures, novelists are more concerned with the inner world of these figures. Accordingly, this paper examines the psychological traits that characterized some of these royal female figures, namely Hashepsut and Nefertiti. This, in turn, evokes the theory of psychological immunity by the Hungarian psychologist Attila Oláh.

Due to the increasing complexity of life and the biological disposition of human nature to seek happiness and avoid pain, the concept of ‘Psychological Immunity’ (also Mental Immunity, Psychiatric Immunity, and Psycho-Immunity) has received significant attention, particularly in

the field of psychology and mental health. As the Biological Immune System (BIS) is considered the impregnable fortress that protects the body from any attack in the form of viruses or diseases, enabling body organs to perform their functions to the fullest, the Psychological Immune System (PIS), likewise, has the same defensive function that enables individuals to overcome stressors and adapt to challenges, thus maintaining their mental health and well-being state.

Lexically, 'Psychological Immunity' is defined as "a study of the interaction between the psychological stimuli and the interactive response of psychological immunity system" (Matsumoto 501). According to Abhishek K. Bahardwaj, and Gaurav Agrawal, Psychological Immunity refers to "the protection layer of the mind which provides the strength to an individual to fight against stress, fear, insecurity, inferiority and viruses like negative thoughts and establish the mental balance" (6). It is also defined as "a series of processes that our brain initiates to help us make sense of the adverse environment we might be in, assign meaning to what is happening, and ultimately find positives for the future" (Kalia).

Notably, most studies on psychological immunity belong to the fields of medicine or psychopathology. This study aims to apply Attila Oláh's theory of Psychological Immunity to two prominent royal female pharaohs, namely Hatshepsut and Nefertiti. Oláh structured his psychological theory and designed a related psychometric tool, the Psychological Immune Competence Inventory, to measure the strength of individuals' Psychological Immune Competence System and adaptive capacities. Accordingly, Oláh's multidimensional model is adopted in this study to measure the psychological competencies of the selected royal female models and to examine the strength of their psychological immunity while fulfilling their royal responsibilities. Two historical novels were selected: *Child of the Morning* (2010) by Pauline Gedge and *Nefertiti: A Novel* (2007) by Michelle Moran. Adopting an interdisciplinary approach, the study also examines the impact of the environment on the psychological immunity of the selected female models. This interdisciplinary study combines the magic of the Pharaonic history and literary creativity through a critical psychological framework.

Literature Review

Despite the deep historical roots of psychology, challenges of the modern era and the complexity of power-relations produced another branch of psychology in the late 1990s, known as “Positive Psychology.” Pioneered by Martin Seligman, the president of the American Psychological Association, the main target of positive psychology is to foster individuals’ mental health and enhance the stimuli that produce such positive psychological feelings of happiness and well-being. Notably, positive psychology shifted the “focus from pathology to flourishing & happiness. ... [It] emphasizes strengths, gratitude & optimism, fostering personal & societal growth” (Nash). Some consider psychological immunity to be a branch of positive psychology as they are both connected to well-being. However, they differ in scope and application. Positive psychology is interested in promoting the quality of life (i.e. good life) and finding meaning in life in general whether there is a stressful experience/ mental illness or not, while psychological immunity is interested in the defense mechanisms that help the individual transcend times of crises, frustration, and trauma. In other words, as the biological immune system starts its defensive role when a disease or virus attacks the body, the psychological immune system starts its defensive role also when the individual encounters a stressful or traumatic experience to preserve the individual’s psychological well-being.

Remarkably, the concept of Psychological Immune System (PIS) preoccupied many scholars, but most of them relate it to the medicinal and psychological domains, especially during times of pandemics as COVID-19. In their “Psychological Antibodies to Safeguard Frontline Healthcare Warriors’ Mental Health Against COVID-19 Pandemic-Related Psychopathology,” Aishwarya Jaiswal et al. examined the traumatic impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the healthcare workers’ mental health and how “frequent encounters with trauma and death have heightened their risk of psychological distress and trauma; psychopathology, such as substance use; mood disorders, such as insomnia, anxiety, and depression; delusional episodes; [and] suicidality” (1). The study asserts the significance of fostering the psychological immunity of the healthcare workers at the individual and institutional levels through certain mental health-related strategies that

develop their psychological antibodies. The psychological antibodies, in turn, start their protective function from these psychopathological symptoms suffered by the healthcare workers. In the same context, Seyed Milad Saadati and Fatemeh Rezazadeh examine through their study, "Stress, Resilience, and the Immune System: A Health Psychology Analysis," the reciprocal relationship between stress, resilience, and the function of the biological immune system in the perspective of health psychology. The study concluded that there is "a significant link between psychological resilience and stronger immune function" (109). Fostering an individual's ability to adapt to any stressful situations has a positive impact on his/her health and well-being.

In the field of psychology, the social psychologists Daniel T. Gilbert and Timothy D. Wilson have pioneered such academic initiatives to popularize the concept of Psychological Immune System (PIS) and its relationship with the quality of life since the early 2000s. In his bestselling book, *Stumbling on Happiness*, Gilbert examines the psychological tactics that make people feel happy and the reasons for human failure to forecast sources of happiness at the future. He assumes that human feelings of discontent after painful events cannot be attributed solely to such negative circumstances but rather should also be justified by the limitation of human imagination to predict how to be happy in the future. Gilbert asserts through his book that human feelings of dissatisfaction are an outcome of their misimagination/misprediction of the future. People's constrained imagination and perception make them overestimate their future. Therefore, when they experience the future and discover that it contradicts what they have imagined they fall prey to feelings of discontent (195). Furthermore, Gilbert justifies such a case that human mental processes are not equipped to forecast happiness accurately. Ironically, people still predict the future based on their flawed imagination. Therefore, Gilbert suggests that individuals develop their awareness by looking into their future beyond their instinctual stimuli and examining others' experiences to improve self-awareness. By doing so, they can attain the happiness and well-being they desire.

Likewise, Tanveer Kaur and Rajashree Roy Som, in a study titled "The Predictive Role of Resilience in Psychological Immunity: A Theoretical Review," examine the interrelationship between resilience and

psychological immunity, perceiving resilience as a significant contributor to fostering individuals' Psychological Immunity (139). Kaur and Roy Som, further, investigate the cause-and-effect relationship between Psychological Immunity (PI) and the Biological Immune System (BIS). The study concluded that resilience is an essential promoter in an individual's psychological immunity, and that such dynamic interaction between resilience and psychological immunity is pivotal in fostering mental health. Just as the biological immune system enables the body's organs to combat all diseases and perform their functions to the fullest, psychological immunity plays the same protective role, providing a person with the ability to confront the challenges that increase day by day due to the increasingly complex nature of modern and contemporary life.

Theoretical Framework: Attila Oláh's Theory of Psychological Immunity

The term Psychological Immunity (PI) was coined by the Hungarian psychologist Attila Oláh in 2000. Oláh structured his psychological theory and designed a related psychometric tool, the Psychological Immune Competence Inventory (PICI), to measure the strength of individuals' Psychological Immune Competence System (PICS) and adaptive capacities. Oláh's model (PICI) is an attempt to examine how cognitive resources and personality traits play a significant role in promoting individuals' mental health and well-being. He perceives Psychological Immunity (PIS) as "an integrated system of cognitive, motivational and behavioral personality dimensions that should provide immunity against stress, promote healthy development and serve as stress resistance resources or psychological antibodies" ("Health Protective"). In other words, psychological immunity indicates an individual's conspicuous ability to withstand and resist stressors, traumatic experiences, and adversity, thus maintaining his/her mental health and feeling of well-being.

Through his measurable multidimensional model (PICI), Oláh postulates that there are three interacting psychological sub-subsystems structuring individuals' psychological immune system, namely "approach-belief, monitoring-creating-executing, and self-regulating" (In Trost and Demir 4). The first subsystem, 'Approach-Belief Subsystem'(ABS) , includes some competencies as "positive thinking,

sense of control, sense of coherence, change and challenge orientation and sense of self growth” (Oláh ,“Life Expectancy”, 103). This subsystem enables the individual to perceive stressful and traumatic experiences not as threats but as controllable challenges. This, in turn, empowers individuals’ adaptive capacities to face such stressors. Regarding Oláh’s second subsystem, ‘Monitoring-Creating-Executing Subsystem’ (MCES), it encompasses such psychological competencies as “social monitoring capacity, creative self concept, self-efficacy and goal orientation” ((“Life Expectancy” 103). The function of this second subsystem is to empower individuals’ capabilities to plan, make decisions, and determine the appropriate adaptive action “in order to influence the environment and to create new possibilities,” as Oláh puts it (103). Concerning the third subsystem, ‘Self-Regulating Subsystem’ (SRS), it consists of “synchronicity, emotional control, and irritability control” (103). This subsystem presents an indication of the success of the first and second subsystems by providing individuals with such a sense of inner peace and emotional stability. An individual’s mental health is, thus, conditioned by the balance among all such personality traits (Bahardwaj and Agrawal 6).

It is important to note that these traits are not necessarily innate. Rather, these traits can be developed by external factors according to the type and severity of stressful experiences an individual undergoes. For example, some individuals are born with self-confidence as an internal trait, while others are born shy or introverted. However, they may later gain the ability to face the outside world due to a traumatic experience that leaves a deep psychological impact and fosters their capacity to influence their environment. Thus, individuals’ psychological immunity depends on the dynamic interaction among intrinsic personal traits, cognitive mechanisms, and the environment in which the individual exists. Oláh *et al.* examine the common characteristics of such psychological competencies and their function in strengthening the relationship between individuals and their environment:

[First,] they tune the cognitive apparatus toward the perception of possible positive outcomes, [second,] they strengthen the anticipation of the possible success of behavior, [third,] they contribute to positive changes in one’s state and emphasize developmental opportunities, [fourth,] they guarantee the selection

of coping strategies which fit both the characteristics of the situation and one's own state and disposition, and finally they ensure the monitoring of the individual's coping resources and their quick and adequate mobilization. ("Life Expectancy" 103)

Based on Oláh's model, these personality traits provide individuals with protective coping strategies against stress, trauma, and psychological stumbles that they encounter in their life, maintaining their emotional stability and well-being. In addition, the role of psychological immunity is not confined to overcoming painful situations and challenges; rather, it provides a kind of psychological resilience that enables the individual to dream and plan for a better future, persevering and defying all the challenges of the present. It can be said that the biological immune system and Psychological Immunity are integral defense mechanisms for humans' survival.

Notably, asserting the significant defending role of the psychological immune system through Oláh's theory and measurable multidimensional model recalls Timothy D. Wilson and Daniel T. Gilbert's theory of 'Affective Forecasting.' In their co-authored article, "Affective Forecasting: Knowing What to Want," Wilson and Gilbert explore how people's decision-making process is determined by their affective forecasts, "predictions about their emotional reactions to future events" (131). Unfortunately, they fall victim to 'an impact bias' due to their overestimation of the deep impact and longevity of their emotional responses to such events. A pivotal reason for doing such an impact bias is 'focalism,' "the tendency to underestimate the extent to which other events will influence our thoughts and feelings" (Wilson and Gilbert 131). The impact bias, in Wilson and Gilbert's perspective, is an outcome of people's inability to realize the impactful role of other future interventions/experiences on the way they think and feel. In addition, Wilson and Gilbert believe that people can attain emotional recovery very quickly; however, it is their lack of self-awareness that makes them overlook their ability to recover from painful experiences. Moreover, many individuals attribute their quick emotional recovery to other external factors rather than their capacity. The study concluded that it is significant to improve affective forecasting to foster individuals' psychological immune system and its related state of well-being.

As noted, both approaches of Oláh, on one hand, and Wilson and Gilbert, on the other, share the same target of fostering individuals' well-being and their adaptive abilities to stressors and adversity, maintaining their mental health. However, both approaches differ in their mechanisms and applications. Wilson and Gilbert perceive the psychological immune system as a system of unconscious emotional processes, while Oláh perceives it as a system of conscious adaptive mechanisms and personality traits. In Wilson and Gilbert's perspective, people overcome any stressors emotionally by altering these negative events with positive imagination. This means that people deal with the psychological damage produced by the stressors in a post-stress manner. In contrast, Oláh's model is developable as it attempts to make people aware and conscious of their adaptive capabilities to resist any stressors or work effectively under stress. Behaving unconsciously while attaining their emotional recovery, in Wilson and Gilbert's view, makes people fall victim to misimagination and overestimation of their future.

Oláh, on the contrary, views that people with high psychological immunity are aware of their adaptive abilities based on the personality traits they own such as optimism, self-control, problem-solving, decision-making, etc. This makes people work efficiently under stressors, while in the case of Wilson and Gilbert they mispredict their condition in the future under such a stressful event, neglecting the impact of other interventions that may force them to be adaptive to entirely unexpected circumstances. Another significant point of difference between both approaches is that Wilson and Gilbert's approach is theoretical and descriptive, while Oláh's approach is practical as he designed his multidimensional model (PICI) to measure the competency of the psychological immune system with its three subsystems to enhance individuals' psychological resources. Notably, as societies become more complex, interest in psychological immunity increases, and this interest produces diverse perspectives, as shown in the case of Wilson and Gilbert and Oláh. In addition, this interest necessitates more and more studies in various fields, as exemplified in this study, which examines psychological immunity through a critical literary lens.

Discussion: Critical Analysis of *Child of the Morning* by Pauline Gedge and *Nefertiti* by Michelle Moran

Hatshepsut and Nefertiti represent a part of the “never-ending story” of ancient Egyptian civilization, as the Polish archaeologist Dr. Zbigniew Szafranski describes (“Lost Treasures of Egypt: Hatshepsut” 3:01-3:03). These women managed to inscribe their names not only on the temple walls and obelisks, but also in the memory of human history. Thus, the psychological immune system and its three interacting subsystems of these exceptional royal female figures are to be examined in the following paragraphs in light of Attila Oláh’s model of Psychological Immune Competence Inventory (PICI) in order to measure the strength of their Psychological Immune Competence System (PICS), as well as their adaptive capacities to the challenges they encountered during their reigns. Both figures belong to the Eighteenth Dynasty, with a time interval of more than one hundred years (Hatshepsut came first followed, by Nefertiti).

Adopting a distinctive and captivating narrative style, Pauline Gedge presents the life of the greatest and most powerful female pharaoh, Hatshepsut, through her bestselling novel *Child of the Morning* (2010). It is a historical novel with a unique artistic texture that brilliantly combines power, love, myth, spirituality, ambition, and contention in the life of the extraordinary female-king, Hatshepsut, whose reign is still described as the most glorious and mysterious period in ancient Egyptian history in general and the Eighteenth Dynasty in particular. Hatshepsut is not only a Pharaoh, but the first female Pharaoh. Thus, portraying a character like Hatshepsut requires from Gedge not to be concerned with historical facts only, but to narrate such a history from the inner world of her protagonist. She, therefore, adopts the third-person omniscient narration technique to enable her readers to delve into Hatshepsut’s psyche and trace her developable psychological immune resources from childhood till attaining the appellation of Egypt’s Pharaoh. She was born as a royal princess. Her father was King Thutmose I, who formerly served as a general in the army. He, however, does not belong to the royal bloodline. Her mother was Queen Ahmose, whose father was King Ahmose I, who liberated Egypt from the Hyksos and founded the Eighteenth Dynasty of the Pharaohs.

After the death of her father, Hatshepsut has to marry her step-brother Thutmose II, based on the tradition in Ancient Egypt, who is supposed to be the successor to his father. In a patriarchal society, the norms and the authority of the priests at that time resist the idea of having a woman as a ruler, and therefore they accept Thutmose II to be the successor to his father on the throne. Unlike Hatshepsut, Thutmose II has a weak personality and health. This makes Hatshepsut the real ruler, even if behind the scenes. Again, the norms of the male-dominated society do not accept Hatshepsut as a Pharaoh after the death of Thutmose II. Because the heir, Thutmose III, is still too young to rule, she is assigned as his co-regent. She, however, creates a myth about her sacred birth that she is the daughter of Amun, king of gods. Accordingly, she becomes the Pharaoh of Egypt for more than twenty years with remarkable achievements in all fields. Reaching adolescence, Thutmose III pursues his conflict against Hatshepsut, and he becomes the king only after her death.

A keen analysis of the personal traits of Hatshepsut's character reflects that she has high psychological immunity and unique psychological resilience. This can be perceived through applying Attila Oláh's multidimensional model (PICI) to her character. As explained in the theoretical framework section, Oláh's model is used to measure an individual's psychological immune competence system and its three-related interacting subsystems (*i.e.* Approach-Belief, Monitoring-Creating-Executing, and Self-Regulating). Concerning the first subsystem, Approach-Belief Subsystem (ABS), Hatshepsut owns most of its competencies such as positive thinking, sense of coherence, change and challenge orientation, and sense of self-growth. The function of this subsystem is to empower individuals' adaptive capacities to face stressors not as threats, but as controllable challenges. This is very clear in the character of Hatshepsut since her childhood. Gedge portrays her as a distinguished child with distinctive personal traits such as intelligence, ambition, and self-confidence. These traits can be described as instinctive/internal resources of the psychological immune system. Another resource is external for being provided by her environment, as she was born into a royal family, a status that fuels her ambition and consolidates her sense of self-confidence. Owning such personal traits makes Hatshepsut the preferred daughter for her father who "was struck by her power" as well as her perseverance (Gedge 158).

Since her childhood, Hatshepsut has a deep belief in her abilities despite the outer challenges she encounters due to her female identity. She perceives herself as strong as her father (Gedge 159), a figure with manly attributes in a female body. For this reason, her father wants her to be his crown-prince because she is more qualified than his immature son Thutmose II: "I have made my decision. ... I will not have Thothmes, my brainless, soft, mother-loving son, to sit on my throne and govern my country into a shamble. ... She, more than I, more than stupid Thothmes, is the Child of Amun. I will have her for Crown Prince" (Gedge 72). As King Thutmose's decision is against the societal norms of that time, his decision is resisted by the priests. Thus, a new challenging phase in Hatshepsut's life starts after the death of her father.

Societal norms and the intrigues of priests begin to interfere because the idea of a woman ruling and holding all the power is unpopular with them. Instead of being psychologically defeated, Hatshepsut stubbornly and determinedly decides to pursue her dream of being Egypt's Pharaoh. Owning such attributes as positive thinking and unique adaptive abilities empower her to encounter any change and any challenge. Yesterday, she was a partner with her father in ruling the land and the legitimate heir to the throne. Today, she faces a male-dominated society and religious authorities who refuse to accept a female ruler. However, such a challenge fuels her desire to persevere because she is goal-oriented, which is one of the basic competencies in Oláh's second subsystem of the Psychological Immune Competence System (PICS), namely 'Monitoring-Creating-Executing Subsystem' (MCES). This subsystem encompasses such psychological competencies as "social monitoring capacity, creative self- concept, self-efficacy and goal orientation" (Oláh, "Life Expectancy", 103). The function of this subsystem is to empower individuals' capabilities to plan, make decisions, and determine the appropriate adaptive action to influence his/her environment.

From the beginning of the novel, Gedge depicts Hatshepsut as a goal-oriented character towards the throne, a character with unique self-awareness and self-efficacy. She does not only want to be the Pharaoh, but she also believes that she deserves that despite the gender-based resistance she encounters. She is aware that she lives in a society where "The people will not understand a female Horus. They want a man to

rule them, to make the sacrifices for them, to lead the army into battle” (Gedge 184). For this reason, her trait of goal orientation consolidates her adaptive capacities to the next challenging phase in her life of being only the wife of the king. Due to the societal norms, it is inevitable that her half-brother (Thutmose II) will share her the throne. She marries him, as was the custom of the pharaohs, and is titled as the Great Royal Wife. Thutmose II is portrayed as a weak man with little experience to rule, and his weakness asserts Hatshepsut’s description as a heroic woman. The norms of that time impose upon her the status of being nothing more than a royal wife, but for a goal-oriented woman with a unique psychological resilience such a status empowers her desire for power and the weakness of her husband asserts her description as a heroic woman. She expresses such weakness while looking at him in his dead bed that he looks ““as ineffectual and weak as he had been in life”” (Gedge 275).

Thutmose II’s poor health and weak leadership abilities enabled Hatshepsut to become the de facto ruler. She gave orders and decrees. As his death approached, courtiers and senior officials began to wonder what would happen. There were no other princes who could succeed him, so it seemed likely that she would eventually rule the country alone. However, Thutmose II wanted to grant the right to succeed him to his son, Thutmose III. Thutmose III’s mother, Iset, was not of royal blood. Thus, after his death, Hatshepsut faced another challenging stage in her life due to the conflict between her and her stepson, Thutmose III. When Thutmose III succeeded his father to the throne, he was too young to rule. Thus, Hatshepsut became the co-regent and de facto ruler of the country, influencing everything until she announced herself Egypt’s pharaoh.

To legitimize her rule as Egypt’s Pharaoh, Hatshepsut adopts many manipulative and adaptive strategies. Owning social monitoring capacity makes Hatshepsut aware of the spiritual nature of her society. Thus, she creates a myth of her sacred birth and inscribes it on the wall of the temple of Deir el-Bahri. She announces that she is the daughter of Amun, king of gods, that visited her mother, Ahmose, at night to conceive Hatshepsut. Accordingly, people perceive her rule as legitimate for being predetermined by the Egyptian deities. In addition, she never misses an opportunity to mention that she is the daughter of Amun: “My father is Amun, King of all the gods. It was he who gave me life and prepared a

throne for me in Egypt. He intended me to be Pharaoh from the time before I was born of the gentle Aahmose. He gave me the sign on the day of my coronation"; "his thoughts are my thoughts, and his will is my will" (Gedge 184; 287). Hatshepsut, moreover, has a deep belief in the value of the goal for which she has struggled for a long time. Thus, the moment that she finally realizes her dream of being the Pharaoh of Egypt is outstandingly depicted by Gedge: "The years of work and worry and waiting have borne fruit. At last I am what my father intended me to be. There is no one in the whole of Egypt who can oppose me. Thothmes is gone. ... My destiny is fulfilled. I am stronger than ever ... the first woman worthy to be Pharaoh" (304).

Ascending the throne with self-efficacy and socially conscious personality will not, however, be the end of ambition for a character like Hatshepsut, a point Gedge is keen to emphasize throughout the novel. Therefore, Hatshepsut realizes the importance of showing respect for the ingrained image in the minds of her society of the pharaoh, and that she is no less competent than men in ruling the country. Therefore, she wears a beard like men and adopts manly skills like hunting. In addition, she wears clothes of men, especially in official ceremonies, and appears on the walls of temples with a muscular body. She believes that to be acknowledged as a Pharaoh, she has to abandon feminine attributes like physical weakness or excessive emotions, which indicate irrationality. Thus, her desire for power evokes her adaptive abilities which, in turn, enable her to adopt masculine qualities and appellation (*i.e.*, she announces herself a king not a queen).

She does not want to change the image of the ruling pharaoh that had been familiar for centuries. This does not mean that Hatshepsut resists her identity as a woman because she loves being a woman as a queen but rules the country as a man: "As Queen I am female, but as Pharaoh I will rule as male" (Gedge 184). She loves her female identity and believes that "Amun wished to have a pharaoh who was more beautiful than any other being on the earth!" (184). This, in turn, echoes Oláh's competency of 'creative self-concept.' She did not become Pharaoh simply because she was the daughter of one king and the wife of another. Rather, she became Egypt's Pharaoh because it was divinely predetermined, and because she had the self-efficacy and abilities to do so. This way of thinking brings Hatshepsut a state of inner peace, which recalls Oláh's

third subsystem of his Psychological Immune Competence System (PICS): the Self-Regulating Subsystem (SRS).

The Self-Regulating Subsystem consists of “synchronicity, emotional control, and irritability control” (Oláh, “Life Expectancy”, 103). This subsystem presents an indication of the success of the first and second subsystems by providing individuals with such a sense of inner peace and emotional stability. It is an indication of the balance among all personality traits. It is her positive thinking, goal orientation, self-efficacy and other personal traits (as explained in the first and second subsystems) that enable Hatshepsut to have such a sense of inner peace after realizing her dream. However, it is important to refer to her distinguished trait of emotional control. Throughout the novel, Hatshepsut is depicted as a woman with great ability of emotional control, a woman who almost behaves wisely, a woman who rarely appears irritable, and a woman with unique psychological resilience. If there is a role for emotions in her life, it is her deep love and devotion to her country, as she expresses frequently in the novel: “Not for nothing was I born of the God to rule this land, she thought fiercely, protectively. All she had seen served to make the love in her to grow—love for the soil, the people, the laughing, fun-loving people” (161). Her desire for power has been fulfilled by the desire to restore the glory of Egypt. Thus, when she became the Pharaoh, “she spent much time in the barracks with the soldiers and on the estates of the generals, winning them all with her charm and her fire. She did not do these things selfishly. Egypt had to be strong” (267).

As a result, Hatshepsut's reign was characterized by unprecedented achievements in all fields, especially trade and architecture, as recorded on the walls of her mortuary temple at Deir el-Bahri in Luxor: “She wanted to build for herself the greatest monument of all time, and the pyramids and temples she had seen served only to whet an already burning appetite for glory” (Gedge 161). She supported trade with Egypt's neighbors, where trade had been deteriorating, particularly during the reign of Thutmose II. She ordered the construction of several structures at Karnak Temple and established her temple at Deir el-Bahari in Luxor. In addition, Hatshepsut's reign was known for peace and prosperity, as she endeavored to cultivate relations with the countries of the ancient East to prevent any wars with them. Thus, her reign was

characterized by peace and prosperity. This absolute power continued until Thutmose III reached adolescence. This marked the beginning of a new challenging phase in Hatshepsut's life due to the conflict between her and her stepson. Unlike his weak father, Thothmes III was strong, "impatient ... and sometimes rude. He needs to be curbed like an unruly horse," in Hatshepsut's words (Gedge 329).

The conflict between them escalated to the point of betrayal and bloodshed, as Thutmose III and his supporters killed Hatshepsut's senior officials, including her architect and senior advisor, Senmut (thought to have a love relationship with Hatshepsut). This conflict weakened Hatshepsut's power, but the character of this all-powerful woman was not easily defeated. Hatshepsut continued to resist and confront conflicts until her death. The end of the novel implies that Hatshepsut's death was because of poison on the orders of Thutmose III to become the king. Hatshepsut's words imply that in her fight with Thothmes: "You may destroy my name, you may forbid the records of my deeds, but your own unworthiness you cannot obliterate with the stonemason's ax" (Gedge 416). She is aware that he wants to erase any record of her name or her achievements. However, traces of "an extraordinary woman", as Thutmose III himself admits towards the end of the novel, cannot easily be obliterated.

Admittedly, Hatshepsut was one of the few women in ancient Egypt who ruled her country. She made every effort to convince the men of her time to accept her as a woman to rule them. Whether Hatshepsut convinced the men of Egypt at that time of her rule or not, what she did was far greater than what some male kings had done. For her brilliance and genius, she is still described as "a volcano of ideas" (Lost Treasures of Egypt, "Hatshepsut", 5:02-5:04). Therefore, she became a role model for women to follow, demonstrating their role in building their countries, whether as wives, mothers, or queens. One of the most prominent figures influenced by Hatshepsut was Queen Nefertiti, to whom Moran dedicated her landmark novel, *Nefertiti: A Novel* (2007).

In her novel, *Nefertiti*, Michelle Moran presents a fascinating historical account of another powerful and mysterious queen, namely Nefertiti, which in ancient Egypt means "the Beautiful One Has Come" (Moran 24). Ambition, love, betrayal, loyalty, and the costs of belonging to the Egyptian court are pivotal themes in the novel. Like Hatshepsut,

Queen Nefertiti belongs to the Eighteenth Dynasty, the time “when Egypt was at its very peak, with the line of powerful pharaohs that included Akhenaten and Nefertiti themselves” (“Lost Treasures of Egypt: Cleopatra & Egypt's Queens” 1:14:34-1:14:40). Moran’s novel is narrated through the first-person narration technique as it is entirely told from the perspective of Mutnodjmet (also Mutny), Nefertiti's younger sister. This enabled Moran to provide her readers with a close and vivid image of life and tensions inside the royal palace, as the story is told by a royal member. This narrative style also illuminates the contrast between Nefertiti and her sister, Mutnodjmet. Nefertiti is described as “threatening and powerful and stunning” (Moran 264). She is a powerful woman whose power is enhanced by her remarkable beauty and charismatic character.

Nefertiti is married to Amunhotep IV and becomes the Great Royal Wife. Amunhotep IV is a king who revolutionizes the deeply instilled conventions and spiritual beliefs of his people by outlawing the worship of Amun-Ra, king of gods in ancient Egyptian cult, and calling for the worship of a single deity, the sun god Aten that is embodied in the sun disc. To assert his power, he announces himself and his wife as intermediaries between this god and his people. In addition, he transforms his name into Akhenaten. Nefertiti supports her husband's ideas and his desire for an absolute power. Thus, she shares him in all religious rituals and ceremonies related to Aten and co-observes with him the construction of special temples for the Aten cult. She also changes her name into Neferneferuaten-Nefertiti., which asserts her entirely support and loyalty for her husband. She, accordingly, becomes his partner not only in religious life but also in the political life.

Nefertiti's ambition knows no end, and this ambition is fueled by her jealousy of Kiya, Akhenaten's first wife. Nefertiti believes that supporting Akhenaten with his ideas will be the best strategy to secure the throne under her power and that of her children. However, these deeds result in many conspiracies and plots by the priests of Amun and the military leaders against Akhenaten to remove him and his wife from the throne. The beginning of such political upheaval and religious conflict is masterfully utilized by Moran to provide a comparative portrayal between the character of Nefertiti and her sister Mutny. Nefertiti is a powerful woman whose ambition and desire for power are

unlimited. In contrast, Mutny wants to have a simple life with the person she loves, a general at the palace, away from such tensions and intrigues of the court. However, Mutny's dream is threatened because Nefertiti wants her sister's marriage to be built upon political gains rather than emotions. As a result, Mutny suffers an inner conflict between her desire for personal freedom and her royal responsibilities. She realizes that she should be as her "family wants [her] to be ... A slave to the throne" (Moran 180). Remarkably, the character of Mutny achieves a balance in the novel. Although she stands as a threat against her sister's ambition, she is always there to advise and support Nefertiti. In other words, she can be described as the voice of wisdom and reason in Nefertiti's life. Toward the end of the novel, all fears of Mutny of the dangerous consequences of her sister's destructive ambition come to be true. After the death of Akhenaten, people washed away his name and all his images with Nefertiti away from the temples. They also destroyed the temples of Aten.

Applying Attila Oláh's model (PICI) to measure the strength of Nefertiti's psychological immune competence system and its three-related interacting subsystems (*i.e.* Approach-Belief, Monitoring-Creating-Executing, and Self-Regulating) shows that she owns a different type of psychological immunity if compared to Hatshepsut's. She shares Hatshepsut many personal traits as ambition, desire for power, and self-confidence. She is as powerful as Hatshepsut, while Michelle Moran describes her as "the Cleopatra of her time. Just as beautiful, just as wealthy, and just as powerful – if not more powerful," (Lee, *The Guardian*). However, she depends mainly on her beauty as well as her manipulative charismatic nature in her pursuit for being a Pharaoh. In light of Oláh's first subsystem, Approach-Belief, it is observed that Nefertiti shares some psychological competencies with Hatshepsut, including positive thinking, orientation toward change and challenges, and a sense of self-growth. This similarity highlights the impact of environment, as both protagonists belong to the Eighteenth Dynasty and are royal. Paternal support is a key factor in their power and sense of self-growth. However, this influence is less evident in Nefertiti's childhood than in Hatshepsut's. Nefertiti's early life was shrouded in mystery. Nevertheless, her father's support persisted after Akhenaten's death, when he helped her rescue the country from the rebellion that followed.

Since their early years, both protagonists have been characterized by positive thinking and adaptability to change. From the beginning of the novel, Nefertiti, like Hatshepsut, expresses in a confident and determined voice that she “will be the greatest queen Egypt has ever known” (Moran 32). However, the adaptive strategies of Hatshepsut and Nefertiti are not similar. Hatshepsut wanted to be Egypt’s Pharaoh, which required her to endure challenging circumstances as a woman in a male-dominated society that resisted the idea of being ruled by a woman. Additionally, Hatshepsut faced challenges as the Great Royal Wife of a fragile king, which compelled her to rule under his name. She later encountered conflict with her stepson until she finally became Egypt’s Pharaoh. In contrast, Nefertiti’s strategies are closely related to her beauty and charismatic personality, as well as the support of her husband, King Amenhotep IV.

After becoming the Great Royal Wife, Nefertiti adapts to the rules of the palace and is mainly interested in satisfying Amunhotep who stands as the driving force behind her power. Just as Hatshepsut who capitalized on the spiritual beliefs of her people by claiming to be the daughter of Amun to legitimize her rule, Nefertiti also supports her husband in his desire to replace the traditional religious cult with the Aten cult. She appears with him as a partner in all religious rituals and ceremonies, and co-observes with him the construction of new temples for the worship of Aten. Motivated by her pursuit of absolute power, she consolidates his declaration that they are intermediaries between the people and Aten. She also changes her name into Neferneferuaten-Nefertiti, which asserts her entire support and loyalty for her husband who declares her the queen due to her loyalty to him and his vision (Moran 214). It is not only the religious life that Nefertiti appears as a loyal partner beside Akhenaton as she participates and fights side by side with him in his wars against enemies. This leads Akhenaton to describe her as his “battle consort [and] his staunchest ally” (Moran 214).

Noteworthy, the adaptive mechanisms adopted by Nefertiti seem less reasonable than those adopted by Hatshepsut or even her younger sister, Mutny. Being entirely obsessed by her desire for power, Nefertiti turns



a blind eye to the dire consequences that might result from supporting such a radical change in ancient Egyptian belief and in challenging the authority of the priests. She ignores the reality that “The power of Pharaoh is balanced by the power of priests,” which results in rebellion and political upheavals all over the country (Moran 111). In contrast, Hatshepsut has a higher degree of psychological resilience when compared to Nefertiti. Instead of opposing Amun priests directly or even arranging an indirect threat against their authority, Hatshepsut produces such a myth of her sacred royal birth that she is the daughter of Amun.

Although she is as ambitious as Nefertiti, Hatshepsut does not cause any deliberate political unrest in her country. For this reason, she deals reasonably with the priests’ resistance to her father’s desire to make her his successor to the throne, agrees to marry her fragile stepbrother, and performs the role of a co-regent for her stepson until she finally becomes the Pharaoh. Likewise, Mutny owns the same rationality while dealing with changes and challenges. She is conscious of the limits of her desire. Although she dreams of leading a peaceful and simple life with the person she loves, she never ignores her royal responsibilities. She always supports her sister, but never accepts such religious transformation led by Akhenaton and Nefertiti. On the contrary, she always warns her sister of the dangerous consequences of her destructive ambition.

Concerning Oláh’s second subsystem, ‘Monitoring-Creating-Executing Subsystem’ (MCES), which encompasses such psychological competencies as the ability for social monitoring, self-efficacy, and goal orientation. The function of this subsystem is to empower individuals’ capabilities to plan, make decisions, and determine the appropriate adaptive action to influence their environment. In such a stage, Nefertiti’s psychological immunity witnesses remarkable improvement. From the early in the novel, Moran depicts Nefertiti as a goal-oriented character: “When I am queen, it will be my name that lives in eternity” (Moran 32). From the time she becomes the queen and until the death of Akhenaton, Nefertiti is characterized by a fragile capacity of self-efficacy and social-monitoring capacity. She is entirely obsessed with

her unrestricted ambition for absolute power. This can be elucidated through her interest in having heirs to the throne and complete support for Akhenaton's decisions and actions, ignoring her sister's sincere warnings concerning the destructive consequences of her ambition. She only thinks of being (she and Akhenaton) "heads of the temples ... control[ing] the calendar, declar[ing] the feast days, and be[ing] in charge of all the gold that once flowed freely into the temples of Amun" (111). She does not monitor the religious nature of the society and the destructive impacts of such a new cult of Atenism. She believes that a Pharaoh has "only two ways of ruling. With fear or with rebellion," thereby supporting Akhenaten's choice of the latter. Therefore, she tells Mutny, "The building of our temple will begin tomorrow" (175).

Notably, Mutny is more competent than Nefertiti in terms of social monitoring capacity and self-efficacy. Aware of the dire consequences of Akhenaton and Nefertiti's deeds, she frequently warns Nefertiti and expresses her fear concerning such scary change in her sister's way of thinking: "Nefertiti, you frighten me. You weren't this way in Akhmim ... Aren't you afraid you will offend the gods?" Nefertiti, defensively, responds: "This is Amunhotep's dream ... The more I do for Amunhotep, the closer he will be to me and no one else. ... it will be my children who inherit this land" (Moran 111-12). This argumentative dialogue contrasts Mutny, who has a high degree of self-efficacy and the capacity to monitor her society, with Nefertiti, who is obsessed with absolute power for herself and her children. For this reason, she refuses to listen to anyone's advice, not even her father's (182). Unlike Nefertiti, Hatshepsut shows greater self-efficacy and greater social monitoring capacity. When Hatshepsut reached the throne as a Pharaoh, she becomes very keen to show respect for her society by following the ingrained image in the minds of her society of the pharaoh and, therefore, she appears in official ceremonies wearing like a male Pharaoh. This does not mean that she abandons her female identity because she loves being a woman as a queen, but rules the country as a man.

Unexpectedly, Nefertiti's adaptive mechanisms and social monitoring capacity improve after the death of Akhenaton and the spread of rebellion everywhere in the country. People start to destroy Aten temples and the new city (Amarna) that Akhenaton and Nefertiti constructed for their rule and the Worship of Aten instead of Thebes. Moreover, they burn his body. Amun priests also insist on avenging Akhenaton for replacing their cult and, therefore, remove his name as well as all his traces for being "the Pharaoh who had nearly destroyed Egypt" (Moran 556). Nefertiti's "dream, vision of immortality and greatness, was to be covered in sand" with the destruction of Amarna. With the help of her father and her sister, Nefertiti has a last chance for salvation through adopting some adaptive tactics to gain people's trust. Accordingly, she changes her name and the name of her daughters in "a renaming ceremony, as her father suggested, to assert to people that they abandon any practices related to Aten and emphasize their return to Amun (555). She declares herself "As Smenkhare" ...[and] had taken an official name without reference to Aten, making it clear to the people that this was a different reign" (557). Accordingly, she becomes the Pharaoh of Egypt whose loyalty to the country and the people dominates all her practices.

As for the third subsystem of Oláh, Self-Regulating Subsystem, which consists of some competencies as emotional control and irritability control and depends on the balance between the first and second subsystems. It is noted that Nefertiti's personal traits as the ability to suppress her emotions for diplomacy and her charismatic character enable her to reach this final stage of a balanced psychological immunity. She manages to overcome the plague and the political intrigues that escalated after the death of her husband. She promises her people a new reign full of prosperity and victories over the enemies (the Hittites) who are very close to the kingdom. Likewise, Mutny is characterized by such capacity of emotional control. She never lets challenging circumstances defeat her sense of inner peace. She is a woman who owns an astonishing degree of reason and adaptability. She is committed to her royal

responsibilities as well as the norms of her society, but at the same time she has her own world of herbal medicine that provides her with tranquility. She is a wise person to whom her father listens keenly to her advice. Therefore, she represents the voice of wisdom and reason in the novel. In addition, Nefertiti, Mutny, and Hatshepsut share the same psychological trait of being loyal to their country. Ironically, Nefertiti and Hatshepsut share the same tragic end due to the erasure of her name and that of her husband from all historical records, to be succeeded by Tutankhamun, her son-in-law, who initiates a new reign during which ““Egypt will prosper, and there will be no rebellion” (Moran 581).

Conclusion

Attila Oláh's theory of psychological immunity offers an impactful framework for measuring individuals' ability to protect their mental health and effectively resist any stress, trauma, or distress. Such a theory presents the Psychological Immune System as a protective system as same as the Biological Immune System. Based on Oláh's theory, a person with resilient psychological immunity enjoys some dispositions as self-confidence, adaptive capacities to the surrounding environment with its diverse challenges, the ability to deal with unexpected situations, and the ability to control emotions. He, therefore, designed a related psychometric tool, the Psychological Immune Competence Inventory (PICI), to measure the strength of individuals' Psychological Immune Competence System (PICS) and adaptive capacities. Through his measurable model (PICI), He postulates that there are three interacting psychological sub-subsystems structuring individuals' psychological immune system, namely approach-belief, monitoring-creating-executing, and self-regulating. The aim of Oláh's multidimensional practical model is to measure the strength of individuals' psychological immune system and their adaptive capacities in an attempt to to make people aware of their adaptive capabilities, thus promoting their psychological resilience and maintaining their mental well-being.

Adopting an interdisciplinary approach, Oláh's theory of Psychological Immunity is applied to some prominent royal female pharaohs, namely Hatshepsut and Nefertiti, in the light of two historical novels: Pauline Gedge's *Child of the Morning* and Michelle Moran's *Nefertiti: A Novel*. It is concluded that not all characters possess the same psychological competencies included in Oláh's psychological model, in spite of belonging to the same environment as well as the same historical dynasty. The study also elucidates the impact of the environment on the psychological immunity of the selected female models, but it is not the sole impact. The strength of the psychological immunity depends on internal psychological resources (*i.e.* personal traits) as well as the external resources (*i.e.* environment). Through the analysis of the selected protagonists, Hatshepsut proves to have the most powerful psychological immunity, followed by Mutny and then Nefertiti. However, all of them achieve remarkable adaptability, but in different ways, while performing their royal responsibilities as daughters, wives, mothers, and queens/Pharaohs. Finally, Hatshepsut and Nefertiti are, indeed, different in the strength of their psychological immunity, but they are similar in their tragic end of obliterating their names and achievements from the historical records. However, their stories are still inspiring and their names have been inscribed in the memory of human history even though they were obliterated from walls of temples.

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المناعة النفسية لبعض النماذج النسائية من الأسر الفرعونية في ضوء روايات "طفلة الصباح" - لبولين جيدج، و "نفرتيتي" - لميشيل موران: دراسة بينية

د. أمل جلال محمد مرسي

مدرس الأدب الإنجليزي ، كلية الآداب ، جامعة الفيوم

Agm01@fayoum.edu.eg

طبيعياً، يُعتبر جهاز المناعة بمثابة الحصن أو حرس الحدود الذي يتولي حماية الجسد من أي عدوان على هيئة فيروسات أو أمراض ، وكلما تمتع جهاز المناعة بالقوة ، استطاع كافة أعضاء الجسد من أداء مهامها على الوجه الأكمل . ولأن الكائن البشري يتكون من جسد وروح ، أي مزيجاً من المكون المادي والمكون النفسي، ولأن الطبيعة البشرية تسعى دائماً نحو الشعور بالسعادة ، من هنا ظهرت نظرية المناعة النفسية Psychological Immunity لـ أتيلأ أولاه Attila Oláh فكما أن جهاز المناعة يمكن أعضاء الجسد من مواجهة كافة الأمراض لأداء المهام على الوجه الأكمل ، فللمناعة النفسية نفس الدور حيث تمد الانسان بنوع من الصلابة النفسية التي تجعله يحلم ويخطط لمستقبله بشكل أفضل مثابراً ومتحدياً كافة تحديات الحاضر. ومن الجدير بالذكر أن معظم الدراسات التي أجريت حول المناعة النفسية تنتمي إلى علم النفس الإكلينيكي أو المجال الطبي . لذا، تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تطبيق هذه النظرية على بعض النماذج النسائية من الفراعين، هما حتشبسوت ونفرتيتي. لقد بنى أولاه نظريته النفسية وصمم من أجلها مقياس الكفاءة المناعية النفسية PICI، لقياس قوة نظام الكفاءة المناعية النفسية للأفراد والقدرات التكيفية. وبناءً على ذلك، تم تطبيق نموذج أولاه متعدد الأبعاد في هذه الدراسة لقياس الكفاءات النفسية للنماذج النسائية الملكية المختارة وفحص قوة مناعتهم النفسية أثناء القيام بمسؤولياتهم الملكية. وقد تم اختيار روايتين تاريخيتين لهذا الهدف: "طفلة الصباح" (٢٠١٠) لبولين جيدج و "نفرتيتي:رواية" (٢٠٠٧) لميشيل

موران. واعتمادًا على النهج متعدد التخصصات، خلصت الدراسة إلى أن الشخصيات المُختارة تتباين في درجة الكفاءات النفسية المدرجة في نموذج أولاه النفسي. كما أوضحت الدراسة تأثير البيئة على المناعة النفسية للنماذج النسائية المختارة. إنها دراسة متعددة التخصصات تجمع بين سحر التاريخ الفرعوني والإبداع الأدبي من خلال إطار نفسي نقدي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المناعة النفسية، مقياس الكفاءة المناعية النفسية (PICI)، الملكة الفرعونية، "طفلة الصباح"، و"نفرتيتي".