

From the Nile's Banks to Ecofeminist Discourse: An Analysis of Idris Ali's *Dongola, A Novel of Nubia*^(*)

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Abstract

This research examines Idris Ali's *Dongola, A Novel of Nubia* (1998) through a focused ecofeminist lens, specifically emphasizing the environmental degradation depicted in the novel and its parallels to the oppression of women. Central to this analysis is the portrayal of the Nile River, not just as a cultural and spiritual symbol for the Nubian community, but as a living entity deeply impacted by the construction of the Aswan High Dam. The research delineates how this environmental transformation, brought about by the dam, mirrors the disruption of traditional women's roles in Nubian society.

The paper delves into specific instances where Idris Ali's narrative draws a stark comparison between the exploitation of nature and the subjugation of women, thus offering a more nuanced understanding of ecofeminism. By examining key quotations and scenes that vividly depict the changing landscapes and their consequences on Nubian life, the research brings to light the intertwined fates of nature and women in the face of patriarchal and industrial forces.

In doing so, the research not only brings forth the ecofeminist elements embedded in the novel but also underscores the urgency and importance of recognizing and combating the dual oppression of women and nature. It advocates for a more integrated approach to understanding and addressing environmental and gender issues, as mirrored in the experiences of the Nubian community portrayed in Idris Ali's narrative.

Keywords: Ecofeminism, Environmental Degradation, Nubian Culture, Nile River, Aswan High Dam, Women's Oppression

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المخلص

يتناول هذا البحث رواية "دنقلا، رواية نوبية" لإدريس علي من خلال عدسة النسوية البيئية، مع التركيز بشكل خاص على التدهور البيئي الذي صورته الرواية وأوجه تشابهه مع اضطهاد المرأة. ومن الأمور المحورية في هذا التحليل تصوير نهر النيل، ليس فقط كرمز ثقافي وروحي للمجتمع النوبي، ولكن ككيان حي تأثر بشدة ببناء السد العالي في أسوان. ويوضح البحث كيف يعكس هذا التحول البيئي، الذي أحدثه السد، اختلال الأدوار التقليدية للمرأة في المجتمع النوبي.

تتعمق الورقة في حالات محددة حيث يرسم إدريس علي مقارنة صارخة بين استغلال الطبيعة واستعباد المرأة، ومن ثم يقدم فهماً أكثر دقة للنسوية البيئية. ومن خلال دراسة الاقتباسات والمشاهد الرئيسية التي تصور بوضوح المناظر الطبيعية المتغيرة وعواقبها على الحياة النوبية، يسلط البحث الضوء على المصائر المتشابكة للطبيعة والنساء في مواجهة القوى الأبوية.

ومن خلال القيام بذلك، لا يبرز البحث العناصر النسوية البيئية المضمنة في الرواية فحسب، بل يؤكد أيضاً على الحاجة الملحة وأهمية الاعتراف بالاضطهاد المزدوج للمرأة والطبيعة ومكافحته. والدعوة إلى اتباع نهج أكثر تكاملاً لفهم ومعالجة القضايا البيئية والجنسانية، كما ينعكس في تجارب المجتمع النوبي التي صورتها رواية إدريس علي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: النسوية البيئية، التدهور البيئي، الثقافة النوبية، نهر النيل، السد العالي بأسوان، اضطهاد المرأة.

In this paper, our central objective is to **explore** the ecofeminist narrative intricately woven within the pages of Idris Ali's novel, *Dongola (to be used as a short title)*. We focus particularly on the environmental transformations depicted in the novel and their parallels to gender dynamics. **Using ecofeminism as the guiding theoretical framework, we examine the interplay between gender and nature, and how environmental changes influence societal norms.** Our analysis aims to articulate a nuanced understanding of the ecofeminist dimensions in Ali's work, including an in-depth exploration of environmental degradation and its interconnection with gender issues. This is specifically highlighted through the representation of the Nile and the societal impacts of the High Dam's construction. Moreover, we aim to clearly reveal how these themes, particularly the transformation of the Nile's ecosystem and its societal implications, intermingle and provide profound insights into the broader sociocultural and environmental fabric of Nubian society.

Abeer Mostafa Elgamal
Doaa Mahmoud Saeed Abd Manaf

The novel's depiction of the intertwined relationship between environmental transformations **and gender relations is a key focus**. We analyze specific instances in the novel where environmental changes directly impact the lives and roles of women, drawing parallels between ecological degradation and gender oppression. Our analysis connects the changing Nubian landscape, shaped by natural and man-made forces, to the evolving roles and representations of women in this context. Through this ecofeminist exploration, we aim to **bridge the literary and the sustainable, highlighting how Ali's narrative not only reflects but also influences real-world perspectives and actions towards environmental sustainability and gender equality**. We provide a detailed analysis of the novel's narrative strategies and character depictions to **enrich understanding of these interconnected issues, demonstrating the power of literature in initiating transformative conversations and actions that extend beyond the page, particularly in ecological preservation and feminist advocacy**.

Ecofeminism, advocating for an interdisciplinary approach that intertwines gender and environmental degradation, becomes particularly salient in the context of Idris Ali's *Dongola*. This unique perspective unveils the historical subjugation of both women and the natural world, resonating with each other in the novel's depiction of environmental changes in Nubia and their parallel effects on women's lives and status. At the crux of this ideological intersection stands feminism, transcending mere advocacy for women's rights to encompass a broader imperative against socio-ecological injustices. **Dorothy Dinnerstein poignantly states, 'Feminism is a crucial human project — a project worthier of adult passion than war or the manufacture of plastic bottles' (26), underlining feminism's vital role in societal pursuits.**

In *Dongola*, the plight of women and the environment are compellingly interwoven. It is imperative to emphasize that the narrative does not cast men as antagonists; instead, it seeks to elucidate broader societal structures. **Through Ali's narrative, ecofeminism discerns how traditional Nubian societies, influenced by patriarchal frameworks, demonstrate power dynamics favoring men, often leading to women's oppression and exploitation of the Nile's resources.** Bruna Bianchi articulates, "Patriarchy is not an idea or an interpretative category, but a system of power relationships which views women and colored peoples as resources, the same ideology that ransacks nature" (19), a concept evident in the novel. The discourse of ecofeminism is crucial in highlighting these interconnected issues, championing a harmonious world

where both women and nature in the Nubian context receive due respect and protection.

Bridging the gap between gender and ecology, ecofeminism insightfully delineates how both women and the environment have historically been victims of analogous forms of exploitation. While this framework brilliantly illustrates these connections, it is imperative to clarify that it does not marginalize the role of men in the discourse. In the context of *Dongola*, this is particularly evident as the narrative interweaves the experiences of Nubian women with the environmental challenges posed by the changing landscape of the Nile, highlighting a unique cultural perspective on these issues. **Karen J. Warren** assertively links nature to feminism, emphasizing the importance of understanding issues such as equal rights and equitable pay in elucidating how women are consistently relegated to subordinate positions across diverse cultures. She contends, "**Something is a 'feminist issue' if an understanding of it helps one comprehend the oppression, subordination, or domination of women. Equal rights, comparable pay for comparable work, and day care centers are feminist issues because understanding them sheds light on the subordination or inferior status of women cross-culturally**" (Warren 1). Consequently, ecofeminism posits that the systems perpetuating the marginalization of women and the infliction of harm upon nature often emanate from societies that prioritize the interests of men over those of women and the environment. This is vividly captured in Idris Ali's depiction of the Nubian society, where the construction of the High Dam and its ensuing ecological impacts serve as a metaphor for the systemic subjugation of women, reinforcing the need for a nuanced ecofeminist reading of the novel.

In the realm of ecofeminist literature, narratives play a crucial role, acting as mediums for disseminating pivotal concepts concerning the environment and the roles of women. This union is exemplified as the narrative of *Dongola* delves into the complex interplay of race, gender, and environmental degradation, vividly illustrating the parallel struggles faced by women and nature. Whether anchored in reality or crafted through imaginative lenses, ecofeminist literature unveils ways in which women challenge prevailing societal norms and becomes a wellspring of inspiration for societal change. *Dongola* emerges as a powerful ecofeminist narrative in this regard, depicting the multifaceted challenges and resilience of its characters in the face of environmental and societal upheavals. In this context, **Greta Claire Gaard** emphasizes, "**Narratives help illuminate the 'story' of climate change**

causes and solutions—stories that surface in the popular media, in science, literature, and culture" (153). This perspective is particularly relevant to *Dongola*, as the novel integrates the story of climate change and environmental shifts in the Nubian landscape with the evolving roles and identities of its female characters.

Idris Ali (1940–2010), a prominent figure in Nubian literature, exemplifies the intersection of ecofeminism and cultural narrative through his novel *Dongola*. His own experiences as a member of the Nubian community lend a unique authenticity to his exploration of ecofeminist themes. Ali's upbringing along the Nile River provided him with a firsthand perspective of the environmental and cultural changes in the region, which he skillfully intertwines in his writing. His deep roots in Nubian traditions and knowledge are evident in his portrayal of the symbiotic relationship between women, the environment, and their cultural heritage.

Throughout his career, Ali was devoted to highlighting the complexities of ecological and gender-related issues in Nubia. His work is characterized by a deep understanding of Nubian identity and heritage, bringing to light the experiences of Nubian women against the backdrop of environmental and societal changes. This unique vantage point is a recurring theme in his literary oeuvre, which includes three short story collections and six novels. In these works, Ali weaves narratives that reveal the profound connections between Nubian culture, the natural world, and the role of women. His literary craftsmanship not only narrates stories but also imparts an understanding of the Nubian way of life, positioning his work as a cornerstone in the study of ecofeminism in literature. Through *Dongola*, Ali invites readers into a profound exploration of ecofeminist principles, offering a nuanced perspective on the intersection of culture, ecology, and gender dynamics in Nubian society.

The story of the Nile and the High Dam in Idris Ali's *Dongola* is a key element, offering fertile ground for ecofeminist analysis. The Nile is portrayed not just as a life-giving force but also as a complex environmental challenge, epitomized by the portrayal of Nile mud, where Awad Shalali's body is described as "**anointed with Nile mud full of bilharzia parasites" (Ali 24).** This depiction of life along its banks, interactions with wildlife, and the practice of traditional activities highlight the river's integral role in shaping the community's identity. The alteration of this environment due to the High Dam can be seen as a metaphor for the disruption of traditional ways of life, closely tied to the roles and identities in society. The construction of the Aswan High

Dam, a symbol of Egypt's engineering prowess and modernization, simultaneously reveals the profound human cost of such monumental projects. It stands as a poignant emblem of the significant human and environmental costs associated with such grand projects. Awad Shalali's poignant reflection underscores this, **"My homeland is the land of Nubia, which has been consumed by the pages of history. We were, but you made us not be. I have come to you to bring a lawsuit against the builders of the dam and the reservoir, and to seek my old borders, from Aswan to old Dongola, to establish a provisional government"** (Ali 31).

The Nile River, beyond its physical presence, **is not just a symbol of life, death, and rebirth; it also echoes** Kronlid's observation: "Nature is often presented in particular terms, as active, as someone rather than something, as unpredictable, and **as** often discussed in terms of relationships" (73). The construction of the dam disrupts the intrinsic relationship between the Nubians and their environment as is expressed when Awad Shalali **conveys his emotions: "He cursed the river that had surrendered to the dam and cursed the whole world, which had helped to save the temples while leaving the people to their fate"** (Ali 20).

Idris Ali skillfully employs the Nile and the High Dam as compelling symbols to depict their profound impact on the characters and their environment. These symbols capture not only the physical transformation of the landscape but also the significant social changes, particularly affecting women's lives. **The novel poignantly articulates the community's demands in the face of these changes: "Give us back our old homeland'... 'Pay us compensation equal to what we lost"** (Ali 33-34). This plea reflects a broader struggle for justice and equity, resonating with the core themes of ecofeminism that link environmental rights to social justice. **The transformation caused by the dam is vividly depicted through the fate of submerged villages: "They saw desolate villages on both banks with all the doors torn off"** (36). This imagery goes beyond documenting environmental alteration; it symbolizes a forceful disruption of nature and human life. The ecofeminist reading of these events highlights the gendered impact of this upheaval, particularly on women's roles and identities in Nubian society.

During these changes, **the river emerges as a symbol of continuity.** This is encapsulated in the story of Awad Shalali, whose connection to the river and his return to his roots are emblematically captured: **"Awad Shalali still sat by the riverside. He ordered another bottle of beer and drank it. Tonight he was**

Abeer Mostafa Elgamal
Doaa Mahmoud Saeed Abd Manaf

catching the train south, going home to his mother who had been waiting for him for ten years” (Ali 13). This moment not only underscores the resilience and adaptability of the characters in the face of environmental and social changes but also highlights the deeply personal nature of these disruptions, echoing the ecofeminist perspective on the interplay of gender, culture, and ecology.

Awad Shalali's narrative is a rich tapestry of history and identity. It transcends the vivid landscapes of Nubia to delve into the depths of its characters' souls, wrestling with challenges of identity and tradition. Awad embodies the struggle between his Nubian past and the allure of a new identity. Bahr Jazuli, symbolizing resistance, is a steady reminder in Awad's mind of the costs of dissent and societal expectations. These visions — like Jazuli hanging from the lion statue or his father's floating corpse — are not merely plot devices but symbols of Awad's psychological struggles. His journey is marked by the solitude captured in his feeling of being a **"stranger in a strange city” (Ali 6)**, and his European experiences offer him a glimpse of freedom beyond tradition. His internal struggle is reflected in his hallucinations, symbolizing his psychological battle with his identity and the cost of dissent. In the community, Awad becomes central, blending real experiences with imaginative elements, as illustrated when he recalls spending time with Bahr Jazuli, **"going to bookshops with him, to cultural symposiums, and the cafés frequented by writers" (Ali 9).** His tales, juxtaposing his experiences in Europe with his life in Nubia, highlight the unpredictability of life and draw parallels between his adventures and his Nubian roots.

The dynamics between Awad and his father poignantly illustrate the entrenched patriarchal norms where women are seen as objects of control and power. This is starkly reflected in how Awad's father perceives the allure of northern civilization, equating it to a singular, sexualized image: **"His naive father had imagined the civilization of the north to be just one white-skinned, succulent woman with heavy buttocks and exposed breasts" (Ali 8).** This perspective underscores a deep-seated patriarchal view that reduces women to mere objects of desire. Furthermore, the character Ruhia is portrayed as using her femininity to exert influence, illustrating the complex dynamics at play within these gendered power structures. The father's obsessive focus on Ruhia demonstrates the dangerous extent to which patriarchal ideology can drive men's actions, exemplified when **"He pounced on her, forgetting his son and his son's mother" (8).** This incident not only reveals the father's

objectification of women but also underscores the broader societal issue of male entitlement and possession. Awad's own perceptions of Ruhia further reveal the internalization of patriarchal attitudes. His derogatory view of her as a **"whore—there was no doubt about that" and a "low-class slut"** (Ali12), is indicative of how patriarchal biases merge with environmental exploitation. This narrative element exposes the parallel between the exploitation of nature and women, both considered as resources to be dominated and controlled in a patriarchal society.

In the aftermath of the deluge, the identity of Nubians, particularly women, undergoes a profound transformation, **servicing as a testament to the fluidity and resilience of cultural and gender identities within an ecofeminist framework.** This displacement particularly affects the women, often the linchpins of their communities. As caretakers and guardians of cultural traditions, these women find themselves at the epicenter of a monumental cultural and environmental transformation. While the novel underscores the remarkable strength displayed by these women, it also captures their profound anguish and the indelible memories that anchor their identities amidst overwhelming adversity.

The dam's creation necessitates a recalibration of Nubian women's roles, compelling them to navigate new realities far removed from their traditional domains. The transformative effect of the dam on the landscape mirrors the upheaval in the Nubian community's cultural fabric. Women, as the custodians of cultural heritage, find their deep connection to the land—and thus their identities and ancestral legacies—threatened. **Through this ecofeminist lens, the narrative poignantly highlights the shared plight of the land and women, both subjected to exploitation and neglect. Many Nubian women, compelled by environmental transformations, seek alternative livelihoods in urban settings.** This transition, often to unfamiliar environments, echoes ecofeminist principles that link environmental challenges with significant impacts on women, who traditionally bear the responsibility of procuring essential resources like water and firewood. In these new locales, their resilience and adaptability become evident, as they continue to be the preservers of cultural traditions, despite being far from their ancestral lands.

The dynamic Nile, central to Nubian women's daily lives, undergoes drastic changes due to the Aswan High Dam. Their routines, intertwined with the river's rhythms, including rituals and resource gathering, highlight their symbiotic relationship with the environment. **However, the Dam's**

Abeer Mostafa Elgamal
Doaa Mahmoud Saeed Abd Manaf

construction introduces a melancholic shift, with rising waters threatening to erase Nubian history and culture. In this engineered calamity, women disproportionately experience loss, yet they also symbolize resilience, maintaining their heritage through oral traditions and spiritual practices. **Their experiences reflect the core of ecofeminism: the profound impact of environmental changes on human communities, with a focus on women.**

The forced relocation of Nubian people, with its profound psychological impact, especially on women, is a critical theme in the narrative. This evacuation represents not only a physical displacement but also an emotional upheaval, affecting their deeply rooted sense of identity and belonging. A poignant example of this is depicted in the novel as Hushia adamantly refuses to leave announcing her desire to die in her land: "They carried her out by force and put her among women who held onto her and tried to calm her down. She would not submit until they persuaded her that the land they were being evacuated to was far from the land of the woman who had stolen her husband" (Ali 67).

Additionally, the theme of waiting and loss experienced by Nubian women echoes the environmental loss and displacement caused by the High Dam. This parallel is powerfully expressed when "Halima waited and her waiting grew long because she was like the other forsaken women of Nubia, all of whom were waiting for men who had journeyed far away, to the cities of Egypt, the Arab lands, and overseas" (Ali 92). Furthermore, the narrative highlights the role of women in guarding and maintaining their new environment, akin to the preservation of nature amidst change. This aspect is vividly illustrated in the book: "They had been quickly dispersed and discarded... leaving their mothers and wives behind to guard the stone houses in what was called their new homeland" (60).

Ecofeminism, at its core, explores the parallel struggles of women and the environment. Women's inherent connection to nature, often linked to biological roles, forms a critical aspect of ecofeminist thought. As Gorney notes, "Comparing the vulnerability of wildlife and women reflects the interconnections between the subjugation of woman and nature, as persuasively demonstrated by ecofeminist philosophy" (77). In *Dongola*, Nubian women's experiences post-Dam construction not only signify environmental shifts but also a broader societal insensitivity. The Dam, symbolizing human dominance over nature, echoes recurrent themes in ecofeminist narratives about the intertwined destinies of women and

nature.

The deep connection between the women—due to their traditional roles in nurturing and sustaining families—and their land, is poignantly depicted in Idris Ali's narrative. The river, once a life-giving force, now morphs into a destructive entity, reflecting the broader ecofeminist theme of how environmental degradation disproportionately affects those most reliant on and intimately connected to the natural world. This catastrophic impact of environmental changes on the Nubian landscape and its inhabitants is vividly illustrated through the imagery of the river. **It is described as "swallowing the houses"(Ali 64) and "flooding the greater part of their agricultural land," (64)** a stark portrayal of the devastation wrought by environmental changes. The novel also delves into the collective response of women to these crises, reflecting a deep communal bond with each other and with the land. This bond underscores their integral role in the fabric of societal and environmental ecosystems. **The loss and displacement experienced by these women mirror the environmental degradation as** profoundly encapsulated in a scene where **"from among the assembly of women, sobbing was heard from a woman who had been forced to leave her village, for whom the songs brought to life memories she had tried to forget"** (Ali 27). Such narratives serve not only to illustrate the interconnectedness of women's lives with their environment but also to emphasize the unique vulnerabilities and resilience they exhibit in the face of ecological upheaval.

Furthermore, women's agency and resistance to societal norms echo the struggle against environmental exploitation and degradation. This parallel is starkly depicted in a confrontation between Hushia and Ahmad Abbas, **"She slapped him and he bit her... She would not give it up. It would be a slap at the law all men lived by and at the traditions of the south"** (103). **The resilience and adaptability of women in the face of adversity are further highlighted in the context of environmental changes.** This is poignantly captured in the narrative about Hushia, **"Hushia wept, hating the reservoir... she received the condolences to be the first to hold a funeral ceremony of the living"** (66).

Women's roles in cultural practices, especially in mourning, parallel the loss and transformation of their natural environment due to factors like the High Dam. This signifies the ecofeminist idea of the interconnectedness of cultural and environmental changes. A vivid illustration of this is when "The women stood at their doors, curious and prepared to help, clutching their black wraps,

Abeer Mostafa Elgamal
Doaa Mahmoud Saeed Abd Manaf

trying to establish the facts before starting their procession to the house of the bereaved for mass mourning" (Ali 63). The cultural context of women's lives in the novel not only captures the societal constraints they face but also mirrors the constraints and exploitation of the environment. This is further exemplified in a conversational snippet between Halima and her father, where she reveals her doubts about the motives of her husband sending her more money than usual. It is noteworthy that, like other Nubian men, Halima's husband had to immigrate to earn his living after the construction of the Dam: "There's something strange in that letter Haj... Has he done it and married the foreign woman I wonder?" (97). This reflects on the societal expectations placed on women, akin to the pressures exerted on the environment. Halima's father scolds her violently and threatens to cut her tongue off if she ever complains about the long absence of her husband. Women, according to his patriarchal viewpoint, are expected to bear everything, including the prolonged absence of their husbands as long as they are given money.

The profound sense of betrayal and loss felt by the Nubian people is poignantly captured in the narrative. Once in harmonious coexistence with the river, they are now compelled to witness its transformation into a source of destruction. Hushia brings to life not just the physical, but also the emotional and cultural dimensions of these environmental changes and their deep impact on the Nubian community. Hushia's perspective is particularly insightful in this respect:

She experienced every detail of the catastrophe: the river that rose up, swallowing the houses and the small strip of land that had survived the first elevation and flooding the greater part of their agricultural land. This time it encompassed the mountain and poured like a nightmare over the heart of the south, bringing its punishment upon them, they who had loved it, sung to it, and even deified it long ago. (Ali 64)

***Dongola* delves beyond displacement narratives to examine impacts on cultural identity.** Traditional Nubian landmarks, now altered, create an identity crisis, with women at the forefront as cultural guardians. **The Dam's construction, predominantly a male-led decision with limited Nubian input, symbolizes the neglect of marginalized voices and nature.** This emblematic decision-making process, overlooking comprehensive understanding, reveals a pattern of disregard in patriarchal societies. **The land symbolizes more than an ecological space; it embodies Nubian heritage.** Women's efforts to preserve this heritage, amidst transformative environmental changes, highlight

their pivotal role in advocating for sustainable practices. **As Charlotte Shane states, "If feminism were a vehicle of rescue or improvement for individual women, it would still have to intervene in health care, childcare, in gun control" (35), demonstrating the need for justice in both society and the environment. Ecofeminism, thus, draws attention to the parallel maltreatment of women and the environment, rooted in societal imbalances, particularly in male-dominated cultures.**

Ecofeminism fosters a complex interaction with culture, characterized by the intricate interplay of social, historical, and environmental influences. As Zuelke insightfully notes, "Concepts such as culture, the natural, the female, and sexuality combine into an interrelated system of culturally situated phenomena that work together" (116). This perspective emphasizes the significant role culture plays in shaping ecofeminist approaches, particularly those cultural practices that resonate with feminist and ecological values. An integral facet of ecofeminism lies in its engagement with cultural narratives, folklore, and myths. These elements are powerful tools for empowering women and fostering a deep connection with nature.

The resilience and steadfastness of Nubian women, as depicted in the narrative, parallel the enduring nature of their environment despite various challenges as captured in the quote, "The girls of my country are the best... because our girls are the most respectable in the world... ' You can leave one of them for years and she will keep your name and reputation safe" (Ali 78). Finally, the emotional landscape of the women in the novel mirrors the disturbances in their natural environment, emphasizing the deep connection between their emotional states and their surroundings. This is illustrated when Abdu Shindi is mentioned, "His sad song had spread among old and young... the women sitting and waiting" (28).

Traditional ecological wisdom is often transmitted through generations, particularly by women, who wield considerable influence in indigenous cultures due to their central roles within their communities. These roles are often deeply intertwined with the environment, positioning women as custodians of conservation. Karen Morrow offers a valuable perspective on this dynamic, noting that women are typically tasked with "the expansive notion of those caring activities that are necessary to nurture life and support the family unit" (35). This observation highlights the intrinsic link between women's roles in family and community sustenance and their

pivotal position in environmental stewardship. In performing their nurturing roles, women not only sustain human life but also act as vital connectors between their communities and the natural world. They ensure that ecological knowledge and sustainable practices are not only practiced in their immediate caregiving but also passed down through successive generations. **Therefore, the roles of nurturing and sustaining assigned to women extend beyond the familial sphere to encompass environmental conservation, fostering a legacy that spans generations.**

The struggles of women in patriarchal societies vividly illustrate the deep connection between women and their natural environment, and how their experiences are paralleled by environmental changes. It is important to emphasize that ecofeminism is not about pitting women against men; rather, it seeks equitable treatment for women within the societal framework. While many men benefit from existing patriarchal systems, they also have the capacity to promote balance by actively engaging and staying informed. **The pervasive nature of patriarchal systems often obscures their far-reaching effects. Attributes such as emotional intelligence and adept social skills, often associated with women, are valuable for individuals of all genders.** Ecofeminism encourages men to reevaluate traditional patriarchal viewpoints and to stand in solidarity with women in the protection of the environment. **This transformative journey requires a deep understanding of the delicate balance between privilege and the challenges faced by many.** **Laura Bates insightfully notes,** “It is also a battle to protect the boys who are lost, who fall through the cracks of our society’s stereotypes and straight into the arms of the communities ready to recruit them, greedy to indoctrinate them with fears of threats to their manhood, their livelihood, their country” (11).

Women in the novel are portrayed as being deeply connected to the 'land of waiting' – a powerful metaphor that symbolizes both their physical environment and the societal roles imposed upon them. This connection is captured in Halima's narrative: 'Her father was stupid, her husband was a tyrant, and no one understood her plight or the plight of all women in this land of waiting' (Ali 94). This theme of 'waiting' mirrors the stagnation and turmoil brought about by environmental changes, particularly highlighted by the construction of the High Dam. Ali's depiction of this scenario is striking: 'The villages flashed by one after the other... slender women with ebony faces waiting for men who were scattered around the globe looking for a livelihood' (26). This imagery not only symbolizes their physical wait but also encapsulates the emotional and societal

inertia they face. Moreover, the novel emphasizes that despite societal constraints, women play a crucial role as guardians of cultural heritage, a responsibility inherently linked to their bond with the land and community. This is poignantly expressed when Idris Ali describes, 'The women in the Kanz villages left the prisons of their houses only to offer condolences or congratulations' (Ali 63). This statement not only highlights their restricted societal movement but also underlines their essential role in upholding social cohesion and cultural traditions.

The women of *Dongola*, even in minor roles, showcase grit and change, while the Nubian landscape **evokes** a feminine image—similar to the universal Mother Earth. The inundation of Nubia symbolizes violation, establishing parallels between how the environment (represented by the Nubian land) and femininity (expressed through the Nubian women and traditions) are both suppressed by prevailing, often patriarchal, powers, whether within the Nubian family structure or by the broader objectives of the Egyptian government. **This metaphorical inundation** mirrors the subjugation of women, depicting a shared struggle against oppression. **Moreover**, their active involvement in sustaining their culture — **not only through disseminating stories and traditions but also by serving as cultural stewards, passing down tales and customs** — underscores the ecofeminist perspective of women as crucial connectors between the past, present, and future.

Women often have quiet voices and limited roles, enhancing male dominance in the community. Likewise, nature is seen mainly as an object for human use, without considering its intrinsic value or the effects of such uncontrolled use. In *Dongola* patriarchal tendencies show in men asserting dominance, while women are commonly suppressed. Women, bound by tradition, are usually valued based on their ability to meet set roles, intensifying their feelings of lack. **Similarly**, the exploitation of nature, where its value is often reduced to its utility for human needs, disregarding its inherent worth. However, instances arise where women assert themselves, regain their strength, and oppose both cultural and environmental degradation. These acts echo the ecofeminist principles of equilibrium.

Dongola skillfully portrays the emotional and psychological struggles of its female characters, who find themselves caught between personal aspirations and societal norms. In the part entitled 'The Sorrows of Hushia and Halima,' the narrative delves into the lives of three women – Hushia, Halima, and Ruhia – each grappling with her unique challenges in a patriarchal setting. Echoing the

Abeer Mostafa Elgamal
Doaa Mahmoud Saeed Abd Manaf

ecofeminist themes previously discussed, **these narratives showcase the resilience and spirit of women who, despite facing numerous obstacles, actively resist and navigate the cultural and societal confines imposed upon them.** These women, each with her own story and wisdom, **further** deepen the exploration of gender, power, and environmental consciousness. Hushia, Ruhia, and Halima represent distinct facets of womanhood amid societal transitions. Hushia's character, deeply entrenched in tradition, symbolizes **the wisdom of the natural world, comparable to ancient trees – offering both shelter and sustenance through the ages.** Ruhia, in stark contrast, represents a vibrant challenge to societal norms, **emulating the dynamic and transformative forces of nature. Like a river tirelessly shaping new landscapes, she forges her own path, reflecting the unpredictable and regenerative aspects of nature.** Halima, navigating the space between these powerful archetypes, **embodies the resilience of nurturing soil. Her journey, delicately balances the weight of tradition and the allure of new freedoms.** Together, these female characters encapsulate the diverse expressions of femininity within a dynamic society.

Additionally, the experiences of these three women offer a multi-faceted exploration of femininity within a patriarchal framework. Hushia demonstrates the burdens of tradition and compliance, while Ruhia exhibits a revolutionary stance, boldly defying and reshaping societal norms. **Ruhia's defiance is akin to the unpredictable and often indomitable forces of nature. She emerges as a catalyst, fearlessly confronting societal expectations and generating waves of change.** Halima acts as a connecting figure, maneuvering through the traditional world, symbolized by Hushia, and the emerging, new world embodied by Ruhia. **Halima's journey** mirrors nature's adaptation and evolution over time. Together, their stories give a comprehensive perspective on the evolving domain of womanhood, **shedding light** on the intricacies of steering through tradition, contemporaneity, and self-identity. **This rich tapestry** of experiences reflects the diverse and interconnected aspects of nature, emphasizing the importance of harmony and balance in both the natural and human realms.

The individual stories of these women not only highlight the trials and triumphs they face in asserting their identity amidst the dichotomy of tradition and modernity, but also underscore their profound connection to the natural world. Hushia typifies the experiences of women in the past, constrained within the firmly established patriarchy of ancient Nubia. Her differing path underscores the aged norms, emphasizing an ecofeminist lens on the continuous

**From the Nile's Banks to Ecofeminist Discourse: An Analysis of
Idris Ali's *Dongola*, A Novel of Nubia**

domination of women and nature by patriarchal forces. Her narratives illuminate the intersectionality of gender roles, societal expectations, and entrenched beliefs within Nubian culture. This perspective showcases, from an ecofeminist viewpoint, the parallel ways in which women and the environment are systematically marginalized and exploited by the prevailing patriarchal structures.

Hushia evolves into a fervent proponent of traditional expectations, particularly in ethnic and religious preservation. This is vividly seen in her intense reaction to Awad's potential relationship with a non-Nubian, highlighting her deep fears about the faith of her future grandchildren and her own devout beliefs. This response illustrates the notable power hierarchy in Nubian society, where marriage often serves to reinforce patriarchal control. Hushia, firmly anchored in the values of the South, perceives marrying outside Nubian boundaries as a taboo. Awad, respecting his mother's strong desire to uphold Nubian traditions, chooses to marry within their community. However, influenced by his travels, Awad emerges as a progressive figure, gradually diminishing the influence of Nubian taboos in his outlook. This contrast between Hushia and Awad reflects the ecofeminist theme of tradition versus modernization in the context of both gender and environmental norms.

Hushia is a complex character, grappling with a patriarchal society through a blend of resistance and adherence to its norms. Her internal conflict mirrors the broader ecofeminist theme of the struggle against oppressive systems. Although Hushia navigates these oppressive expectations, she remains deeply rooted in community values, desiring recognition from younger women for her challenges to traditional roles. Her declaration: "Shaya's daughter had rebelled against her. If it weren't for her, the girl would never have had a husband! And how many spinsters there were in this land! All infidel, ungrateful women" (Ali 112), serves as a proof of the societal pressures women face. In Hushia's perspective, a woman's worth is intrinsically tied to her marital status, showcasing a patriarchal valuation akin to how nature is often commodified and valued based on its utility. Those labeled as 'spinsters' are harshly judged for their perceived defiance of patriarchal principles, drawing a parallel to the way non-conforming natural elements are often marginalized or undervalued.

One evening, believing she has discovered Halima in a compromising situation, Hushia assumes the role of a societal watchdog exposing Halima's supposed transgression: "She felt a rough leg, then two smooth legs, spread apart. She let out the scream she had been holding in, and it came out piercing

Abeer Mostafa Elgamal
Doaa Mahmoud Saeed Abd Manaf

and loud: 'Help! Help! Help! Disgrace! Help me, people!'" (Ali 113). Stunned, she muses, "She almost fell, thunderstruck. This was a shameful thing she had never heard before. What is going on here, Lord?" (113). Hushia's immediate condemnation of Halima exemplifies her internalization of patriarchal judgments, often directing blame towards women for moral lapses in situations involving both genders.

This reaction mirrors a broader societal trend of unfairly assigning moral culpability predominantly to women, a key facet in ecofeminism. The ecofeminist lens here suggests a correlation between the way women and nature are both subjected to harsh scrutiny and exploitation based on constructed societal norms. Halima's plea, "Please, Hushia, protect me!" (Ali 114), underscores their complex relationship. Despite her fear, Halima intuitively seeks protection from Hushia, revealing a deep-seated, almost maternal or natural instinct for mutual support and care among women. This moment highlights the stress and conflict engendered by social pressures, illuminating how these pressures can fracture even close bonds between women, akin to how environmental degradation disrupts the natural harmony.

Similarly, Hushia's acute awareness of societal shifts is reflected in her fears for the Nubian community in Kanz, articulated through her dreams: "Ever since she had gone blind, her dreams were all about burglars and robberies; gangs from Upper Egypt had been invading the resettled Nubian villages" (Ali 112). This anxiety symbolizes a broader challenge to Nubian heritage and identity. Hushia's perspective offers a window into the traditional Nubian society's struggle with change. The tension between ancient norms, which Hushia represents, and the force of modernization is profound. Her steadfast refusal to leave her land, shows as she announces: 'You can beat me and drag me away but I won't leave... I want to die in my own land' (Ali 67). Furthermore, the response of women in mourning rituals is a poignant reflection of their deep connection to the land and community. This is exemplified when "Hushia al-Nur... jumped from among the women tearing at her hair and rubbing dirt on her face" (28), underlining their integral connection to the land and the environmental ecosystem.

The integral role in the cultural fabric of Nubian society is characterized by the experiences of displacement, loss, and resilience, epitomizing the ecofeminist themes of resistance and survival. Hushia's disdain for the reservoir serves as a metaphor of her resistance against both environmental and societal injustices, reflecting the active role women play in the community's response to

crises and changes. In her community, Hushia holds a respected position due to her age and wisdom, allowing her significant influence, especially in matters of relationships. She is perceived as a guardian of tradition and cherished values within her Nubian society. Her journey to find happiness amidst challenges is compelling. Despite her blindness, she draws great comfort from her steadfast faith, as “She silently prayed. There is no power or strength save in God” (Ali 113). Her blindness has led her to develop an acute awareness of her surroundings, exemplifying her adaptability and resilience. Her detailed knowledge of her home is described as: “She knew every inch of the house; she had trained herself after many falls. Here, the floor swelled; here was a shallow hollow; behind her was the oven and the cattle pen; the water jug was to the left; the entrance was ten yards away; the stone wall was to the right” (113).

Hushia's behaviors and strategies for navigating a male-dominated society are deeply intertwined with the environment, as depicted in the way: “She moved as quietly as a cat, as warily as a fox, with an elderly cunning” (Ali 113). Hushia's acute hearing allows her a profound bond with her environment, tuning into the subtle sounds of nature: “she could detect even the faintest sounds, including birds, bats, and insects” (113). This unique relationship emphasizes an ecofeminist perspective, positioning Hushia's special connection with the environment as a symbol of the broader relationship between women and nature. Her heightened senses illustrate the essential relationship women share with the Earth and underscore a theme of mutual exploitation and neglect by patriarchal systems.

The story of Halima vividly illustrates the double standards and injustices prevalent in patriarchal societies. Ali deftly brings these disparities to the forefront, prompting readers to contemplate persistent gender biases and advocating for a societal shift towards empathy and understanding. Halima's experience embodies the complex dilemma many women face in traditional settings: the challenge of balancing personal desires against community obligations. Each evening, her growing solitude underscores the widening chasm between her aspirations and her reality. Her night dreams, filled with longing for her husband's return, stand in stark contrast to her socially constrained daytime existence. This internal conflict resonates with the broader ecofeminist dialogue that underscores the intertwined experiences of women and nature's rhythms. In these patriarchal contexts, a woman's worth is often gauged by her endurance, patience, and unwavering hope. This glorified continuous waiting, while seen as a strength, overshadows the associated

Abeer Mostafa Elgamal
Doaa Mahmoud Saeed Abd Manaf

sadness, longing, and sacrifices.

Halima's married life exemplifies the burden of social expectations and gender roles, accentuating the resilience of women navigating a male-centric world. A particularly poignant aspect of Halima's tale is her father's failure to empathize with her suffering. Despite the common cultural perception of fathers as protectors and supporters, her father's entrenched patriarchal views exacerbate her plight. Rather than shielding her from societal judgments, he amplifies them, branding her as 'crazy' (Ali 91). Halima's father embodies a critical issue in traditional societies: the overvaluation of tangible assets over emotional well-being stressing that a woman's happiness is quantifiable and attainable through material possessions. The external luxuries he provides become mere symbols of her profound loneliness and isolation. No amount of material luxury can replace the deep emotional connection she yearns for. Furthermore, his belief that Halima should be content even if Awad marries another woman stems from an archaic view of polygamy as a status symbol and a man's inherent right. His inability to recognize his daughter's emotional distress underlines the blindness inherent in patriarchal perspectives. Halima's poignant reflection, "We aren't oxen, that turn a water wheel, and eat grass, and lie down to sleep!" (Ali 102), metaphorically captures how women are often perceived solely for their functional roles, with their personal desires, dreams, and emotions disregarded.

Men in Halima's life, such as Hamad Tawfig and Yazid Effendi, epitomize the external threats often associated with women's honor in patriarchal societies. Her valiant efforts to protect her dignity starkly contrast with society's eagerness to tarnish her reputation. The disparate societal roles between genders are succinctly captured in the observation, "the shame was reserved for women – the men were never blamed" (Ali 95). This statement underlines the ecofeminist theme of gendered responsibility and societal expectations. Patience, often extolled as a virtue for women, is both a prescribed behavior and a celebrated quality. The repetitive mantra, "Patience, patience, patience" (95), resonates with the ecofeminist discourse, drawing a parallel to how nature endures—through seasons, cycles, and environmental pressures—reflecting the expectation that women similarly bear societal burdens, internal conflicts, and the challenges imposed by patriarchal norms.

Every action Halima undertakes is scrutinized against the inflexible barriers of social expectations. Her routine activities are constantly judged and met with disapproval. Eventually, the community starts perceiving her as unstable, and she becomes a "shadow of herself" (Ali 100). Rather than finding empathy, her

**From the Nile's Banks to Ecofeminist Discourse: An Analysis of
Idris Ali's *Dongola, A Novel of Nubia***

yearning transforms into a subject of public curiosity and gossip: "Who was Halima waiting for?" (98). The zenith of her patience coincides with receiving a letter from Awad, which paradoxically intensifies her anguish. Her internal turmoil escalates as she contemplates the radical decision of divorce, a move that would disrupt not only her marital bond but also shatter entrenched societal norms. Confronting traditions and significant disapproval from figures like her father, this becomes a moment of profound courage and transformation. Sending a telegram to Awad, she issues an ultimatum: commit or release her. This act transcends her personal narrative; it becomes a larger commentary on a woman's right to assert her respect and dignity within marriage. Symbolically, this choice represents not only her pursuit of freedom but also acts as a beacon for broader societal change and reform.

Significantly, most discussions about Ruhia tend to emphasize her physical beauty over the substance of her character, a reflection of societal superficiality. Ruhia, viewed through an ecofeminist lens, mirrors the condition of nature: admired yet exploited, encapsulating patriarchal desires to dominate both women and the environment. Her narrative, in conjunction with Hushia's and Halima's, underscores the challenges women endure in male-centric societies. Ruhia, too, becomes a poignant emblem of the trials faced by women, particularly in relation to their allure and influence. Her tale highlights the societal tug-of-war between desire, admiration, and control, stemming from her beauty, which is predominantly seen as her chief asset. Although her attractiveness affords her a measure of power in a setting where women often feel sidelined, it simultaneously attracts envy, gossip, and hostility.

Like nature, frequently overlooked and exploited, Ruhia also endures being marginalized and ostracized by her community. Her life and resistance accentuate the pervasive notion that patriarchal societies often diminish and suppress entities they cannot readily comprehend or dominate. Ruhia's defiance represents more than just opposition to men or societal norms; it is a rebellion against an architectural system designed for control and domination. Symbolically aligning with the forces of nature, Ruhia embodies the perilous allure of unbridled femininity. Her story highlights the inherent challenges and dangers that non-conforming women face in a patriarchal context. Women like Ruhia are viewed as threats, not solely to individual men but to the societal order itself. This is articulated in the advice giving to her husband: "Listen, Shalali, she's a low-class woman. Do yourself a favor and divorce her." (Ali 11). This assertion illustrates the societal attempts to diminish her, reducing her

Abeer Mostafa Elgamal
Doaa Mahmoud Saeed Abd Manaf

complexities to simplistic, derogatory labels, mirroring how nature is often trivialized and controlled.

Ruhia's character encapsulates a classic narrative where a woman's sexuality is both a source of power and a potential downfall. Her allure, transcending mere physical attraction, becomes a tool to challenge gender norms. However, this also leads many in her community to regard her with fear and disdain. Hushia's perception of her is steeped in superstition and fear, as she is "...absolutely certain that Ruhia, the sterile woman her husband had married, had cast some demonic spell to affect his innermost mind" (Ali 67).

In essence, Ruhia is scapegoated for others' misfortunes, seen as a harmful force wielding a "demonic spell" over men. This widespread mistrust reflects society's unease with empowered women. Her striking beauty acts as both an allure and a threat, disrupting the lives of individuals like Awad and his father by challenging social norms. She epitomizes society's ambivalence towards women who deviate from traditional roles, often perceived as simultaneously enticing and perilous as is shown in Hushia's warning her son: "My boy, don't go to the land of that snake" (Ali 9). Ruhia remains an enigmatic figure, symbolizing both desire and caution. Awad's visions of her, where she is seen "engaging in lewd acts with the vagrants of Bulaq" (9), add layers to her character, enhancing her mystique and prompting questions about her true intentions and influence. Significantly, her character is often associated with the deceitful north, described as a place "where only cowards and informers got any glory" (9).

In the broader context of the novel, all three women – Hushia, Halima, and Ruhia – confront patriarchal constraints. Hushia clings to tradition, Halima battles societal judgments, while Ruhia, despite being objectified, struggles to assert her agency, and pursue autonomy. Leslie Kern's observation resonates with this theme, noting, "we often believe that acting nice will protect us from threats because we've seen how abuse escalates when women say no, ignore men, or walk away from an uncomfortable situation. It's an internal wrestling match between our own instincts and knowledge, social conditioning, fear of being too fearful" (145). This quote aligns with the ecofeminist perspective by highlighting the internal conflicts women face in navigating a patriarchal world, mirroring the struggles and resilience of nature against human exploitation.

In *Dongola*, ecofeminism serves as a profound lens on environmental degradation. Idris Ali's narrative lucidly underscores the fact that harm inflicted

upon the Nubian land and the sidelining of its women emanate from a broader mindset deeply rooted in the pursuit of power and control. The story, set against the backdrop of the Aswan High Dam, emerges as a poignant testament to the resilience of Nubian women amidst substantial societal changes. While the construction of the Aswan High Dam is heralded as a symbol of progress in modern Egypt, it simultaneously embodies the pervasive societal tendencies to regulate and define femininity. Thus, *Dongola* adeptly reveals the profound correlation between the exploitation of nature and the oppression of women, providing readers with a compelling exploration of the multifaceted challenges posed by notions of progress, cultural identity, and the enduring strength of marginalized communities.

The profound sense of loss and betrayal depicted in *Dongola* poignantly mirrors the environmental degradation in Nubia. The North's irrigation practices and water reservation policies, detrimental to Nubian lands, spark resentment that transcends mere ecological damage, touching cultural and spiritual realms. **Awad's growing disillusionment reveals a rift between his community's religious and traditional narratives and the stark reality of environmental exploitation. This awareness evolves into anger, particularly towards the older generation's passive acceptance of such exploitation.** His disdain for religious and cultural narratives that overlook environmental and social injustices signifies a rebellion against a patriarchal system culpable for both environmental degradation and social inequality. Idris Ali eloquently encapsulates this complexity, stating:

He later learned that all the bounty of the North came from constant irrigation provided by the water held in reserve above the land of Nubia. He grew angry and hateful and a never-ending sorrow entered his heart. This was why when he grew up and began reading he so liked the ideas of Bahr Jazuli and his comrades. From that day onward he hated the preachers in the mosques who held out the image of that imaginary paradise before the people. He hated his grandfather and all the old men because they had given in to the tyranny of the North. (24)

The theme of environmental degradation is poignantly explored through the depiction of landscapes and characters' responses to these ecological changes. **Awad's thoughts reflect the internal conflict and cultural identity crisis faced by the characters:**

Was it the fear of contamination from the plagues of the city or the attachment to their environment and special identity? The Nubians,

Abeer Mostafa Elgamal
Doaa Mahmoud Saeed Abd Manaf

the Ababidah, the Basharis, the desert Arabs, the people of the Siwa Oasis, and the wandering gypsies--what if he sat among them and taught them and civilized them? Would that not be a noble calling, assuming that nobility was his aim? But prophecy was a hard calling, and he had given ten years of his life to a cause he had seen as noble. To stay in this vast wasteland, to be bitten by a viper lurking below a layer of sand, to eat food made from camel milk and seasonal pigeons, and to sacrifice all the achievements of civilization would be too much even for a saint. (53)

This quote illustrates the dichotomy between traditional lifestyles and the encroaching influences of modern civilization. The dilemma—whether to stay in an environment portrayed as a 'vast wasteland' or to embrace the 'achievements of civilization'—echoes the broader ecofeminist theme of the struggle between natural preservation and industrial progress. The juxtaposition of the fear of 'contamination from the plagues of the city' with the 'attachment to their environment and special identity' highlights the tension between environmental degradation and cultural erosion. **This internal dialogue showcases the novel's exploration of the complexities surrounding the impact of environmental changes on traditional communities, underscoring the intrinsic value placed on natural landscapes and traditional ways of life against the allure and perceived benefits of modernization, reflecting the novel's intricate ecofeminist narrative.**

The stark disparity between different regions and the recurrent devastation **aptly demonstrates** the environmental changes in Nubia, particularly out-of-season floods. This aspect poignantly reflects the exploration of the impact of environmental degradation on local communities, especially in the South. **Echoing ecofeminist perspectives, the narrative illustrates how ecological changes disproportionately affect marginalized groups, drawing parallels with the marginalization of women.** The socio-environmental challenges faced by the Nubian people highlight the struggle against natural disasters, worsened by environmental mismanagement, **"The north had glory and leisure, the south death and floods. How many times had they been ruined by a flood coming out of season?"** (Ali 38).

The construction of the High Dam, leading to the submergence of ancestral lands, signifies not just physical displacement but also a profound cultural and emotional upheaval. This transformation has deep implications on the cultural and social fabric of the Nubian community, profoundly impacting the roles and lives of women:

They told her 'Your son has chosen to follow a dangerous road-he's mixed up in politics.' She did not understand. The years passed her by and she spent most of them in tears. The northerners' need for water increased and they built a huge dam to the south of the first reservoir a stupendous mountain that would block up all the water except for a measured amount which would flood all of Nubia with its temples, mountains, and villages. The country's most massive evacuation began. (Ali 67)

Environmental changes directly affect cultural and social practices, influencing everything from mourning rituals to celebrations. **In *Dongola*, the community's response to these shifts, particularly among women, underscores the interconnected nature of environmental and cultural transformation. Ali captures this essence, stating: "The joys and sorrows of the land of Nubia sparked off shouts or trills of happiness. There were forty days for receiving condolences and wearing black and unending celebration before anyone's wedding night." (Ali 63).** The profound loss and transformation experienced by the community, where once fertile lands and homes are now submerged, signify a drastic environmental shift. **Idris Ali poignantly conveys this through the character's reminiscence: "One day he dreamed with his comrades of sanitary rooms for all the people and of blowing up these tombs when this Othman was a farmer with land and a fine house on the banks of the Nile in the now-submerged land of Nubia." (10).**

Lastly, the novel vividly depicts the new challenges and risks faced by Nubian community in adapting to altered environmental conditions. The reference to the land as an "open graveyard" metaphorically signifies the death of their traditional lifestyle, illustrating the dire consequences of environmental change, "It was an effort steeped in danger because the ground was soft and unstable: an open graveyard. But the harvest was a rich one whether they closed the reservoir openings at the set time or did it early to trap the flood water." (Ali 65)

In conclusion, *Dongola, A Novel of Nubia* by Idris Ali offers a rich tapestry for an ecofeminist reading, particularly in its depiction of environmental themes. The novel intricately portrays the Nile and the High Dam not merely as physical entities but as symbols of profound environmental and cultural transformations. These elements significantly impact the lives of the characters, especially women, emphasizing how environmental changes are inextricably linked with shifts in societal roles and norms. The women in the novel, deeply

Abeer Mostafa Elgamal
Doaa Mahmoud Saeed Abd Manaf

connected to their natural surroundings, embody the ecofeminist principle of interconnectedness between women and nature. Their experiences, mirroring the environmental changes around them, reflect the dual marginalization of both women and the environment. This parallel draws attention to the broader theme of environmental degradation, depicted through vivid descriptions of altered landscapes and the characters' nuanced responses to these changes.

Furthermore, the construction of the High Dam and the ensuing alterations to the Nile serve as a backdrop for exploring the cultural and social shifts within the Nubian community. Overall, *Dongola* emerges as a compelling narrative that intertwines environmental degradation with cultural and social dynamics, seen through an ecofeminist lens. It not only sheds light on the specific plight of the Nubian community but also resonates with broader issues of environmental justice and gender equality. Through its exploration of the intricate relationship between human communities and their environment, the novel offers profound insights into the challenges and resilience of marginalized groups in the face of environmental and societal upheaval.

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Abeer Mostafa Elgamal
Doaa Mahmoud Saeed Abd Manaf

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