

## ‘The Road Never Ends’: Ecofeminism and Magical Realism in Rachel Zadok’s *Sister-Sister*

Terry Westby-Nunn <sup>1\*</sup>

Published: March 5, 2021

### ABSTRACT

Ecofeminism is an interdisciplinary movement that analyses power imbalances and examines the intersectional impacts neoliberalism has on humanity and the planet. Cultural artefacts (literature, films, artworks, etcetera) play an important role in raising awareness of ecofeminist concerns. Evaluating Rachel Zadok’s magical realist novel *Sister-Sister* (2013) through an ecofeminist lens exposes how the social and ecological ills of the Anthropocene are a result of a systemic neoliberal marginalisation of the planet and the poor. The novel depicts the trauma inflicted on those living in poverty, revealing how poverty spreads its tentacles through the lives of those it affects. Set in an alternative South Africa where drought has blighted rural villages, *Sister-Sister* demonstrates how environmental degradation has a disproportionately negative impact on the poorest in society. The novel addresses sexual violence and rape, raising the urgent matter of how society fails girls; girls growing up in economically deprived environments tend to be especially vulnerable to sexual predation. The paper finds resonances between magical realism and ecofeminism. As both are processes of resistance – ecofeminism resists oppressive toxic power and magical realism contests reality – the analysis highlights how magical realist devices are an effective means of communicating crucial ecofeminist concerns.

**Keywords:** South Africa, ecofeminism, neoliberalism, magical realism, Rachel Zadok

### INTRODUCTION

Rachel Zadok’s dystopian *Sister-Sister* (2013) was short-listed for the Herman Charles Bosman Prize and the University of Johannesburg Prize. This complex, experimental, magical realist novel has been described by Christopher Hope as ‘[a]n extraordinary blend of parable, passion and poetry; it’s not often a novel of such originality comes around’ (*Sister-Sister* cover endorsement). The novel is set in an alternative South Africa and has a lyrical, dream-like quality, and yet beneath its lyricism, it is a savage tale that explores the compound ways in which the Anthropocene is impacting on both the human and nonhuman ecosystems. Zadok’s work is an exploration of a planet in crisis, a society in crisis, and ultimately a family in crisis. The novel delves into the complexities of sibling rivalry — in this case between the twins Sindi and Thuli — and explores the sisters’ quest for separation and selfhood in a traumatised society. On an ecofeminist level, *Sister-Sister* examines how, in a fractured society, where the earth is victimised, underprivileged children too are vulnerable.

Colonisation and decolonisation are important concepts in the novel, and one of the most important symbols of colonialism Zadok explores is the road: it is a metaphor for capitalist greed, homelessness, and grief. The title of this article: ‘The road never ends’ (Zadok, 2013a: 297) is inspired by the twins’ symbolic journey along the Ring Road. The gloomy concrete highway operates, first, as ecofeminist commentary (as discussed later). Second, the layered, sometimes dislocated way the road finds expression in the text is a feature of the magical realist storytelling in the novel, and Zadok’s exploration of the road reveals the power of the interplay between ecofeminism and magical realism. After the dream prologue, the twins’ story opens on the road: ‘I stand at the edge of an overpass as another bleak dawn spills over the city stretched out below. Office blocks rise into the leaden sky like a jawful of giant’s teeth’ (Zadok, 2013a: 13). This apocalyptic, evocative opening immerses us in the twins’ journey on the Ring Road: a road that circles in on itself, never ending, much like the horror of the capitalist systemic abuse that

<sup>1</sup> Terry Westby-Nunn is a lecturer in Screen in The School of the Arts at the University of Hull; she did her doctoral research at the University of Pretoria.

\*Corresponding Author: [T.Westby-Nunn@hull.ac.uk](mailto:T.Westby-Nunn@hull.ac.uk)

blights the lives of the poorest. The road functions too as an inspiration for this article: the road map as a motif conceptually links the disparate strands of my discussion together.

The road map of my article is as follows: I will outline the theoretical perspectives of ecofeminism and magical realism and discuss how Zadok's novel successfully engages with ecofeminist concerns through employing magical realist devices. The discussion will explore Zadok's witnessing of the trauma inflicted on those who live in poverty, and by association her exploration of how the South African social system has failed girls who live in economically deprived environments. Ecofeminist concerns come into play in this discussion of trauma and the systemic abuse of children, and this analysis will also consider how patriarchal ideals of overtly sexualised female body shapes, clothing, and behaviours are foisted on girls from an early age. From here, I move on to examine Zadok's depiction of environmental abuse, and how — when addressing the impact on humans — the Anthropocene has the greatest impact on the poorest in society.

Ecofeminism broadly examines the repercussions patriarchal neoliberal capitalism is having on the planet and its inhabitants. It is an intersectional theory and activist movement, assessing how oppression operates not only on the environment and women, but also on those marginalised by the toxic neoliberal global hegemony.<sup>1</sup> Colleen Mack-Canty (2004: 169) notes that although the term ecofeminism is generally credited to Françoise d'Eaubonne (1974), some ecofeminists (Gaard, 1998; Salleh, 1991), suggest the word ecofeminism appeared sporadically before 1974. D'Eaubonne's work was pivotal in the intersectional linking of the market economy of patriarchal capitalism to what the market deemed as resources to be exploited, for instance, the environment and women's bodies: the environment for food, mining, and so on; and women's bodies in terms of domestic and reproductive labour. Intersectional ecofeminism links this resource exploitation across many other oppressions too: the exploitation of the poor for cheap labour, and the exploitation of the resources of colonised nations, to name only two. As many ecofeminists point out, the movement is not essentialist: it does not presume a special link between women and nature: '[s]ince all life is nature, neither gender of human beings can be closer than the other to "nature"' (Gates, 1996: 13). There are many ecofeminisms: 'many trends coexist within ecofeminism, going from spiritual ecofeminism, Marxist-oriented ecofeminist analysis of work, cyborg ecofeminism, animal rights ecofeminism, and many more' (Casselot, 2016: 76). Given these many strands of ecofeminism, for the purpose of this analysis, Greta Gaard's definition of ecofeminism has been employed:

Drawing on the insights of ecology, feminism, and socialism, ecofeminism's basic premise is that the ideology which authorizes oppressions such as those based on race, class, gender, sexuality, physical abilities, and species is the same ideology which sanctions the oppression of nature. Ecofeminism calls for an end to all oppressions, arguing that no attempt to liberate women (or any other oppressed group) will be successful without an equal attempt to liberate nature. Its theoretical base is a sense of self most commonly expressed by women and various other nondominant groups — a self that is interconnected with all life. (Gaard, 1993: 1)

My analysis of Zadok's *Sister-Sister* (2013) draws on this understanding of ecofeminism; the oppressions of race, class, gender, species and nature are central concerns of the novel.

*Sister-Sister* exhibits magical realist elements, and so, it is worth briefly engaging with the slippery concept of magical realism. Many theorists (Hart and Ouyang, 2005; Gaylard, 2005; Faris, 2002) point out that there is an inherent conflict in the term 'magical realism', which prepares readers for a stimulating, contradictory experience where the 'real' and the 'magical' (which incorporates the fantastic, the uncanny, the absurd and the fabulous) fray. It is a celebration of the unexpected: it undermines forms of literary realism while, at the same time, upholding many of realism's modes in order to create a 'contested space' for the reader. This contested space makes magical realism an imaginative literary form that is attractive to many postcolonial writers, as postcolonial realities are themselves contested spaces. Gerald Gaylard notes that magical realism emerges in postcolonial literature as an 'imaginative' intervention — a site of resistance — which is a reaction to the disillusionment of socio-political realities. He writes:

The emphasis upon the imagination in contemporary cultural production from Africa has occurred primarily because desperate situations, both past and present, have demanded imaginative solutions, but

---

<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this paper, Gabriele Griffin's definition of neoliberalism in *A Dictionary of Gender Studies* (2017) will be employed: '[a] political theory that arose in the nineteenth century and had a resurgence from the late 1970s onwards. Neoliberalism promotes individual freedom, self-determination, and choice through an emphasis on minimal government involvement, free trade, the free market, and promotion of the private sector rather than the public sector. Neoliberalism is associated with the gradual decline of the welfare state, the privatisation of public-sector industries and services, and the marketisation of services. This disadvantages women who benefit significantly from public services and welfare provision. Neoliberalism is also associated with the rise in audit culture where following due process is regarded as more important than the outcomes of any process. Feminists such as Aihwa Ong regard neoliberalism as a technology of governance'.

also because writers have felt freer than they did whilst under the yoke of imperial domination. (Gaylard, 2005: 4)

Since ecofeminism contests patriarchal and capitalist power, and magical realism also resists hegemonic narratives, it is not surprising that ecofeminism and magical realism find comfort in each other. In *Sister-Sister*, Zadok constructs a successful alternative South Africa by employing magical realist strategies, and further uses magical realism to create an unstable narrative that exposes and explores the challenging ecofeminist issues of trauma, exploitation and rape. Ecofeminism and magical realism are potent literary allies.

*Sister-Sister* opens on an unnamed *sangoma*'s dreams: she returns to 'KwaNogqaza Falls, just as she did on the night of her initiation ceremony, twenty-five years before' (Zadok, 2013a: 9).<sup>2</sup> The dream is filled with striking environmental imagery and mythology. The *inkanyamba*, a serpent well known in Zulu spiritual culture, pulls the *sangoma* into the water and commands her to dig.<sup>3</sup> She does so, and finds two pebbles. Later the dream takes her to a shore where two chicks eat maggots from a dead gull's body; the seawater disappears and the natural world around the *sangoma* withers: 'The trees in the coastal forest sicken, dropping leaves until they are nothing more than splintered grey trunk and branch. The world dies as the chicks grow fat on their dinner of maggots' (Zadok, 2013a: 9). The *sangoma* notices a scab on one of the round stones in her hand, and begins to pick at it; as she does so the stone bleeds, and the crying of a baby is heard:

The stone shudders and rolls away from her prying finger towards its twin. They merge, becoming one. She contemplates the single stone in her hand, but before she can glean meaning, it splits in two and her palm begins to bleed. (Zadok, 2013a: 9-10)

The *sangoma* is woken from the dream by her daughter, Sizane, who tells her the baby is coming. Later we learn that it is not one baby that has come, but two: the eponymous *Sister-Sister* twins.

Rich in symbolism, much of the novel's dream prologue imagery evokes the trauma inflicted on the Earth in the Anthropocene. From a plot perspective, the prologue is the prophetic driving force of the narrative: it is the spindle on which the story lurches and turns. When the reader, after following the disjointed, dreamy and nightmarish magical realist narrative of the novel, reaches the tragic conclusion, it becomes clear that interpretation is key. The *sangoma*'s interpretation of her dream wreaks havoc on the lives of those she believes it pertains to, and creates in its wake an inverted self-fulfilling prophecy.

Using Russian Formalism as a frame of analysis, the *fabula* of the tale centres on how this dream prophecy shatters the lives of the twins affected by it, and Zadok's *syuzhet* is accomplished in teasing out the story through her complex structuring of the dual narratives featuring each of the twins: Thulisile (Thuli) and Sindisiwe (Sindi).<sup>4</sup> The dual narrative structure works as a puzzle and the fragmented, deconstructive strands chronicle the disintegration of the twins' initially close relationship. Set against the backdrop of the Anthropocene, this ecofeminist tale zooms in on a fracturing, sociopathic, patriarchal society, and centres on how the twins' passage into adulthood is tainted by the social and environmental ills that blight their lives.

After the dream prologue, the first narrative section is Thuli's, and the complexity of her ungrounded stream-of-consciousness chapters — magical realism in action — is a result in part of her being a spirit who trails her living twin, the homeless Sindi, as she wanders the edges of the Ring Road highway in Johannesburg. Shard by shard, Zadok reveals the tale behind what led to Thuli's death and why her spirit is compelled to remain with Sindi. The Sindi sections use a third-person narrator. Zadok's choice of different narrative perspectives for each twin disrupts mainstream literary conventions, and is — like both ecofeminism and magical realism — a challenge to the status quo. The first-person narrator in the Thuli sections enmeshes the reader with her fluid, shifting spirit perspective on the world. The third-person narrative in Sindi's sections follows a more disciplined linear structure, allowing the reader to grasp the narrative strands that were hinted at in Thuli's somewhat disorientating chapters.

There is a long tradition of the use of the trope of twins in literary narratives, and yet each author explores different aspects of society through this trope — twins 'do not provide a single key to contemporary culture but multiple entry points' (De Nooy, 2005: xiv). In *Sister-Sister* the rupturing of the relationship between Thuli and Sindi symbolises the disintegration of not only South Africa's social fabric, but also of the environment — and consequently planetary health. Identical twins are fascinating in that they share the same DNA; however, their individual life experiences create divergent realities and personalities. While Thuli and Sindi enjoy a special bond as twins, sharing everything initially ('they shared out the drumsticks and wings: one for me, one for you' (Zadok, 2013a: 15)), they are very different. Uncle Jabu points out when he meets the girls for the first time when they are eleven: 'Sizane, you gave your girls the wrong names. Thulisile means "quiet one" but she talks, talks, talks, and

<sup>2</sup> A *sangoma* is '(in southern Africa) a traditional healer or diviner' (Stevenson, 2015).

<sup>3</sup> Felicity Wood describes the *inkanyamba* as a 'supernatural serpent: in this case, the snake in the sky — the *inkanyamba*, the tornado spirit' (172; italics in the original).

<sup>4</sup> *Syuzhet* refers to how the plot unfolds: 'employment of narrative' (Görey, 2017: 6).

the other one has no tongue' (Zadok, 2013a: 86). Their Zulu names carry prophetic foreshadowing. Given that Thuli's spirit is sliced from her body by Sindi, and spirit-Thuli shadows her guilt-ridden living sister, Thuli is forced into silence by circumstance, thus fulfilling the signification of her name. Thuli's rape by Uncle Jabu is also instrumental in silencing her. As for Sindisiwe, Loon Man tells her: 'Your name means saved. Sindisiwe, it means saved. Did you know that?' (Zadok, 2013a: 31). Was Sindisiwe initially given the name after she was saved from her *sangoma* grandmother's soil smothering? If so, she was subsequently lost as her extended family's superstitious beliefs resulted in her fearing that she was soulless. The impact of Sindi's family's beliefs on her life (in particular, her *sangoma* grandmother's dream prophecy) cause her to commit the crime of using *sangoma muti* from Gogo Nkosi to slice Thuli's spirit from her.<sup>5</sup> However, at the close of the novel, there is a measure of redemption, and 'Sins' is 'saved' by the Black Preacher and his disturbing hybrid One True Church, when they free Thuli's spirit from her link to Sindi. It is a barbed redemption for Sindi as the church has an obsession with young women's virginity and breeding, as Loon Man tells her: 'Saving good girls and keeping them pure so they can be the Mothers for the New Mankind' (Zadok, 2013a: 31). In this cult-like environment, 'pure' young women are nothing more than uterine receptacles for the Saviour's sperm; their destiny lies in being baby incubators. Throughout the novel, there is commentary on how girls are abused by those in power: Ma Wilma sells her virgins into sexual slavery and certain deadly Z3 infection; Z3 is eerily similar to HIV, and the myths surrounding both illnesses will be discussed further on in the article. While Sindi may have been saved from contracting Z3, her fate at the hands of the Believers of the One True Church is uncertain. What is certain is that patriarchal control over female bodies reigns, and girls in Zadok's novel are, from that perspective, nothing more than beings to be consumed sexually by men.

In writing a novel about Zulu girls, a story rooted in Zulu culture, Zadok, a white female writer, has taken a risk. It is vital that people from cultures that are under-represented in the media tell their own stories. Melissa Silverstein writes in an open letter, '[i]t is incumbent on white women to remember their privilege and to do the work with fellow white women to support women of color and work to end institutional systemic racism' (Silverstein, 2020). Arguably, Zadok's portrayal of the cultural and traumatic challenges faced by Zulu characters is an example of a white woman acknowledging the wounds of girls from another culture; the novel is a recognition of systemic racism and Zadok's attempt to understand the pain of another echoes a core facet of the ecofeminism being explored in this chapter: 'a self that is interconnected with all life' (Gaard, 1993: 1). The work provides an opportunity for healing: '[w]ith trauma forming a bridge between disparate historical experiences, so the argument goes, listening to the trauma of another can contribute to cross-cultural solidarity and to the creation of new forms of community' (Craps and Buelens, 2008: 2). Zadok has listened with empathy to the trauma another culture has endured and has responded with compassion. She does not shy away from difficult subjects, and the novel plays an important role in what Miki Flockemann — using a term taken from Kelly Oliver (2004: 80) — calls 'witness-bearing'. Flockemann (2010: 22) writes: 'while "witness-bearing" refers to the structure of subjectivity itself as it entails bearing witness to a truth about humanity — it presents "phenomenological or psychological truth" even if imagined'. This witness-bearing is seen throughout the novel through the ways in which the characters interact with the pain inflicted upon them, and via a wider examination of social ills plaguing South African society. Zadok witnesses the pain each twin goes through as they come of age. As the twins grow up, and apart, a measure of sibling rivalry is to be expected; however, the dysfunctional family dynamic ensures that their close bond is viciously torn asunder:

They'd fought before, but in the past their arguments were quickly forgotten. This was different. They'd never been divided before, never taken sides with someone else against each another, like Thuli had with Thembi. Now they barely spoke, communicating only through resentful glares full of blame and spite. Sindi didn't know how to cross the dark space between them, didn't know if she even wanted to. (Zadok, 2013a: 137-138)

When Thuli receives a single Christmas gift from Thembi, and Sindi receives nothing, Sindi's isolation and pain are cemented:

Then came Christmas, the worst Christmas ever. Mama didn't even get out of bed and there was nothing special to eat and no presents. No presents for her. Thembi gave Thuli a red plastic comb, and she stuck it in her hair and paraded around like a starring from TV. (Zadok, 2013a: 139)

Zadok draws the reader into the effect the neglect has on Sindi, enabling them to empathise with Sindi's predicament and to understand why Sindi chooses to seek out Gogo Nkosi's evil muti. Their poverty-stricken mother is too exhausted or depressed to notice that only one child gets a Christmas gift, and it is her negligence in not addressing this imbalance that leads to Sindi's deep feeling of exclusion: an exclusion which has terrible consequences.

<sup>5</sup> *Muti* refers to 'South African traditional African medicine or magical charms' (Stevenson, 2015).

Ecofeminism honours this witnessing, as it explores the intersection of different kinds of trauma: ‘routinely ignored or dismissed in trauma research, the chronic psychic suffering produced by the structural violence of racial, gender, sexual, class, and other inequities has yet to be fully accounted for’ (Craps and Buelens, 2008: 3-4). In countries where social support is not adequately addressed by governments, children are severely victimised by poverty. As theorist Lawrence Buell states:

ecofeminists have been among the leaders in a broader initiative to push environmental criticism toward substantive engagement with issues of environmental welfare and equity of more pressing concern to the impoverished and socially marginalized: to landscapes of urbanization, racism, poverty, and toxification; and to the voices of witnesses and victims of environmental injustice. (Buell, 2005: 112)

Zadok also witnesses and explores injustices by recounting the disturbing belief, which gained some traction in South Africa, that raping a child will cure a man of HIV:

‘When the clinics closed, people had no one to turn to. Some say we must return to the old ways if we are to save ourselves. They say the only way ...’ Uncle trailed off. He could not look at them, his eyes shifting over their heads until he focused on a point high above them.

‘They say the only way is to sleep with a virgin,’ Mama’s voice was sharp. ‘Is that what they say, Jabu? That old lie? Nobody says that any more, people know better. Please, Jabu, tell me they don’t say that here.’ Uncle nodded.

‘And what does Mama say? Is she one of those?’

Uncle did not reply. (Zadok, 2013a: 110)

Rape, and bearing witness to the pain that rape causes, are important ecofeminist concerns, and Uncle’s raping Thuli in a misguided attempt to cure himself of Z3 echoes the views of ecofeminist theorist and activist Vandana Shiva (2014: 23):

I have repeatedly stressed that the rape of the Earth and rape of women are intimately linked — both metaphorically, in shaping world-views, and materially, in shaping women’s everyday lives. The deepening economic vulnerability of women makes them more vulnerable to all forms of violence, including sexual assault.

Thuli’s social and economic vulnerability is tragic: the eleven-year-old girl has no support structures to assist her after her rape. The shame of her rape becomes hers to bear. Even Sindi blames Thuli for the rape:

*Eleven was how old she was, eleven years and five months. Eleven was the number of hotels she’d counted.* Sindi lowered her hands. The grunting had stopped.

‘You’re a good girl, Thuli,’ she heard Uncle whisper, ‘a good girl to help your uncle.’

Sindi prayed that he would go, just go. She didn’t want to do bad things with Uncle like Thuli had, because she wasn’t like Thuli. Sindi didn’t bat her eyelashes or fetch beer for Auntie’s boyfriends or let anyone pat her on the bum. (Zadok, 2013a: 14, original emphasis)

Zadok examines how patriarchy is readily absorbed by women in her examination of how the female adults, in particular, shame Thuli for contracting Z3. When Sister Bongi, the district nurse, comes to the school, she asks Thuli about her menstrual cycle:

‘Mama doesn’t like to talk about stuff like that.’

[Sister Bongi says,] ‘Nobody wants to talk about sex or menstruation or pregnancy. It makes my job very difficult.’ (Zadok, 2013a: 280)

In a culture where shame and secrecy surround sex, even Sister Bongi is unable to escape patriarchal assumptions. When Thuli tests positive for Z3, Sister Bongi fails the child by projecting the shame on Thuli, rather than on a broken system:

[Sister Bongi] looks at me the same way Mama does when I’ve done something to disappoint her and I know I’ve failed. I want to ask her what the test is for, but the look on her face stops me.

‘Thulisile, I need to see your mother.’ She sticks a red star next to my name on the front of our folder.

‘I’m going to write her a letter and give it to your teacher. You must collect it tomorrow and take it home.’

‘I didn’t do anything.’

'No?' She narrows her eyes as if trying to see inside me. 'Just give the letter to your mother. It's very important.'

'Okay.'

'Okay, you can go.' (Zadok, 2013a: 282-283)

Later, their mother, Sizane, too blames Thuli for contracting Z3: "You little sluts," Mama slurred, her breath hot in Sindi's ear. That was what she'd been shouting, that they were sluts and had been allowed to run wild too long' (Zadok, 2013a: 249). Sizane is a struggling mother: she is moody, prone to aggression, and drinks with the next-door neighbour, 'Next-Door-Auntie' (who is something of a foster relative), while her twins watch soapies and other popular programmes on TV. These programmes mirror what the South African audiences are currently exposed to — *Generations* and *Idols* are referred to in particular — and the novel touches on how these popular cultural influences are being absorbed and reflected by young people: "Thuli shook her hips and stuck out her bum like she was on *Idols*' (Zadok, 2013a: 230). Zadok explores how popular culture sexualises children from a young age; sexual stereotyping is foisted on the youngest and most impressionable in society. Laurie Penny, a contemporary feminist author, writes:

The ways in which contemporary capitalism undermines women's bodies, from advertising to pornography to the structures of gendered labour and domestic conflict, are not private troubles with no bearing upon the wider world. They are necessary fetters in a superstructure of oppression that has become so fundamental to the experience of femininity that it is effectively invisible. (Penny, 2011: 2)

While notions of female sexuality are clearly transmitted to Thuli and Sindi through mass media, other forms of effective, accurate information dissemination are revealed as problematic. Thuli, a prepubescent girl, knows nothing of sex or menstruation, yet she knows how to wiggle her hips and flirt. Not only has her overworked, exhausted, spiritually lost mother failed her here, but so has the school system. It is evident that poverty spreads its tentacles throughout the lives it oppresses. It appears on many levels, in particular a poverty of knowledge and critical thinking, which compromises the ability of the twins to empower themselves effectively. Thuli is unable to communicate to any other adult that Uncle Jabu has raped her. In fairness, an ability to communicate about such an intimately traumatic event such as rape or molestation is not necessarily an issue related to poverty; personal responses to such trauma are multi-layered, and have also to do with how victims are treated in society. However, spreading information about what is sexual abuse, as well as an empathetic system, can do much to empower the most vulnerable of victims to speak out; the global #MeToo movement is currently making progress in destigmatising victims of sexual molestation and rape. How far this reaches into poorer, marginalised communities globally remains to be seen. Uncle Jabu's poverty means that he too is too caught up in mistaken ideas that derive from ignorance, such as the belief that having sex with a virgin can cure his Z3. It is clear Uncle Jabu's beliefs occur at the intersection of two realities: the beliefs he was born into — those of his *sangoma* mother — and the failure of the government clinics adequately to address the Z3 epidemic, which led to mass deaths. As Uncle Jabu says, 'You know, Sisi, seeing your neighbours waste away until there is nothing left makes a man desperate. This thing, it eats you from the inside, it makes even good people do bad things' (Zadok, 2013a: 109). When people are immersed in the grim reality of poverty, there are no winners. Schoolchildren are not properly informed about Z3:

Speculation began afresh, this time as to what it meant to be Z3. Somebody said Dora was Z3, but Dumisile said she was too fat to be Z3. 'Look at Mr. Edwards,' he said, holding up his index finger. 'Skinny-skinny.' (Zadok, 2013a: 124)

As a result of a failure of the current education system to address a pressing concern, neither of the twins is aware of how the Z3 disease is spread and how children are being targeted by desperate, dying men. South Africa currently has one of the highest HIV rates globally, and Zadok's novel depicts a disease that has claimed many lives and broken many families.<sup>6</sup>

Not only are lives and families broken in the novel: but so is the environment. In this magical realist alternative South Africa, climate change and drought (the effects of the Anthropocene) have made electric cars the norm: 'On the third day, we come to the fence of the Reading Car Yard. It used to be a golf course until the government bought the grounds and turned it into a scrap yard for all the petrol cars they seized on D-Day' (Zadok, 2013a: 39). The environmental degradation echoes throughout this ecofeminist tale: the drought and its associated horrors

---

<sup>6</sup> The Southern Africa sub-region, in particular, experiences the most severe HIV epidemics in the world. Nine countries – Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe – have adult HIV prevalence rates of over 10 per cent. At an estimated 26.0 per cent, Swaziland has the highest HIV prevalence rate in the world, followed by Botswana (23.4 per cent) and Lesotho (23.3 per cent). With 5.6 million people living with HIV (17.3 per cent), South Africa is home to the world's largest epidemic. (UNICEF, 2018)

(famine, desertification, disease) impinge radically on the fates of the twins. Uncle Jabu leaves his drought-ravaged village, and it becomes clear that it is out of desperation for a cure for his deadly Z3 that he seeks his sister, Sizane, and importantly — disturbingly — the prepubescent twins in Johannesburg.

In this alternative landscape, we glimpse how the environmental degradation has impacted on familiar iconic South African locations. The Durban waterfront is gone: '[Uncle] showed us a place they used to call the Golden Mile before the water rose up and flooded the fancy hotels' (Zadok, 2013a: 67), and the monoculture sugar cane fields have been replaced by graves: 'Where once there must have been sugar cane, there were only graves' (Zadok, 2013a: 135-136). D-Day and its meaning for the lives of the poorest are reflected through the eyes of the most marginalised in society: poor children. The environmental catastrophe may be read through the lens of ecofeminism, as it has the greatest impact on those without access to financial power:

[Sizane says:] 'Yes, the drought, I expected the drought, but it's so quiet, so very quiet. Where is everyone?'

'Some people moved to the city to look for work, but most are gone.'

'Gone?'

'Yes, Sisi, gone. When the drought came it took the last of us, just like Mama said it would. They wanted to burn her house, after what she did.' He glanced at Sindi. 'They said she was a witch. They wanted to burn her.' (Zadok, 2013a: 108-109)

Zadok weaves environmental imagery through the story, and thus an ecofeminist reading is rooted, not only in the environmental disaster that underscores the narrative, but also in Zadok's powerful descriptive intensity:

It hardly rains any more. The cirrus clouds that wrinkle this faded sky are mean and meaningless. They leave the city to suffocate under the dust that creeps into everywhere, powdering our cheeks until we look like ghosts. With each passing season, circling this road, I feel how it sucks at our juice. We are being slow-baked, hardened like tar. In summer the heat plucks our flesh, stealing sweat and blood and tears; in winter the cold freeze-dries our bones. When we pee, if we pee at all, it splashes up onto our shoes. The soil doesn't want our water. There is nothing this earth wants from us, and we have nothing left to give. (Zadok, 2013a: 40)

Humans have 'nothing left to give' (Zadok, 2013a: 40) because they have selfishly taken it all. Thematically, the recurring motif of 'One for Me and One for You' (Zadok, 2013a: 13) highlights how each twin puts herself first, underscoring the more general selfishness inherent in humanity.

Humanity's moral ambiguity is a prominent concern for Zadok. She illustrates this through the depiction of workers who are victimised by the oppressive capitalist system:

Under the toll-plaza arches, the air stung. The woman who took the toll looked tired and poisoned, and Sindi felt listless just looking at her. The cold booth light washed the tones from her skin and turned the rims of her eyes to fluorescent strips. (Zadok, 2013a: 105)

This mindless labour and the effect it has on workers forced by economic circumstance to do menial jobs are encapsulated in Ynestra King's observation, which implies a link between environmental degradation and working conditions of the poorest:

Biological simplification, i.e., the wiping out of whole species, corresponds to reducing human diversity into faceless workers, or to the homogenization of taste and culture through mass consumer markets. Social life and natural life are literally simplified to the inorganic for the convenience of market society. (King, 1989: 20)

Zadok's writing about the ominous fried chicken of the market society, and the worker frying the chicken, also reflects this banal homogenisation of both animal products and labour:

Inside, stale spices and rancid oil assault my nostrils. A sunken-eyed woman stands over the fryer, her orange uniform darkened by grease. My stomach turns as I watch her lift a wire basket of chicken bits from the oil and empty the contents into a family-size bucket. (Zadok, 2013a: 312)

The natural world has been commodified and is exploitable, but humans too are commodities to be exploited by this economic system. Central to this system is the highway that threads its way through the novel.

A highway is a discombobulated space: first, highways are liminal spaces. We use roads and highways to travel from one place to the next, and as such they occupy a transitional interiority in our consciousness. The road is never the destination, since roads function as necessities of the journey; like airports and stations, they are a form

of non-place for most humans. The fact that the highway functions as a home for Sindi and spirit-Thuli has ecofeminist implications in revealing how crippled the social system is. In South Africa, highways are the main arterial routes through which capitalism transports its material goods, and '[t]he road is as much a unifying as a dystopian South African space and hence it offers a way to engage with the consequences and stresses of a developing country within a globalised world' (Van Huyssteen, 2017: 2). For the twins, the highway once represented a form of escape: 'We used to believe that the highway went somewhere, that over the horizon was escape, places we'd never been and thought we wanted to go' (Zadok, 2013a: 14). This romantic, idealised notion of a highway leading to a better place has been shattered, the fairy tale has been inverted: the twins finally went to Eston, and met a terrible fate at the hands of their superstitious rural family. Instead of their happy ending, the twins are stuck circling the highway, with no end in sight. Living on the edges of the concrete highway, they occupy a liminal state of being, excluded from the mainstream capitalist system, but watching others functioning in that system: 'I stare at the highway winding round the city, at the trucks that work seven days, all hours' (Zadok, 2013a: 39). Although the truckers are a pivotal part of the economic system, their working hours are abusive as the hungry beasts of overpopulation and consumerism need constantly to be fed. By rooting her tale in the story of a street child, Zadok allows her readers to empathise with the most marginalised in society. Much like the flowers blooming in the cracks, the twins are like seeds which have fallen through the societal cracks:

For Sindi, walking is better than standing still. When you walk, things change. Mama Moon slides from skinny sliver to bloated belly; as her baby grows, we circle the city. In summer, if it rains, sunflowers seed in cracks and sprout and bloom, and each time we pass, they've changed. The stems thicken, the petals brighten and the seed cluster grows blacker than a nest of hungry beaks. Then comes the day when nothing grows there any more, when all that's left of that yellow sun is a dried, brown husk. (Zadok, 2013a: 14)

As discussed at the beginning of this article, the road functions a magical realist device. Furthermore, with spirits and dream prophecies being treated as normal occurrences, the novel in this sphere exhibits magical realist elements:

[the] combination of realistic and fantastical narrative, together with the inclusion of different cultural traditions, means that magical realism reflects, in both its narrative mode and its cultural environment, the hybrid nature of much postcolonial society. (Faris, 2004: 1)

The *sangoma* dream prologue indicates an immersion in Zulu culture, and, along with the environment, children, the poor and women, Zulu culture finds itself under siege from external forces in Zadok's postcolonial narrative environment.<sup>7</sup> In her discussion of the application of magical realism to a South African context, Paulina Grzęda suggests that:

magical realism proves specifically well-attuned to thematise the collision of any incompatible categories, be it the rational and the magical, the core and the periphery, the pre- and the post-capitalist, fact and fiction, as well as the past and the present. The narrative mode's contribution to the reclaiming of the freedom of the spirit equally manifests itself in its capacity to activate readers, re-situating them as interrogators rather than recipients of delivered truths. (Grzęda, 2013: 158)

Zadok's novel assesses various belief systems, asking its readers to interrogate what it means to believe. Importantly, I do not wish to collate magical realism with belief, but rather to unpick how Zadok has approached the issue of belief and woven magical realist elements into it to create the shifting, fluid world which the twins inhabit. In an interview, Zadok states that her 'fascination with belief systems and how they affect cultures and the individual ... is the probable source of *Sister-Sister*' (Zadok, 2013b). Given that belief systems inspired the novel, it is worth looking at the way magical thinking is brought into sharp focus in *Sister-Sister*.

The dream prophecy of the twins' *sangoma* grandmother underpins the narrative. Their grandmother believes that because Sindi survived the soil suffocation, the ancestors have punished them:

'Did I not tell you long ago that we must find them and appease the ancestors?'  
Out the corners of her tear-blurred eyes, Sindi saw Uncle shake his head.  
'You cannot blame these children for everything bad that has happened to us.'  
'Don't be a fool. The blame does not lie with her, but with us for not listening to the amathongo. The dreams were clear. That this girl lives insults your forefathers.'

---

<sup>7</sup> The external forces that have impacted on Zulu culture are historical colonialism (including apartheid with its homeland system and migrant labour policies), and the new global colonialism: neoliberal hegemony.



‘That is enough.’ He clenched Sindi’s shoulder so hard it hurt. ‘Think of the damage you have done this girl already. At your hand, she lost her voice.’  
‘I have little breath left, Jabu, but I will not die falsely accused. The other one, the first-born, she speaks?’  
Uncle nodded. ‘But you did not ...’ He looked down at Sindi and shook his head.  
‘Soil did not steal her voice. She has no voice because she is empty. It is not our lips that speak, Jabu, but our souls. The ancestors tested us, and we failed, but you can set it right. There is still time for you to save yourself.’ (Zadok, 2013a: 131-132)

The drought and Z3 are not evils caused by the grandmother *sangoma*’s failure to heed the warnings of the *amathongo* (ancestors), but are caused by neoliberalism’s impact on the environment and the poor, coupled with problematic government policies with regards to treating Z3. D-Day for petrol cars was implemented because the drought had ravaged the land and petrol had been identified as a contributor:

That’s what the headline of the newspaper article said, the one Mama kept folded into the cover of her ID book: *The Dawn of a Fresh New Era*. It was D-Day, the last day of the petrol-car amnesty, when everyone was meant to change to electric. (Zadok, 2013a: 17, original emphasis)

However, as a magical realist narrative, Zadok’s novel questions reality and finds it skewed. After all, the *sangoma muti* Sindi uses to slice Thuli’s spirit from her body does indeed work: ‘Gogo Nkosi sighed. “The power of belief. What you believe becomes true”’ (Zadok, 2013a: 266). Reality blurs with magical thinking, in keeping with Gerald Gaylard’s views on magical realism in a postcolonial context:

It is in this conjunction, this mingling, this oxymoron, that the space and time for new possibilities is opened up. If nothing else, postcolonialism tends to be an inclusive form that reaches out. The spirit of postcolonialism opposes reduction and embraces complexity. Postcolonialism concretises the apparently impossible and etherealises the real so that there is no longer a neat distinction between the real and the magical. (Gaylard, 2005: 48)

Belief, and how it governs lives, are explored in Zadok’s novel. The One True Church also engages in its own version of magical thinking. We cannot assume that Grandmother’s *sangoma* beliefs are magical thinking and the Christianity of the One True Church is not. Shermer explains: ‘Worldwide, there are about 10,000 distinct religions, each one of which may be further subdivided and classified. Christians, for example, may be apportioned among about 34,000 different denominations’ (2011: 232); given these statistics it is evident that religion is not a singular experience. For people engaged in their spiritual beliefs, their god or gods or ancestors or spirit guides are real to them; each believer vehemently denies that his or her beliefs are magical thinking. According to Michael Shermer:

[A]lthough there is much cultural variation among different religious faiths, all have in common the belief in supernatural agents in the form of a godhead or spirits who have intention and interact with us in the world. There are three lines of evidence pointing to the conclusion that such beliefs are hardwired into our brains and behaviorally expressed in consistent patterns throughout history and culture. These evidentiary lines come from evolutionary theory, behavior genetics, and comparative world religions. (2011: 232)

The hybrid postcolonial nature of Zadok’s text offers up different belief systems and examines how they impact on the lives they affect, allowing the reader to explore what it means to believe:

Auntie said the Black Preacher was the devil. Mama said that Auntie thought anyone who wasn’t Catholic was the devil. Auntie countered that she’d met him once and got a shock when she touched his sleeve, which proved he was associated with dark and unnatural goings-on. Since then, Thuli had begged Auntie to take them to a meeting of Believers: she wanted to feel the dark and unnatural goings-on for herself. Auntie refused. ‘Stay away from those Believers,’ she warned. ‘They’re up to no good.’ (Zadok, 2013a: 95)

Auntie’s comments reveal the fault lines of subjectivity which underscore belief, and how believers tend to revere what they believe and denigrate what they do not.

While the novel questions the impact belief systems have in particular on the twins, lack of faith is also represented as problematic: ‘Mama settled into her chair, “and me, I don’t believe in that religious nonsense”’ (Zadok, 2013a: 299). Sizane’s spiritual dislocation finds solace in liquor: ‘Mama had stopped speaking to Sindi by then, unless her tongue was lubricated by alcohol, which made her cruel’ (Zadok, 2013a: 313). The novel does not attempt to answer the existential questions it poses with regard to belief and lack of belief; there are no answers, only the deep ambiguity of being. Caught at the intersection of conflicting beliefs — those of her rural family and

Nandi, as well as of Joe's One True Church — Sindi's patchwork beliefs, absorbed haphazardly from people immersed in their own magical thinking, are reflective of her spiritual confusion and reveal her postcolonial hybridity. This is indicative of the way in which cultures work upon each other, and in turn how magical realism works upon the reader:

Magical realism radically modifies and replenishes the dominant mode of realism in the West, challenging its basis of representation from within. That destabilization of a dominant form means that it has served as a particularly effective decolonizing agent. (Faris, 2004: 1)

Putting belief under the spotlight in *Sister-Sister*, Zadok is asking her readers to question their beliefs and how belief operates on the individual and society; in this way the novel attempts to decolonise belief.

In conclusion, it is evident that in Zadok's powerful *Sister-Sister* there is a synergy between magical realism and ecofeminism. Given that magical realism challenges how readers negotiate texts, and the ecofeminism in Zadok's novel is also challenging readers to assess the world they live in, there is an overlap. While the novel addresses important ecofeminist concerns, the lyrical, experimental magical realist style negotiates the fine balance between storytelling and what can be seen as a form of evangelism, rendering magical realism an important mode of exploration for ecofeminist novels. As the novel demonstrates, belief structures can be limiting, and in *Sister-Sister* the twins are not only at the mercy of sociopathic neoliberalism, but are also vulnerable to disturbing beliefs (for instance, the notion that having sex with a virgin will cure Z3). Ecofeminism struggles against patriarchal belief structures, and Zadok points out that religious beliefs can also be challenging to negotiate. The patriarchy of the One True Church, including its attitude to women's bodies, is deeply embedded in religious and cultural belief systems:

The reality is that men of all classes use and take for granted power over women within their class, workplace, political party, or family structure, even — or especially — when power in the public arena is denied to those men. This is evidenced by the fact that violence toward women is fairly universal in Patriarchal societies and does not differ significantly across class boundaries. (Gaard 1993, 21)<sup>8</sup>

Storytelling is a powerful way to ask people to rethink their societal programming, and this is what the twins' stories do for their readers: as Thuli observes, 'Joe Saviour once told me every life has a legend. Before a soul comes to earth, God seals a story inside it. To know your purpose, you need to unravel the mystery of that legend' (Zadok, 2013a: 17). Zadok's unlocking of the stories of Thuli and Sindi in the pages of *Sister-Sister* asks readers to assess to what extent their personal beliefs and biases are operating on their lives.

In a rare moment of redemptive relief, the novel's epilogue sees Thuli, freed from her wandering and attachment to Sindi, joining her dead father:

[Sindi] recognises the man, though there is no crease running through the centre of his face where Mama folded the photo. She watches Thuli step over the threshold. She calls her name, but Thuli does not look back; she closes the door behind her. (Zadok, 2013a: 315)

Is Thuli now freed from Sindi's grief? After all, Sindi has found Loveday, of whom spirit-Thuli says: 'My toes are tap-tapping when they finally come: the preacher, the watchman and the sister-thief. I hiss at her' (Zadok, 2013a: 216). Loveday — the homeless white teenager — and Sindi become surrogate sisters; there is a sense of a new beginning where colour and culture do not matter as Sindi shares her appropriately named Lifesaver sweets with Loveday, just as she had always done with Thuli: "'One for me,'" she says. "One for you"' (Zadok, 2013a: 316).

While the novel ends with Thuli's spirit freed and joining her dead father, Sindi's fate at the hands of the church is uncertain: 'magical realism shuns easy solutions, and in doing so, it counteracts the amnesia so often inculcated in transitional South Africa in the name of forgiveness and reconciliation' (Grzęda, 2013: 170). Through her poetically woven imagery and magical realist plotting, Zadok has crafted a deeply ecofeminist, dark, intense and harrowing coming-of-age tale of twins who find themselves in the Anthropocene, and as a result, at the mercy of a sociopathic society.

[Thuli says:] 'The road never ends.'  
'It ends,' Joe says. 'Everything does.' (Zadok, 2013a: 297)

---

<sup>8</sup> Here Gaard references Russell (1989).

## REFERENCES

- Buell, L. (2005). *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Literary crisis and environmental imagination*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing.
- Casselot, M.A. (2016). Ecofeminist echoes in new materialism? *PhanEx*, 11(1), 73–96. <https://doi.org/10.22329/p.v11i1.4394>
- Craps, S. and Buelens, G. (2008). Introduction: Postcolonial Trauma Novels. *Studies in the Novel*, 40(1 & 2), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1353/sdn.0.0008>
- D'Eaubonne, F. (1974). *Le Féminisme ou la Mort*. Paris: Éditions P. Horay.
- De Nooy, J. (2005). *Twins in Contemporary Literature and Culture: Look twice*. Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230286863>
- Durrant, S. (2004). *Postcolonial Narrative and the Work of Mourning: J. M. Coetzee, Wilson Harris, and Toni Morrison*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Faris, W. B. (2004). *Ordinary Enchantments: Magical realism and the remystification of narrative*. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv17vf68f>
- Flockemann, M. (2010). Little Perpetrators, Witness-Bearers and the Young and the Brave: Towards a Post-Transitional Aesthetics. *English Studies in Africa*, 53(1), 21–34. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00138398.2010.488333>
- Gaard, G (ed). (1993) *Ecofeminism: Women, animals, nature*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Gaard, G. (1998). *Ecological Politics: Ecofeminists and the greens*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Gaard, G. (2010). *New Directions for Ecofeminism: Toward a More Feminist Ecocriticism*. *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, 17(4), 643–665. <https://doi.org/10.1093/isle/isq108>
- Gates, B. T. (1996). A Root of Ecofeminism: Ecoféminisme. *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, 3(1): 7-16. <https://doi.org/10.1093/isle/3.1.7>
- Gaylard, G. (2005). *After Colonialism: African postmodernism and magical realism*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press.
- Görey, Ö. (2017). *English Narrative Poetry: A Babel of voices*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Griffin, G. (2017). *A Dictionary of Gender Studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Current online version: 2017. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acref/9780191834837.001.0001>
- Grzęda, P. (2013). Magical Realism: A Narrative of Celebration or Disillusionment? South African Literature in the Transition Period. *ariel: A Review of International English Literature*, 44(1), 153–183. <https://doi.org/10.1353/ari.2013.0009>
- Hart, S. M. and Ouyang, W. (eds). (2005). *A Companion to Magic Realism*. Woodbridge: Tamesis.
- King, Y. (1989). The Ecology of Feminism and the Feminism of Ecology, in J. Plant, (ed). *Healing the Wounds: The promise of ecofeminism* (pp. 19–28). Philadelphia: New Society.
- Mack-Canty, C. (2004). Third-Wave Feminism and the Need to Reweave the Nature/Culture Duality. *NWSA Journal*, 16(3), 154–179. <https://doi.org/10.2979/NWS.2004.16.3.154>
- Mda, Z. (2000). *The Heart of Redness*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.
- Mickey, S. (2018). Editors' Preface, in D. A. Vakoch and S. Mickey (eds). *Literature and Ecofeminism: Intersectional and international voices*. Abingdon: Routledge. Kindle Edition.
- Murphy, P. D. (2018). Introduction, in D. A. Vakoch and S. Mickey (eds). *Literature and Ecofeminism: Intersectional and international voices*. Abingdon: Routledge. Kindle Edition.
- Okri, B. (1991). *The Famished Road*. London: Jonathan Cape.
- Oliver, K. (2004). Witnessing and Testimony. *Parallax*, 20(1), 79–88. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1353464032000171118>
- Penny, L. (2011). *Meat Market: Female flesh under capitalism*. Winchester: Zero Books.
- Russell, D. E. H. (1989). Sexism, Violence, and the Nuclear Mentality, in D. E. H. Russell, (ed). *Exposing Nuclear Phallacies* (pp. 63–67). New York: Pergamon Press.
- Salleh, A. (1991). Review of *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology, and Development*, by Vandana Shiva. *Hypatia* 6, 206–214. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1527-2001.1991.tb00218.x>
- Shermer, M. (2011). *The Believing Brain: From ghosts and gods to politics and conspiracies – How we construct beliefs and reinforce them as truths*. New York: Macmillan. Available at [www.scribd.com](http://www.scribd.com). (Accessed 25 January 2018).
- Shiva, V. (1993 & 2014). Preface, in M. Mies and V. Shiva. (eds). *Ecofeminism*. 2014: ebook with forward by Ariel Salleh. London & New York: Zed Books. Available at [www.scribd.com](http://www.scribd.com). (Accessed 12 January 2018).
- Silverstein, M. (2020). A Message to the Women and Hollywood Community. *Women and Hollywood*. Available at: <https://womenandhollywood.com/a-message-to-the-women-and-hollywood-community/> (Accessed 22 August 2020).
- Stevenson, A. (2015). *Oxford Dictionary of English (3rd ed)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Current Online Version: 2015. Available at: [https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199571123.001.0001/m\\_en\\_gb0732920?rskey=7xkt0&result=2](https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199571123.001.0001/m_en_gb0732920?rskey=7xkt0&result=2). (Accessed 8 February 2021).

- UNICEF – United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (n.d.) Eastern and Southern Africa: HIV and AIDS, in *UNICEF*. Available at [https://www.unicef.org/esaro/5482\\_HIV\\_AIDS.html](https://www.unicef.org/esaro/5482_HIV_AIDS.html). (Accessed 15 August 2018).
- Van Huyssteen, W. (2017). *How to Paint a Highway*. MA Thesis. Department of Fine Art, University of Witwatersrand.
- Wolf, N. (1991). *The Beauty Myth: How images of beauty are used against women*. New York: Morrow.
- Wood, F. (2004). Snakes, Spells, Cadillacs and Kruger Millions: Oral Accounts of the Extraordinary Career of Khotso Sethuntsa. *Kronos*, (30), 167–183. Available at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41056520>.
- Zadok, R. (2013a) *Sister-Sister*. Cape Town: Kwela.
- Zadok, R. (2013b). Author's Notes: Rachel Zadok. *Mail & Guardian*. Available at <https://mg.co.za/article/2013-04-26-00-authors-notes-rachel-zadok/>. (Accessed 22 August 2020).
- 

**Citation:** Westby-Nunn, T. (2021). 'The Road Never Ends': Ecofeminism and Magical Realism in Rachel Zadok's Sister-Sister. *Feminist Encounters: A Journal of Critical Studies in Culture and Politics*, 5(1), 08. <https://doi.org/10.20897/femenc/9745>

Copyright © 2021 by Author/s and Licensed by Lectito BV, Netherlands. This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.