

Editorial

TOWARDS the end of 2016, Peter Croeser who had been acting as liaison between *Natalia* and the Natal Society Trust stepped down, and nominated me as editor for the 2017 journal. We had some interesting conversations about the role of *Natalia*, and also around the forward movement of the publication. Phila Msimang was nominated as the representative for the Natal Society Foundation, and thus the ‘go-between’ between any Natal Society Foundation related matters and the workings of *Natalia*. Further, Peter suggested that I had carte blanche to choose a new editorial committee, and given that many of the old committee wanted to retire as active members, there was an opportunity to inject different conversations into *Natalia*, and begin to engage with what was happening in KwaZulu-Natal from a variety of perspectives. Very sadly for *Natalia*, and the Natal Society Foundation, Peter died in October 2016.

Changes to the committee

To this end, the new committee members were chosen to represent diversity and spread the potential for relevant articles beyond the boundaries of the province. While thankfully, professors Bill Guest and Adrian Koopman, and Dr Phindi Dlamini agreed to stay on the committee, new committee members represent a broadened outlook and have certainly contributed their part in the 2017 editorial year. New committee members are Professor Julie Parle, Dr Mxolisi Mchunu, Dr Pranitha Barath, Mrs Debby Joubert, Mr Phila Msimang, and me, Debbie Whelan, as editor.

Changes to the publication

Changes in the committee suggest changes to the publication and changes to the modus operandi. Active discussions were held around a section of *Natalia* being accredited with DoHET tempting academics to contribute along research topics. This entailed inviting referees and to this end we are very grateful to have had the calibre of referees that we did: Professor Debbie Bonnin, Percy Ngonyama, Dr Bill

Bainbridge, Professor Sabine Marschall, Dr Maleshoane Rapeane-Mathonsi, Dr Sylvia Vietzen, Professor Paul Maylam and Dr Graham Dominy. It is hoped that they may be tempted to contribute at least a note in the 2018 volume!

Further, many thanks to the University of KwaZulu-Natal Press for supplying us with volumes they have published in this year, namely Juliette Leeb-du Toit's isishweshwe: *A History of the Indigenisation of Blueprint in Southern Africa* and Carolyn Hamilton and Nessa Liebhammer's work on *Tribing and Untribing the Archive*. Bill Guest's work *Stella Aurorae* and John Conyngham's *Hazara*, both published by the Natal Society Foundation, have also been included.

Changes to the structure

In order to attract a broader section of writers with different abilities and various backgrounds, a new section 'Discussion' of lengthier articles but not as rigorously assessed as the full articles has been included. This then leaves the smaller section on 'Notes and Queries' open for succinct submissions that may fit in with one of the themes of *Natalia*. The *Style Guide* has built on the 2016 revisions, and some elements have been amended or removed so please check the website (<http://www.natalia.org.za/natalia.html>) for future contributions.

Changes in operation

Changes to the mode of operation of the editorial committee have been enforced due to a number of things: most of the committee members are fully employed, which means that midweek meetings, which were tried, were unsuccessful and meetings are now convened on weekends. Another unexpected challenge was the unplanned relocations of both me as editor to the University of Lincoln in the United Kingdom and Phila Msimang to the University of Stellenbosch. This means that we now need to rely much more on electronic means of communication which, given the format of the publication, is really an exercise in 'round-robinning'. Face-to-face meetings will continue for planning purposes, but most of the final editing can be done online.

Changes in theme

Natalia as a journal needs to remain relevant in order to continue to justify its existence. Because of this, it is vital to actively engage with the 'big' discourses that have been going on in the last couple of years. Decolonisation, #Rhodesmustfall, #Feesmustfall are all symptoms of living *in* history and thus there is an opportunity to engage directly with how this actually manifests itself in present day KwaZulu-Natal. While these are uncomfortable conversations they affect all of us, and *Natalia* is an ideal place in which to allow for cogent commentary as to how history changes, and our experiences of change in the province where we live. The 2017 volume begins to address the in-between places in history: Duncan du Bois' piece on Joseph Baynes is counterpointed with a short explanation of the move of Macrorie House Museum to the Baynesfield Estate, highlighting changes in relevance and necessarily reinforcing a repositioning as to how things that have run for many years have a sell-by date: we need to be alerted to potential change in order to correctly address it in a pragmatic and prepared fashion. Adrian Koopman's

pieces reveal engagement with landscape and cultures through the common theme of birds – while birds are the key reason for the Woodward brothers’ journey, birds are also the central feature of material culture shown in the *isithwalandwe* crane feather and its place in Zulu cultural history, and the nominal associations with Henry Francis Fynn. My article addresses another side of the drought story – that it is in fact a lived experience, and that drought is inevitable and not necessarily symptomatic of the globalisation process.

Our articles for 2018 intend to address different aspects of the currently highly contested land issue, of the challenges of decolonising education in history, and presenting the ‘other stories’ of recent histories in KwaZulu-Natal. Further, we anticipate some ethnographic entries for the 2018 volume, which may be engaging and it is hoped allow for a deeper understanding as to who we are as residents of KwaZulu-Natal.

Changes in audience

Phila Msimang informs us that *Natalia* has an unexpectedly far reach. Statistics show that individuals from across the globe frequently make use of the journal’s website, with visitors from the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom, Australia, Peru, Algeria and the Netherlands among others reading and downloading our digital content. Although the journal is relatively locally focused, subscriptions for physical copies of *Natalia* endure. Notably, university subscriptions for physical copies continue to increase in South Africa and abroad with the journal reaching as far as Yale University’s libraries. The new composition of the editorial committee promises to extend the reach of the journal even further.

So, welcome all to the belated *Natalia* for 2017. This is a slimmed down version of the usual due to a reimagining and repackaging, but the 2018 *Natalia* has already four full papers, a number of Discussions, Notes and Queries, and hopefully our first article in Zulu. It is hoped that the 2018 version will be full of variety, interest and thought-provoking moments.

DEBBIE WHELAN