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Transitions and Transformations

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Editor's Note

The Retrospective Methods Network

RMN

Newsletter

RMN Newsletter 15–16 (2020–2021): 6

Transitions and Transformations

Work with retrospective methods is often concerned with gaining perspective on a culture or tradition on the far side of a cultural change that is remote from the present, such as Christianization of modernization. Now, we find ourselves in the midst of such a change and, alongside well-worn terms like *pre-Christian* and *pre-modern*, we begin to use *pre-pandemic* to describe an era before mandatory face masks and zoom-fatigue. The world is transforming around us, inviting us to reflect on how the changes we study may have been perceived in their time.

A curious thing about this transition has been its limbo-like temporality. Things that happened pre-pandemic can easily seem a lifetime away, while those that should occur since the pandemic began often seem beset by Kafkaesque cancellations and postponements. In many cases, these events have felt perpetually impending yet never occur, as though they are trapped in Zeno's paradox of the arrow, doomed always to cover only half of the remaining distance to its target, as time is subdivided infinitely. We have wrested this journal from pandemic suspension, so that it may reach you at last.

Although time may seem limbo-like, the contributions gathered here show that work has not stopped and is as vibrant and diverse as ever. Among the projects and networks that fall under the aegis of the RMN, the Austmarr Network has been especially active. Rather than being postponed, Austmar X was split: Austmar X.1 was held virtually in 2020, keeping the annual rhythm, and Austmarr X.2 followed in 2021 (see Willson, this volume). The edited volume based on Austmarr VII, *Crossing*

Disciplinary Boundaries in Studies of the Viking Age, edited by Daniel Sävborg, should appear with Brepols in 2022, and a volume surrounding Austmarr X.1–2 is being organized by Sabine Walther.

The Aarhus Mythology Conference has also been lively. It is no longer 'so-called': informal reference to it through its place of origin is now treated as its name, retroactively numbering the meetings. A publication from the 13th event, *Folklore and Old Norse Mythology*, has just appeared (Frog & Ahola, in this volume). The publication from the 14th, *The Feminine in Old Norse Mythology and Folklore*, edited by Tommy Kuusela, will hopefully appear in late 2022 or early 2023. The 15th (see Kaikkonen & Kozák, this volume) also has a publication in process: *Methodology in Old Norse Mythology*, edited by Jesse Barber, Amy Jefford Franks, Jonas Koesling, Giulia Mancini and Bob van Strijen with Frog and Simon Nygaard. The 16th conference was just held – with much live participation – in Reykjavík in November 2021.

Transitions and transformations are also coming to *RMN Newsletter*. We are returning to an exclusively digital publication. We have adjusted our format from continuous text to beginning each contribution on a new page with the journal's full header. We are also in the process of reorganizing our editorial structure and invite you to see the call for editors at the end of this issue. Our journal has always aimed to meet the interests and needs of you, our readership, and we hope these current changes will help us keep pace with the future.

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