



HUMSAM

PRISEN

Magic Clothes: Material Mediation of Distant Gods

Abstract by Christian Bull

In her most recent book, *Clothes and Monasticism in Ancient Christian Egypt* (2021), Ingvild Sælid Gilhus highlights the role of clothes as “mediators between the wearers and the world” and shows how clothing participates in constructing the monastic world and molding monastic minds and memories. In the present homage, I will apply the focus on clothing to another of Ingvild’s research interests, the so-called Greek Magical Papyri, to show how specific clothes prescribed in certain spells construct the identity and authority of the ritualist as a high-ranking Egyptian priest. In recent decades there has been an increasing awareness that the magical papyri, which provide formulas for anything between erotic spells of attraction to direct visions of divine powers, are connected to the Egyptian temple environment, and the clothes mentioned strengthen this link. The priestly clothes, I argue, are a component of a heightened and contained semiotic system, and in the ritual they serve to focus the ritualist’s attention toward invisible others, and thereby help shape the bodily experience of spirit and presence. As such, they are indeed dynamic mediators, making the distant gods and spirits real in the minds of the ritualists.