



HUMSAM PRISEN

Relating to angels, past and present

Abstract by Ingvild Sælid Gilhus

Some spiritual beings, or non-empirical others, are extremely successful, with a longevity that stretches from the mists of prehistory to the spotlights of the contemporary world. Angels and demons immediately spring to mind, angels are the focus of this paper. These non-empirical others are extremely flexible, sometimes masquerading as humans or even demons in disguise, sometimes human souls are expected to transform into angels in the hereafter. In stories and imagery, angels have a strong sensual appeal and arouse emotions.

This paper moves from the flourishing of angels in the ascetic movement of ancient Christianity to angels and “angels-crazes” in the contemporary world. How did monastics communicate with angels and how do people communicate with them in Western secularized societies today? What is the emotional appeal of angels, past and present? In what ways do the past and the present interact in these non-empirical others?