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Trinh Minh-ha and In-between Religious Language: Painted in Gray and Red Colours

Introduction

Between the countries of light and of night is the country of semi-darkness whose inhabitants travel in the diurnal and nocturnal meanings of things, passing from one incarnation into another, turning into... In Christian symbolics, gray designates the resurrection of the dead. Artists in the Middle Ages painted Christ's coat gray – the colour of ash and of fog – when he presided at the last judgment.¹

Gray is the colour of in-betweenness, of transformation, ambiguity and uncertainty. In the paragraph just cited from *Elsewhere Within Here* (2011), Trinh T. Minh-ha draws our attention to the gray areas of life and points out how such boundary experiences are expressed in Christian symbolism. She is claiming the in-between, the gray stuff of interconnection between all living things and at the same time trying to safeguard the difference between these multiple, various beings according to factors such as gender, ethnicity and race. In her book, *When the Moon Waxes Red*, Trinh invokes symbolic language as the opposite of clear and coercive language and claims that such symbolism can help to understand the multiple layers of language. Trinh writes:

The inability to think symbolically or to apprehend language in its very symbolic nature is commonly validated as an attribute of 'realistic', clear, and accomplished thinking [...] At times obscured and other times blatant, this inability and unwillingness to deal with the unfamiliar, or with a language different from one's own, is, in fact, a trait that intimately belongs to the man of coercive power.²

¹ Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Elsewhere, within Here: Immigration, Refugeeism, and the Boundary Event* (Routledge: London 2011), 73.

² Trinh T. Minh-ha, *When the Moon Waxes Red: Representation, Gender and Cultural Politics* (Routledge: London 1991), 84.

Symbolic language lies at the heart of religious language, language that opens itself up to many meanings and interpretations, the language of imagination, myth and poetry. Theologian Paul Tillich emphasized the symbolic nature of religious language in *Dynamics of Faith* (1957) and said: “Man’s ultimate concern must be expressed symbolically, because symbolic language alone is able to express the ultimate.”³ By stressing the importance of symbolic language Trinh resolutely holds open the in-between space of speaking as an alternative to the “realistic” clear way so highly valued in Western thought, and Tillich insists that the same principle is at work in religious language: “Faith, if it takes its symbols literally, becomes idolatrous!”⁴ Tillich spoke about myths as “symbols of faith combined in stories about divine-human encounters.”⁵ He argued that the language of Christianity conveys a historical myth and that “Christianity speaks the mythological language like every other religion. It is a broken myth, but it is a myth; otherwise Christianity would not be an expression of ultimate concern.”⁶ Symbolic languages such as the language patterns Tillich and Trinh steer us toward always unsay as much as they say anything. They give room for other sayings, or as Trinh says: “Bordering on both profundity and absurdity, the work of saying in unsaying, or of unsaying in saying again what is already said and unsaid, seems always uneasily and provocatively fragile.”⁷ Trinh observes that dusk is often expressed in French as *entre chien et loup*, “between dog and wolf”. Such grey interstices of becoming a wolf, being between domestic predictability and wild unknowability, are full of uncertainties, hopes and fear. Trinh is interested in natural cycles, waxing and waning light and yearning, the constant interplay between light and shadows, “of passing from one incarnation into another, turning into ...” She continues: “Needless to say, the hope for and the fear of the end of the world, the powerful and peaceful experience of twilight as the coming and going of colour, the waning and waxing of desire, or the ability to open wide into the abyss of the world of shadows, constitute a site where East and West both depart and meet – literally, literarily.”⁸

³ Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith* (Harper Torch: New York 1957), 41.

⁴ Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, 52.

⁵ Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, 49.

⁶ Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, 54.

⁷ Trinh, *When the Moon*, 83-84.

⁸ Trinh, *Elsewhere Within*, 74.

Might one describe discourses as religious when they take such questions of hope and fear seriously, and are attentive to desire and “the abyss of shadows”? My paper uses Trinh’s theories of symbolic language and in-between spaces to reflect on gender in religious language in the West. How does one express and explore such inbetween spaces from the standpoint of a religious tradition, the gray “abyss of the world of shadows” of becoming wolf, wild, without certainty? What kind of luminosity is needed for such a journey into the shadowland of human life and boundaries between natural and divine? What kind of clear, coercive speech needs to be challenged in order to make room for such a discourse? Tillich calls such speech “idolatrous”, because it does not take seriously the symbolic character of religious language. Trinh might approach it as western, white, male, Master discourse.

Keeping in mind that such languages of saying and unsaying are both “uneasily and provocatively fragile”,⁹ Trinh observes in an interview in 1990:

What I understand of the struggle of women of colour, however, is that our voices and silences across difference are so many attempts at articulating this always emerging-already-distorted place that remains so difficult, on the one hand, for the First World even to recognize, and on the other, for our own communities to accept, to venture into, for fear of losing what has been a costly gain through past struggles.¹⁰

Trinh is resolutely continuing the struggle of how to claim hard-won identity as a speaking subject for women of colour, and at the same time questioning and challenging the construction of that very subjectivity. She is fighting for the identity of coloured women and at the same time deconstructing this very identity. And in order to hold open this provocative and fragile space, she needs symbolic language, saying, unsaying, and saying again with a different interpretation. For me as a feminist theologian who explores gender questions within a religious tradition, such an attempt is tremendously important. An exploration into the dusk of theology entails finding out how our pillars of religious certainties are constructed, and where foundational texts suddenly open up the opportunity for an alternative reading and new possibilities of gray in-betweenness.

Searching for such languages of unsaying, Trinh looks to the moon. Trinh speaks of the tradition of many Asian women and children to come out for a

⁹ Trinh, *When the Moon*, 83-84.

¹⁰ Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Framer Framed* (Routledge: London 1992), 139.

walk in the moonlight during the mid-Autumn festival. The images of the moon become sexual and sensual, the moon becomes a woman. Trinh writes:

Through the eroticization of nocturnal light, she is, as tradition dictates, often all hair and skin: darkness is fragrant, soft, vaporous, moist, mist- or cloud-like, while the glow emanating from her smooth bare arm evokes the sensation of touching jade. Yet she is not simply night to his day (as in many Western philosophical and literary traditions), she is day in night.¹¹

Following Trinh's notion of the gray areas and "the abyss of shadows" as the area where "East and West both depart and meet – literally and literarily", I want to use Trinh's methodological lamp to explore the construction of light in my own religious tradition. I want to think about the gender of light, darkness and the areas in-between, and the way in which such light has been used to construct gender. In short, I want to talk about sun, moon and stars in Christianity and paint them in the gray colour of in-betweenness.

Creation West and East

How is gender represented in stories of sun and moon in the Christian West, and how do such symbolic stories help us to make sense of gender in contemporary life? Trinh argues that there is a strong difference between Asian moon traditions and the western subjection of female moon to masculine sun. She argues for a possible gap that opens up to thinking about women in relation to this dark luminary of fragrance and mystical glow, conveyed to us through storytelling, festivals and traditions. In a move parallel to Trinh's, I am pondering the traditional western imagery of light and the gender of light, where the female moon is so often seen as a helpmate to the masculine sun, "night to his day". This idea of sun and moon as having a relationship built on the dominance of one gender over another is strong in western thought and reinforced by the grammatical gender of Roman languages that designate *sol* as a male noun and *luna* in the feminine. Such ideas are strengthened by multiple iconographies in the Christian tradition where Christ is depicted through sun imagery, and Mary using lunar imagery. Marina Warner cites a fourteenth-century penitential song on Mary as the Moon:

Ave Regina, pure and loving
Most noble: *Ave maris stella*,

¹¹ Trinh, *When the Moon*, 3-4.

Ave dear maid,
Moon where God took hiding.
But for the Virgin Mary
the world had been lost.¹²

If Christ is the “Sun of Righteousness” (Mal 4:2) in medieval iconographies,¹³ his mother Mary’s primary symbol is the crescent moon, whose light is borrowed from the sun.¹⁴ Sun and moon are thus used to emphasize the auxiliary function of women in relation to men. While the western tradition has undoubtedly ordered the celestial bodies symbolically according to gender, to underline the auxiliary functions and subordination of women with the help of Christ and his mother, I want to point out alternative signs in the western sky, accounts that help to break the monotone of women’s subordination, offering a night to men’s day. If Tillich points to the mythical aspect of Christian narratives and symbols,¹⁵ I look to sun and moon in order to point out their context of gender subordination and the need to nudge theological texts to make them yield new meanings.

Christianity forms its foundational stories of the creation of light after faint mythological memories of older traditions. In the Sumerian-Akkadian-Canaanite pantheon, sun and moon and stars were divinities, set in the sky by warrior God Marduk according to the Babylonian creation story of Enuma Elish: “The moon he caused to shine forth; the night he entrusted to her. He appointed her, the ornament of the night, to make known the days. Monthly without ceasing to go forth with a tiara.”¹⁶ The creation story in Psalm 104 describes Yahweh as the one who creates order in the universe who, like the Babylonian Marduk, “appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knows his

¹² Marina Warner, *Alone of all her Sex: The Myth and Cult of the Virgin Mary* (Vintage Books: New York 1983), 258.

¹³ J.C.J. Metford, *Dictionary of Christian Lore and Legend* (Thames and Hudson: London, 1983), 234. See also David Fideler, *Jesus Christ the Sun of God: Ancient Cosmology and Early Christian Symbolism* (Quest Books: Wheaton) 1993, for the symbolic connection of Christ and solar deities.

¹⁴ Hilarie Cornwell / James Cornwell, *Saints, Signs and Symbols* (Morehouse Publishing: Harrisburg, 2009), 11. For research on symbolic connections between Mary and the moon, see Warner, *Alone of all her Sex*, 255-271 and Jaroslav Pelikan, *Mary Through the Centuries: Her Place in the History of Culture* (Yale University Press: New Haven 1996), 177-187.

¹⁵ Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, 54.

¹⁶ Enuma Elish tablet V: 12-14. Alexander Heidel (ed.), *The Babylonian Genesis* (Chicago University Press: Chicago 1942), 44.

going down” (104:19). The youngest and most influential creation story of the Hebrew Scriptures, the Genesis account, was written in the Babylonian exile.¹⁷ The moon, stars and sun are no longer divinities in the Genesis story; they are not even mentioned by name, presumably because the Hebrew author does not want to invoke the lunar and solar deities.¹⁸ They are called the “two big lights”, and are created on the fourth day: Hebrew creation stories are thus modelled after old mythologies, with a demythologizing twist to undermine the astral divinities. The only clue left of sun and moon’s divine past in Genesis may be the verbs. They still “govern” or “rule”.¹⁹

In *The Moon Waxes Red*, Trinh points to the symbolism of sun and moon in Chinese mythology and how it has been reappropriated by feminists. According to a Chinese creation story, the Moon Queen Chang E has stolen the pill of immortality from the Sun King Hou Yi, who is her husband, much in the same way as Eve has yielded to the temptation of the snake to desire and eat the apple of infinite knowledge. Chang E is punished by being expelled to the moon, and in one version the Sun King chases after her and tries to kill her. On the fifteenth day of every month the Sun King visits the Moon Queen. Trinh points out that when Chinese feminists retell and reappropriate the story for a new audience in order to find empowerment for women, the quest and motives of the Moon Queen have changed: Chang E is no longer driven by arrogance or desire for immortality. She swallows the elixir of life, not because of desire for immortality or jealousy of the Sun King’s superior being, but rather, in order to be free and stay close to earth.²⁰ But it should be noted that Chang E is not an inspiration to every Chinese feminist and Trinh cites feminist writer Ting Lan, who says: “Woman is not the moon. She must rely on herself to shine,”²¹ thus indicating that the image of the Moon Queen offers no real empowerment, not even in its reappropriated form.

Does the image of woman as the moon then contribute to hold open the gray space of gender and religion? In contrast to Ting Lan and to the feminists who

¹⁷ According to John Drane the story reads “as if it is a deliberate undermining of the assumptions of the Babylonian story.” (John Drane, *The Old Testament* (Lion: Oxford 2000), 262). Moon is masculine in Hebrew and sun is feminine, but the two luminaries shift gender on their way into the West through translations of the Hebrew into Greek and Latin.

¹⁸ Terence Fretheim, “The Book of Genesis,” *New Interpreter’s Bible 1*, (Abingdon Press: Nashville 1995), 344.

¹⁹ Claus Westermann, *Genesis* (T&T Clark: Edinburgh 1987), 10.

²⁰ Trinh, *When the Moon*, 237.

²¹ Trinh, *When the Moon*, 4-5.

advocate the Moon Queen, Trinh neither wants to embrace the traditional connection between woman and the moon, nor reject them. Trinh pays attention to the inscription of women into mythologies of celestial bodies, and how this codification goes hand in hand with the way in which the luminal bodies have been represented in dualistic systems. “As long as the light of the moon is merely spoken of as having its birth in the sun, decreasing in proportion to its distance from the solar ray, and being accordingly light or dark as the sun comes and goes, women will reject Woman,” Trinh says.²² Trinh thus presents us with a figuration of gendered celestial bodies that resists playing into traditional schemata of the dualistic pair of an all powerful male sun and a less powerful female moon. “She is day in night”, says Trinh, and this day-in-night transgresses traditional binaries of gender in Western thought with their privileging of sight (*theoría*) over other ways of perception, by distributing light differently and by connecting light to touch and smell. Trinh thus seems to suggest that the nocturnal wanderings of the moon can become sites where the fixed boundaries of domination are discovered, distilled and dislocated. She asks: “How realistic was it to liquidate the moon? Can women simply leap outside the (un-)feminine without falling into the historical model of mastery?”²³ Instead of “liquidating the moon”, Trinh calls for an exploration of the moon’s gender.

The New Testament may also carry its trace of ancient goddess worship when a pregnant woman appears on its pages, “clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. She was with child and was crying out in her birth pangs in the agony of giving birth” (Rev 12:1-2). Catherine Keller writes of this strange pregnant intertext in Christian orthodoxy: “Suddenly we find ourselves in the atmosphere of a heavenly female radiating all the cosmic luminaria. Even Yahweh, for all his sky symbols, never robed himself in sun, moon, and stars all at once. Who is she? What can the surplus brilliance of the text signal?”²⁴ Keller answers her own question with two observations. First, she points out that such an imagery of a female luminary reverberates in the symbolic context of the readers. Second, Keller argues that reading “the text in spite of its intention” may effect another discovery, namely “to cultivate the gap between what is seen

²² Trinh, *When the Moon*, 5.

²³ Trinh, *When the Moon*, 5.

²⁴ Catherine Keller, *Apocalypse Now and Then: A Feminist Guide to the End of the World* (Beacon Press: Boston 1996), 64.

and what is said, where archaic images may break in to dance a few steps of the unacceptable.”²⁵ Thus, by adding a dash of deconstruction to the troubled layers of mythology and demythology and pointing out where the text starts to stutter, Keller finds an in-between theological space of light, divinity and femininity in these last pages of Scripture. Like Trinh, Keller thus proposes to widen the textual gap of the Christian canon in order for “archaic images” to dance and provide in-between theological spaces.

In *Woman, Native, Other*, Trinh had cited Audre Lorde’s famous line about the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house, and adds: “The more one depends on the master’s house for support, the less one hears what he doesn’t want to hear.”²⁶ Thus instead of trying to fit *Woman* and stories of women into the already stable house of metaphysical binaries of gender, race and ethnicity, Trinh interrogates the structure of discourse itself and seeks to interrupt this structural flow. She asks if this lunar identification of woman can open up new trajectories of thought about representation and gender. Such an endeavour entails linguistic methodologies that seek their strength both in poststructuralist strategies and Zen mysticism. Trinh writes in *Woman, Native Other* of the woman writer, “She says to unsay others so that others may unsay her and say: It’s still not it.”²⁷ And in *When the Moon Waxes Red* she writes: “She is the moon as she is not. All depends on how the moon partakes of language and representation.”²⁸

Woman, in Trinh’s view, is both the moon, and she is not. The body of the pregnant woman of Revelation, clothed with the sun, standing on the moon and carrying the stars like a tiara is likewise fluctuating between celestial genders. This heavenly being carries symbolic femininity and yet not. All depends on how “language and representation” function in the religious portrayal of jealousy, arrogance, gender, punishment, forbidden goods, or chasing of sun, moon and stars.

The dichotomy between the sun and the moon and the theme of the Moon Queen’s arrogance for which she must be punished by her moon-walk is well known in the legends of the West. The Latin fourteenth-century *Dyalogus Creaturae*, the Dialogue of the Creatures, which was widely distributed in

²⁵ Keller, *Apocalypse Now and Then*, 65.

²⁶ Trinh T. Min-ha, *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism*, (Indiana University Press, Bloomington 1989), 80.

²⁷ Trinh, *Woman, Native, Other*, 23.

²⁸ Trinh, *When the Moon*, 4.

Europe and was the first book to be printed in Sweden comprises a collection of stories of animal and celestial bodies and offers explanations of why the creation appears as it does. The first story in the collection tells the story of how jealous moon was of the sun because of her own inferior light. The sun chided the moon for not obeying the laws of the creator. The moon and the stars waged a war against the sun and the moon tried to pierce the sun with a javelin, but the sun in turn sliced the moon's face into pieces and threw the stars into the sky and said: "This is how I will treat you, whenever you become full."²⁹ *Dyalogus* is colorfully illustrated with a full-frontal portrait of a wrathful and virile sun and the melancholic profile of the bandaged and shattered female face of the moon.³⁰ Throughout time this drama of domestic violence takes place in the sky each month when the moon dares to show its full face and is chased afterwards, cut and bruised by the rightful distributor of light, which is the sun. *Dyalogus* offers an alternative and more aggressive model of gender subordination than the Jesus/Mary-solar/lunar combo in Christian medieval iconography. And yet such a depiction of virile sun and feminine moon would not have made sense in the vernacular languages of Scandinavia, since sun in Germanic languages takes the feminine gender and the moon takes the masculine gender.

This brings me to another sun/moon tradition of the Norse people, a pagan story of creation. Christian writers in the 13th century wrote down pagan stories and ancient poems to preserve the Old Norse poetic tradition. This strange marriage of Old Norse pagan myths and Christian traditions has shaped the religious imagination of the Scandinavian north, influencing and permeating each other. The Old Norse mythologies preserve the cultural imagination of two siblings, Sister Sun and Brother Moon who ride the sky in wagons. Like the story of Chang E, and as in the *Dyalogus*, arrogance and punishment are part of the tale. Nevertheless, the drama of the story is not due to the jealousy, ungratefulness and arrogance of the moon, but rather to the siblings' father, who dared to adorn his children with divine names, because they were "so fair and beautiful."³¹ The story of the human children in the sky, radiating with fairness, is thus entangled in with the ecstasy of white beauty. Snorra-Edda,

²⁹ John Bernström (ed.), *Dyalogus Creaturarum Moralizatus: Skapelsens Sedelarende Samtal 1483*, transl. by. Monica Hedlund, (Michaelisgillet: Uppsala 1983), 331, translation into English S.G.

³⁰ Bernström (ed.), *Dyalogus*, 12.

³¹ Snorri Sturluson, *Edda*, transl. by Anthony Faulkes (Everyman: London, 1995), 14.

the 13-century Icelandic manuscript of Norse mythology describes sun and moon in this way:

But the gods got angry at this arrogance and took the brother and sister and set them up in the sky; they made Sol drive the horses that drew the chariot of the sun which the gods had created to illuminate the worlds, out of the molten particle that had flown out of the world of Muspell [...] Moon guides the course of the moon and controls its waxing and waning.³²

The sun is female in the Norse myth, yet she has no power to name herself nor choose her own destiny. She, along with male Moon, is human. They are white children who have been lifted up to be celestial beings and are at the mercy of the divinities. The Norse account does not depict violence towards women in the same way as *Dyalogus* does, but there is little female empowerment involved for the fair young woman who runs the sun wagon. With Ting Lan we might ask, whether woman must not rely on herself to shine.

Gray Wolves, Dragons and Red Blood

At this point I want to emphasize an interesting feature of the Norse story, i.e. the drama of the chase, and continuous threat to the sun and moon. According to the story, sun and moon are perpetually chased by two wolves, which will swallow them at the end of time.³³ The female sun is chased through the sky, much like the pregnant woman in Rev 12:1, only this time not by red dragons, but by gray wolves. The origin of the wolves is known and traced though matrilineage and this pack of wolves signals the Nordic apocalypse.

The ancient giantess breeds as sons many giants and all in wolf shapes, and it is from them that these wolves are descended. And they say that from this clan will come a most mighty one called Moongarm. He will fill himself with the lifeblood of everyone that dies, and he will swallow the heavenly bodies and spatter heaven and all the skies with blood. As a result the sun will lose its shine and winds will then be violent and will rage to and fro.³⁴

The Nordic Moongarm spattering the universe in red blood makes for a powerful image of terror for Christians and pagans alike and it resonates with wolf

³² Sturluson, *Edda*, 14.

³³ Sturluson, *Edda*, 14-15

³⁴ Sturluson, *Edda*, 15.

imagery in the Bible, where wolves are generally seen as nasty creatures. Wicked people, false teachers, the nemesis of good shepherds, and the devil are all likened to wolves in Scripture (Mt 7:15; 10:16; 10:17; John 10:12).

The red moon of a lunar eclipse is regarded as an omen in many cultures and Trinh points to Chinese mythology, which interprets the red moon as a foreshadow of wicked times.³⁵ Trinh writes: “Today, lunar eclipses are still impressive, but scientists find them ‘undeniably lovely’, for the dimming moon often shows strange and beautiful colour effects. The old fox sees to it that everything becomes a commodity.”³⁶ Yet she argues that there exists a third space between the mythological horror of the past and placid commodity, that is to say symbolic language. Trinh writes: “Seeing red is a matter of reading. And reading is properly symbolic.”³⁷

If sun and moon go by their appointed tracks according to the will of God and gods, I am wondering whether these Nordic wolves and their bloody jaws might not help to create a gray space between the infernal and the sublime, where the story opens up in retelling. If Trinh has so far introduced us to gray in-betweenness, a second colour is now flowing from the Nordic apocalypse, where the wolf speckles the sky with red blood. Sun and moon are chased by wolves at the end of times in the Nordic myth, the pregnant lady of Revelation is likewise chased by a great red dragon (Rev 12:3), whose mythological matrilineage is as abjected as the ancient giantess who breeds all the gray wolves. Keller writes: “The repressed returns, dragon-red in its rage, wound and passion.”³⁸

Taking my cue from Keller’s midrash on the red dragon, and Trinh’s red symbolic reading, I choose to read the wolves as an intertext of rage, wound, passion and threat of representation, that which takes sun and moon off guard so that the story starts to rock to and fro. I am wondering what Trinh’s symbolic way of “the work of saying in unsaying, or of unsaying in saying again what is already said and unsaid” can tell us about gray, wolfish horror and repressed dragons that invade our boundaries East, North and West and threaten to fill the world with blood and destruction. As already noted, Trinh draws our attention to the French description of dusk as *entre chien et loup*, between dog and wolf. The gray space is the area where we take the risk of

³⁵ Trinh, *When the Moon*, 8.

³⁶ Trinh, *When the Moon*, 8.

³⁷ Trinh, *When the Moon*, 83.

³⁸ Keller, *Apocalypse Now and Then*, 70.

becoming wolves and the chance of annihilating our own safe categories, that Deleuze and Guattari have made classic in *Thousand Plateaus*: “The wolf, wolves, are intensities, speeds, temperatures, nondecomposable variable distances. A swarming, a wolfing.”³⁹ A wolf is not only a member of a pack, but an individual that faces me. Donna Haraway criticizes Deleuze and Guattari for their “incuriosity of animals, and horror at the ordinariness of flesh.”⁴⁰ For Haraway, the wolf appears as “who I find myself to be in the world.” And the pack of wolves that she faces is not a faceless multitude. Haraway writes: “This pack is not one of florid wild-wolf fantasies, but a savvy, cosmopolitan, curious lot of free-ranging canids.”⁴¹

The wolf is an ambiguous creature and serves as a messianic symbol in the Bible when it imagines the wild living in agreement with all other living beings at the end of time: “The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent’s meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, says the Lord.” (Is 65:25) Following Haraway’s cue, I am expressing in religious images how I “find myself to be in the world” among those cosmopolitan wolves chasing sun and moon, in the strange balance of safeguarding identity and difference. I am painting these images in Trinh’s colours, in gray and red, in-betweenness and plurality of meaning. Telling sacred stories one more time and pointing to new imaginary aspects of them, there is room for woman as riding a wagon and as a mysterious moon emanating light that is soft to touch like jade. There is also the possibility of a gray space, “to be between dog and wolf”,⁴² when the safe tracks of sun’s and moon’s gendered representations are interrupted, when human children and animals are freed from stereotypical celestial wagons to interpret anew. Trinh writes: “Artists in the Middle Ages painted Christ’s coat gray – the colour of ash and of fog ... One can say that the fog is a transcultural symbol of that which is indeterminate (‘the gray area’), it indicates a phase of (r)evolution, between form and formlessness, when old forms are disappearing while new ones coming into view are not yet distinguishable.”⁴³

³⁹ Gilles Deleuze / Félix Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (University of Minneapolis Press: Minneapolis 1987), 35.

⁴⁰ Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet* (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 2008), 30.

⁴¹ Haraway, *When Species Meet*, 14-15.

⁴² Trinh, *Elsewhere within Here*, 74.

⁴³ Trinh, *Elsewhere within Here*, 73.

Might Christ's gray coat when raising the dead become pages on which old and new religious images are formed and reformed?

Trinh T. Min-ha (1952 -) es una feminista, pensadora y cineasta vietnamita postestructuralista. El artículo utiliza las teorías del lenguaje simbólico de Trinh y sus espacios intermedios para reflejar el género en el lenguaje religioso en Occidente. Trinh escribe sobre el mito del sol y la luna, y argumenta a favor de una posible brecha que se abre al pensar en las mujeres en relación con este astro oscuro de la fragancia y el resplandor místico, transmitida a nosotros a través de cuentacuentos, fiestas y tradiciones. En un movimiento paralelo al de Trinh, estoy barajando la imaginaria occidental tradicional de la luz y el sexo de la luz, donde la „luna femenina“ es a menudo vista como una ayuda idónea para el „sol masculino“. Las huellas de esta relación se pueden ver, por ejemplo, en las representaciones de Cristo como Sol y María como la luna, así como en las mitologías nórdicas. Estoy dibujando estas imágenes con los colores de Trinh, en gris y rojo, en la intermediación y la pluralidad de significados, en la que se forman y reforman viejas y nuevas imágenes religiosas.

Trinh T. Min-ha (1952-) is a Vietnamese feminist and poststructuralist filmmaker and thinker. The article uses Trinh's theories of symbolic language and in-between spaces to reflect on gender in religious language in the West. Trinh writes of the myth of sun and moon and argues for a possible gap that opens up to thinking about women in relation to this dark luminary of fragrance and mystical glow, conveyed to us through storytelling, festivals and traditions. In a move parallel to Trinh's, I am pondering the traditional Western imagery of light and the gender of light, where the female moon is so often seen as a helpmate to the masculine sun. The traces of this relationship can for example be seen in the depictions of Christ as sun and Mary as moon, as well as in Nordic mythologies. I am painting these images in Trinh's colours, in gray and red, in-betweenness and plurality of meaning, in which old and new religious images are formed and reformed.

Trinh T. Min-ha (geb. 1952) ist eine vietnamesische Feministin und poststrukturalistische Filmemacherin und Denkerin. Dieser Artikel verwendet Trinh's Theorien der symbolischen Sprache und des Dazwischen, um über Geschlecht in der religiösen Sprache im Westen zu reflektieren. Trinh schreibt über den Mythos der Sonne und des Mondes und argumentiert, dass es eine mögliche Öffnung gebe, die das Nachdenken über Frauen in Bezug auf diesen dunklen Himmelskörper des Dufts und mystischen Glühens ermöglicht, vermittelt durch Geschichten, Feste und Traditionen. In einer Parallelbewegung zu Trinh denke ich über westliche Bilder von Licht und dem Geschlecht von Licht nach, in denen der weibliche Mond so oft als Helferin der männlichen Sonne gesehen wird. Die Spuren dieses Verhältnisses

finden sich zum Beispiel in Darstellungen von Christus als Sonne und Maria als Mond oder in nordischen Mythologien. Ich male diese Bilder in Trinks Farben – in Grau und Rot, Dazwischen-Sein und Bedeutungsvielfalt, in denen alte und neue religiöse Bilder geformt und neu geformt werden.

Sigrídur Guðmarsdóttir finished her Ph.D. in constructive theology in 2007 from Drew University. She works as a senior pastor in the Lutheran church of Iceland and teaches philosophy of religion at the University of Iceland.