

**IMAGES FOR A FEMALE SUBJECT IN LUCE IRIGARAY'S  
*ELEMENTAL PASSIONS*<sup>1</sup>**

INTRODUCTION

The argument that Western theology and philosophy only know a very particular subject - the male subject - is not contentious within Women's Studies. Within traditional philosophy, subjectivity is presented as a universal and inclusive concept. Feminist critiques have pointed out, however, that this concept in fact denotes men (only). Women are, for example, depicted as seductresses who tempt men to leave the path of knowledge or as mothers and carers who make it possible for man to develop his thinking. However, for one concerned with subjectivity the question how a female subject could be constructed, remains. Where should one start? These are leading questions in my research. I address them in this article in which I introduce my dissertation.

One could start the construction of a female subject with a male subject and develop a female version from there. However, a danger would be that this female subject would exclusively be developed in reaction to her male counterpart. The issue is to what extent this female subject would be genuinely different. One could also choose for separation and try to develop a completely new female subject far removed from patriarchal thinking. A problem with this option, however, is that one always takes one's intellectual baggage along. By negating one's intellectual roots, one could risk reinforcing existing power structures without realizing this. Is there another method?

The French philosopher and psychoanalytic Luce Irigaray takes a different route. She develops a female subject in dialogue with the Western canon.<sup>2</sup> In an analysis of the canon Irigaray lays bare the foundations and

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<sup>1</sup> H. Canters, *Images for a Female Subject in Luce Irigaray's Elemental Passions*, Sunderland 2000. Publication of this thesis is forthcoming: *Forever Fluid: Towards Female Subjectivity*, Manchester: Manchester University Press.

<sup>2</sup> For an introduction into Irigaray's thinking, see for example M. Whitford, *Luce Irigaray. Philosophy in the Feminine*, London: Routledge 1991. For an interpretation of Irigaray from a feminist philosophy of religion perspective, see G.M. Jantzen, *Becoming Divine. Towards a Feminist Philosophy of Religion*, London: Routledge 1998. Examples of Dutch studies of Irigaray are A. Halsema, *Dialektiek van de Seksuele Differentie. De filosofie van Luce Irigaray*, Amsterdam: Boom 1998 and A.C. Mulder, *Divine Flesh, Embodied Word. Incarnation as a hermeneutical key to a feminist theologian's reading of Luce Irigaray's work*, Utrecht 2000.

presuppositions of Western thinking. Irigaray's unravelling of theories of subjectivity creates a space for the development of a second subject, a female subject. This subject develops in relation to a male subject and is at the same time intrinsically different. In my research on female subjectivity I focus on Irigaray and on her book *Elemental Passions* (EP)/*Passions élémentaires* (Pe) in particular.<sup>3</sup> In my thesis I also explore the relation between Lacanian psychoanalysis, the Irigarayan concept of subjectivity, imagery, mirrors and reflection. For reasons of clarity and space I leave these matters aside here and primarily address *Elemental Passions* from a philosophical perspective.

*Elemental Passions* is one of the least well-known texts by Irigaray. One might assume that it is little read because it is neither worthwhile nor significant. Yet in my research I show that this text is crucial to Irigaray's concept of female subjectivity. One reason for its obscurity could be the time of its publication in English. This occurred in between *Marine Lover* (1991) and *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* (1993).<sup>4</sup> Both attracted a lot of attention, perhaps at the cost of *Elemental Passions* (1992). Why is *Elemental Passions* so significant for female subjectivity? There are numerous places, particularly until the 1980s, where Irigaray speaks of the conditions for a female subject to come into being. From 1988 onwards Irigaray addresses the relation between a male and a female subject in her argument on sexual difference. *Elemental Passions*, however, is the only book length text where Irigaray actually develops a female subject and shows how this can be done with the reader as witness. Therefore, I would like to argue that if one wants to understand what Irigaray's female subject entails, one must turn to *Elemental Passions*.

I suggest that Irigaray's work on the elements and subjectivity need not necessarily have resulted in the strong emphasis on sexual difference which is present in Irigaray's work of today.<sup>5</sup> I would like to argue that it is possible to take certain aspects of *Elemental Passions*, such as its call to the powerful one to listen to the other in 'words never yet imagined' and its

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<sup>3</sup> L. Irigaray, *Passions élémentaires*, Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit 1982 [*Passions élémentaires* hereafter: Pe]; L. Irigaray, *Elemental Passions* (translated by J. Collie and J. Still), London: Athlone Press 1992 [*Elemental Passions* hereafter: EP].

<sup>4</sup> L. Irigaray, *Amante Marine de Friedrich Nietzsche*, Paris: Minuit 1980 ; L. Irigaray, *L'Éthique de la différence sexuelle*, Paris: Minuit 1984 ; L. Irigaray, *Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche* (translated by G.C. Gill), New York: Columbia University Press 1991; L. Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* (translated by C. Burke and G. Gill), London: Routledge 1993.

<sup>5</sup> See for example L. Irigaray, *J'aime à toi. Esquisse d'une félicité dans l'histoire*, Paris: Bernard Grasset 1992. L. Irigaray, *Je, tu, nous. Toward a Culture of Difference* (translated by A. Martin), London: Routledge 1993. L. Irigaray, *I Love to You. Sketch of a possible felicity in history* (translated by A. Martin), London: Routledge 1996.

playful use of imagery, in order to further feminist discussions of difference and multiplicity.<sup>6</sup> In my view, the employment of these aspects could result in a recognition of differences (plural) coupled with an analysis of multiple power differences. Together with the use of imagery this could for example open up the stagnated discussion between white women and black women within the feminist movement and within feminist thinking.

### 'I' AND 'YOU'

*Elemental Passions* features an 'I' and a 'you'. Who are they? In *Marine Lover* an 'I' and 'you' also feature. F. Oppel who comments on *Marine Lover* interprets them respectively as Irigaray and Nietzsche, and *Marine Lover* as an 'intertextual love relationship' between them.<sup>7</sup> More generally, it could be argued that Irigaray's books on the elements constitute amorous dialogues between an 'I', Irigaray or woman gaining access to philosophy, and a 'you', the philosopher that specific text engages with. In the earlier texts 'When Our Lips Speak Together' and 'And One Doesn't Stir without the Other' we encounter an 'I' and a 'you' too.<sup>8</sup> However, in these cases the pronouns arguably refer to women; to women as lovers, as mother and daughter, and to different dimensions of one woman.<sup>9</sup> In all these texts, the use of the pronouns 'I' and 'you' serves to unsettle subject and object positions. It allows for fluidity and reciprocity between the two. It is not always clear whom the pronouns refer to. Indeed, I would like to argue that this is intentional. Through an unsettling of subject and object positions, the text challenges binary logic.

*Elemental Passions* is an extremely complex text to read. It is poetic, even lyric in places, associative and questioning. In order to give the reader of this article a flavour of this text and of my treatment thereof, I would like to begin with a part of my interpretive summary of *Elemental Passions*. I use the term 'interpretive summary' to indicate that my synopsis is at the same time an analysis. In it I concentrate on female subjectivity and highlight the

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<sup>6</sup> EP9/Pe9.

<sup>7</sup> F. Oppel, 'Speaking of Immemorial Waters', in: P. Patton (ed.), *Nietzsche, Feminism and Political Theory*, London: Routledge 1993, 88-109.

<sup>8</sup> L. Irigaray, 'Quand nos lèvres se parlent', in: *Ce Sexe Qui N'en Est Pas Un*, Paris: Minuit 1977, 203-217; L. Irigaray, *Et l'une ne bouge pas sans l'autre*, Paris: Minuit 1979; L. Irigaray, 'When Our Lips Speak Together' (translated by C. Burke) *Signs* 6 (1980) 1, 69-79; L. Irigaray, 'And the One Doesn't Stir without the Other', *Signs* 7 (1981) 1, 60-68.

<sup>9</sup> C. Burke, 'Introduction to Luce Irigaray's "When Our Lips Speak Together"', *Signs* 6 (1980) 1, 66-79; H.V. Wenzel, 'Introduction to Luce Irigaray's "And the One Doesn't Stir without the Other"', *Signs* 7 (1981) 1, 56-60.

process of becoming a subject. A concept that is significant for the development of a female subject is fluidity. Instead of a rigid division between one and not-one, self and other, there are permeable boundaries between two subjects. The imagery of *Elemental Passions* does not neatly correlate to object or subject positions but deliberately undoes these distinctions in fusion and effusion. As a result, male and female subjectivity are not static goals which can be achieved. Instead, subjectivity is forever in process. Fluidity is also reflected in the form and the style of *Elemental Passions*. My interpretation of the concept of fluidity will be addressed in more detail below.

#### A TASTE OF ELEMENTAL PASSION

Irigaray opens with short, staccato sentences: 'Large spaces. [*Which are*] White. A gust of breath, white. Quick, take this breath. Stay in it. Hurry. Let it not abandon me. Let me not leave it. To be swept up in it: my song'.<sup>10</sup> The short sentences of this first paragraph serve both to attract the attention of the reader and to convey a sense of urgency. Indeed, twice in this small paragraph words which depict speed, '*rapide*' (quick) and '*dans la hâte*' (make haste/hurry) occur. The song, woman's song, is a token of her love for 'you'. The second and third paragraphs explore this:

You give me a white mouth. Open, my white mouth, like the angels in cathedrals. You have stopped my tongue/language [*langue*]. For me the song remains. I can say nothing but sing.

Singing for you. But this 'for you' is not a dative. Nor the song, a gift. Not received by you, not made by me, nor for you, this song: my love with you. Mingled. It escapes me. A cloud.<sup>11</sup>

The song is an image both for woman's language and her love. The you stops the I's tongue and/or language, the French word *langue* can mean both. Once woman's speech is stopped the only way she can articulate herself is through song.

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<sup>10</sup> EP7, translation modified. De grands espaces. Blancs. Un grand souffle, blanc. Rapide, épouser ce souffle. Y rester. Dans la hâte. Qu'il ne m'abandonne pas. Que je ne le laisse pas. Y être entraînée: mon chant (Pe7).

<sup>11</sup> EP7, translation modified. Tu me donnes une bouche blanche. Ouverte, ma bouche blanche, comme les anges dans les cathédrales. Tu m'as coupé la langue. Me reste le chant. Je ne peux rien dire que chanter.

Chanter pour toi. Mais ce pour toi n'est pas un datif. Ni ce chant, un don. Pas reçu de toi, pas produit par moi, ni pour toi, ce chant: mon amour avec toi. Mêlées. S'échappe de moi. Nuée. (Pe7).

Woman's love is a love which cannot be appropriated, cannot be owned. 'My love with you' is characterized as a song which is not, the text says, 'a gift'. For Irigaray the appropriation of woman by man is one effect of binary logic. If the subject of philosophy is exclusively male, then, Irigaray argues, women can be objects of exchange between men. Women can serve as gifts among men and can thus be 'owned' by men. Marriage arrangements provide an example. In this context it is significant that the first page of *Elemental Passions* tells the reader that woman's love for man is not a gift which he can claim as his own.

By giving her love to you-man in her song, I-woman's breath mingles with the air and forms a cloud (*nuée*). It provides the first attempt at thinking with a different logic, a logic that is not characterized by dichotomies and does not recognize the concept of ownership and appropriation. This mingling is characterized as 'diffusing without a halt' (*diffusion sans arrêt*).<sup>12</sup> The words '*sans arrêt*', literally 'without stopping', are significant. They appear throughout *Elemental Passions* in descriptions of a female subject and indicate a movement towards fluidity.

The air is full of I-woman. You-man however does not recognize this nor does he hear the song she sings. Until he hears it, a fruitful relationship between man and woman as two sexually different subjects remains a promise. This promise is what the closing paragraph leaves us with: 'Seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, living, await fertilisation by an innocent force/potency (*puissance*)'.<sup>13</sup> The message of the closing paragraph of chapter one is that human actions performed by the senses such as seeing and hearing need 'fertilisation' (*fécondation*). I interpret this to mean that these everyday biological functions are performed but are not fruitful in the Irigarayan sense: it is not until two subjects, male and female, are allowed to come into being, that our actions and our language become procreative or fertile. Within this context the 'innocent force' or 'potency' (*puissance*) is a crucial image in *Elemental Passions*.

The opening chapter of *Elemental Passions* introduces its key concepts and struggles: the images of a song, a cloud, love, fecundity and potency (*puissance*); woman's struggle for subjectivity and man's tendency to cut off her speech. The main events of the succeeding narrative are presented: you-man tries to appropriate I-woman by forcing her to speak like him, he does not succeed, nor does he understand I-woman because she is different from him: I-woman offers him her love which is a love that allows for (sexual)

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<sup>12</sup> EP7/Pe8.

<sup>13</sup> EP8, translation modified. Le voir, l'entendre, le parler, le respirer, le vivre attendent la fécondation d'une puissance innocente (Pe8).

difference and the reader is left with a promise of new relations between the sexes. It is as if the stage is set, the story-line presented and now the performance or in our case the text, is ready to commence. For this reason, I view the first chapter as the prologue.

In my analysis of the development of a female subject in *Elemental Passions* the concept of *puissance* is significant. Together with the term *sans arrêt*, it indicates a source of growth. This is illustrated in the following fragment in which I address the third chapter of *Elemental Passions*. Chapter three introduces key events in the relationship between 'you' and 'I', man and woman. In chapter two man tried to flee and leave woman behind. Yet however far he went, she was still with him, locked in an embrace.<sup>14</sup> This embrace continues in the beginning of this chapter: 'still I embrace you'.<sup>15</sup>

Woman mimes man's steps in his search for himself. Where does she lead him? She has taken him to a place that is 'deeper than the greatest depths your daylight could imagine', to a 'luminous night'.<sup>16</sup> It is a place which follows its own rhythm 'quickening in movements both expected and unexpected', which results in a force so strong that it cannot be measured.<sup>17</sup> Where and what is this place? I interpret it as a reference both to the womb and to female sexuality. Woman has led man to the place of his origin, the womb, where movements and fluids follow their own rhythm. What is man's reaction to this? He tries to impose his philosophical categories of thought, the ancient categories of time and space onto it, but they do not fit: 'your space, your time are unable to grasp their regularity or contain their foldings and unfoldings'.<sup>18</sup> However, he does not give up, which leads to the I's following understanding:

And I understand the mystery of your power [*pouvoir*]. You touch upon that which gives itself in the renunciation of any limit, upon the intensity which floods out in the abandoning of all reserve, and you take it back into yourself. You limit it within the horizon of a skin which stretches, swells, and gradually expands. And you are erect [*et tu t'ériges*]: I am. Such is, being.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>14</sup> EP12/Pe12.

<sup>15</sup> EP13, translation modified. Encore je t'embrasse (Pe15).

<sup>16</sup> EP13/Pe15.

<sup>17</sup> EP13/Pe15.

<sup>18</sup> EP13/Pe15.

<sup>19</sup> EP14, translation modified: 'Et je comprends le mystère de ton pouvoir. Tu touches à ce qui se donne dans le renoncement à tout bord, à l'intensité qui se profuse dans l'abandon de toutes réserves, et tu le reprends en toi. Tu le rebordes d'une membrane horizon qui s'étend, se gonfle, se déploie à mesure. Et tu t'ériges: je suis. Tel, l'être' (Pe16).

Man's power (the word *pouvoir* indicates power in the sense of (male) dominance in contrast to *puissance* which denotes (female) potentiality for empowerment as in the prologue) comes from the appropriation of the limitlessness which woman offers him. This limitlessness also figured in the prologue. The images of the song and of the cloud were images of woman's love for man. Man's appropriation results in the assertion of his subjectivity. Irigaray revisits the Cartesian cogito 'I think, therefore I am'. She highlights the maleness of this subject when she rephrases it from a female perspective: 'you are erect: I am'.<sup>20</sup> This erection refers both to man's penis, illustrated by 'a skin which stretches, swells and gradually expands', and to man's assertion of himself as the one subject within philosophy.<sup>21</sup> Both lead him to proclaim that 'I am'. In this process, woman or mother, the origin of man's being, is 'forgotten'. She continues to be the ground of man's being, yet is invisible.<sup>22</sup>

For woman, man's borders and boundaries constrain her in her becoming a subject. We read that man imposes a framework (*cadre*) which consists of his skin.<sup>23</sup> Everything that operates without or outside of his boundaries is dismissed from the male structures of meaning which impose limits. This again is a reference to binary logic. Man's becoming a subject through the appropriation of woman would be disturbed if woman, like man, were to assert herself and pronounce herself as 'I', as a subject.<sup>24</sup> When man's reflection and ground of being actually begins to assert herself as a subject, man's reaction is to put a halt to it with the use of violence. He reinstates his boundaries of meaning and being through bodily force: 'You strike, knock, cut, wound'.<sup>25</sup> The chapter ends with a plea by 'I' to 'you', to stop his violent behaviour towards her: 'Do not strike so hard, you are paralyzing her, stopping her flow'.<sup>26</sup> In this chapter woman brought man back to his origin, her body. Man's reaction was to appropriate this body. Yet, it is clear that woman cannot live as a female subject within his classifications. Man's violence can be understood as a consequence of man's inability and unwillingness to recognize the other as a subject.

To conclude this section I would like to bring some threads together. My opening remarks that the short sentences of the prologue depict the urgency of its content show how style and meaning go together in *Elemental*

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<sup>20</sup> EP14/Pe16. See also EP17/Pe20.

<sup>21</sup> EP14/Pe16.

<sup>22</sup> EP14/Pe16.

<sup>23</sup> EP17/Pe19.

<sup>24</sup> EP17-18/Pe21.

<sup>25</sup> EP18/Pe21.

<sup>26</sup> EP18: 'Ne frappe pas si fort, tu la figes, la paralyse dans son flux' (Pe22).

*Passions*. Woman's song, her breath which mingled with the air and formed a cloud all display fluidity and a breaking down of boundaries. Ownership of the song is not possible. It is a gift that cannot be appropriated. At the end of this section where Irigaray revisits the Cartesian *cogito* appropriation is the issue. Man appropriates woman in order to become a subject. Binary structures are enforced. Indeed, force is used in the form of violence. Man's subjectivity occurs at the cost of woman. Within his framework, she cannot become a subject too. One way out of this impasse is through love. Woman offers man a kind of love which allows for two different subjects. Man's love for woman, the above illustrated, is through appropriation. Irigaray describes these two kinds of love as follows:

Love can be the becoming which appropriates the other for itself by consuming it, introjecting it into itself, to the point where the other disappears. Or love can be the motor of becoming, allowing both the one and the other to grow. For such a love, each must keep their body autonomous.... Two lives should embrace and fertilise each other without either being a fixed goal for the other.<sup>27</sup>

This quotation shows that love between two sexually different people is fruitful when each recognizes the other as distinctly different. Neither should be 'a fixed goal' for the other, they should be *sans fin arrêtée*. A recognition of the other as genuinely different causes a break-down of rigid boundaries. It renders dichotomies unnecessary and operates within a fluid logic.

Another motif that can be discerned in my synopsis is that of a return to the origin. Woman leads man back to his origin, she mimes his steps and brings him to a place that resembles a womb. It goes beyond the scope of this article to elaborate on this. However, I would like to say that a return to one's personal and philosophical origins is necessary according to Irigaray. In Irigaray's reading of the Presocratics and of Empedocles in particular, Presocratic philosophy enabled a female subject to come into being. In *Elemental Passions* I discern the Greek mythic figure of Ariadne who leads man back to that what he has forgotten: the body, materiality, the abject, woman, passion. For Irigaray all these elements belong to philosophy too and need to be incorporated within Western thinking. I will elaborate on this in *Forever Fluid*.

Lastly, man's resistance to woman's utterances and to her budding subjectivity are symptomatic. Throughout *Elemental Passions* he refuses time

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<sup>27</sup> 'L'amour est le devenir qui s'approprie l'autre en le consommant, en l'introjectant en soi-même, jusqu'à sa disparition. Ou l'amour est le moteur du devenir qui laisse l'un et l'autre à leur croissance. Pour un tel amour il faut que chacun garde son corps autonome.... Que deux vies s'embrassent et se fécondent l'une l'autre, sans fin arrêtée en l'un ou en l'autre' (Pe27-8).



and again to hear her. Instead he repeatedly reinstates his own position through force. Man's reluctance and inability to listen and woman's ongoing struggle to make herself heard can in my view also be a model for other situations in which parties with unequal amount of power try to communicate.

#### FLUIDITY: A TERM WITH MULTIPLE MEANINGS

In my development of female subjects, the term 'fluidity' plays a pivotal role. I use it to denote a number of issues. Firstly, it refers to the logic employed in the concept of subjectivity. The traditional construction of subjectivity in terms of one and not-one, self and 'other', demonstrates a thinking in terms of binary structures and dichotomies. If you want to develop subjects who are not in hierarchical power positions in relation to each other, then a logic of fluidity can be useful. Applying this fluid logic can mean for example, that the rigid distinction between self and 'other' that indicates a difference in power becomes obsolete. In this way, fixed subject positions can become fluid and the possession of power shared.

Fluidity also refers to an Irigarayan characteristic of a female subject. This is its second meaning. When Irigaray develops her female subject in *Elemental Passions* she tries to make sure that this subject goes beyond the boundaries positioned by traditional Western philosophy. One could argue that in order to develop something new and different, one should not merely re-act but should seek to change the parameters within which subjects develop. In order to do this, Irigaray develops a female subject that is continually becoming. This subject is never 'finished', it is always developing further. In this sense it is fluid, not fixed. Such a development of female subjectivity implicates a simultaneous change in the development of the male subject. This leads to significant changes within philosophical thinking as my analysis of *Elemental Passions* indicates. An advantage of this fluid female subject is that such a female subject cannot be made into an object. Precisely because it is involved in a process of continual becoming, it cannot be pinned down or objectified.

My third use of the term fluidity is closely related to its second meaning. In order to think and write of a female subject without making it into something fixed, Irigaray employs imagery. The images of *Elemental Passions* are for instance, a song, a cloud, a flower and lips. In my synopsis I show that these images display fluidity within themselves. They also flow over into one another. So the images for Irigaray's female subject are fluid in more than one sense. The language in which Irigaray writes of the development of this subject is also fluid. This brings me to my fourth

meaning of fluidity. This is the fluidity of language. The language of *Elemental Passions* is poetic, full of questions, playful and elusive. Like the female subject it describes, Irigaray's language escapes possession. It eludes the reader time and again.

Lastly, I would like to suggest that fluidity can also be used to go beyond Irigaray and to conceive of multiple female subjects who take up ever changing positions of power in relation to each other. It can thus be used to develop female subjects who find themselves in different positions of power, depending on for instance the place of meeting and the presence or absence of other subjects. In this way, I propose that it becomes possible to use Irigaray's insights and her development of a particular kind of language within which a female subject can become, to incorporate differences between women as well.

Summing up, I distinguish five aspects of the concept of fluidity. The first refers to a logic that is fluid instead of dichotomous. The second denotes the fluid nature of a female subject. She is always in a state of becoming. This is demonstrated thirdly by the imagery used in *Elemental Passions*. The images display fluidity themselves and also flow into one another. All three aspects can be discerned in the language of *Elemental Passions*. Lastly, fluidity can be employed to think of female subjects whose power relations to each other change continually.

## CONCLUSION

The question I posed at the beginning was how a female subject could be developed. One answer derived from *Elemental Passions* is that imagery and fluidity are key aspects of this process. My analysis and interpretation of *Elemental Passions* have shown that an Irigarayan female subject will continually be involved in the process of becoming (*devenir*). As soon as she starts to 'be' instead of 'become' she runs the danger of being objectified and essentialized. I characterize a continual becoming by the concept of fluidity. This development is a relational endeavour. In the process of becoming subjects, all have to learn to listen and to 'speak'. I have argued that the use of imagery is crucial to this process.

An interesting question for subsequent research would be to ask what other images than those of *Elemental Passions* (lips, flower, song and cloud) would be appropriate for the further development of subjectivity. The additional question '*for whom* would these images be significant?' also needs to be addressed. For reasons of space I have not addressed the issues of race or sexuality here. However, throughout my thesis runs a red thread of an

analysis of racial oppression in our society.<sup>28</sup> More and more critiques of whiteness are raised against feminist philosophy and also against Irigaray.<sup>29</sup> Irigaray has also been accused of being heterosexist in her later work.<sup>30</sup> Her concept of sexual difference seems to focus exclusively on the heterosexual pair man-woman. Differences between women which result in differences in power also need to be addressed if one is concerned with the concept of subjectivity, the feminist argument goes. A focus on sexual difference is not enough. My suggestion for the development of multiple female subjects through imagery paves the way for a constructive answer to these critiques. The interpretation of *Elemental Passions* presented here indicates a possible way leading from the complex interplay of factors such as sexuality, race and sex towards a concept of subjectivity that allows for differences, notably differences in power, between women. For me, the imagery of *Elemental Passions* is a good point from which to journey towards subjects who will be forever fluid.

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<sup>28</sup> This is also illustrated in H. Canters, 'Vrouwen die Spreken en Gehoord Worden' in: M. de Haardt e.a. (red.), *Geroepen om te Spreken*, Kampen: Kok 1998, 91-102.

<sup>29</sup> An example is K. Christensen, "'With Whom Do You Believe Your Lot Is Cast?' White Feminists and Racism', *Signs* 22 (1997) 3, 617-649.

<sup>30</sup> See for example P.Cheah and E. Grosz, 'The Future of Sexual Difference. An Interview with Judith Butler and Drucilla Cornell', *Diacritics* 28 (1998) 1, 19-42.