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The Sexuate and the Relational: Luce Irigaray and Stephen A. Mitchell on Language

Annie Ross

What if a sense of oneself as a separate individual and of objects as differentiated others is only gradually constructed, over the course of early development, out of this undifferentiated matrix?

Mitchell,
Relationality (2000)

If we are to be as one, isn't it necessary for us first to be two?

Irigaray,
"The Three Genres" (1991)

In this essay, I compare and contrast how language is received in two separate texts by two psychoanalysts, Luce Irigaray and Stephen A. Mitchell. Irigaray's treatise, "The Three Genres," bridges her background in psycholinguistics with feminist philosophy to produce one of her foundational tenets: that the semantics and grammar of language in the modern West belie a hierarchical construct, eclipsing sexual difference and the subjectivity of women. "Our social organizations and the discourse that stems from them," she concludes, "are therefore regulated by a neuter governed by the masculine *genre*" (Irigaray 1991, 145). As a relational psychoanalyst, Mitchell is immersed in the semantics of language but is equally interested in both content and sensory experience. In regard to Hans Loewald, who has profoundly influenced his work, Mitchell writes that perhaps "we use language not only to convey meanings and to clarify situations, but to evoke states of mind, to generate and link domains of experience" (Mitchell 2000, 15). Accordingly, Mitchell's focus tends to be the powers of language in personal development and in analytics, and he does not offer a critique of the cultural effects of discourse. Despite their discrete emphases, however, I find that each theorist has the potential to inform the other and, perhaps, to answer questions left open within their own work. Irigaray's feminist awareness would rectify Mitchell's tendency to somewhat overlook the specific needs of female subjects. From his perspective, Mitchell sees a primordial union established through the sounds of language that might mitigate the rupture that, for Irigaray, is reified through words.

It is helpful to parse the meaning of Irigaray's essay title so as to better comprehend her argument. Importantly, the *genres* to which she refers are polysemous entities. The term *genre* is often used to indicate type, category, or style, as in artistic or biological description. This usage applies in Irigaray's case, but its French language origins are more complex – particularly concerning *gender*, to which it is closely related etymologically – and I would venture that Irigaray intends these interconnected meanings. Thus, the author touches upon several valences of the word *genre*, denoting it “as index and mark of the *subjectivity* and ethical responsibility of the speaker. ... It constitutes the irreducible differentiation *internal to the 'human race'* [*genre humain*]” (Irigaray 1991, 140-41). What is this “irreducible differentiation”? Here, too, Irigaray's meaning operates on more than one level. She explains that “*Genre* represents the site of the nonsubstitutable positioning of the *I* and the *you* and of their modalities of expression” (141). *I* and *you*, grammatically, are speaker and listener, both ostensibly subjects. For Irigaray, there is another specific meaning: the differentiation “internal to the human race” is the differentiation between male and female, for sex is to her the human difference *par excellence*.¹ In both applications of the term, *genre* frequently describes and/or re-inscribes objectification or erasure. The subject *I* can take the subject *you* as an object. The “neuter” *genre* can obscure the “irreducible differentiation.” Irigaray's examination of the three *genres* is designed to expose, analyze, and ultimately transform the oppressive sexual dynamics of language.

As her essay indicates, there are three grammatical genders extend in French to inanimate objects; every noun is either male, female, or “gender-less” (neutral). For Irigaray, however, language is never neutral. Where the masculine or feminine has not been erased (and it is overwhelmingly the feminine that is erased), dominion is indicated (and it is overwhelmingly male dominion). In French, the language “which made [Irigaray] a subject,” (Irigaray 1991, 141) the “neuter” *il* signifies “he” as well as “it,” and so its usage belies a hierarchical superstructure. “This order of laws claims to be neutral,” she writes,

but it bears the marks of he who produces them. Between 'the weather today' [*le temps qu'il fait*] and 'the time of history' [*le temps de l'histoire*], there is the time of the creation of worlds, of the establishment of their economies, and of gods or a God speaking in nature. ...How did discourse permit this content, this signification, this culture? How can it replace them with others? (142)

1. Rather than digress into the sex/gender debate, on which Irigaray does not elaborate, I refer the reader to one of the Oxford English Dictionary definitions of *gender*, which is appropriate to the discussion: “In mod. (esp. feminist) use, a euphemism for the sex of a human being, often intended to emphasize the social and cultural, as opposed to the biological, distinctions between the sexes.” *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. “gender, *n.*” accessed April 10, 2011, <http://oed.com/viewdictionaryentry/Entry/77468>.

In order to reform the oppressive structure that is both reflected in language and reaffirmed through the use of language as it stands, Irigaray seeks to lay bare the discursive *infrastructure*, to locate and announce the “sexuate” marks within. To this end, she identifies two interrelated processes in which reform must be enacted: *formalization*, where language is currently organized according to what Irigaray calls the “cultural order,” and *style*, where the subject who uses metaphorical language reflective of one's embodied and therefore sexuate condition is empowered to “[resist] formalization” (142).

The work of unpacking and revolutionizing discourse has ramifications far beyond the attempt to trouble linguistic domination. Irigaray sees her project in ethical terms, claiming a “responsibility for the preservation, organization, consciousness and creation of life, of the world” (Irigaray 1991, 143). In her view, the inequities of language and the denaturation of the embodied subject in an increasingly automated environment are inextricable from one another. The neutralizing of language—which, as we have seen, obscures the mechanics of historical sovereignty—is part and parcel of the de-subjectification that is entailed in suppressing the sexuate. If Irigaray is correct in that no difference can be acknowledged and respected without acknowledging and respecting sexual difference (a point which will be explored below in greater detail), then responsibility for the human subject requires an interrogation of *why* the present discursive structure has developed. Sexual difference depends on and creates, in her words, “an *active* mutation in the laws and order of discourse” (143).

The transition from Irigaray to Stephen A. Mitchell requires, if not a paradigm shift, then a reorientation of ideological priorities. In some respects, the two authors are working from common ground: both are trained psychoanalysts for whom the significance of language bears heavily on their work, and both are especially sensitive to the pitfalls of misused power and the need to recognize subjectivity. Moreover, the importance of the mother to early human development—largely overlooked in Freudian theory—occupies a central place in their schemata. Finally, it is difficult to imagine Irigaray refuting Mitchell's claims that language itself is “the very stuff of mind,” and that every child is gradually “inducted into the linguistic-semiotic system through which he will become a person, and his later psychological self” (Mitchell 2000, 5). Yet, from the several theories of language development that Mitchell summarizes, it becomes clear that his sympathies lie with a perspective that poses serious challenges to Irigaray's own.

Mitchell introduces his discussion by contrasting the standpoints of two interpersonal psychoanalysts, Harry Stack Sullivan and Daniel N. Stern. For Sullivan, a pioneer in the field of social psychiatry, the progression from “autistic” (in the now-

outdated sense of self-gratifying) to “syntactic” language in the child is unequivocally positive; his assessment of language as “the most important of all human tools”(Sullivan 2003, 180) in the context of the interpersonal suggests Sullivan's estimation of unambiguous mature verbal communication. In Mitchell's synopsis, the ramifications of language acquisition include, for Sullivan, “the emergence of the distinctively human from the animal” (Mitchell 2000, 6) – a belief that holds far-reaching implications for the definition of subjectivity. Stern, conversely, feels ambivalent about the child's entry into verbal proficiency; whereas the ability to relate oneself to others linguistically has clear value, it also constitutes an estrangement “between two simultaneous forms of interpersonal experience: as it is lived and as it is verbally represented,” as well as a move to “the impersonal, abstract level intrinsic to language” (Stern 1985, 162-3). Stern's quote points to an appreciation of relationality beyond its verbal register. As we shall see, Mitchell's outlook lies closer to Stern's than to Sullivan's.

The alienation between firsthand experience and representation is fundamental to the work of Jacques Lacan, whose own deliberately cryptic use of language Mitchell and Margaret J. Black examine in a précis in *Freud and Beyond*. Lacan's influence is germane to the present essay for two reasons. First, among the post-Freudian psychoanalysts, he is noteworthy for foregrounding linguistics in his project; per Mitchell and Black, Lacan sees, “the determinative dimension in human experience [as] neither self (i.e., ego) nor relations with others, but language” (Mitchell and Black 1995, 196). Second, Irigaray has been considerably influenced by Lacan, with whom she studied in Paris and from whose theories she would digress, evidently to his dissatisfaction. Despite his breach with the object-relations school of thought, Lacan shares with them a focus on the mother's critical role in psychic development, which (as mentioned above) is also a salient element for Irigaray and Mitchell, albeit to different effect than for Lacan. The mother is indispensable to Lacan's notion of the “imaginary order,” where her presence beside the child's disconcertingly complete reflection in the mirror positions her as a pivotal Other in the child's first experience of alienation.² This moment of (mis)recognition, when the child identifies with the wholeness of his own reflection and thus supposes his psychic self to be whole as well, thereby alienates the child from his image of himself—a separation that can never be reconciled. What Lacan takes to be the disconnect between self-perception and reality is embedded for the individual in language:

2. As a discussion of Lacanian theory lies outside the scope of this essay, I refer the reader to Lacan's “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience” (Lacan 2006, 75-81).

What distinguishes Lacan's approach...is his claim that the ordinary subject of experience is wholly illusory, not in a dialectical relationship with other modes of experience. ...The [psychoanalytic] patient is jarred by the analyst's general unresponsiveness and unexpected reactions into...the realization that he is not creating the language he is speaking, but, rather, that language predates him and shapes his experience (Mitchell and Black 1995, 198-99).

As will become clear, both Irigaray and Mitchell agree with Lacan that language shapes experience, but how they proceed from this premise marks their divergence from one another.

By far the psychoanalyst most instrumental to Mitchell's thinking on relationality is Hans Loewald. Whereas Lacan conceives of persons as conduits for a pre-existing linguistic structure, Loewald proposes a level of existence beyond structure, an original condition of unity shared by all "in which there is no differentiation between inside and outside, self and other, actuality and fantasy, past and present" (Mitchell 2000, 4). This "primary-process" or "primal density" precedes all of the distinctions and binaries that humans construct to order and make sense of their experiences, but it does not dissipate as a result of later developments. Rather, it persists as an organizational mode, operating in conjunction with the learned discriminatory mode ("secondary-process"). Psychological health, according to Loewald, is incumbent on balance and reciprocity between both modes. A preponderance of primary-process functioning results in the chaotic deluge of psychosis; a lack of primary-process gives rise to the other end of the continuum, a rigid compartmentalization wherein "self and other are experienced in isolation from each other [and] actuality is disconnected from fantasy"(4)—the corollary, perhaps, to Lacan's concept of alienation. Lacan, however, sees alienation as the inescapable human condition, set in motion by the mother in one's infancy. In Loewald's rendering, alienation may well be "the normative adaptation" to the modern, ever-more-digitized way of life, but it is by no means inescapable (Mitchell 2000, 4).

Loewald's theory of organizational modalities directly impacts his views on language. In contrast to Sullivan and Stern, who disagree as to the impact of its acquisition, Loewald finds the most meaningful division of language to be *how* it is perceived in primary- versus secondary-process. As Mitchell explains, there is no truly "preverbal" period for Loewald because "language is an intrinsic dimension of human experience from birth onward" (Mitchell 2000, 8). In fact, as Mitchell illustrates, recent studies indicate that language is also experienced to a sophisticated degree *in utero*, obviously not in the sense of semantic comprehension but as a sensory perception akin to the developing infant's encounter with music. Mitchell emphasizes the import of this research for Loewald for language is therefore "deeply embedded and embodied in the child's undifferentiated union with the mother inside of whom he slowly grows into

awareness,"(8) an intrinsic aspect of primal density. As with other elements of the organizational modes, the sensory and affective experience of language persists in primary-process, optimally in balance alongside its syntactic experience in secondary-process. But in Loewald's thesis and Mitchell's interpretation, the relevance of language among the other modal elements can hardly be overstated. "It is language that provides that life-enriching link between past and present, body and world, fantasy and reality" (10). Or, in Loewald's own words, "It ties together human beings and self and object world, and it binds abstract thought with the bodily concreteness and power of life" (Loewald 1977, 11).

Certainly it can be argued that Luce Irigaray's appraisal of the imprint of language on human relations accords with Loewald's, and thus with Mitchell's. Indeed, discourse overall, and the three grammatical *genres* in particular, impart critical humanistic concerns. Yet, for Irigaray, the reality of sexually-divided power structures is essential to these operations. The way language is gendered, she writes, "is often revelatory of social and historical phenomena. It shows how one sex has subordinated the other or the world" (Irigaray 1991, 144). This hierarchical dynamic, so crucial to Irigaray's undertaking in "The Three *Genres*" and elsewhere, is nowhere to be found in Mitchell's discussion of language in *Relationality*.³ I argue that by neglecting to attend to the inheritance and impact of linguistic sexism, Mitchell misses the opportunity to work toward a truly thorough narrative of intersubjectivity, one that recognizes the critical question of how men and women are differently constituted *as* subjects in the modern West.

One of the more powerful contributions of the object-relations school's emphasis on mothering has been the acknowledgment of females as integral actors in the psychodynamic chronicle, a much-needed corrective to Freud's otherwise exhaustive investigations.⁴ I have already noted Loewald's insistence on the pertinence of embodiment to the subject, especially in primary-process mode; it follows that the female body carries the potential for dual significance in this mode, as one who (barring medical obstacle) can nurture life within as well as one who has lived in her own mother's womb. In his chapter on attachment theory, Mitchell carefully explores the case of an analysand, Connie, whose pregnancy evoked the childhood loss of her

3. *Freud and Beyond* features a two-paragraph subheading, "Lacan and Feminism," which nods to the debate as to whether Lacan's notion of "the phallus as the signifier extraordinaire" is problematic for or conducive to feminist readings; Irigaray is mentioned as one such theorist who, with Kristeva, has "attempted to work from Lacan's analysis to generate more directly feminine forms of experience and meaning" (203). I will draw on this subheading later in the essay.

4. I think it is appropriate to include Loewald among the object-relations thinkers, in consideration of his pronounced concern with relationality. Nevertheless, I readily allow that, broadly speaking, Loewaldian theory is distinctive enough to bridge (or circumvent) several schools of psychoanalytic thought.

mother, but, with one minor exception, he does not use the occasion to examine the specific ways in which concrete language—with or without consciousness of its gendered infrastructure—affects Connie's experience of her self. The exception, however, is telling. Early in their analysis, she becomes angry with Mitchell when he habitually greets her without speaking her name. Not mollified by his defense that it is not Mitchell's "customary style" to greet anyone by name, Connie threatens to end their sessions: "She felt that what she experienced as the anonymity of my manner was intolerable, and that unless I would sometimes mention her name, she would be unable to continue" (Mitchell 2000, 97). Thereafter, Mitchell makes an effort to greet Connie by name, which directly changes the course of their work together: "I actually found that I enjoyed saying her name. And her responses to my greetings were warmer than they had been before" (97). The negotiation marks a turning point in their working relationship, which intensifies in time commitment and productivity.

I have singled out this episode from *Relationality* because it implicitly alludes to the braided nature of language, gender, and subjectivity, whether or not Mitchell has consciously intended it to do so. Is there a correlation between Connie's specifically female experiences of pregnancy and motherhood and her sense of self as a subject? Undoubtedly so; Mitchell relates that Connie "remembered the strangeness of the separation that constituted [her son's] birth," and how the loss of their shared embodiment "associated to her memories that in losing her mother she had lost a "part" of herself" (Mitchell 2000, 89). Connie's subjectivity is inextricably bound up with her gendered, embodied self—what Irigaray would call her "sexuate" self—as well as her feeling that she does not *have* the same inner "self" as others do, "some much more grounded sense of who they are" (89). All of these elements are entwined in the pervasive spirit of loss that motivates her analysis. It is not coincidental that the act of addressing Connie by name, thereby speaking to her as a precise subject, is momentous enough to vivify her analysis with Mitchell. Mitchell's review of his work with Connie illustrates a much broader truth, one so obvious as to risk being overlooked: the dependence of psychoanalysis on the effectiveness of language. Mitchell demonstrates a clear awareness of this contingency when he informs us that

Loewald regards the uses to which language is put as embodying and creating different forms of psychic life. The centrality of language in the psychoanalytic experience makes possible a reanimation of psychic life through the excavation and revitalization of words in their original dense, sensory context in the early years of the patient's life (12).

Put differently, the words that analysands learn from their primary caregivers carry an especial plangency in the analytic setting, providing a channel to the realm of primary-

process. For someone in Connie's situation, bereft of a mother she cannot consciously remember, one might imagine that such words could be dizzyingly potent.

Mitchell is also attuned to the theoretical approach to linguistics from which Irigaray emerged. In *Freud and Beyond*, he and Black remark that some read Lacan as claiming, "that Freud was not prescribing but describing the patriarchalism that saturated the language of Western cultures" (Mitchell and Black 1995, 203). Therefore, Mitchell is versed in the perspective that (a) finds gendered resonances within language, and (b) identifies them as a manifestation of institutionalized oppression. Yet, wherever his allegiances may lie, Mitchell offers no indication in *Relationality* that, despite his nuanced understandings of language, either his psychoanalytic theories or practices are informed by this approach.

In Irigaray's view, language literally *engenders* subjectivity. If one accepts her assertion that language reflects a modern Western framework "which does not permit both sexes to be subjects," her conclusion that there exists "a certain *subjective pathology* on both sides of sexual difference" indicates a diseased, sociocultural system (Irigaray 1991, 143).⁵ A cursory study of syntax in any romance language attests to Irigaray's evaluation of linguistic hierarchy. She reminds us that, for example, "God is now masculine in most, if not all, languages," and elucidates why:

Man gives his *genre* to the universe, just as he wants to give his name to his children and his property. Anything which seems valuable to him must belong to his *genre*. The feminine is a secondary mark, always subordinated to the principal *genre*. ...An analysis of [the neuter's] origins often reveals that it stems from an erased sexual difference (144).

To Irigaray, the "subjective pathology" referred to above is a result of the negation of sexual difference that she identifies in language, and thus in Western culture at large. Unsurprisingly, given her training, she points to psychoanalysis as an exemplar of this pathology. As discussed earlier, analysis is predicated on language, but Irigaray also points to what transpires in the linguistic component of certain psychological disorders. For instance, among schizophrenics, "[w]omen tend mainly to structure a corporeal geography; men, new linguistic territories" (145).

The divide between the material and the territorial reflects Irigaray's assessment of the cultural dynamics in which we are entrenched. Oppenheim observes that, for Irigaray, men separate themselves from "the natural, of which the body is a microcosm...Nature (and woman) is seen as an object, something to be possessed, consumed, mastered" (Oppenheim 2006, 184). Her inquiries into psycholinguistics have

5. It is worth noting Irigaray's reference to "both sides" here, for while her project is assuredly first and foremost a feminist one, she does not disregard the damage that patriarchy perpetrates on men. The humanistic nature of her concern is not immaterial in the context of relational psychoanalysis.

alerted her to similar discursive practices across disparate grammatical and topical categories. Men situate themselves in discourse as cardinal actors, asserting their subjectivity; women situate themselves more contextually, more obligingly. Men use the word *I* such that “it is significantly more important than the *you* and *the world*. With women, the *I* often makes way for the *you*, *the world*, for the objectivity of words and things” (Irigaray 1991, 146). Men appear to comprehend themselves more easily as subjects, according to Irigaray's research, and the sociohistorical structure of language contains a natural extension of this distinction, one in which a woman-object is positioned vis-à-vis the male-subject.

Irigaray's theory bears connotations for the psychoanalytic procedure that are at least as complex as her theory itself. To begin with, the very soundness of the analyst/analysand design is called into question when its currency comprises a fundamental imbalance. The notion of a safe, respectful “holding” therapeutic environment is already troubled by Lacan's belief that because “the patient has no privileged position from which to understand the meanings of her speech, it is up to the analyst to decipher those meanings” (Mitchell and Black 1995, 200). In Irigaray's framework, it is not the analyst's interpretive expertise that upholds dominance but rather the messages encoded in both parties' speech. Because language both nullifies sexual difference and mirrors the inequities based on that difference, women are doubly invalidated. How, then, can analysis legitimately serve female clients? What is the purpose of psychoanalysis if, despite the intentions of its participants, the means of exchange only perpetuates the suppression of full subjectivity?

“Working on language in its sexuation...allows us to analyse the symptom,” writes Irigaray, “to name and understand the problem, to find the openings that allow us to modify the economy of the utterance” (Irigaray 1991, 147). Following Loewald, Mitchell does in fact open up a space for linguistic reappropriation. He tells us that Sullivan, Heinz Kohut, and other post-Freudians have invented new analytic terminology in keeping with their theoretical innovations. Rather than creating new words, on the other hand, Loewald invests classical Freudian terms with new meanings. Mitchell explains that Loewald is familiar with the anachronisms of traditional theory and the interpretations thereof, but does not find their solutions in neologisms; instead, Loewald argues, psychoanalysis may require,

a less inhibited, less pedantic and narrow understanding and interpretation of its current language leading to elaborations and transformations of the meanings of concepts, theoretical formulations, or definitions that may or may not have been envisaged by Freud (Loewald 1977, 13).

Insofar as Loewald believes in the affective power of primary-process language, this stands to reason. As we have seen, a child's linguistic bond with its mother has gestational origins; even small shifts in tone and rhythm seem to be discerned and recalled in infancy. Even so, we may surmise that Irigaray could not support Loewald's defense. Although she has no intention of prescribing either "an ideal model of language" or "a *fixed and immutable* schema for the production of discourse," (Irigaray 1991, 143) Irigaray insists that throughout our linguistic iterations "*sex [sexe] is a primal and irreducible dimension of subjective structure*" (146). Loewald's proposal, at least as Mitchell reports it, does not account for sexual difference.

At the same time, Irigaray's "Three Genres" offers no consideration of the non-semantic, non-grammatical aspects of language—that is, the primary-process experience of language, which undergirds so much of Loewald's and Mitchell's understandings of intersubjectivity. Must one assume that, even if Irigaray is in every respect correct in her premise, the *sounds* of phonemes, morphemes, and words transmit sexism and the erasure of difference? If the answer is yes, then a radical shift in linguistic usage would have to begin during pregnancy in order to effect a significant change in the communication of oppressive structures. Yet this would also present a uniquely agentive opportunity for women. As the first voices that their children hear, mothers would have the wherewithal to engineer a subversion of "the economy of the utterance." Of course, any successful attempt at subversion would be predicated on a meticulous deconstruction and inspection of the sexuate in "the discourses of men and women...to interpret the misunderstandings and impasses to which their sexual relations, both in the strict sense and in the social, cultural sense, are often reduced" (Irigaray 1991, 147). In other words, a revolution in the linguistic order would rely upon a prior dissection of the language in which, like Irigaray, we are made subjects.

Perhaps the language experienced in earliest childhood does not oppress, after all, but instead does what Mitchell believes it does: contributes to the unity between caregiver and child, enables a robust affect, and provides the necessary substance to which abstract language can connect, thereby bridging primary- and secondary-processes. These functions may even represent the potential to fulfill Irigaray's goal of revivifying the subject who is "masked, bogged down, buried, covered up, paralysed," toward a subject who is "engendered, generated, may become, and grow through speech" (Irigaray 1991, 147). Mitchell and Irigaray may have variant views on what language in its current configuration *does*, but their visions of realized individuals and mutual, substantial relationships are in some respects highly commensurate. Consider Mitchell in his discussion of the intersubjective mode of interaction, where he states that the relational psychoanalysts Jessica Benjamin and Nancy Chodorow have shown that

a more meaningful vision of health both for the child (and for the psychoanalytic patient) is a sense of subjectivity and agency, in the context of relatedness and recognition by, and identification with, a mother (analyst) who is a subject in her own right (Mitchell 2000, 66).

In this respect, Mitchell and Irigaray do not appear to directly oppose each other, but are they complementary? Is the one workable, or even desirable, without the other?

I suggest that Irigaray's project has a greater capacity for enhancing Mitchell's work than Mitchell's has for enhancing Irigaray's. Loewald's dual process theory brings tremendous fecundity to psychoanalytic practice, and by building on Loewald with his own relational network of non-reflective, affective, self-other and intersubjective modes, Mitchell advances a remarkably integrated, three-dimensional template for the human psyche.⁶ Contrastingly, Irigaray's declaration that "no world can be produced or reproduced without sexual difference" may sound reductive, and her injunction to analyze language and establish a new, metaphorical style can read as frustratingly vague (Irigaray 1991, 149). What seems by turns reductive and vague, however, is in each instance deliberate. Acknowledging sexual difference, as put forth in "The Three Genres," has an ethical urgency; without it, we will be unable "to construct, and not destroy, human values" (Irigaray 1991, 147). At the same time, this recognition entails such a degree of critical analysis that Irigaray reiterates her message, evidently fearing the continued resistance her work will face. She tells us that "the feminine has been used only for the conception, growth, birth and rebirth of the *forms* of the other," which leads her to ask, "how to espouse that which has no *forms*, no edges, no limits?" (151). Irigaray must be circumspect in guiding her readers through the process because the guidelines depend on a subjectivity that does not yet exist. Proceeding from this premise, Mitchell's work is condemned to insufficiency; his ultimate relational mode, intersubjectivity, is beside the point if fully half of its participants are not true subjects.

That being said, I wish to close with a recommendation toward reading Luce Irigaray's treatises on language with Stephen A. Mitchell's work in mind, particularly where Loewald's influence on Mitchell is clearly visible. In keeping with the topic at hand, I direct the reader to each author's use of a single, analytically apposite word: *excavate*. "Man is now excavating his mythical archaeology," says Irigaray, "when he is not looking for himself on the most distant planets, being still bound here and now to a *fault* from which he cannot deliver himself" (Irigaray 1991, 149). She is referring to the state of human alienation, to the estrangement revealed in and reified by the use of

6. Mitchell's four-tiered model of interactional modes is explicated at length in Chapter 3 (pp. 57-77) of *Relationality*. In brief, the model begins with Nonreflective Behavior and proceeds, in order of complexity, to Affective-Permeability, Self-Other Configurations, and finally Intersubjectivity, the mode in which one person is recognized "as a subject by another human subject" (Mitchell 2000, 64).

language to which we are accustomed, where we misguidedly remove ourselves from the basic sexual difference situated in the metaphorical Garden of Eden. Compare her view with Mitchell, who, as we saw earlier, relates Loewald's precept that language in the analytic process "makes possible a reanimation of psychic life through the excavation and revitalization of words in their original dense, sensory context." Here, language does not alienate; it connects, animates, binds together. Irigaray and Mitchell are each engaged in the work of excavation, yet she discovers a controlling superstructure, and he discovers a reanimation of psychic life. Is this simply a matter of divergent emphases? Or are they experiencing language from within their sexual difference?

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