Turning Perversion into Fervor

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The Marquis de Sade’s reputation for corruption, eroticism, and sodomy creates a major problem when analyzing his literary works, and even less does it motivate a person to pick up a copy of *The 120 Days of Sodom*, an overwhelming categorization of prostitutes’ sexual adventures. The negative stigmatism attached to the Marquis and his characters stems not only from the oppression of French libertinage in the eighteenth century, but also from today’s culture under the influence of literature’s New Criticism. This developmental theory attempts to focus on major rhetorical tools, such as imagery, alliteration and hyperbolic language. This practice only focuses on the surface of the words and the picture they form. The New Critic analyzes literature without any conceptions of the author’s life or its social context. This criticism neglects to look at the other factors motivating a story such as the morality, psychology, and politics behind the words of the text. New Criticism causes analysis and interpretation to be called into question. Furthermore, New Criticism solidifies the negative stigmatism attached to the reputations of author, such as that of Marquis de Sade, into the minds of its generation and today’s society.

Many college students do not know who the Marquis de Sade is, and those who do see him as literature’s most perverted author and refuse to pick up his texts. They are clinging to the idea that Sade is an amalgamation of sodomy and atheism—and that is *all* he is. Yet, if read with a broad set of
psychoanalytical, linguistic and philosophical theories, the works of the Marquis Sade are valuable historical references. They are quintessential socio-political commentaries on the corrupt parliament of King Louis XVI, and they are poignant literary structures that define the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in defiance of previous conservative “sublime” discourse. Students need to look past the whipping, sucking, and surging seed. The purpose of this paper is to aid in and encourage this goal. Using two major figures in literary interpretation, Sade’s works will be analyzed in conjunction to prove that the genius of Sade is more than penetration and ejaculation.

Jacques Lacan’s *Écrits* discusses many psychoanalytical approaches to human behavior that can be seen through written discourse. In the first section of the paper, the sister novels, *Justine and Juliette*, are analyzed with the mirror-identity theories of Lacan to offer evidence of the unconscious as an aspect of the Sadean character. Though Sade attempts to tear away the psyche and soul from his characters’ bodies and their dialogue and actions deny the appearance of the unconscious, the work of Lacan suggest that there are certain features of Sade’s works that signify the suffocated unconscious through the structure of language. Moreover, indication of an unconscious enables the development of theories behind the unconscious presence and overall affect on the language of the text, sexually and socio-politically.

This paper will also attempt to investigate the duplicative action of Sade’s language of rebellion. Physical and social language abound in *The 120 Days of Sodom*, emphasizing the constant contact of the dominate aristocracy and the enslaved peasantry in French society. Bakhtinian heteroglossia and grotesque hyperbole accentuate the ultimate destruction of this particular contact. The libertine penetrates the centrifugal language with its own centripetal language, unaware of the fact that each time contact is made, power is lost. The centripetal language uncrowns itself, creating an impotent language without power. Essentially, language is the destructive force in Sade’s works. Sade uses a unique system of languages to express the hypocrisy and social practices of the ancien régime. To better understand the significant impact that Sade’s works made as literary art, they should be considered a sociopolitical voice, inciting fervor within a group of oppressed people.

“To the letter belong construction and continuity” (Victor 209). Language is the essential element that binds a story to its characters. It is the graceful letter with which each character moves. It treads softly across a cold wooden floor; it runs frantically from danger, and it pleasantly moans as it entangles itself within its lover’s caress. Language is the essence with which a story systematically unfolds. In *The Didascalicon*, Hugh of Saint Victor explains
that when the letter, the construction of language, is perfectly organized, it needs no more than what is stated. However, sometimes the letter is structured amidst excess “in order to inculcate an idea or because of a long parenthetical remark, [and] the same thought is repeated or another and unnecessary one is added” (Victor 208-209). Excessiveness is the goal of Sade’s discourse—“to say everything.” It defines his literature.

Sade’s language, according to Marcel Hénaff, calls for both totality and excess, creating a less than subtle paradox bound in a Sadean text, one of its many paradoxes (56). As the writer of a rebellious discourse in a time when political uproar was overwhelming France, Marquis de Sade utilized the sociopolitical instability as a force to change the way novels were written. This is quite ironic considering that Sade had an extreme distaste for novels in general. His disgust with the genre is explained in many biographies and especially so in his own manifestos.

In 1801, Sade wrote *Idée sure Les Romans* (*Reflections on the Novel*), which is essentially a review of the novel’s history in Spain and France, from classical literature to the seventeenth century. He calls for the need to pry novels from their romantic, chivalric role in the early eighteenth century and advertises the erotic human body—the nature of the body. This materialistic view of the body (productions of the body being excrement, semen, vaginal fluid, urine, spite, etc.) and Sade’s need to say everything about its function was so important to him that he actually shunned his own work. *Justine*, published in 1794, is an erotic story; however, satisfying its Victorian contemporaries, the eroticism was the sublime, the hidden, an insinuation. The crime of Justine’s passions and sexuality is covered in colorful, metaphoric language—rose petals—and never would he have his name attached to such an abomination:

Never, I say it again, never shall I portray crime other than that clothed in the colors of hell. I wish people to see crime laid bare, I want them to fear it and detest it, and I know no other way to achieve this end than to paint it in all its horror. Woe unto those who surround it with roses. Their views are far less pure, and I shall never emulate them. (116)

According to Iwan Bloch, Sade’s denial of authorship to *Justine* signified nothing (93). However, it does emphasize the strength of Sade’s libertinage philosophy and the incorporation of this philosophy into his works.

Because libertinage is based on the pleasure of the body, in Sadean terms, the body is the key force in his stories and plays. Each character is a body, a source of “construction and continuity” for the story. The body is the letter; however, the body does not consist of the mind, specifically the unconscious. Sade’s body is defined as only the anatomical organs that the
body needs to physiologically function. There is a division of the body’s functions from the mind’s function. Thus, the movement of Sadean language is strictly mechanical. It is disassociation from the soul and unconsciousness.

The Sadean body is theorized to represent society, government, and religion; it represented a “new order of things” during the ambiguous sociopolitics before, during, and after the French Revolution. By cutting the body from the soul, Sade reaps the idea of a transcendent figure, a higher authority, essentially leaving the organization of things up to the power of Nature. But in Nature, there can be no domination by force; otherwise, She destroys herself to restore balance. Desire, primitive in nature, is the dominant force in the Marquis’s works. His focuses on the pursuit to expel passion through both pleasure and pain. The libertine’s need to expel his desire fuels the ultimate destruction of man and his society.

It has been written that Sade uses his characters only as physiological beings that simply “fuck, shit, and piss.” The characters live in the conscious present. There is no talk of dreams or emotions. The unconscious and the psyche are vehemently ruled out. Man is machine. However, Lacanian experimentation suggests that the instant a body sees its reflection in a mirror, there is a sense of denial and confusion that ultimately leads to a type of hysteria. When the reflected image is taken in by the onlooker’s eyes, consciousness, unconsciousness, and reality merge. This would indicate that Sade may have been subtly using a psychoanalytical charge amplified by the hysteria that an orgasm causes or the madness of sexual liberation, criticizing the King’s government as being in a constant state of orgasm, creating hysteria within the country.

One of the major themes in Sadean literature is duality. This motif is most obvious in the sister novels, *Justine* and *Juliette*. Duality is evident in their titles: *The Misfortunes of Virtue* and *The Fortune of Vice*. These two novels deliciously and malevolently describe the sexual corruption of two sisters, Justine and Juliette, who lost their aristocratic Parisian parents at an early age. They are subjected to every aspect of the libertinage sexuality, forcefully and consensually. These two novels are, most simply, commenting on the rape of the people by religion and government and also the destruction under the government’s lack of organization and liberty (Bloch 97).

For contextual purposes, it is important to understand the relationship between duality and the individuation theory of Carl G. Jung. In “Phenomenology of the Self,” Jung describes the different aspects of the psyche, focusing on the idea of truly knowing oneself by reaching past the conscious personality and experiencing the journey through the unconscious (Jung 144). “The psyche consists of two incongruous halves which together should
form a whole” (Jung 287). This journey to know oneself wholly is known as individuation. There are several stages of this process: the shadow, the anima and animus, and completeness. The shadow represents what is opposite of the conscious personality. “[It] is a moral problem that challenges the whole ego-personality, for no one can become conscious of the shadow without considerable moral effort. To become conscious of it involves recognizing [the] dark aspects of the personality as present and real” (Jung 145). When one approaches the reality of his or her shadow, it is met with some resistance.

*Justine* is Juliette’s shadow. The novel *Justine* is crime intertwined with beautiful suggestive language—beauty and the sublime. The moment Justine’s hymen is ripped apart, the thieving of her innocence and replacement of pain is only suggested. It is not printed audaciously; it is playful, colorful, and the use of metaphors bounded by rose petals screams to be deciphered. *Juliette*, however, is cruder than its counterpart. Every moment of uncontrolled passion is written with bold eroticism that catalyzes the pulsating movement of the story and the destruction of Juliette’s connection with any self-control. Character aspects suggest that the two sisters are in fact one person, each novel portraying its opposite. Justine is wrapped in virtue and truly fights to maintain it unscathed. Whereas Juliette instantly succumbs to the libertine lifestyle, and any moralistic conviction she had before she set foot in Panthemont, the convent in which the sisters were raised, dissolved with her first orgasmic splatter. This opposition simulates the function of a mirror; in that, when held up to each titular heroine, it reveals the opposite movements of the two. It is a suggested duality through opposite images:

> I, like Messalina, am a whore; but I am also esteemed as modest as Lucretia. I am an atheist like Vanini; I am esteemed as pious as the holy Theresa. I am as false as Tiberius; I am esteemed as truthful as Socrates. I am believed to be as temperate as Diogenes; but Apicius was less immoderate than I. (qtd. in Bloch 98)

In *The Mirror Stage as Formative of the I Function*, Jacques Lacan discusses the metamorphosis of an individual after acquiring a certain image, the *imago*, ascertained by that of one’s environment. “It appears to him as the contour of his stature that freezes it and in a symmetry that reverses it, in opposition to the turbulent movement with which the subject feels he animates it” (Lacan 3-4). Lacan suggests that the mirror aspect of the psyche functions as an attempt to connect an organism to its reality. In the case of the sister novels, Lacan’s mirror function is evident in the titular characters’ attempt to unconsciously connect to the conscious level. Marcel Hénaff has suggested that Sade, by eliminating the expressive nature and psyche of the conscious being, also eliminates the idea of duality. He describes that the use of mirrored or
duplicative language does not insinuate that Sade’s characters possess a psyche, but the use of mirrors only enhances the visual excitement of the libertinage. Sade annihilates any possible delirium that is caused when a character sees his or her reflection in a glass. “Sade turns the mirror into a device for producing determined, denumerable erotic effects” (Hénaff 112). However, it is necessary to recognize the duality that connects *Justine* and *Juliette*. Lacanian theory holds that when an organism sees its reflection it experiences a disturbance. There is a formative aspect of the internal mind that creates an internal image that an individual has of herself. When this internal image encounters reality’s image, then there is a sense of inner fragmentation of the individual. This fragmentation reveals hysterical repressions “and it returns at a more archaic stage than obsessive inversion and its isolating processes, situating the latter as prior to the paranoiac alienation that dates back to the time at which the spectacular I turns into the social I” (Lacan 7). Recognizing the differences between *Justine* and *Juliette* and understanding that the former is battling vice through virtue and the latter is infected with vice, in addition to understanding the hysteria and delirium that is caused by orgies and excessiveness of orgasms, the sense of duality becomes more evident.

The beginning of *Justine* describes the misfortunes that have befallen Justine’s family, and how she and her sister, Juliette, were forced out of Panthemont onto the streets to fend for themselves. Justine, willed by her virtues, was disgusted at the vices of libertinage, yet Juliette prematurely discharged at these thoughts:

> Madame de Lorsange, at the time called Juliette, whose mind and character were to all intents and purposes as completely formed then as at thirty… she gave not a moment’s thoughts to the cruel events which had broken her chains. As for Justine, ages as we have remarked, twelve, hers was of a pensive and melancholy character, which made her keenly appreciate all the horrors of her situation. (*Justine* 460)

When the two part, the Lacanian representation of the encounter between the inner image and reality is exemplified:

> Delighted to be her own mistress, Juliette spent a minute, perhaps two, wiping away Justine’s tears, then, observing it was in vain, she fell to scolding instead of comforting her; she rebuked Justine for her sensitiveness; she told her, with a philosophic acuity far beyond her years, that in this world one must not be afflicted save by what affects one personally…But it is difficult to harden a gentle good heart, it resists the arguments of a toughened bad mind, and its solemn satisfactions console it for the loss of the bel-sprit’s false splendors. (*Justine* 460)
Justine is so horrified with the words that ushered out of Juliette’s mouth that she declares she would rather die than live in the shame her sister’s libertine philosophy promised. When Juliette chastises Justine for crying, it can be suggested that she is scolding Justine for what she sees in herself. Justine is not comparable to the image of Juliette’s *intra-organic mirror*. Juliette becomes a fragmented person, rejecting any indication of virtue that was molded into her before her parents passed. She rejects the reality of her entirety.

Conversely, Justine’s virtue is stained by rape and murderous accusations, and when her life is most threatened, she finds herself at her sister’s feet begging for mercy. Juliette, on the other hand, had already been inducted into libertinage by Madame Delbène, the Panthemont nun in charge of Juliette’s care, and her deconstruction into continuous vice and erotic pleasure lead to scenes depicted in the novel as an utter hysteria of orgasms.

Justine is Juliette’s shadow; therefore, it can be inferred that Juliette is the Lacanian. Begging the mercy of Madame de Lorsange infers that Justine’s voice is inferior, creating the question of Sade’s libertine belief that virtue is inferior and weaker in respect to crime. The inferiority argument is amplified by the fact that Justine is a woman, characterized by her weakness and emotional hysteria. *Juliette* is told from a first person perspective until the last five pages of the novel, emphasizing her own thoughts, accentuated by the use of *I*. Juliette’s life is madness, destruction and fragmentation through erotic pleasure, sodomy, and sadism. Her voice is loud and she heard. Although she is female, she emasculates herself through a plethora of sexual acts and philosophical conversations, putting her at the same dominant height as her male counterparts. The two different perspectives with which each novel was written would suggest that Juliette, the dominant voice, is the conscious, *intra-organic* image of the subject, and Justine is her reality, her unconscious image.

Referring back to the individuation theory of Jung, he states that “there is a hidden feminine personality, and in that of every woman, a masculine personality” (Jung 1). Hence, if Juliette emasculates her womanhood and takes on a phallic presence, that would suggest that she is the male persona of the psyche, and her unconscious persona, characterized by Justine, is the feminine character fighting for her virtue, proving the Lacanian theory applied to the suggestion that Juliette and Justine are duplicative forces, mirrored images. In addition, there are other indications of the unconscious within the dissected Sadean mind. Jung indicates that there are specific archetypes, typically naturalistic, that represent the unconscious. These aforementioned archetypes are incorporated within each novel, allowing judgments to arise that Sade did not do a doctoral job of dividing the body and its psyche.

“Here, let me have your cunt, let me toy with it, and let’s both of us drown in the rivers of fuck” (*Juliette* 413). One of the most common archetypes
in Jungian theory is waterways. Sade uses water to portray the depth of perversions: “Let us both drown in rivers of fuck” (Juliette 413). It represents the instinct-driven and tangibility – the primitive beast that rules the body’s function. The tangibility of each titular is evident in the structure of the language of each novel. Juliette is more tangible as a character because Sade expressed crime for what it is: bloody and perverse; while Justine, as mentioned before, is covered in beautiful insinuation. Contextually, this again indicates that Juliette is the Lacanian intra-organic image. Psychoanalytically, water is the unconscious that flows directly underneath consciousness, known also as “an inferior consciousness,” which adds to the theory that Justine is the inferior feminine personality of Juliette (Jung 19). Water is the unknown psyche, characterized by her depth and darkness. Another important aspect of water is its function as a mirror.

True, whoever looks into the mirror of the water will see first of all his own face. Whoever goes to himself risks confrontation to himself. The mirror does not flatter, it faithfully shows whatever looks into it; namely the face we never show to the world because we cover it with the persona, the mask of the actor. But the mirror lies behind the mask and shows the true face. (Jung 20)

Both Jung and Lacan insist that the confrontation of the inner and the reflected selves are frightening and is met with some resistance, causing inner chaos, which Lacan refers to as hysterical repression. The repression is an effect of the psyche’s fragmentation. The encounter is so emotionally stressing that the individual turns its attention away from its reflected reality and isolates itself. This isolation can be physical or mental. There are two instances within the novels that represent the isolation caused by the mirror stage: the aforementioned parting of the two sisters, and the end of both Justine and Juliette.

Before Juliette leaves her sister to survive on her own, Juliette refuses to recognize the virtuous blood that pumps through Justine. She refuses to recognize herself, and thus refuses to acknowledge her sister, her opposite. Juliette takes to physical isolation by plugging any open orifice with a penis, a finger, or a tongue. With every orgasm she produces, the muscular spasms add to the increased madness caused by the denial of her “self”. Her body is truth. She is not a virtuous, young woman, but she is a phallic woman who orgasms and plugs the anus or vagina of any one person with her phallus. Each orgasm slowly deconstructs her being, until the end of the novel, where she finally accepts Justine as she lies at her feet, crying. The two sisters embrace each other and are once again at the same level and conjoined as they once were at the beginning of the novel. It seems that Juliette’s acceptance and emotional
outburst would end the mirror stage and its isolation. However, Justine is killed by Mother Nature—a lightening strike to her heart. Juliette, maddened by her sister’s death, retreats to Paris to take a Carmelite’s veil, in an attempt to expiate her crimes. She becomes quite famous for her piety and edification.

In contrast, the end of Juliette exemplifies mental isolation; more specifically Juliette, as she completely voids her mind of the unconscious. “In view of Madame de Lorsange’s refusal to keep such a prude under her roof, the debate was whether to fling the poor soul out of the doors or immolate her in the course of divers orgies” (Sade 1189). Ultimately, the group decides, in light that there was a violent lightening storm outside, that they would leave her to the elements, knowing that she is not going to survive. By pushing her out the door, Juliette forces the unconscious out of her psyche. Therefore, she isolates herself from becoming a complete person. After her death, her reputation disappears from the celebrities of libertines.

The end of each novel signifies the end of the mirror stage for both women. The fact that both novels take a pivotal turn from first person perspective (I) to the third person objective signifies that the “specular I turns into the social I,” which this paper characterizes as the use of the third person signifiers (Lacan 7). “The I [turns] into an apparatus to which every instinctual pressure constitutes a danger, even if it corresponds to a natural maturation process” (Lacan 7). The natural maturation process indicated by Lacan is exemplified through the maturation process of the body, the last developmental property being death. This means that at the end of each novel, when the point of view switches from first to third a dangerous atmosphere is created for Sade’s characters; the danger of Nature threatens with lightning and the howling winds. It can be suggested that Justine’s mirror stage leaves her fully matured and she is no longer needed for purposes of the embodiment of the inner image and external image, so her maturation pointed to death.

Essentially, the argument as to whether duplicative forces are evident in Sade’s work is shifted by using the ultimate tool in recognizing these opposites, the mirror, to reveal the battle between the intra-organic mirror and reality’s mirror. No longer can it be said that Sade uses mirrors only to enhance the eroticism pictured in an orgiastic group. The idea that there is duality and a sense of individuation allows readers to suggest that Sade is more than sex and atheistic philosophy. The sister novels are the water flowing under the conscious society of revolutionary France in the 1700s. At the time of their publishing, they forced confrontation and reflection, causing utter hysteria, which, in turn, fueled a populace’s rebellion to stop the libations of aristocratic libidos.
The conclusion of both novels excites the idea of the destructive principle of Nature. She killed Justine at the end of both novels. Can Justine be seen as the martyr of eighteenth century French society, a force that is meant to balance the libertine’s abuse of Nature? Ultimately, sexual desire killed Justine because it is a primitive characteristic ruled by Nature. It is instinctual. In addition to desire, knowledge is an aspect of Nature as well. The biblical Tree of Knowledge is a well known literary icon that represents the acquirement of the knowledge of evil. The serpent hanging from the branches of the tree, with its length and scaly skin and sly tongue, seduces and persuades Eve to take the fruit off the branch. The mere act of taking the fruit from the tree signifies that Eve gave into her body’s temptation—desire to taste fueled her decision to pluck the fruit from the tree. Eve bites the fruits, and her taste buds tingle as she sucks on the sweetness of the fruit’s meat. When she swallows the fruit, she takes in knowledge of good and evil, and desire and temptation. She acquires the truth of power of nature. Sharing her knowledge with Adam causes the enrage of God, and he destroys the Garden of Eden. The Tree of Knowledge represents the destructive power of Nature. Acquisition of knowledge leads to the knowledge of truth.

This principle is a common motif throughout many of Sade’s work. There is one particular scene in Juliette that allows readers to acknowledge the association with the tree and knowledge within Sade. Juliette is seated in a room as a member of Sodality of the Friends of Crime:

It was decorated so as to appear a forest; between the trees were countless little glades within each of which was a table set for twelve […]. Owning to the studied placing of the glades there was not one table from which you could not see all the other; and the cynical spirit in which the whole thing had been [framed] was also evident in the fact that no lubricity here in the dining room would be any less visible to the observer’s eye…(442)

A Jungian archetype that symbolizes the dark part of the psyche (i.e. the unconscious), the forest in this instance symbolizes the available sources of knowledge. The acquirement of such knowledge is within the phallic fingers and the penises of the members who hang between the branches of the trees. Their’ sex is the fruit and their members and philosophical speech seduce and persuades their victims to succumb to libertine sexuality, or the victims are forced to comply, chained, or whipped. “Let us drown in the rivers of fuck.” Rivers of overflowing and over-abundant orgasmic seed are evidence of the transfer of knowledge—through penetration and orgasm—from one person to another.

According to Hénaff, the Sadean body is an object for the acquisition of power, knowledge, and desire (10). Now, the only way for the Sadean body to
acquire knowledge is through gaining the seed of knowledge through orgasm—whether it is forceful or consensual penetration into the vagina, mouth, and/or anus. Taking the aforementioned into account, one can presume that desire and knowledge, in the Sadean text, operate on the same level. It has already been stated that desire is detached from the unconscious—it’s passion is felt only in consciousness. However, Lacan’s *The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious* challenges this perception. Incorporating theories of this Lacanian text reveals the insinuation that Sade is operating on a paradoxical level; in that Lacan states that the acquirement and understanding of knowledge is done not in the conscious state of mind, but on the foundation that the knowledge “is already operative in the unconscious, a logic in which, for example, an interrogative voice or even the development of an arguments can be recognized” (Lacan 283). Bruce Fink defines this theory:

Knowledge is inscribed in some way and in some place in the subject [for contextual purposes, the subject is the Sadean character], but the latter does not know what he is doing. (When asked why he is doing what he is doing, he concocts a rationalization, much like the neurotic who contrives a reason for acts motivated at the unconscious level.) (107)

The face the subject contorts to a rational dissertation is exemplified in both *Justine* and *Juliette* as both women only experience after a rational argument against God and praising Nature has been presented—after such, the argument is modeled in the characters’ behavior through sodomy and other orgiastic activities.

If knowledge operates at an unconscious level, then that means that Sade’s characters are not just bodies eating, pissing, and fornicating. Through the acquirement of knowledge, his characters strengthen their unconsciousness, thus distancing themselves from Sade’s original material and power hungry sex machines.

When Eve swallowed the fruit of knowledge, she also gained truth of good and evil; thus it can be said that knowledge begets truth. Establishing that knowledge and truth are separated by a thin veil of subjectivity, we can look at the one thing in both Sade and Lacan’s lecture, that incorporates both regimes: desire. It is imperative to understand that when Lacan undertakes the description of desire and its interaction with the regimes, there is a close resemblance between desire and madness.

According to Lacan and Freud, desire is the vessel through which both knowledge and truth are experienced. Lacan suggests that the experience is unconsciously subverted through desire evident in the grammatical structure of discourse—the “dialectic of desire.” Now, Lacan implicates that it is the phallus
that drives the desire’s overwhelming presence in the dialect. However, when it comes to Sade, the image of the penis is not only symbolized, but the organ is explicitly described and used to penetrate any anus that walks past it. As a phallus, the image has a direct connection with the unconscious aspect of the discourse, so when the image is tangible to the characters, and is used to transfer knowledge through coitus, then this unconscious connection can be assumed to be stronger; in that, now the phallic representation is “real” but has not lost its symbolic importance; only the meaning has changed. The subverted meaning is that it is a tool that symbolizes acquisition through experience. In any respect, if there is representation of a phallus, this solidifies the theory of the parallel dialect of the unconscious to the conscious.

Desire divorces itself from Law’s meditation, “because Law originates in desire” (Lacan 299). A paradox within itself, I find this confusing to interpret; nevertheless, it allows me to make the suggestion, agreeing with Kant, that the barrier between knowledge and truth is only the lack of unconscious. Since the Sadean character, based on previously mentioned theories, can be found to have unconscious activity, there is no barrier between knowledge and truth. When a character receives knowledge and transfers it to another, unconsciously they are gaining truth. This is possible only because, as Kant states, truth is closely related to morality, in that truth is everyone’s duty. Essentially, truth is a principle that becomes a customary law of sorts, and because desire is born in Law, then the Sadean characters are transferring knowledge and experiencing truth on the unconscious level.

Though desire may be allergic to unconsciousness, it is the drive that ties virtue and vice together. Utilizing the mirror stage discussion described earlier, we can better understand why the unconscious can still not ascertain its subverted presence in Sadean text. The reason for this is attributed to the idea of hysteria created by denial of the reflected self image and the hysterical and the primal repression. It is as if Sade’s characters have evolved through each orgiastic act, and in acquiring knowledge, the subverted text adds a sense of realization to the character development, allowing them to see the truth and morality. But when this happens, the character is plugged with a grotesquely sized penis in the anus, and additionally in the vagina and mouth. It is as if there is an ongoing conflict between Sade and his text. When his characters come closer to discovering the unconsciousness, his pen forces them to deny it, plunging each one into deeper hysteria, which ultimately leads to a spastic and chaotic circus of orgasmic overflow. It is a madness that drives all characters to their destruction, except for Justine. It has already been established that she is the unconsciously repressed part of Juliette. According to the text of Justine, Justine and Juliette are the only two characters who overcome the defiant pen of Sade, and ultimately make their escape together. At the end of the text, Juliette finally
accepts that which she rejected at the beginning of the novel. She discovers the unconscious through the language of desire.

Jean-Michel Herimonet and Joaniko Kohchi write the “desire is essentially allergic to consciousness” (232), rather as the elaborated, it is desire’s satisfaction that is allergic to consciousness. Sade’s novels are not void of the unconscious, even though he makes a point of keeping his character mechanical and in the conscious. Therefore, Herimonet and Kohchi’s statement creates a problem when analyzing Sade’s work. It seems that there is a paradox within the duplicity: If the unconscious does not exist in the Sadean novel, then neither does desire—but they do, as both are twisted around the words.
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