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What Marquis de Sade's Literary Critique Can Teach Us about Entrepreneurship

Abstract: No writer has captured the reader's imagination as vividly as the Marquis de Sade. Per his usual ramblings, he espouses evil via excruciatingly detailed sexual exploits; but, in later writings he is vehemently critical of those who engage in corrosive behavior. In *Reflections on the Novel*, de Sade provides step-by-step instructions to create repelling, enthralling, and memorable fictional narratives, then stratifies "what not to do" in order to avoid situations that may lead to irreparable physical, mental, and emotional damage in real life. In this same pamphlet, he advocates authenticity in writing and ways to empower the budding Sadist. Moreover, he is unique in this discourse because he deviates from previous writings and speaks directly to the audience. This article deconstructs *Reflections on the Novel* and it provides unique writing tenets as suggested by de Sade. These precepts are revolutionary because they provide new avenues of research in entrepreneurship.

What Marquis de Sade's literary critique can teach us about entrepreneurship

Donatien Alphonse Francois, better known as the Marquis de Sade (1740––1814), is one of the most controversial figures in both history and literature. As a historical figure, he is reputed to be a criminal and a libertine. He is also suspected to be the individual who was the spark that ignited the French Revolution (Gray, 1987). As a literary figure, his works purportedly have no redeeming social value (Wyngaard, 2013), and are nothing more than a "tissue

of horrors" (de Sade, 1987). However, after reading *Reflections on the Novel*, it becomes evident that there is more to this disputatious figure than at first "meets the eye." In fact, he may be able to provide unique sagacity with respect to the true value of entrepreneurship.

Jones and Spicer (2009) posed the question of whether de Sade could be considered an institutional entrepreneur – the conclusion was a reticent 'yes.' It is my contention that de Sade was an entrepreneur on a multitude of levels. His entrepreneurial acumen is evidenced through his pre-Revolutionary works, all of which were written to undermine the authority of both the Monarchy and the Church and to promote dissidence among his French countrymen. In fact, his edicts were so incendiary that he was imprisoned both during and after the Revolution. As a precursory example, during his judgeship, he ruled that the state did not have the right to impose the death penalty upon its citizens (Gray, 1987). His opposition stood in stark contrast to the prevailing judicial norms of the time. His challenging the dominant ideas of the French Revolution led authorities to deem him a danger to the state, resulting in further imprisonment for the Marquis. This example can be construed as narrative entrepreneurship as defined by Spinosa et al. (1997), whereby he created a narrative anomaly that was sufficiently contagious to infect a dominant storyline. He continued his "tirade" on the Monarchy and Church by inciting rioters to storm the Bastille and release prisoners whom he falsely claimed were being executed (Gray, 1987). During the French Revolution, de Sade was considered an outstanding corporate entrepreneur in that his transformation of the Paris hospital system was considered nothing short of exemplary (Quinlan, 2006). He dramatically improved hospital cleanliness, access to patient care, and revamped hospital administration practices. Lastly, in his final days, de Sade was applauded as an exceptional theater organizer. Despite the fact that he was institutionalized in a mental hospital at the order of Napoleon, his theatrical prowess was so widely known that people traveled great distances to Charenton Asylum (in Saint-Maurice Val-de-Marne) to see the plays that he directed, performed, and wrote (Phillips, 2005). Although de Sade's entrepreneurial adeptness does not precisely conform to a specific category of entrepreneurship, his life

experiences combined with his literary successes, define him as a "plus zone challenge" type of entrepreneur (Hindle, 2007; Pelly, & Fayolle, 2020). In other words, his ability to blend practice and theory enabled him to inspire the entrepreneurial imagination.

What lessons does de Sade the writer have for modern scholars of entrepreneurship? It could be argued that entrepreneurship is the study of deviance (Kets de Vries, 1985). In other words, managing and line working are considered 'normal' behaviors; whereas, entrepreneuring is a behavior that defies the norm. To understand deviance, we must penetrate the imagination of one of history's greatest sybaritic minds.

Lying in the subtle clues of his works and within his own literary theory and firsthand writings is an overt understanding of de Sade's entrepreneurial deftness. Through his works, de Sade teaches us about writing differently. This article addresses de Sade's axioms in *Reflections on the Novel* at face value to facilitate the analysis of his decrees and to highlight novel ways to study entrepreneurship that follow the spirit of his writing.

De Sade contributes three principal constructs to the study of entrepreneurship. Firstly, he details the sublime in order to avoid real life untenable, corrupting acts. Secondly, he explains the need for authenticity in stories. Thirdly, he provides insight into building systems that coerce, engage, and manipulate individuals to a desired outcome. In short, de Sade's lasting contribution to the study of entrepreneurship is infection of our imagination (Trouille, 2004).

This work introduces an overview of de Sade the man, along with his literary precepts, particularly his special emphasis on unreason. This synopsis is followed by: evaluating ways in which de Sade's techniques can be used to describe entrepreneurial failure (i.e., what not to do); entrepreneurial imagination through the study of antenarratives (what was not actually done); and, ways in which de Sade's writing can highlight institutional and narrative entrepreneurship (i.e., building systems to coerce people via threats and manipulation). These comparisons will be used to advocate a Sadean style autoethnography as a novel methodology, and will be followed by the discussion and conclusion.

De Sade the man, de Sade the writer

De Sade's biography is oftentimes overlooked; nonetheless, it can illustrate the antecedents of his literature, similar to ways that an entrepreneur's life can influence entrepreneurial enactment (Sarasvathy, 2001) or entrepreneurial antenarratives (Rosile et al., 2013). His upbringing was that of pre-revolutionary French aristocracy, but with interesting twists. His father was frequently absent, and his mother was oblivious to him. As a result, he was raised by his uncle, Abbe de Sade (Gorer, 2013). Undoubtedly, the Abbe was a tremendous influence upon the young Marquis. The Abbe had many live-in servants, including a mother-daughter duo with whom he engaged in licentiousness behavior, oftentimes including other individuals as well as components of the socio-material environment – despite the fact he was a "devoted man of God" (Berman, 1999). Moreover, the Abbe had an extensive library of pornographic books that shaped the young Marquis's distorted view of the church and society at large, and that encouraged corrosive behavior (Schaeffer, 2000).

During his early adult years, the Marquis served a seven-year stint in the army, after which he married a young woman from an impressive bourgeoisie family. In the beginning of their relationship, his wife accepted his dark proclivities. It was speculated that his wife either ignored or was complicit in his sexual interactions with prostitutes (Ostermeyer, 1941). Moreover, his mother-in-law, the Madame de Montreuil, initially served as his advocate and defended his character, but withdrew her support when his moral turpitude continued. In fact, she was so appalled by his behavior that she made it her personal crusade to secure his imprisonment (Schaeffer, 2000). It was during these frequent consignments in various prisons that de Sade formed the perfect spaces for his "intellectual adventures" that ultimately gave way to his lasting legacy.

True to form, de Sade's literary style has been described as anti-women, anti-liberal, anti-humanist, and anti-democratic (Corey, 1966). Sadism in contemporary discussion is typically described as similar to Sado-Masochism, a doctrine based upon sexual pleasures (Bos, 2007). Practitioners of Sado-Masochism profess that pleasure and pain can be enhanced when constrained to certain spaces, agreements, or acts that are based upon mutual consent. De Sade's true ideas,

however, are much more nefarious because he views pleasure as a zero-sum game. In other words, pleasure is maximized in direct proportion to the amount of physical and psychological pain inflicted upon the victim.

Unreason in a Sadean heterotopia

In the field of entrepreneurship, de Sade proffers two contributions to theory, each of which will be explored. First, he compels us to focus on unreason. Tracing back to classical economics, research in business typically assumes rational actors (Smith, 2010). Based upon this premise, scholars build models to facilitate their ability to theorize, generalize, and predict future events (Pelly, 2017). However, we can conceptualize entrepreneurs as nonconformists who eschew reason (Kets de Vries, 1985); and, markets can be equally unstable (Chiles et al., 2007). Alternatively, entrepreneurs may be the impetus behind wanton implosion of market forces akin to Schumpeter's (1942) concept of creative destruction. In other words, entrepreneurs can propose counter-stories, institutions, businesses, ideas, or inventions that destroy existing reason in favor of a world to the entrepreneur's liking. Therefore, unreason may not be as farfetched in entrepreneurship as contemporary vernacular suggests.

De Sade's forte is creating and theorizing anent unreason. He grandstands in his works, but in his quest to say everything, he says nothing (Blanchot, 1948). He does not view reality as coherent or sensible, but rather as a series of momentary flashes of gratification (Greteman, 2016). His goal is to create the antithesis of longevity, posterity, and sensemaking (de Sade, 2016). The rationale behind his behavior can be attributed to his view of nature as fundamentally evil (Trouille, 2004). In other words, he believes that hedonism is a natural order of life (Bataille, 1993). De Sade's chief objective is to create a system in which victims become so confused they submit to schema, thereby making him a master of the systems he creates. His philosophy correlates directly with the belief that an entrepreneur can become the leader in a post-equilibrium world (Chiles et al., 2007). In lieu of generalizability, de Sade focuses on "theorizing in the moment," founded upon his whims and the systems he created.

These systems are known as heterotopias, typically defined as zones separated from surrounding regions (Winkler, 2014; Foucault, 1967). Heterotopias may be real or imagined, and are exemplified in thought experiments and in literature (Foucault, 1998; Beckett et al., 2017). Examples of heterotopias from history and sociology include Stone's (2013) depiction of Chernobyl as a heterotopia that echoes the nightmares of the past; and in, Winkler's (2014) description of museums as heterotopias that can pave the way for rehistorizing. Finally, Pelly (2020) and Pelly and Boje (2019) explore ways that academic silos evolve into heterotopias that awaken latent evil in individuals.

Despite their divergence from the outside world, the inner workings of a heterotopia are internally consistent (Winkler, 2014; Johnson, 2006). They serve as a contrast that enables reciprocal sensemaking (Topinka, 2010). Simply stated, heterotopias can both influence and be influenced by the environment, and can manifest into a series of routines (Gioia, 1992) that socialize (Checkel, 2005) individuals into preprogrammed thinking – even though it may not be in an individual's best interest.

The relationship between heterotopias, unreason, and entrepreneurship is well documented. Hjorth (2005) defined organizational entrepreneurship as the spontaneous growth of heterotopias within an established organization that challenge both its strategy and tactics. Pelly (2016, 2017a) explores how factual and fabricated stories can be the foundation of heterotopias that are designed to supplant dominant organizational routines. Johannisson and Olaison (2007) and Peredo and Chrisman (2006) describe heterotopias that arise as a result of failures in sensemaking of dominant organizations and institutions.

Unreason, heterotopias, and entrepreneurship

The focus upon unreason in a heterotopia can be extrapolated to show that de Sade alters our understanding of entrepreneurship. His version of entrepreneurship experiences no morality and is without limits, except those experiences defined by the imagination and the arbitrary boundaries set by the "overlord" of the heterotopia. To elucidate, entrepreneurship may not

coincide with economic gains, but may focus upon pleasure-seeking and short-term gratification. This is a model not of heroic entrepreneurs as described by Schumpeter (1942), but of selfish ones. This does not mean that Sadean entrepreneurship and pecuniary gains are independent of one another. Money hoarding can be an excess that is as orgasmic as victimization (Bataille, 1993).

These ideas may be considered shocking; however, they are not totally foreign in the study of entrepreneurship. Sarasvathy (2001) famously described entrepreneurs with generalized aspirations in the spur of the moment, which can be construed as hedonistic. Kets de Vries (1985) also described the entrepreneur as a deviant. Moreover, the idea that deep thought and unbounded imagination can result in innovation is not a new concept, especially with respect to enactment (Sarasvathy, 2001). Even case study-based stories of entrepreneurship such as Allen's (2007), are rife with fictionalizations of lying, cheating, alcohol, and quick fixes, which can influence theory and practice (See the *Journal of Business Venturing* Volume 22 Issue 5 for articles that theorize with respect to entrepreneurship as based upon Allen's case). If de Sade is a deviant enactor with a colorful biography, then exploring entrepreneurship through his eyes may lead us to better understand entrepreneurs as deviants, understand the antecedents to their behavior, and harness the power of their imagination to help the reader interpret, instead of merely observe entrepreneurial behavior.

The first rule of de Sade: What not to do

Many literary critics have characterized de Sade as a man who recorded his fantasies through literature. However, in his own words, de Sade purports the obverse. In *Reflections on the Novel* (de Sade, 1987), he explains that the point of his works is to educate individuals about deviance; in effect he wants to scare people away from the villains in his novels. In the same work, he declares that he is performing a public service though his writing. This is a declaration that de Sade is not evil's greatest advocate, but its greatest critic (de Sade, 1987).

This basic precept harks back to a fundamental problem in research, particularly in entrepreneurship. In most post positivist research, there is an obsessive hunt for "the truth" (Herrmann, 2020). This truth focuses extensively on what does work, what happened, and why something was successful (Pelly, 2017). This is particularly problematic for entrepreneurship – there is no universal definition of entrepreneurship, or of opportunity (Alvarez, & Barney, 2007), nor are the basic components of a business plan agreed upon (Gartner, & Teague, 2017). On the other hand, we can heed de Sade's advice and focus upon entrepreneurial failure. These forgotten pathways have been previously explored in case studies (Shepherd et al., 2016), but a literary analysis may be more beneficial, especially when reviewing rejected antenarratives (Rosile et al., 2018) and entrepreneurial struggles (Allen, 2007; Pelly, 2016).

The inconsistencies of entrepreneurship mirror the biographical and literary epochs that transcended de Sade's life. Before the Revolution, the judicial system in France was comprised of two courts – one for members of the nobility and one for everyone else – a clear dichotomy of the law, and for ethics (Jandeaux, 2012). During the Revolution, these values were upturned in a most chaotic fashion, only to be deconstructed once again during the reign of Napoleon (Gray, 1987). A pioneer of de Sade's caliber tests these frontiers during periods of upheaval – by showing humanity in its most repugnant form and by de-masking his fantasies without societal constraints (Delon, 1972). Amidst endless debates on morality, de Sade provided a unifying force of "what is not" acceptable behavior (de Sade, 1987).

By the same token, we may not understand "what is success" in the field of entrepreneurship – but consensus among experts may not be relevant (Pelly, 2017). Perhaps we should follow in de Sade's footsteps to explore what entrepreneurship is not (Jones, & Spicer, 2009), and use his literary exposés to explore entrepreneurial failure and its root causes. Understanding the opposite of success can lead to the opposite of failure, if stories are told in an evocative way that propels the reader into in the story (Whitehead, 1933; Follett, 1970).

Another advantage of using de Sade's premises to theorize about entrepreneurship is relative to entrepreneurial ethics. A libertine who is able

to create a company as a domain of unreason may consider it a given right to terrorize subordinates (Pelly, & Fayolle, 2020). Recounting these acts in a gruesome Sadean-style can serve as examples to students and to aspiring entrepreneurs. Providing examples of unacceptable behaviors is especially germane with the rise of student incivility in business schools (Burke et al., 2014) and calls for increased ethics training in business schools (Giacalone, & Thompson, 2006). De Sade teaches readers to be more mindful and introspective (de Sade, 1987), and repugnance to his depictions of behavior serve as an important reminder that we are all human beings and should be respectful of one another.

De Sade in search of authenticity

Authenticity is continually sought in research so that we may uncover "truth" in our writing (Herrmann, 2020). Enactment is a significant driver in entrepreneurship (Sarasvathy, 2001), meaning it is necessary to assess the motivation behind the entrepreneurial action, be it an underlying intention or generalized aspiration. Unfortunately, most research, including ethnographic research, is observational instead of interpretive (Herrmann, 2020). Researchers focus on the ontic instead of the ontological (Heidegger, 1961); or, what can be sensed instead of what can be believed.

De Sade advocates the use of literature in lieu of history to explore human behavior, and what man wishes to be instead of how he actually behaves (de Sade, 1987). He invites authors to "take off the mask" and make themselves vulnerable to readers. As an author, this vulnerability enhances plausibility (Herrmann, 2020), and it encourages the reader to become a part of the story (Follett, 1970).

This authenticity (or verisimilitude in de Sade's terms (de Sade, 1987)) can be augmented by giving complete details of our fantasies. In the words of Agent Smith from *The Matrix*, humans define their existence through misery (Wachowski, & Wachowski, 1999), a sentiment shared by de Sade. But the Marquis makes one addition to Smith's statement – that misery makes the experience believable.

In entrepreneurship, we are flooded with Horatio Alger stories (Decker, 1997) and the myth of the heroic entrepreneur (Anderson, & Warren, 2011). But our fantasies, our fears, our failures, as we play them in our minds, are often omitted from our research (Rosile et al., 2013). Frequently, the choices we did not take are the ones that have the most educational value (Follett, 1970).

De Sade also encourages us to use travel to provide verisimilitude for the reader (de Sade, 1987). Every fantasy, or story, happens in a strange setting. For example, the setting could be on a luxurious yacht after the purchase of an IPO of a tech firm; or, the fantastical grandmother's house where "if only she could see me now"; or, the former or future boss next to the water cooler at the point where the entrepreneur cites Johnny Paycheck (1977) and exclaims, "Take this Job and Shove It." Irrespective, these unique heterotopic settings provide fertile ground for the entrepreneurial imagination, and they provide vivacity for readers to construct their own fantasies. This suggests that writers should focus more on providing "thick descriptions" (Geertz, 1973); in other words, more on the means of entrepreneurship as well as a re-examination of its ends. The ability to pave the ground for a fertile imagination in entrepreneurship allows the reader to form his or her own conclusions.

De Sade as a builder of systems

De Sade's writings are similar to Schumpeter's (1942), in that both men advocate for the destruction of existing systems in favor of constructing new ones. In fact, de Sade shares many ideas with members of the school of Austrian economics – Kirzner's (1997) exploiting gaps in the market place (or in institutions in de Sade's case); Lachamann's (Chiles et al., 2007) exploration of the socio-material for enhancing opportunities (or improvising with common implements to enhance torture); and, Hayek's (Steele, 1993) use of introspection to understand humanity (or in de Sade case, the use of deprivation and deep thought to enhance perversions).

Contrarily, de Sade is unique in his use of literary device to explore the underlying evil in mankind. His intention is to scare us, to infect our

imagination (Trouille, 2004). His use of literary devices explains in a very authentic way not just the action of constructing systems, but the underlying motivations (Butler, 2003). His form of entrepreneurship emphasizes creating heterotopias as systems, then becoming master of these domains. His use of archetypes provides a road map of how the libertine (or entrepreneur) can exploit others based upon their social status and skill sets. Alternatively, de Sade hints at latent needs by showing how a socio-material environment – replete with a dark isolated castle, a secret room in the Vatican, or a dungeon, can be altered to coerce individuals to conform to the norms of the person in power (Greteman, 2016).

This use of literary devices serves as a roadmap for other entrepreneurs to emulate as they construct their own systems. If we accept the premise that entrepreneurs are deviants (Kets de Vries, 1985), then readers can use de Sade's ideas as a roadmap to construct their own systems that deviate from the norm.

Tips from de Sade to write the perfect entrepreneurial tale

We do not provide a step-by-step checklist to produce entrepreneurship research like the Marquis de Sade, because he offers an orientation of ethics in lieu of a step-by-step system (Butler, 2003). However, we do offer a few pointers from the Marquis that may give the entrepreneurial research community a moment of for pause.

Many literary scholars have accused de Sade of heinous crimes. However, de Sade freely admits that most of this work is based purely upon fantasy (Wyngaard, 2013). What distinguishes de Sade from other pornographers of the time is that he created a coherent ethic to accompany his stories (Butler, 2003). Unlike the modern entrepreneurship scholar who provides a moral or lesson in the story, de Sade strongly advises against moralizing in the text and, instead, either withholds opinions, or uses subtle nudges within the discourse to allow reflexive interpretations by the reader (de Sade, 1987). On the

occasion that de Sade "lends a lesson to the reader," his characters convey the message; he does not. Of notable exception is in *Reflections on the Novel* in which de Sade speaks directly to the reader. For writers who create their own entrepreneurial Sadean auto/ethnography, it is encouraged that they allow the characters within the story to deliver the message, and to allow the reader to interpret the findings for their own ways and reasons (as found in Follett, 1970; Whitehead, 1933). Who would have ever guessed that de Sade was a post-modernist at heart?

De Sade also advocates that we embellish or exaggerate what we see (de Sade, 1987). This exaggeration allows for further extrapolation on the part of the reader, who can craft open ended applications. However, he strongly advises against exaggerating to the extent that the story lacks verisimilitude – a story must be relatable, if not believable, at all costs. Interestingly, many entrepreneurs exaggerate their successes in speeches to gain credibility and to form a bond with the audience – perhaps entrepreneurship scholars could emulate their practice as well. This precept implies that truth lies with the reader, not the writer.

De Sade was a master of the *tableau vivant* style of writing (Shapiro, 1993). In other words, his writing segments the action into vignettes that oscillate between characters and narrator to keep the reader engaged and anxious to read the next page. Long, drawn-out text (yes, even the kind found in modern entrepreneurship literature) can be exhausting. More troublesome is the fact that research no longer considers the practitioner, but practitioner critique could be more available if our research read more like de Sade's prose. This structure is frequently emulated in reality television shows – there is filming of the characters, followed by cut scenes that provide thoughts of the characters – with each episode rotating through multiple characters. This style of writing provides the opportunity for more democratic theorizing.

De Sade encourages us to view writing as a palimpsest (McMorran, 2007). The palimpsest is a literary orientation in which the author and reader engage in a simultaneous act of reciprocal interaction with the text across multiple iterations of each manuscript. In many ways, this enables the text to take on a life of its own across readings and interactions of a manuscript.

De Sade was a master of producing multiple versions of his books to match the times in which he was living and the ideas of his audience. His support of the palimpsest is commensurate with indigenous storytelling (Rosile et al., 2018) in which the author engages in the process of storytelling, story listening, and story co-construction, as found in entrepreneurial articulation (Pelly, 2016), or re-historicizing (Hatch, & Schultz, 2017).

Finally, de Sade encourages every novelist to be an effective writer (de Sade, 1987). Much like an evocative autoethnographer (Herrmann, 2020), de Sade realized that without an effective writing style, the author had little to offer. For those of us in entrepreneurship research perhaps we should "spice up" our written discourses to make them more interesting and meaningful for our readers. Like best-selling novelists, our works should be engaging – every article seen as an appetizer, a prelude for exciting things to come. More importantly, we should allow readers to be able to creatively apply our findings to their own stories (Follett, 1970; Whitehead, 1933).

Discussion and conclusion

This writing has focused upon reviving the theories of the Marquis de Sade and applying them to the study of entrepreneurship and its methods. Though de Sade died long before great scholars of entrepreneurship such as Schumpeter (1942) existed, he continues to speak to us through his biography and literature. His written text in *Reflections on the Novel* is clearly unconventional. He speaks to us as an open-ended storyteller, and his perspective on unreason contradicts not only our mainstream understanding of business, but entrepreneurship as well. De Sade's ideas are much like dark matter, they may be invisible, but they exercise an uncontrollable and significant impact and should be studied (Bertone, & Hooper, 2018). Unreason is the dark matter of entrepreneurship, and this paper has provided a new way to use the insights of the master of unreason to explore understudied aspects of entrepreneurship.

It is our belief that de Sade's biography and literature (despite their contradictions), can provide insight into ways we study and explain

entrepreneurship. Instead of focusing on the empirical and factual facets of entrepreneurship, it is time to tell a story of entrepreneurship. This would intimate that scholars not search for "truth" but rather for truth for the reader or audience, and act in accordance with the plus zone challenge in entrepreneurship (Hindle, 2007; Pelly, & Fayolle, 2020).

This approach to generate verisimilitude with the reader (de Sade, 1987) means that we focus not upon cold, hard statistics that easily fall into the Oedipus effect (Popper, 1950); rather, the emphasis should follow de Sade's lead and focus less on the "ends of entrepreneurship" and more on "the means." This philosophy is in line with process studies in entrepreneurship (Hernes, 2014). Through recounting gritty details, or "thick descriptions" (Geertz, 1973), de Sade directs us not in the elusive pathway towards entrepreneurial success, but away from failure.

Of equal importance, de Sade teaches us ways to construct systems in which the entrepreneur can dictate the rules of success and (un)reason. This removes entrepreneurship from a causation perspective (Sarasvathy, 2001) to a perspective of entrepreneurship without limits. In de Sade's systems theory, entrepreneurship becomes limited not by markets or customer desires, but by the entrepreneur's imagination. This approach encourages us to view entrepreneurship in a different light in order to engage our readers on a higher, more realistic level.

Future research that supports de Sade's precepts should fundamentally diverge from mainstream writing styles and goals. This is a more dramatic shift than simply embracing the playful sides of entrepreneurship (Hjorth, 2005). Rather, it necessitates that entrepreneurship research *be* a story in lieu of simply analyzing stories. Like good storytellers, entrepreneurship scholars should emulate early authors who wrote business novels to inspire readers (Pelly, & Fayolle, 2020).

This approach is not without limitations. The reliance on small sample sizes limits generalizability. However, de Sade would argue that generalizability is not as critical as verisimilitude which supports the postulate that entrepreneurs are black swans; therefore, sensemaking is enhanced though stories in lieu of statistics (Pelly, & Fayolle, 2020). Moreover, Sadean

stories are fictionalized and can be viewed as excessively subjective. However, objectivity is irrelevant in a Sadean entrepreneurial narrative because sensemaking lies with the reader's ability to feel connected to the story, and is not exclusively related to objectivity. Finally, it could be argued that using de Sade could potentially glamorize amorality in entrepreneurship studies. However, de Sade argues that it is only by engaging in evil that we can fully understand it (de Sade, 1987).

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