

Creativity, anti-humanism and the ‘new sociology of art’

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Abstract

This paper reviews sociology's uneasy engagement with creativity, using the lens of recent critiques of Bourdieusian art sociology and the call for a more nuanced understanding of the agency of art objects and trajectories of artistic production. I develop and apply an anti-humanist ontology to assert that creativity is profoundly sociologically interesting, and key to the production of human culture, from science and technology to the arts to social forms and institutions. Analysis of auto-ethnographic data on the production of a painting of Australian *mallee* woodland establishes three propositions for an anti-humanist sociology of creativity: that creative production is part of an open-ended flow of affect between assembled human and non-human elements; that affective flows produce creative capacities to act, feel and desire in bodies; and that products of creativity such as artworks are themselves affects that themselves contribute to the production of social life, the world and human history.

Keywords

affect; anti-humanism; assemblage; art; creativity; Deleuze

Introduction

The social and psychological sciences have characterised creativity either as something extraordinary and remarkable (de Filippi et al., 2007: 512), or frequent and common-place (Gauntlett, 2011: 15). The former perspective marks out a creator as distinct from the mass of 'non-creative' people: exemplary figures from art, science and literature bolster this perspective. Sociologists have tended to the latter position: for Marx, the creativity of human labour has fashioned the world, history (1975: 328, 357) and objects of beauty (ibid: 329); for Becker (1974), each instance of artistic production requires the labour of a multitude of actors.

Creativity is of sociological import precisely because of the ubiquity of creative production: from writing a letter, plumbing, cookery or sex, through social action, politics and policy-making, to technological innovation and the 'creative arts': what part may creativity play in the production of social forms, institutions and social identities? But while sociology has de-centred the source of creativity from an individual 'creator', recognising the part that social interaction, social institutions and social structures play in creative production, I want to take a further step, to deny human privilege in the commission of creativity. I shall develop an argument that creativity should be considered not as a human capacity, but as emergent from assemblages of relations between the human and the non-human (things, ideas and social formations).

This paper contends that rather than asking questions about what creativity is, sociology should ask the somewhat ungainly question: what do creative products produce? or 'what do they *do*? This is to approach creativity from the point of view of its contribution to everyday life, the social world and human history. To this end, I will draw on a Spinozist/Deleuzian anti-humanist ontology of 'affect': an approach that some have argued open up new insights for social analysis (Ansell-Pearson, 1999; Blackman, 2008; Buchanan, 1997; Clough, 2004; DeLanda, 2006; Manning, 2010; Thacker, 2005).

My specific focus in the paper is artistic creativity. I begin by exploring how Becker (1974) and Bourdieu (1983) together established the parameters of an art sociology that focused its attention upon the social contexts within which creative production and consumption took

place, before examining the critiques of this position that have been called the ‘new sociology of art’ (De la Fuente, 2007: 410). This forms the stepping-off point for my anti-humanist perspective, and how this may inform a sociology of artistic creativity, using a brief auto-ethnographic case study to illustrate the approach and its sociological application to artistic creativity.

Creativity and the sociological imagination

Sociological studies of creativity have focused upon the contexts within which creativity occurs, or has been judged to have occurred (Ford, 1996: 1112; Simonton, 1997; Thompson et al., 2007). However, sociologists have also attended to a narrower realm: artistic creativity, focusing on the contexts, institutions and markets surrounding art production and consumption (Gell, 1998: 6), and I propose to approach creativity from this aspect. Howard Becker’s classic (1974) study of art took a sociological chainsaw to the artist as ‘creator’, arguing instead that art emerges from a collective effort, in which the artist is dependent upon a network of other human actors, whose activities included

conceiving the idea for the work, making the necessary physical artifacts, creating a conventional language of expression, training artistic personnel and audiences to use the conventional language to create and experience, and providing the necessary mixture of those ingredients for a particular work or performance (Becker, 1974: 768)

Becker’s interactionist account of art worlds focused on such networks, the conventions of work that bind them together and the resources deployed to achieve their goals (Becker, 1982), and has been used to analyse creative production, artistic genres and movements and so forth. For instance, Bottero and Crossley (2011) drew on interactionist network approaches to model the punk rock ‘world’ of the late 1970s, concluding that Becker’s focus on network, conventions and resources sensitised sociology to the shared meanings and interactions in creative production and consumption (ibid: 117).

Pierre Bourdieu (1983) took a different sociological approach to artistic production, pointing to the social and economic power relations and struggles that surround and link art producers,

consumers and markets. He suggested the existence of artistic 'fields', more structural than the kinds of interactional networks in Becker's analysis, which reflect forces and struggles over artistic capital (Bourdieu, 1983: 312-3), and situate the production, reception and consumption of art and culture. This approach informed his analysis of fashions in the arts, and the institutionalisation of the cult of the individual creator and the 'art work' as object of veneration (ibid: 318), referring back continually to the social and power relations that shape the artistic field (ibid: 322). This Bourdieusian structuralist approach to creative production has been used extensively to analyse canons, styles and techniques in arts and music:

to shine a light into the murky waters of artistic fields to show what really guides them, to reveal the hidden depths of inequality in what appear to be disinterested practices and to demonstrate how power relations in such fields fulfil a grander role of hardening structures of social and cultural inequality at large (Prior, 2011: 124-5).

In this perspective, the artistic field extends well beyond the immediate site of creative production, meaning that familiarity or association with the arts and their performance may provide cultural capital to producers and consumers, reinforcing social position and status, or fuelling struggles between artistic movements (Bourdieu, 1984; Cheyne and Binder, 2010).

The artwork made me do it

Arguably, both Becker's and Bourdieu's analysis of artistic 'worlds' and 'fields' may be extensible to sociological study of non-artistic areas of creative production and reception, where perhaps the de-mystification of creativity is less iconoclastic. However, in relation to artistic creativity, their emphases on social contexts of production and consumption have been criticised as reducing art to economic and power relations (Born, 2010: 179), and as indicative of sociology's 'seeming inability to treat art as anything more than a proxy for or pseudo-reflection of the social' (Prior, 2011: 123). As Born (2005: 16) commented:

banal observations on the complex division of labour in modern media can obscure the more interesting point that ... all cultural production constructs and engages relations

not only between persons, but also between persons and things, and it does so across both space and time.

Born (2005: 34) suggested that traditional sociological theories of creativity failed to recognise the confluences between micro-processes and the 'historical trajectories' and 'macro-dynamics' of art assemblages. Continuity in artistic codes and aesthetic formations, and 'their evolution or bifurcation, subtle shifts or sudden ruptures in style or ideology' should be the subject-matter of art sociology, alongside structural analyses (Born, 2010: 179). De La Fuente (2007) argued that discontent with Bourdieusian orthodoxy required a 'new sociology of art' that could 'grapple with the aesthetic properties' of artworks (ibid: 410), engaging with creative products and their contribution to social life (ibid: 423), rather than focusing simply upon the contexts of their production (see also, DeNora, 1999: 32; Prior, 2011: 125; Wollf, 2006: 144).

Among these critics, some have seen in this new focus a challenge to conventional conceptions of artistic agency. Prior (2011: 125) considered that the sociology of art should attend more fully to the 'ways objects are artfully present in the world, the multifarious ways they resist and react'. From an Actor Network Theory (ANT) perspective, he suggested that art objects might be seen as 'actants', capable of agency and producing limits on what artists do (ibid). Born (2005; 2010) found value in Alfred Gell's art anthropology, which 'considers art objects as persons' (Gell, 1998: 9), while DeNora (1999: 34) teetered on the brink of a similar shift when she argued for a change of focus from what music means to what it actively does. In a paper entitled '*The artwork made me do it*', De La Fuente (2010) referenced both Gell and ANT, before turning back to a more conventional view of art objects as mediators of meaning.

Gell's (1998) anthropological approach was firmly relational, focusing upon the interactions between artists, artworks ('indices'), art audiences ('recipients') and the models or other things portrayed in art ('prototypes'), all of which could act either as 'agents' and 'patients' (targets of agency) within their relationships (Gell, 1998: 27). He theorised a nexus of interactions, which might comprise just two components such as an artwork and an artist, or an artwork and a recipient; or could involve chains of interactions in which each element was

active or passive in their relation to other elements. As an example of the latter, Gell (ibid: 62-5) suggested the example of the interactions surrounding Velasquez' *Rokesby Venus*, which was slashed in 1914 by artist Mary Richardson in protest at the imprisonment of fellow suffragette Emmeline Pankhurst. Here, artists, artworks, political figures and audiences interacted in a nexus branching across space and time.

Despite the theoretical advances afforded by this approach to artistic agency, Gell's analysis has limitations as the foundation for a sociology of art. Most significantly, despite its willingness to ascribe agency to inanimate objects such as painting or sculptures, it remains hobbled by a conventional notion of agency, retaining a foundational 'anthropocentrism' (Braidotti, 2006: 40) that privileges human action. Consequently, Gell considered that non-human objects such as artworks possessed only a 'secondary' or 'second-class' agency (Gell, 1998: 36), which was 'borrowed' from human agents. Furthermore, his cross-tabular analysis (ibid: 29) of possible interactions between elements produced what he regarded as 'illegitimately-formed expressions' (ibid: 36), in which an artwork played no part (for example, the power of an artist over a recipient independent of an artwork), or in which an element had an agentic interaction with itself. For Gell, these were not part of an 'art' nexus, although a sociological imagination would recognise the potential significance of these interactions for the practices and institutions of art and creativity. Third, the approach downplayed other factors shown by sociologists to affect artists and their artworks, from social institutions through to personal dispositions such as choice of media or artistic styles. Fourth, the theory is curiously lacking in any conception of power or resistance. Despite the recognition of an active or passive role for all elements, human and non-human, one is left wondering about the consequences of this agency: what are the effects of action by the agent, from whence does an agent's power derive, and how might this power be resisted? A final related criticism is that the approach does not admit of development or temporal change in the agency of elements, indeed the theory feels static and lacking in dynamic qualities.

For all these reasons, I do not find Gell's approach convincing. But can its relational underpinning and its openness to non-human action be developed without its residual anthropocentrism? To build on Gell's relationality, and to explore the issues set out in the 'new sociology' of art, I will follow the lead of various writers (Grosz, 1995; Jeanes, 2006;

Osborne, 2003; Thrift, 2004; Whitaker, 2012) who have found utility when discussing creativity in the Spinozist anti-humanism of Gilles Deleuze (1990). Deleuzian scholarship has taken a more radical approach to the non-human; one that steps back entirely from both anthropocentrism and the agency/structure dichotomy, considering instead the capacity of humans and non-humans to affect and be affected (Deleuze 1988: 122-124). The work of Deleuze and his sometime collaborator Félix Guattari includes many discussions of creativity in art, science and philosophy¹, but rather than a slavish exegesis of this work, I will establish in the next section a ‘toolbox’ (Malins, 2006: 84) of Deleuzian concepts to synthesise an anti-humanist, empirically-oriented sociology of creativity.

Anti-humanism assembled

In Deleuzian ontology bodies and other entities have no existence or integrity other than that produced through their relations with other (similarly contingent and ephemeral) bodies, things, ideas or social institutions (Deleuze, 1988: 125; Deleuze and Guattari, 1988: 260-261). *Assemblages* (ibid: 88) of these relations develop in unpredictable ways around actions and events, ‘in a kind of chaotic network of habitual and non-habitual connections, always in flux, always reassembling in different ways’ (Potts, 2004: 19). Assemblages develop at sub-personal, interactional or macro-social levels (DeLanda, 2006: 5), and have an existence, a life even, independent of human bodies (ibid: 40; Ansell-Pearson, 1999: 157-9). We may thus conjecture a minimal ‘painting-assemblage’, comprising, at least:

subject – medium – canvas – paintbrush²

although as will be seen in the next section, a creativity-assemblage will typically incorporate many disparate relations.

In an assemblage, there is no ‘subject’ and no ‘object’, and no single element possesses agency (Anderson, 2010: 736): the conventional conception of human agency is replaced in Deleuzian ontology by *affect* (Deleuze, 1988: 101), meaning simply the capacity to affect or be affected. An affect is a ‘becoming’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988: 256) that represents a change of state of an entity and its capacities (Massumi, 1988: xvi): this change may be physical, psychological, emotional or social, and an affect’s force may be – to use Foucauldian terminology – ‘coercive’ (for instance, the intensity of a pigment), ‘disciplinary’

(evaluation by the art Establishment) or ‘governmental’ (an ‘artistic sensibility’). It is an artwork’s affects (for instance on its viewers) that make it appear to have ‘agency’.

Affects are ‘projectiles’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988: 400) that produce further affects within assemblages, producing the capacities of bodies to do, desire and feel, and in turn producing subsequent affective flows. However, because one affect can produce more than one capacity, affects flow ‘rhizomically’ (ibid: 7), branching, reversing flows, coalescing and rupturing, supplying a diachronic and more dynamic understanding of creative production than in Gell’s (1998) theory. The flow of affect within assemblages is thus the means by which lives, societies and history unfold, by ‘adding capacities through interaction, in a world which is constantly becoming’ (Thrift, 2004: 61).

Spinoza’s conception of passions as active forces (Deleuze, 1990: 283) was elaborated by Deleuze and Guattari into a view of *desire* of relevance for an analysis of creativity. Here desire’s underlying principle is not acquisition (of an object of desire) but production of action, ideas, interactions, and thence reality (Deleuze and Guattari, 1984: 27-30).

Productive desire is a creative capacity (Jordan, 1995: 127) of a body to act, feel or otherwise engage with other bodies and the physical and social world, while assemblages are *desiring-machines* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1984: 5; 1988: 88). Relationally, human *desire* is the capacity of a body to affect or be affected (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988: 399), and in the context of creativity, the painter’s or composer’s capacities (desires) to mark canvas or score music are simply elements in the affective flow that produces a painting or a concerto.

Flows of affect change a body’s capacities in one direction or another (Duff, 2010: 625), and may combine or cancel each other out. Every body, object, idea, subjectivity or other relation is consequently a *territory*, produced and fought over by rival affects within assemblages (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988: 88-89). In *singular* affective flows, relations combine in ways that ‘represent nothing, signify nothing, mean nothing other than the desire they produce’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1984: 286); while *aggregating* flows of affect produce ‘stable forms, unifying, structuring and proceeding by means of large heavy aggregates ... organizing the crowds’ (ibid: 287-288).³ Both flows are productive, but while the latter imposes order and defines what bodies can and cannot do, the former de-territorialises, opening up possibilities

for what bodies can do and desire, and may produce a *line of flight* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988: 9) away from a stable state or identity, and toward a more ‘nomadic’ space of possibilities for action or desire (ibid: 89). This sounds a lot like how artists, innovators and inventors describe the creative process, both in terms of the creative act (Deleuze, 2003: 71) and the effect of a creative product upon its audience (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 175-6).

These Deleuzian elements (and their underpinning ontology) supply the framework for an anti-humanist sociology of creativity. In a nutshell, this focuses upon assemblages of human and non-human relations rather than creators and outputs; on flows of affect within assemblages rather than notions of creative agency; on territorialisations and de-territorialisations of capacities to do, feel and desire rather than social structures and deterministic fields; and upon the affective capacities of creative products rather than their aesthetic or other attributes. An anti-humanist sociology de-privileges the individual creator and her/his ‘creativity’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 164), and indeed creativity must no longer be considered as an agentic attribute of a body, but rather as a flow of affect between assembled bodies, things and ideas.

Anti-humanism, affects and the creativity-assemblage

To explore this sociology, I want to examine some auto-ethnographic data on creative production, drawn from my own hobby as a painter. This also supplies the opportunity to assess how an anti-humanist sociology of creativity addresses empirical study of what bodies and things do, how they are produced and transformed, and how assembled elements flow together and produce effects and capacities. Analysis can be grounded methodologically in Deleuze’s own (1988: 124-126) empirical approach, which he called ‘ethology’ in honour of Spinoza’s *Ethics*. Ethology entails documenting the relations that comprise assemblages (ibid: 126), and how relations affect and are affected (ibid: 125, Osborne, 2003: 515).

Together these two approaches move beyond an anthropocentric focus on the agentic power of the creator. The former emphasises *creativity-assemblages* rather than bodies or things individually. So a fine-art creativity-assemblage might be summarised as

painter - surface - paint – implement – subject – ideas – past events - technique,

plus a multitude of relations with the artist's experiences, emotional responses, skills and creative ideas. The latter considers creativity not as a single moment of engagement between painter, paint, model and canvas (Gell's 'agent'/'patient' relation), but as a process of affecting that transforms human and non-human elements. This affective flow begins long before any mark is made on a canvas and continues long after the paint has dried.

In 2000, I was a visiting researcher in South Australia, and one weekend rented a car and set off into the Adelaide Hills. Some forty kilometres out of the city, I left the car on a dirt track and wandered through an area of *mallée*, a scrubby woodland of stunted gum trees, acacias and other low vegetation that survive in semi-arid conditions and poor soil. It was the first time I'd seen *mallée* apart from a planted stand in the Adelaide botanic garden. For me, it seemed quintessentially Australian, and I felt inspired to try to capture something of it on paper. I used my watercolours to paint an image of this woodland while the flies buzzed around me and the afternoon sun burnt the back of my neck.

Some years later, lacking inspiration one day for a studio-based painting, I dug out this watercolour and worked it up into an oil pastel sketch, focusing on the twisting and overlapping limbs of the short skinny trees and accentuating the range of colours in the wood (Figure 1). I intended this as the basis for a subsequent oil painting of the woodland scene I had witnessed in South Australia.

(insert Fig 1 about here)

At that time I was interested in abstracting landscape scenes, and my first effort aimed at a minimalist rendition that used the contorted shapes of the trees as its motif. Of some decorative merit but otherwise not a great success, this work however did give me an idea for an even-more abstracted approach, and following a visit to a Howard Hodgkin exhibition in 2006, I embarked on a series of paintings using the *mallée* sketch as their basis. The one represented here (Figure 2) was the second in a series of three or four works that applied different colour palettes.

(insert Fig 2 about here)

Mallée No. 2 now has wall-space in my home alongside works by other painters; gaining mixed responses. One visitor, who I knew in advance considered abstracted painting low in proficiency and swift to execute, gave a favourable reaction, but asked, 'Did it take a long time to do?' 'Yes it did,' I replied. 'A lot of thought went into it.' This seemed to satisfy my guest.

This little tale of creativity born from a lack of inspiration would hardly detain an interactionist or constructionist sociologist for long, but offers a datum from which to assess three propositions concerning an anti-humanist sociology of creativity. The first proposition is that *creative production is part of an open-ended flow of affect between assembled human and non-human relations (bodies, things, social institutions and abstract ideas and concepts)*. As noted in the previous section, affects (the capacities to affect or be affected) reflect a change or transformation in the state or attributes of a relation within an assemblage. The relations in the creativity-assemblage may be physical, cognitive, emotional, social and of course artistic, and the flow of affect in the *mallée* tale began with a visit to the botanic gardens and a car rental and ended with a judgement upon a painting hanging half a world away.⁴ This rhizomic flow of affect between relations in the assemblage produced creativity in the most unpredictable and unexpected ways, and perhaps continues to produce affects, altering beliefs and emotions among the viewers of *Mallée No 2* and the subsequent art and academic work of the author (including this paper) for a dozen years.

This proposition necessarily requires us to acknowledge that 'creative' activity and 'creative' outputs are part of a broader flow of affect, a flow with a multitude of products and consequences, and productive of myriad capacities and desires. This flow is the means by which the social world, lives and human history are produced, and the 'creative' elements cannot be privileged as qualitatively distinct from other parts of this flow. Whether artistic creativity is *quantitatively* different (and consequently what if anything distinguishes artistic creativity from other production) is considered in my next proposition.

The second proposition is that *affective flows produce (territorialise) capacities to act, feel and desire in bodies, including creative capacities*. From what has already been said, it is hard to sustain an anthropocentric view of the author as the prime mover in this tale of wood, sun and paint. Rather, the affective powers of things, ideas and social forms (gum trees, a sketch, an exhibition) together affected the author's body, territorialising its capacities to think, to feel, and to create. This proposition does articulate with Becker's 'art worlds' and Bourdieu's 'artistic field', but it also recognises what might be called a 'micropolitics' of affects in the creativity-assemblage. In his analysis of the 20th century painter Francis Bacon, Deleuze (2003: 40) described these affects and the role of the artist as follows:

In art, and in painting as in music, it is not a matter of reproducing or inventing forms, but of capturing forces. ... Paul Klee's famous formula – "Not to render the visible, but to render visible" means nothing else. The task of painting is defined as the attempt to render visible forces that are not themselves visible. Likewise music attempts to render sonorous forces that are not themselves sonorous.

These forces or affects, whether they are physically co-present (a model or a preliminary sketch), or invested in the artist's memories, attitudes or beliefs (ibid: 61), are 'already in the canvas, more or less virtually, more or less actually, before he begins his work' (ibid.). Each mark made on the canvas is itself an affect that is productive of another and another. So for example, when confronted by similar subject-matters (a female nude), a Botticelli-assemblage produced *The Birth of Venus* (1486) while *Crouching Nude* (1954) was the product of a Picasso-assemblage; different elements in these creativity-assemblages enabled differing affects to flow. In the author's creativity-assemblage, the woodland and landscape, an interest in the botany and geology of Australia, the heat and the flies, the paint and the paper together produced a rhizomic flow of affects one upon another, that in turn led to a watercolour sketch, and via a pastel drawing, a Hodgkin exhibition and some failed paintings, to a study in blue and yellow of those gum trees in the Adelaide Hills. Each step along way was part of a flow as affect produced affect, and affect produced capacity, that in turn produced further affects.

This example suggests creative production as a particularly rich and rhizomic flow of affect, increasing the frequency, strength and complexity of affects, branching and going off at tangents, rupturing and reaching dead-ends (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 165). The generation of affective flows makes it a potent producer of capacities: territorialising, de-territorialising and ‘becoming’, generating lines of flight for both creators and recipients of creative outputs. This perspective on the quantitative ‘richness’ of relations or the ‘density’ of affective flow in the creativity-assemblage offers a non-anthropocentric means to differentiate creative products, and how experience, skill, craftsmanship, and ‘maturity’ may enhance creative production.

The final proposition is that *products of creativity are themselves affects that will produce (territorialise) further capacities and desires in human and non-human, and are thus part of the on-going production of social life, the world and human history*. This follows logically from the previous point: every mark made on a canvas is indeed an affect that transforms the surface, the subject and the painter, and so on until the work is finished or put aside. But this third proposition also recognises the processual and unfinished character of creativity, and suggests it would be mistaken to conceive of a painting or a song simply as an outcome, a ‘consequence’ of a creative act.

Artists are presenters of affects ... they not only create them in their work, they give them to us and make us become with them. ... Van Gogh’s sunflowers are becomings, like Durer’s thistles or Bonnard’s mimosas (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 175).

Few would question that creative products are affects, although often the capacity of art to produce a ‘line of flight’ in its viewers is assumed to be an ‘emotional’ response, from happiness or pleasure through to sadness or nostalgia. Gell’s (1998) monograph, re-worked not in terms of agency of artworks but as affective flows within creativity-assemblages, suggests many other possibilities for how creative products affect, from the healing powers of a religious icon (Gell, 1998: 32) to establishing the social rank of the possessor of a Tahitian artefact (ibid: 111). Art affects may produce a cognitive or introspective reaction, encouraging reflection, insight or even a call to action. Socialist realism, for example, supplied not only an emotional reaction but also an encouragement to work or fight for the

cause or state, as does both 'graffiti art' and graphic design. Or an art work may produce a sensibility or even an identity in its onlookers or participants: such transformative powers are implicitly ascribed to creative products by art and music therapists, arts in health practitioners and by hospital architects (Fox, 2013). Finally, they may produce judgements that have aesthetic and commercial significance, estimating the 'worth' of the creative product. The latter affects are in turn productive of 'the arts', art markets, art consumers and associated social forms (galleries, concert-halls and so forth) and the disciplines of aesthetics and criticism. In the case of my painting, these affects are quite limited, but even so, *Mallée No. 2* does continue to affect those who see it, perhaps now including readers of this paper.

Discussion

I would suggest that these propositions set out an agenda for an anti-humanist sociology of creativity that de-privileges human creators in favour of flows of affect between bodies, things and ideas. Creative production is the on-going 'becoming-other' (Ballantyne, 2007: 97) of bodies and things as they affect and are affected. Both the creative product and the creator are consequently outcomes of the creativity assemblage: the artist is as much produced as is the painting or other product (Deleuze, 2003: 70-71). Furthermore, creativity cannot be tied to a moment when an 'artist' produces an artwork; the flow of affect that lead to that moment began way back (in ideas, experiences or affective events), and will continue far into the future as the work affects audiences and other artists and creators.

This approach addresses the criticisms levelled by proponents of the 'new sociology of art' discussed earlier. A focus on rhizomic affective flows between relations as disparate as a canvas and an art movement satisfies Born's (2005: 34) call for a sociology that moves beyond micro- and macro-levels of analysis and addresses the temporal trajectories of artists and artworks (Born 2010: 179). For Prior, art sociology needs to attend to three aspects. First, to the role of aesthetic objects in 'knowing the world as well as imagining one's place in it' (Prior 2011: 125), and I would argue that the three propositions indeed establish art objects as elements in the affective flows that produce both the world and human sensibilities. Second, to the 'unique but also indeterminate status of the artwork as it imposes limits on what the artist does' (ibid), and the anti-humanist approach re-privileges art objects as material forces themselves productive of the social world in ways that cannot be simply

reduced to the intentions of their creators or the meanings ascribed by audiences or arts establishments. Third, to ‘the question of judgement and value’ (ibid) of creative products, of the potential for an aesthetics not relativised out of existence by sociological contingency (Wolff, 2006: 144), and I have argued that creative products may be evaluated in terms of the affective flows that produced them. I would like to say a little more about this latter issue, picking up the distinction between singular flows that produce novelty and resist categorisation, and aggregating flows that organise or define.

Deleuze and Guattari (1984) regarded capitalist markets, nationalism, tradition, patriarchy and so forth as forces that territorialised into repressive, oppressive and reactionary State regimes. They consequently contrasted creative products that create a line of flight in artist and audience with those that limit and constrain, describing the latter as ‘State’ or ‘major’ art forms, science or philosophy that specify what may be done, and what may be thought (Deleuze, 2003, Deleuze and Guattari, 1988: 373, Massumi, 1992: 4-5, Osborne, 2003: 511). State or major art territorialises and stifles creativity (Jeanes, 2006: 129-130) so that what is produced is derivative, trammelled by tradition or economic exigency, or subverted to narrow interests (for instance, social realism or commercial graphic design). Movements such as impressionism or the pre-Raphaelites were derided or excluded by the Paris *Salon* and British *Royal Academy*, institutions imbued with traditional or ‘establishment’ values that produced aggregating territorialisations of the creativity-assemblage. More generally, innovation becomes imitation, and profitability replaces passion (Jeanes, 2006: 131-2).

This suggests a further means to evaluate creative products, on the basis of how they contribute to opening up possibilities for action, desire and lines of flight. This is intrinsically a political project that articulates with Osborne’s (2003) critical voice concerning the high-jacking of ‘creativity’ by entrepreneurial capitalism, but also supplies a basis to understand (and put to use) the de-territorialising capacity of creativity for social objectives, for instance, as part of emancipatory struggles and social movements, or to produce or enhance health and well-being in clinical and non-clinical settings (Fox, 2013).

Central to this paper’s concern has been the intention to establish a workable sociology of creativity that, while informed by the agenda of the ‘new sociology of art’, can be used to

explore empirical data. Deleuzian ‘ethology’ offered a means to explore assemblages and affects supplied in my auto-ethnographic data, and I want to draw the threads of this paper together by looking at the kinds of research agenda that the approach establishes. Deleuze and Guattari (1984: 3) asked: ‘given a certain effect, what machine [assemblage] is capable of producing it? And given a certain machine [assemblage], what can it be used for?’ With reference to the first question, my example showed that it is methodologically possible to map out the material, psychological, cultural, political and social relations in a creativity-assemblage, and trace the flows of affect that produced creative outputs. This approach can be used to document the relations and affects that have shaped creative production contemporaneously and historically, to make sense of the dynamics of production and the processes that shape creativity over time. Looking at the production of both artworks *and* artists’ capacities opens to investigation a range of aspects of creativity-assemblages, including the emergence of distinctive ‘styles’ and approaches, and the rise and fall of art movements and genres. Importantly, artworks are no longer just ‘products’ of creativity, but affects in their own right, producing transformations that range from emotions through to social change.

This of course applies not only to artistic creativity, but also to a much broader field of creativity and innovation in science, technology, social theory, political science, organisation and so on (Roberts, 2012). For instance, we might be able to make more sense of the part that serendipity plays in creativity (Koenig, 2000): for ‘serendipity’, read ‘flows of affect within assemblages’. We may interrogate Watson’s (1968) autobiographical account *The Double Helix* to inform study of the creativity-assemblage that produced the theory of DNA’s role in biology, disclosing the complex flows of affect between chemicals, scientists, ideas, laboratories, social institutions and cultures of scientific competition and collaboration. My study (Fox, 2011) of the development of antiseptic and aseptic surgical technologies used documentary accounts to uncover affective flows between bodies, bacteria, medical devices, doctors and ideas of healing and infection.

The second question (concerning what creativity-assemblages can *do*) can be interpreted narrowly, to consider what kinds of material, psychological and social relations within an assemblage might lead to which kinds of creative outputs, and how creativity might be either

fostered or constrained by specific interventions that shape the relations and affects in the creativity-assemblages of students, workers and other potential creators. For example, once acknowledged as part of a creativity-assemblage, the recipients, audiences and consumers of creative products become relevant not only *after* creativity production has finished (for instance, as a determinant of innovation uptake or the successful marketing of contemporary art), but as part of the affective flow that produces creative capacities. For both Copernicus and Darwin, social, political and religious/philosophical relations to their audiences constrained their creativity; for scientists, peer review, research assessment exercises and promotions committees determine how creativity is manifested in the day-to-day work of scientific production; for inventors and technology developers, the economics of the marketplace determine which ideas they pursue.

More broadly, this question shifts attention beyond the immediacy of artistic or other creative outputs, to assess the part artistic and innovative activities and movements play in wider cultural life, the production of identities and sensibilities, social and economic organisation and integration, and resistance and rebellion. A concern with flows of affect, and with the territorialising and de-territorialising effects of aggregating and singular affective flows respectively, offers the means and the logic to link creativity-assemblages to their cultural and social effects.

I have set out here an approach to studying creativity sociologically, and these two approaches to studying assemblages and affective flows confirm the rich potential of an anti-humanist sociology that can engage with creativity in the arts and in other arenas, from explanation and analysis through to social interventions. Addressing these questions clarifies the status of creative products as elements within the broader processes of social production; while creativity is thus found to be socially pervasive, it is also of intense sociological interest. A sociological focus upon the affectivity entailed in creativity, and the part played by non-human as well as human elements, supplies new insights into creative production, be it high art or household technology, and in what creative products do, how they affect and are affected, and consequently how they in turn produce the social world and human history.

Notes

1. For example, discussions of creativity in music (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 338-350), painting (Deleuze 2003) and literature (Deleuze and Guattari 1986).
2. This notation should not be taken to imply any causal sequencing within an assemblage. Relations articulate with each other within a network of connections.
3. My use of 'singular' and 'aggregating' to describe these two types of flows replaces the more obscure DeleuzoGuattarian terminology of 'molecular' and 'molar', in an effort to demystify and 'sociologise' anti-humanist ontology.
4. Its beginning might in fact be traced back to many earlier events and experiences that led to that moment.

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