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Review

Mixed Forms in Visual Culture (Francis 2021) London: Bloomsbury 248 pages, ISBN 9781350211391

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The main body: A survey of forms – as embodiment

Overview

This is a complex textbook addressing key examples of mixed form over the last 500 years in Western European and Anglo-American cultures. With 80 colour illustrations, it is extremely well referenced in historical and contemporary sources, yet of distinctly different parts, including two wholly visual chapters. This is a standard Bloomsbury hardback, with the paperback version published in June 2023 at considerably reduced cost. The economies of aesthetic forms, early publishing circulation, is one facet of the book's narrative, and the

contrast between mixed forms exclusively for the wealthy and popular mixed forms, is central to the book's dramatic, and hence performative, structure. We are taken to some of the earliest European curatorial and authorial contexts in which mixed forms, whether opulent object collections or folded paper publications, constituted both a material type and a conceptual category for aristocrat and manual worker respectively. The narrative style features a broad vocabulary, inter-related arguments with cross-chapter questioning that is difficult to precis or gloss. Is there some operational logic to this type of a book? If my interpretation is valid that this project's distinctiveness aligns visual practices with forms of material production and with modes of reading and writing employing multidisciplinary operational concepts, then this might best be understood if represented in a table. The 'table' therefore also stands in as a publishing convention, for a detachable, general overview of what any narrative cannot achieve, in sufficient detail:

a comprehensive summary. The table below (see Figure 1) is a formal feature and type of paratext, which here represents a visual and conceptual overview of the book from which the review is drawn.

Whilst a formalist approach will always fail if it separates representation from reality by too many degrees, yet, Francis argues:

when 'formalism' has been cast as a 'problem' in recent decades, in the wake of aspects of post-structuralism (Osborne 2013), Hegel's aesthetics not only supports a return to formal preoccupations, but equally enables form's other – the idea or 'content' – to be kept in view. (7)

Given the unpopularity of Hegel in the art school or departments outside of philosophy, we cannot elaborate effectively on Hegelian philosophy here. Hegel's text features in both book (2021) and article (2022) and so is worthy of note, if not elaboration.¹ Francis is committed to the enduring value of Marxist critique to contemporary critical theory, and despite ongoing debate amongst pro and anti-Hegelian Marxist supporters, we should cite Hegel's influence in Francis's project, in allowing a number of elements; an 'historical typology', a schema of 'form', 'idea', 'content' and 'media', as well as 'sensuous form' particularly

drawn from the Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics (1835). We are guided, that is, from the late Renaissance to a focus on modernity and on to the contemporary mixed realities of augmented and virtual digital curation in the contemporary era. This pragmatic reflective history provides significant adhesive for Marx’s own texts to be applied to aesthetic production, given his neglect of aesthetics (7–9).

We could say that this book manages a plural theoretical attitude towards embodiment, addressing how labour, aesthetic and industrial, negotiates with form’s force. Francis negotiates between analytic and post-continental philosophical concepts to continue with a tradition of thinking through the politics of aesthetics in materialist terms, drawing of course on Rancière’s distribution of the sensible (2004) whilst integrating considerable art historical sources. Central to Francis’s argument, after the transparent explanation of her search terms, is that: ‘Perhaps unsurprisingly, there seems to be no literature on “mixed forms in visual culture”’ (13). The book assumes then, in Marxist–Hegelian fashion, that the subject and their experience are not wholly inseparable from the same social forces that define knowledge. A theory of mixed forms suggests the subject always exceeds textual description.

Figure 1: Visual table summarizing the relations between chapters, topics, forms and concepts.

Chapters	Topic	Forms, as aligned with analogy between reading and writing as forms of material production	Concept/s of motivating interest to reading/writing – derived from hypertext (subtitles, italics, quotation) and [my] choice of key words
1,3,7	Historicised examples of mixed forms from <i>thesis</i> ; Cabinets of Curiosity (Wunderkammer), to <i>antithesis</i> ; Broadside Ballads and Chapbooks, to <i>synthesis</i> (of sorts); Digital Culture as Wunderkammer	Words and things	Discourse/Content analysis Episteme- Renaissance, Classical (Foucault) Categorization Order/disorder ‘Taxonomia’(Foucault) Postcolonial practice ‘Colonial system’ (Marx)

		<p>Images and text</p> <p>Real and virtual; and mixed reality as a segment of augmented reality and augmented virtuality</p>	<p>Labour/Entertainment Distribution ‘Social life’ of books (Williams) Materiality Reading revolution (Williams) Interior (reading) Division of labour Individuation/division Marxist aesthetics</p> <p>Sensible (sensory, sensorium) Mixed reality (MR, Milgram, Kishino) The screen, media/computer (Manovich) Discretization (Stiegler) Modularity (Manovich) Medium (Mitchell) Hyperindividual (Cubitt) Post-Fordism Precarity Overlap</p>
2,5	<p>Mixed Form in Working Life: The Rise of Manufacture</p> <p>Mixed Form and Modernism in the Visual Arts: Assemblage and Assembly Lines</p>	<p>Bodies and Machines</p> <p>Practices of reproducibility and iterative labour (e.g. theatre, architecture, painting, sculpture, mass commodity production) and their dis/assembling or hybridity</p>	<p>Distribution Sensible Descriptive/Experiential</p> <p>Modernism, avant-garde Assemblage, hybrid/mixed-form Non-art ‘Negativism’ (dada) ‘Plastic automatism’ (Motherwell) Glue Queer Modernism, Hybridity/conjunction Standardization Fordism Phenomenal diversity/uniformity</p>
4,6	<p>The Pastime Scrapbook</p> <p>The Artist’s Scrapbook</p>	<p>Popular print cut-outs</p> <p>Mixed print media cut-outs and printed colour block silhouettes.</p> <p>(Glue, tape, paper adhesive, thread and binding etc.)</p>	<p>Extralinguistic (implicit, suggested concepts)</p> <p>Embodied cognition Visuality Sensory perception Percepts Nonconscious-Nonself ‘bewegtes Leben’, <i>life in motion or animated life</i> (Warburg, <i>Mnemosyne Atlas</i>, 1924-9)</p>

Introduction	Mixtures of All Sorts	Text and image	Heteroglossia (Bakhtin) Différance (Derrida) Sensuous form (Hegel) Sensory ratios (McLuhan) Mixed form in academic writing (Hebb) 'bewegtes Leben', <i>life in motion or animated life</i> (Warburg, <i>Mnemosyne Atlas</i> , 1924-9)
Conclusion	Synthesis of Sorts	Text and image	<i>Mixed Form</i> <i>Identity, Nationhood</i> <i>'Expanded field' (Krauss)</i> <i>Nothing-everything,</i> <i>Identity capital (Marx)</i> <i>Non-estranged diversity</i> <i>The join</i>
Journal Article	On the visuality of writing: A visual essay	Found internet images from Wikimedia commons, black pages with title text, other hypertextual features e.g. source referencing	picture-essay textual graphics visual knowledge non-verbal argument found-image writing

Introduction and/or Conclusion: The paratextual, and our reading of autographic and allographic mixed forms

Paratexts

The problem of thinking and making mixed form applies also to the system/s that try to define it. Gilles Deleuze quoted in 'Lettre-préface', by Jean-Clet Martin's *Variations: La Philosophie de Gilles Deleuze* says: 'I believe in philosophy as system. For me, the system must not only be in perpetual heterogeneity, it must be a heterogenesis – something which, it seems to me, has never been attempted' (Deleuze quoted in Martin 1993: 8). I affix this at the outset to point to the remarkable potential leverage for what variety of knowledges this volume of mixed-form-chapters may promote, both contained within, and exceeding, the book-form. Perhaps only if the book as system, is a system not in the sense of having machinic and sequentially functional parts, not taken as a whole, by virtue of being made up of those parts nor having a single identity, nor being confined within two covers, front and back. Francis consciously dispenses with mention of Deleuze, who only appears twice in this

project. We are left to clarify the Deleuzian potential of 'assemblage' as 'agencement' and 'the fold' as 'force'; as linkages that connect one form with another. Future work, Francis proposes, might produce knowledge from analysing mixed form itself, in 'all cultural practices', which is the fascinating challenge left to us in the 'The remainder' at the book's end, and after 'Beyond a synthesis' (206). Francis thereby both introduces and concludes with the further significance of the join, where media theorist Mitchell (2013) is cited as showing 'nested' and 'braided' links between different media (2021: 13), and with various 'conjunctions' illustrated throughout, that a proposition for further work, 'includes Roland Barthes (1975) on the seam, Gayatri Spivak (2012) on the copula, and Gilles Deleuze (1993) on the fold' (206). This demonstrates both the significant neglect of, and potential for, a generative methodology of the mixed form, an idea this review will elaborate upon.

The feature of the continuity or join, between two of the book's largely visual chapters and their extension in a visual essay, published later as an article (Francis 2022), raises analytical problems of how to read this project, in at least a couple of interesting ways. One, of the nature of paratexts in general (Genette [1987] 1997b). The visual essay, as we will see, leaves most of our interpretation down to assumptions of the implicit negotiation between the author and the publishing house in the paratextual domain, which decides the nature of:

the generally less explicit and more distant relationship that binds the text properly speaking, taken within the totality of the literary work, to what can be called its paratext: a title, a subtitle, intertitles; preface, postfaces, notices, forewords, etc.; marginal, infrapaginal, terminal notes; epigraphs; illustrations; blurbs, book covers, dust jackets, and many other kinds of secondary signals.(Genette 1997b: 3)

Genette is a rare scholar in the specialism of what he generically terms transtextuality ([1982] 1997a) in literature, and who published, over one decade, a foundational and progressive study of the role of what he defined as paratextual features ([1987] 1997b) in the history of rhetoric, poetics and literary criticism. This is one in which the conceptual differences, between the autographic (as singular copy under the author's control) and allographic (reproduced and 'detachable' features such as prefaces or introductions not written by the

author of a work) provides one of the thresholds of interpretation throughout this book. This distinction between autographic also referred to as authorial, indicates a type of authenticity and immanence, whereas allographic indicates a reproducibility or non-authorial instrumentality. This was likened to the difference between painting and a musical composition by Nelson Goodman (1968), and is elaborated upon by Genette. For Genette, 'Paratexts are those liminal devices and conventions, both within and outside the book, that form part of the complex mediation between book, author, publisher, and reader' ([1987] 1997: publisher's jacket copy). That Francis's visual essay (2022) is akin to an earlier model cited, Aby Warburg's *Mnemosyne Atlas* (1924–29) (21) which removes all explanatory or interpretative language, as such, from the work, leaves us squarely in the realm of reading paratextual features: the visual relations between one image (or text) and another. Hence, the frameworks of academic publishing, alongside authorial choice of image's sequence or contrasts; provides us extralinguistic insights into embodied cognition. Furthermore, there is an interesting contextual 'note' from the realm of non-representational theory. Nigel Thrift attempts to describe non-representational theory largely in the register of representational writing. Aware of this fundamental problem he says of his book *Non-representational Theory: Space, Politics, Affect* (2008):

I should add that I think this manuscript is amongst the last that will take on such a dreary form. It seems clear to me that to do justice to the ambitions of much of what I am writing about requires a new cursive register, one that mixes all manner of media and presentational styles in order to achieve its goals. (2008: 258)

Francis's work is aiming towards a post-representational materialism, paying equal attention to text as paratext. As a brilliant curatorial project this is unsurprising. Francis includes 'space, politics and affect', and is arguably more successful in that each chapter presents a distinctive method to materialize the dilemma Thrift failed to resolve in his book. There is less focus on Chapter 7, a fascinating argument, well worth further study, on 'Digital Culture as Wunderkammer', in order to take a more in-depth approach with the chapters directly related to 'writing in creative practice' for this Journal.

Intensification

There is relatively little research on how and in what ways intensifying of a sensory perception and the interpreting of the percept (mental ‘image’ or consciousness of the visual, in colour or perhaps sound, if we are synaesthetic or musical enough to ‘hear’ a melody from a printed lyric sheet for example), is achieved in the arts, outside of psychology. This is apparent in that both book and article feature a visual intensification, a visual writing that cumulatively builds throughout the reading experience.

There appears to be an indelible influence of studies in the 'role of the reader' throughout, which can be contextualized in numerous ways, although this will not be described but simply enacted, here.² It may also be under-researched how intensified reading, and types of experiential, deep, slow or close reading are often used casually and interchangeably, but that share an allowance for more than cognitive processing (Stephens 2021). Various systems traditionally come into play as interpretative devices when this takes place. Rhetoric would be the classical example. Formalist criticism was one response to close reading, but neuroscientific studies of embodied cognition equally hold. Francis’s interest in this field is indirect but apparent through her methodological diversity, especially when writing takes on an act of assemblage-making in multiple chapters. To read trans-disciplinary works on embodied cognition, across biology, neuroscience and phenomenology in Thompson’s *Mind in Life* (2007) alongside this book would thus be rewarding. Intensified or heightened reading, whatever further investigation may reveal it to be, is a type of doubling of the awareness, through more than one of the faculties, and also a means whereby personal identification can play a role in making a text (its subject, content or topic). Mixed form reading impinges more on our biographical narratives – are we mixed forms? – as we read. Empirical fascinations of artists, for example, Thomson (2017), in this journal, and the growing faculties of writing production in UK Higher Education, are, importantly, spaces in which individual experience legitimately forms a ground plan for the curriculum. As Francis says in her ‘Preface’ ‘this project has involved the refusal of consistency at the level of an artist’s practice (as a student I had four pseudonyms identified with different kinds of art)

(ix). We might empathically relate to the multiple identities and facets of an authoring self, as artist–academic–educator–theorist–other or such multi-combinations that equally extend into personal, familial, cultural and social dimensions. This self-same domain of the autographic-authorial 'I', we often assume is under our own control, mixed form indicates otherwise. Of the three types of preface Genette identifies; authorial, allographic and fictional, the distinction between the first two as 'serious' and the latter as 'playful' ([1987] 1997b: 277), makes of Francis's preface more a signal towards the fictional as inclusive within the authorial, and hence playful as a result. If this is the case for how artist's labour is defined by its context within capitalism, how the changing face of work in modern western capitalism shapes the sensible, is also the book's central concern.

This project is concerned with intensification that takes place at the intrapersonal and interpersonal scale, at micro and macro levels of the sociopolitical. Francis states that, '[m]ixtures are often treated with suspicion', which has proved true in my experience (Stephens 2023). She substantiates this by citing: 'the first post-partition minister of India Jawaharlal Nehru [when he] described himself as "a queer mixture of the East and West, out of place everywhere and at home nowhere" in a phrasing that also links mixture to perceived deficit' (1). This 'perceived deficit' better indicates all historical moments of constitutional power exchange in which identities are torn apart for the sake of identity-coherent, yet unnaturally occurring, commonalities. The diminishing of mixed form, like mixed heritage, takes place in the social field and on an industrial scale. Her critique shares a common thread with post-structuralist and anti-enlightenment philosophy, given theoretical and ethical motivation to delimit rationalism, not through denial, but in a turn towards embodied and sensory epistemologies.³

Ontologies

Superficially or at first glance, the 'mishmash' 'motley' and 'miscellany' citing of mixed forms constitute a kind of mosaic or patchwork appearance at times, and yet, a Richter's Overpainted Photograph or Jimmie Durham's Still Life, Francis argues, take slight precedence over a Martha Rosler work of 'heterogenous magazine imagery' because the

former two are ‘materially hybrid entities, composed of different substances or structures’ (5). Such differences lead to a more detailed discussion of assemblage artworks, over collage and montage, in Chapter 5 on ‘Mixed form and modernism’ as something of a mixed form logic emerges. Problematically, at times, what constitutes a mixed form is not entirely clear. This is itself, at the level of ontology, a fascinating debate as to the elusive nature of the mixed form. She astutely remarks, to take one example, that the problem modernism has with mixed form is that it both rejects and champions it, simultaneously. The problem of mixed form’s definition is not one confined within the covers of this book, but roving at large across historical accounts, not simply due to the nature of its complexity but the lack of heterogeneity in analytic frames of reference, as was Deleuze’s, earlier cited, point. Hence Greenberg’s well known later essay ‘Modernist Painting’ ([1965] 1983) and his positions on formalist modernism as a medium-specificity and quality reaching towards some kind of apotheosis, (echoing similar positions such as F. R. Leavis’s argument in *The Great Tradition* (1948) in literature, that echo traditionalist foundations going back to Aristotle’s essentialist divisions of the arts). Francis convincingly argues against medium-specificity citing concurrent arguments such as ‘Fluxus artist Dick Higgins [who] published his ‘Statement on Intermedia’ in 1967’ (117) . When the ‘revolutionary’ qualities of innovation claimed for collage by some artists and critics, is as strongly claimed for ‘photomontage’ by others, Francis meticulously unpicks the interminable problems inherent in such arguments through the now most welcome perspective of a theory of mixed form. That is, she cuts through much disagreement about the form as medium and materialist positions. For instance, she wryly interjects, ‘[i]f assemblage contaminates the nineteenth century’s categories of art more than collage, this starts with the fact that it is more voluminous’ (123). The question of an assemblage’s identity, vis-à-vis collage, is solved when Francis curtly remarks, in a curatorial aside, ‘I suggest that “assemblage” is used to designate “collages” that cannot be fixed to a wall’ (123). There is a distinctive clarity to familiar art historical debate that mixed forms contribute.

In the first two-three decades of the last century with Picasso, Ernst, Oppenheim, Schwitters or Haussmann who furnished us with ‘various hybrid’ forms that are widely accepted as part of the Dada and Surrealist legacies of modernism, we might assume we already have

sufficient grasp of the mixed form, and have already thought this through. Yet, whilst these are some of the better-known art historical examples, and the book elaborates ‘over fifty kinds’ of mixed visual forms, it would be wrong to assume that the focus of the book is derived from these popular art historical contexts.

There is, therefore, more detailed historical precedent needed to untangle the complexities of mixed form’s philosophical ontology. This occurs as an object’s properties in becoming object, not least, objects for science through empirical means, are already formed into a potential order outside of their radical, rogue alterity in cultures unknown to the West, that is, through forms of violence disguised as curatorial strategy.

Epistemologies

The first in-depth analysis of exemplary ‘mixed form’, will be given more of an in-depth treatment, in keeping with the doubling, intensification process of this critical book review. Attention to attending as a practice of care in scholarship leads directly to reading reading, involving a meta-cognitive process, much like that between editorial and authorial positions. We focus in Chapter 1 on those privileged and esteemed private object collections themselves known as Wunderkammer (Cabinets of Curiosity) common in ‘mid-sixteenth to late seventeenth century’ Europe. Here the affect is derived from a heightened display of the curious, the ‘rare’, ‘exotic’ and ‘improbable’, precursors to which were perhaps the ‘reliquary chests’, having powers of a mystico-religious nature. One contemporary account counted 970 Cabinets of Curiosity between 1556 and 1560 alone. The method that operates within this chapter is a comparative visual analysis, combining both content and discourse analysis, of eight antique prints, in digital reproduction, and one painting, as facsimiles of the spatial arrangement within each of these ‘actual, historical cabinets’ or private rooms. This is to analyse ‘the nature of the artefacts’ and ‘the principles for their arrangement’. Each heterogenous collection differs in its display, so that historical distance might crystallize patterns, beyond the judgements of commentators at that time, and later, as to the ‘the bizarre,

the accidental' and 'unsystematic' that these displays primary epistemology were said to represent. Knowledge as structured in forms, like books, carry out similar regimenting functions. If mixed form is simply the chaos of all things higgledy-piggledy either prior to or after some notion of order, to what order are we then appealing? This late sixteenth-century phrase for disorder, hurriedness, conveys cultural norms and values that are hidden in plain sight. The listing of Mr John Tradescant's 'Ark', which 'formed the basis of the Ashmolean in Oxford' from a visitors account in 1638 is likewise astonishingly revealing, both in its variability of object and colonial reach:

In the museum itself we saw a salamander, a chameleon, a pelican, a remora, a lanhado from Africa, a white partridge, a goose which has grown in Scotland on a tree, a flying squirrel, another squirrel like a fish, all kinds of bright coloured birds from India, a number of things changed into stone, amongst others a piece of human flesh on a bone, gourds, olives, a piece of wood, an ape's head, a cheese, etc; all kinds of shells, the hand of a mermaid, the hand of a mummy, a very natural wax hand under glass, all kinds of precious stones, coins, a picture wrought in feathers, a small piece of wood from the cross of Christ, pictures in perspective of Henry IV and Louis XIII of France, who are shown, as in nature, on a polished steel mirror when this is held against the middle of the picture (26)

Visually and epistemologically, this short extract, from a much longer list, is as fascinating as it is disturbing. Our contemporary awareness of the sheer scale of the rigorous and uncompromising violence of decontextualizing objects, knowledge and peoples germane to the imperial power and status-driven wealth-accumulation of Western Europe surely hits home. Francis's imperative to unpack and historicize the political dimension of all this wanderlust or bildungsreise activity, validating as it does the continuities of authoritative knowledge in both; scientific findings from optics and reliquary fragments, alongside specimens of every type, is enacted throughout the analysis. I notice the optical and perspectival play in the polished steel mirror, which uses a ploy as found in Brunelleschi's experiment (of 200 years earlier) 'proving' linear perspective through an empirical viewfinder and mirror. Such details, add evidence to her later arguments that the prints

themselves are perspectively drawn to emphasize their enframement in a spatial order. Francis also integrates her Marxist framework from the outset, who after all spoke of the ‘competitive zeal’ in such motivations to collect, to engage us in a critical perspective throughout her narratives; and keeping present our insights into the origins of the Bourgeoisie, in terms of cultural capital, taste and judgement. There is nothing to shield us from another striking affect: the utter human voracity to commodify and consume images of the world with equal ruthlessness and frivolity. At our twenty-first century historical juncture where world dissolution is a cultural and political reality for many more than had previously been able to articulate their privation, the question of the power to precipitate extinction, via the acquisition of knowledge, demands just the kind of close attention Francis pays to these historic examples. Grotesque though they might also be, too many contemporary cases might resonate with this.

The book therefore raises the kind of questions that Colebrook addresses in her paper ‘Images without worlds’, drawing on Stiegler’s work that also addresses one of Francis’s concerns, the ‘proletarianization of the sensibility’:

When art objects appear as lost, no longer recognised, or as mere junk, we are given images without world. What were once objects of what Bernard Stiegler refers to as ‘mystagogy’ – or seeing an image as the revelation of some immaterial sense that remains to be read – become nothing more than dead matter (Stiegler 2017).
(Colebrook 2020: 12)

The task then, for Stiegler, at least in *Symbolic Misery, Volume 1: The Hyperindustrial Epoch* (2014) is to explore how we are subjected by marketing (and, we might read, dominant aesthetic forms) and deprived of an ethical-aesthetic instinct that is replaced by ‘conditioning’. Stiegler’s ‘genealogy of the sensible’ in the two volume *Symbolic Misery* just cited, may provide an interesting contextual reference or intertextual reading to Francis’s work. In terms of visuality, Colebrook puts it more succinctly that, ‘a very specific conception of art: the proper comportment to the world is not one of seeing, but one of reading’ (2020: 14). This is highly resonant with Francis’s project, because she, as a visual

artist–academic is, in effect, both consciously re-reading, taking a meta-cognitive approach to reading, akin to Genette, and reading seeing throughout this project. In one sense, this is a type of aesthetic reading of material objects held in common between a post-phenomenology and post-critical theory (in which the nature of a Self is left unresolved), that allows, according to Colebrook's reading of Foucault: 'the practices, relations, bodies, and procedures from which the notion of knowledge as representation emerged, while also insisting that other relations were possible' (Colebrook 2020: 14-15). In another sense she directly addresses the difference between sight and touch for epistemologies of the Enlightenment: the so-called 'Molyneux problem' (Degenaar and Lokhorst 2021), can we know what we cannot see? Francis's solely visual essay (2022), excepting image titles and footnotes, as paratexts, with its unique visual abstract, is thus a perfect addendum to this book. The visual article intensifies and dramatizes the 'text' as a mixed form object. How we see objects and their images is an open question, especially if their structures of being-visual are not re-materialized, but simply, representationally reproduced.

One reason why this first chapter is of such importance then, is, as she says at the end of the chapter, 'the way in which the Wunderkammer circulates today may work to critique, and compensate for, the absence of heterogeneous affect in contemporary culture, an absence addressed in chapter seven, and one which may be seen to drive this book' (50).

Heterogeneity is valuable as mixed form, not least because in landscapes of piled-up garbage where only 'some mixture involves "matter out of place" in Mary Douglas's phrase (Douglas 1966) in destructive ways: pollution for example' (4), it is rather to promote the idea that 'mixture's transgressions and nonconformities are regarded as productive' (4) and that this work encourages us to take seriously.

So, an epistemological problem remains, how do we 'read' such phenomenon at all, especially if the mixed form is already marginal or invisible? In the section 'Defining "order"' in Chapter 1, Francis draws on Foucault's *The Order of Things* to explain how different forms of order prior to 'modern "scientific" taxonomic order' are not in dis-order but may well be inchoate in our eyes. The 'renaissance episteme' was organized around a different logic entirely, 'similitude' and 'resemblance' (rather than the 'identity and

difference' binary derived from the 'Classical episteme' Foucault [1966] 1994: 52) and in four ways; *convenientia* ('likeness by adjacency'); *aemulatio* 'which is *convenientia* "from a distance" as instanced in "the reflection and the mirror"; analogy ('resemblance across space') and sympathy, interestingly 'the "threat of render[ing] things identical, [yet] it is countered by its twin, antipathy" (Foucault quoted in 32). Hence, Francis's visual analysis of the nine cabinets proceeds on this basis. We might just note her conclusions. That the spatial perspective or 'visual assonance' in the print's layout when taking the form of a 'grid' that mirrors an architectural view thus misdirects us towards presumption of a taxonomic order. That a 'radical heterogeneity of its origins, perhaps as a kind of postcolonial practice' (50), offers an insight that, 'the desire for order (or whatever kind) [...] might be said to mirror the submission of the other to the same, that, in part, defines the practice of colonization' (50). Taken together, we might then deduce that the Wunderkammer's diversity, emergent from the diverse cultures from which it came, 'is suppressed, or not reflected', and that this is also found in Marx's view that the rise of manufacture paralleled 'the increasing subjection of independent and diverse "handicraft" workers' (51). The relation between human and non-human agency, a question for new materialism, would see mixed form here having the power of unthought or if cognition is externalized, mixed forms provide instances of the cognitive non-conscious, to borrow Hayles (2017) use of these terms. Mixed form's epistemological force, for Francis, depends on a positive response to the division of labour, in effect, to 'protest' is not to 'acquiesce' (51). The book asks of its readers, can we think with mixed form, rather than let the diminishing of mixed form think for us?

Force

Chapter 2, 'Mixed form in working life: The rise of manufacture', takes a political notion of partition, and engages Rancière's research on the distribution of the embodied sensible (hence aesthetic) at the outset, for whom: 'the system of self-evident facts of sense perception (Rancière 2004: 12) is "partitioned" as more or less diverse. ("Distribution" in the French original is "partage" which means both a sharing and a separation.)' (53). She extends this to the wider world, via a focus on division of labour that is a phenomenon of 'workplace

specialization' congruent with the theme of mixed form in at least two general characteristics. Firstly that, 'the logically implied idea of labour as a practice that properly comprises different parts; that is on some level, undivided' (54) and secondly, for Marx and Engels that this division is of primary importance: ' "one of the chief factors in historical development up til now" (Marx and Engels, 1932) '(54). Also, ' "the foundation of all production of commodities" (Marx [1867] 1999b)' and ' "the category of categories of political economy" (Marx 1861–3)' (54). It is the diminishing of mixed form that is now emphasized. The referencing here is significant in that, in the main, the chapter is constituted by verbatim extracts, carefully selected and rearranged into subheadings from Marx's writing on the division of labour, sourced from Marxists.org, which are drawn from 'three core Marx and Engels texts/anthologies: Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844; The German Ideology and Capital, Volume 1, Chapter 14, supplemented occasionally by Economic

Manuscripts of 1861–1863' (56). The author's critical text appears through extensive footnotes and commentary. One problem here is that these extensive footnotes are in too small a font to read fluently, in moving between the text and commentaries. The narrative sequence of the subheadings are in two parts in keeping with the premise of the project, the first a more descriptive and critical explanatory account and the second an embodied experiential account, both highly astute, which continue her playful, artist's touch, approach. The subtitled sections of Marx's text are rearranged as follows: The division of labour – key features: Descriptions, Emergence, The two fundamental forms of manufacture: heterogenous manufacture, serial manufacture; Different kinds, The division of labour and estrangement in capitalist society. Part 2 moves into an embodied account with: The division of labour – as experienced: Labouring time and diversity of experience, Mechanization of men, Deformation of being, Reduction (including from whole to part), Limitation (and specialization), The texture of labouring-experience, Becoming stupid, Enslavement, Death. A certain wry humour in the narrative sequence of subheadings is not lost. However, we might feel as if we are in a different book at this point, especially after such a sensorially abundant Chapter 1. Are we thus woken by the desolation of the sensible, through empathy, as objects subjected to a mechanistic taxonomy via alienation? Perhaps, if we have just read Chapter 1. Or possibly we might relate to Durkheim's notion of anomie, having just read

Chapter 3 and now adrift from the lost pastoral or collective acts of reading whilst socialized into an urban factory environment, and overly singularized by the labour with which we have become identified. In which instance, do we notice another emergent mixed form affect, of simultaneous dislocation and relocation? Personally, I would say so, yet it is one not derived from the optical sense, rather it occurs from the elaboration of the kinaesthetic aspect of intertextual reading, texts that quote and reference each other, reinforced by a shift in the physicality of the content of the material, echoed in the rapid production of sub-headings. Kristeva's 'classic' notion of intertextuality is one form of transtextuality for Genette (1997b: xviii). Another argument for empathy might cite Thompson's work from cognitive neuroscience, taking a neurophenomenological approach and outlining four types of empathy, two of which hinge on the self–other relation; 'mutual self and other understanding' and 'moral perception' (Thompson 2007: 401). This puts paid to any benign connotation in Rancière's 'factory of the sensible', leading us to Marx's conclusion, quoting from D. Urquhart, that, '[t]o subdivide a man is to execute him, if he deserves the sentence, to assassinate him if he does not. [...] The subdivision of labour is the assassination of a people' (Marx quoted in 70). Reminded, as we might be, by that haunting talisman, 'a piece of human flesh on a bone', now emptied of its world-sign, next to 'all kinds of bright coloured birds from India', as part of Mr John Tradescant's Cabinet of Curiosity. That mixed form might demand reclamation and reparation through unique curatorial attention, reading and attending, is now possible.

Reading

The next in-depth analysis of exemplary 'mixed forms' Francis provides appears in Chapter 3, treated more lightly here in order to begin to draw out some of the parallel and cross-referenced arguments across chapters, and focuses on the 'Broadside Ballad and the Chapbook'. Chapbooks we note are as popular now as ever. This fixes our attention on the continuities between early 'printed matter' or proto-books, and may be of contemporary relevance to those particularly interested in the performative dimension of literacies and their social component, as events. Ballads (broadsides or broadside ballads) a category of single-

sided print sheet often with woodcuts, which ‘originated in the first quarter of the sixteenth century’ (Hughes quoted in 78) grew to wide circulation and popularity throughout the eighteenth century. They included advertisements, notices, penny prints, bills and song sheets were often circulated as literal ballads to be sung, and provided cultural forms ‘encountered by those unable to afford a Wunderkammer; the non-noble, non-merchant citizen, or in Marx’s terminology: the labourer, the worker or the artificer’ (73). It is these different types, their production and performative readability that makes of the single sheet of paper, a mixed form. We might have one of the necessary pauses here to consider the subtle differences wrought by close comparison. A single-sided printed sheet becomes a mixed form, not by virtue of its combination of different material substrates, but because each context and purpose it generates is different. Hence it is brought home, as in numerous places throughout the book, that Francis’s mixed form is a highly differentiated concept provided by a theory of mixed forms wrought from the field of material culture.

With ‘chapbooks’ likely named after the chapmen who distributed them, ‘pedlars, hawkers and other itinerant merchants’ (Neuburg quoted in 86) a single printed sheet, folded in four, eight, twelve or sixteen, constituted uncut books of double the number of pages in kind (eight, sixteen, 24 or 32) is also an essential example of the wide-ranging distribution of the mixed form in popular culture. If there is something of the ‘bizarre’, ‘accidental’ and ‘unsystematic’, epithets applied as early as 1565 to the Cabinets of Curiosity (30), along with something of the fairy tale or magical (we recall, ‘things turned into stone’ and ‘the hand of a mermaid’) but now with a decidedly realist reportage mixed genre, in the content of both the ballads and chapbooks, we can see this as describing the earliest cultures of popular reading in the British–European context. Taken from the chapter’s illustrations we have ballads for a horse advertisement (1798), a notice of a fire in a coffee house (1818), the Jacobite King’s proclamation (1678), various song ballads, for example, The bleeding lovers lamentations or Fair Clorindas sorrowful complaint for the loss of her inconstant Strephon (1683–96), The Easter wedding or, The bridegrooms joy and happiness compleated, in his kind and constant bride (c.1685). Chapbooks illustrated are as follows: King James 1st and the tinker (c.1790). History of John Cheap, the chapman (c.1800), Fortunate weaver’s uprising or The landlady well pleased (1802), The lamp-lighter (1803) and Pilgrim’s progress (c.1840). This wide-

ranging collection makes for a fascinating account. Their reception and use is as interesting as their themes, for instance, that ‘chapbooks were sold uncut’ and ‘the purchaser would slit the pages and lovingly stitch or pin them’ (Shepard quoted in 95) or that a blatant voyeurism of ‘murder and execution sheets (Hughes 1969: 10)’ (79) and ‘fictionalized accounts of crimes, criminal’s confessions and their last moments, all in gory detail and presented as the unadulterated truth’ (79), gives rise to obvious comparisons the reader might make with press and social media obsessions with scandal, reputation and the popular or collectivist imperative of fictionalizing life-stories. Francis quotes extensively from Shepard’s work *The History of Street Literature* (1973) who lists the full array of ballad subjects as ‘religious, political, criminal, romantic, amatory, bawdy, humorous, superstitious, moralistic, and tragic’ (Shepard quoted in 83). The analyses of the eighteenth-century ‘reading revolution’ and nuanced discussion of early forms of performative and social readership and the progressive difference between the two: ‘If “without a tune a ballad does not live”, a chapbook as silent text clearly did’ (94) is very insightful. This also follows equally interesting discussion as to the identity of the writers themselves and the type of social labour that writing was or could have been.

The chapter ends with a Marxist analysis of the correlation between division of labour and newly enforced singularity, the quantified worker’s labour as finite energy, and the rise of the chapbook and private reading experiences. When the proletariat is denuded of the social events and contexts that the ballads, as a modality of public reading, offered, we speculate on experiences of reading akin to digital phone use today. The ‘problem’ of the subject’s role in sociality, and thereby regimes of knowing, is of nuanced interest to many theorists. For instance, de Sousa Santos:

In the Marxist tradition, the relationship between objectivity and neutrality was solved by the articulation between objectivity and a strong subjectivity – a collective and historically constituted subjectivity. The most brilliant formulation of this idea is due to Lukács (1971) and his offering of the strong subjectivity of the self-organized working class as the guarantee of scientific objectivity. (2018: 62–63)

As convincing as this is, another expression from a pro-Hegelian stance might suggest Francis is closer to, that:

Mechanical objectivism is a gross distortion of the Marxist position on the fundamental question of the subject-object relationship. For Marx, these relationships are contradictory and dynamic. Subject and object are not found to be dichotomized or constituting one identity, but one dialectical unity, the same dialectical unity in which we find theory and practice. (Freire 1985: 155)

Re-assembling the subject

By correlating ‘Assemblage’ with the ‘Assembly line’ in Chapter 5, when this Marxist framework is well established, allows a hypothetical encounter between a factory worker and a Hausmann, mixed-media object/sculpture called Spirit of the Age (1919), a mechanical head made up of numerous parts. This concludes that chapter, as a colour illustration, on page 145, and leads to the position that mixed form might suggest ‘a critique of “constant labour of one uniform kind” [Marx 1867]’ given that ‘the factory worker’s most accessible experience of phenomenal diversity was no less than the complex commodity rolled off the assembly line’ (144). That is, the worker might not appreciate the mixed form of the sculpture. When ‘the idea of realizing producers as consumers of their products was also key to Fordism’ (145), this discussion of mixed form affect in modernism, as well as for modernity, questions whether ‘mixed form assemblage, in all its variations, offers an effect for the viewer that is demonstrably at odds with the affective texture of Fordist rationalization as monotonous, and dehumanizing in its singularity’ (145). Pragmatically speaking, and in keeping with heterogeneity, each position is correct. Worker’s conservatism or aspirational, convergent interest in homogenous form is structured not simply in cultural taste, ideologically, but through embodied action. Likewise, historical interest in mixed form, with chapbooks providing the equivalent diversity of Cabinets of Curiosity, capture the attention of exclusive and inclusive audiences alike. But Francis’s articulation brings yet more criticality. The political and socio-economic reduction of the individual to a singularity, in part or in kind, is

possibly one of the strongest critiques in this project. Also, awareness of mixed form brings home the fact that everything is 'living' strictly speaking, in the sense that each object (or subject) is also wholly singular and uniquely situated before it becomes (an) object. Mixed forms thereby live in resistance to representation and category.

Hence, we have another correlation or we may now perceive 'dialectic', at work in this project, another form of reading across chapters, in addition to the intensification of the visual, that is, a multimodal intertextual reading. Intertextuality as further explained by Martin, from Kristeva's definition in 'Word, Dialogue and Novel' is, 'a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another' (2011: 148), and perhaps a suitably heterogenous form of thinking across, from 'words and things' to 'image and text' and from objects to individuals. The maker reads the objects (texts) they make, not only closely, but as mixed forms. Francis continues to seek possibilities for mixed form therefore to be a positive and ethical project. A positive approach to Marx is found in Gillian Rose, likewise, who depoliticizes the man, whilst establishing the political imperative of ethics within aesthetics. Rose places Marx alongside other great thinkers such as Rousseau and Plato to do so, arguing that Marx promotes a 'positive vision ... cleverly, through scepticism' (Lloyd 2008: 208). This dialectical argument between multiplicity and unity takes place in favour of mixed form's ability to counter a conception of centralizing power, and establishes the criticality of this project, in all its various chapters. Because, as Gillian Rose has said, 'Marx wants to restore full activity to those who have been deprived of their activity in the labour process' (Rose quoted in Lloyd 2008: 208).

Visual, embodied reading

A wonderful citation of Krauss's famous diagram, from 'sculpture in the expanded-field' (1979: 37-38) is repurposed in Francis's conclusion to illustrate culture and reality in Marxist theory (203). By engaging with this book, one that combines detailed textual historical analysis with 'The pastime scrapbook' and 'The artist's scrapbook', Chapters 4 and 6, which are joyful and surprising jolts of image and colour, with very few words or explanation, a

mixed form affect is generated via the absence of text as the emergence of paratext. As often, after a visit to an art gallery or a period of focused visual attention, the first moments on leaving one space for another enlivens the world in extraordinary colour and light. Suddenly, a paving slab surrounded by grass becomes a pixel in a work of art as we recall the labour that designed to place it there. Reading and experiencing reading are, therefore, brought into combinatorial focus through the mixed form of the visual essay. Colebrook's take on this, is very resonant with my reading of Francis's article, 'On the visuality of writing: A visual essay' in the recent special edition of this journal:

One intriguing gesture toward another modality of life – beyond representation – was his conception of the 'shining' of language: rather than language being the sign of the world, it might bear its own force. Such a notion resonates with a whole series of gestures in late 20th-century and early 21st-century thought, where paint, film, and words appear as matters themselves. (2020: 14–15)

Do both Francis's book and article seem to demonstrate that the mixed form seems better placed to foreground visuality than singular forms appears able to achieve? This striking idea relates to sensory embodiment, from its material production through the body and in terms of what the body can do and how a body is situated in relation to mixed form. Francis undoubtedly makes a unique contribution to visual culture studies, especially when we take into account the view that: 'The "turn to affect" across the humanities and social sciences has particular importance for the field of body studies' (Blackman and Venn 2010: 8). We are a decade on from this comment, by Lisa Blackman and Couze Venn, which featured in a special edition of *Body & Society* devoted to affect. This drew on two decades of research in this field. Yet, we might agree that Francis still highlights how: 'the theme of "affective labour" and the capitalization or economization of affect [...] as a phenomenon in need of fresh study' (Blackman and Venn 2010: 7) remains relevant. The article takes a mediating stance between the page and the screen, in this sense, of great interest to critical digital studies. Hence, a number of current research interests are spoken to by Francis's project, around visuality, affect and affective labour, hence precarity, embodiment and materialist vitalism in relation to digital culture. These coalesce into concerns for which this book

articulates an historical perspective. What is unique here may in fact be that these material concerns have not been so rigorously applied to the forms of what preceded and post-dates, the book-form itself.

This ultimately raises questions of the normative composition of what is academic writing and research or, research and its representation in an era of embodiment studies and practice research, that is sadly, especially in art and design, still largely articulated and validated in the traditional forms of theses and normative written texts.⁴

This takes us closer to Genette's term for reading all five forms of transtextuality⁵ that is, as forms of palimpsest, both in the material overlay of any text on its precedents and the manner in which we can read any text, curated object, visual or otherwise, outlining the patterns it forms via the smallest degrees of layering meaning upon meaning. Francis's entirely visual abstract in the visual essay (2022) is perhaps the best articulation of this palimpsestual notion, that subtle attention to reading can open and re-form text's covert parameters. A type of historicized materialist non-representational position is a possible avenue of research that allows for the Subject to be unconfined as a singular form, yet recognized in its singularity. The *Renewal of Pagan Antiquity* by Warburg, who is cited by Francis elsewhere, also warns us against any 'rectilinear view of history' (1999: 603) that would project false order onto the mixed form 'Renaissance curatorial structure' of *Cabinets of Curiosity* (23). He richly illustrates how 'the Renaissance had preserved and revived types of ancient pagan divination composed of so potent and heterogenous a mixture of elements - rationalism and myth, the mathematician and the augur...' allowing the 'Christian paganism of Rome', the 'Babylonian-Hellenistic astrologer' and the 'Roman augur', a voice (1999: 601).

The oversimplified differences between the authorial and allographic, the autonomy of the worker regards their work, are imperceptible without a theory of mixed forms. Indeed, like mixed forms themselves, which 'collectively comprise a mixture' (206) these are distinctions to be appreciated now more than ever before. We do this, as Francis says, 'realizing the variousness, in cultural form and work, of being-human' (206).

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Notes

1. For an excellent talk on Marx's key concepts and relation to contemporary theory, including on-going debate on Hegelian and anti-Hegelian positions, Ray Brassier's lecture 'Marx and philosophy' (2018) is available at: <https://syntheticzero.net/2018/08/28/ray-brassier-marx-philosophy/>.
2. Aspects of reader response theory might be of background or contextual interest here and features in an article 'Reading writing breathing' in *New Writing: The International Journal for the Practice and Theory of Creative Writing* (Stephens forthcoming 2024: n.pag.)
3. Speaking personally as a reviewer, mixed form seems a life project in at least three senses. From Indian, Anglo-Celtic, Welsh and Portuguese descent, I instinctively respond to remarks in the introduction on embodied identity. Secondly, as a Ph.D. researcher with an interest in contemporary Buddhist-derived theories of nonself in academic writing, mixed form is another type of post-structuralist 'non-identity based' theory, founded on difference. Mixed form theory appears to maintain that what 'it is' is in vibrant ontological relations with what 'it is not'. Buddhist 'Self' as mixed form would be considered *Pratītyasamutpāda* with the translation of 'interdependent co-arising' being closest in this context to a thing as made up of many distinct and inter-related material and causal conditions. Thirdly, as a researcher engaged in biographically related methodologies, such as performative autoethnography, my interest is motivated by the happenstance of Mary Anne Francis as both a former tutor of mine, and ex-colleague, at the University of Brighton.
4. Thanks are due to a UAL colleague Dr Royce Mahawatte whose current study critiquing academic forms of written assessment has allowed rich conversation and food for thought.
5. The five types are intertextual, paratextual, meta-textual, hypertextual and architextual. The first refers to Kristeva, the second what Genette originally referred to as exclusively paratexts, '[p]aratextuality [...] is first and foremost a treasure trove of questions without answers' both of which are defined in the main article. The third, meta-textual, commonly called 'commentary' of which a review such as this would be included, '[t]his is the critical relationship par excellence'. The fourth is hypertext, in which any text is later 'grafted' onto an earlier (hypo) text whilst not being a direct commentary. The fifth, architextual, refers to that 'silent' relationship indicated often via titles and subtitles, of a taxonomic nature. Researching Francis's Mixed Forms alongside Genette would provide a most rewarding research avenue (Genette 1997b: 1–5).