"More Choice – Less Freedom? Mediated Narratives of Human History"
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The question 'more choice – less freedom?' expresses the paradox we encounter in discussions of the new media and platforms available for human communication: there are positive as well as negative possibilities at the same time, promises and perils indeed. My paper wants to show that this is not new, that – as we all know – transition is perennial, and it will then focus on those theories and tendencies that appear as the most promising ones for an improved understanding of media. The main tendency seems to be that towards a holistic view of platforms as well as everything else, and the cognitive sciences, systems theories as well as cultural studies belong into this context and provide intriguing ideas. Neither the theories nor their application to media studies, however, have reached any final stages, all of them still are unstable and fully in transition. That is why I will in the second part speak about those aspects of research on media that need to be renewed, even though they began with Aristotle, namely investigations on the position of media in human perception and understanding and in important social and cultural contexts. Cognitive systemic approaches will be mentioned, before the 'reality of common knowledge' is discussed, the constructive power of language, media as forms of epistemological significance, and finally in part two the relationship between holism, culture, and media. Part three will use insights gained from these ideas for a brief description of the platforms of British TV programmes and independent websites dealing with British history, in order to explain the at first rather surprising fact that there is an enormous stability on these platforms. The conclusion will even claim that there is not much difference in fiction either.

1. Transition is Perennial

"These are the times that try men's souls" begins Thomas Paine's first *Crisis* paper, published in Philadelphia in 1776, the pamphlet that helped ignite the American Revolution (cf. http://www.ushistory.org/paine/). Are we now also in times that try the souls of human beings? I think we are, and many people have the same feeling. I actually think – or have I picked this up somewhere in the languages and cultures I am part of? – that we are in the process of a transition that is comparable to the movement from the Middle Ages to the Early

Modern Age, or the enormous change from the agricultural to the industrial world. The transition we are in will thus take a long time, certainly several decades, perhaps even centuries.

My reason for mentioning Paine is simply that we should be aware of the fact that this has always been the case in human life. So even though we are in a highly significant historical process once more, of which nobody can predict the outcome or the next important effects on human life, we must acknowledge that this in many respects is nothing new for human beings. Nobody can deny that things have changed strongly since the advent of new media. I was at a conference organised by the British daily *The Guardian* in March this year called 'Changing Media Summit 2011' (http://www.guardian.co.uk/changingmediasummit?&) where similar problems were discussed to the ones we are talking about here. This was a business event with top people of the BBC, ITV, MTV, AOL, Google, Walt Disney as well as chairpersons of smaller companies speaking about the changes they have noticed, and it was very interesting to hear their reports. Eventually they all try to find out what the best things to do are for them, and in this process they employ the categories we all have used for quite some time, such as 'money', 'making a profit', and so on. Another category that almost all of them mentioned was 'story', 'story telling' or 'narrative', which is something I am particularly interested in, as I am investigating how the new media have changed or are changing story telling. All of the speakers of the London conference pointed out the significance of good stories in their business endeavours, which is instantly understandable when one thinks of TV stations like the BBC and ITV or a company like Walt Disney, but 'good stories' is also an important element in all other companies. None of them said anything about any significant changes to story telling that the new media have brought about. I personally think there will be changes, but they will take longer to materialise because of the permanency of the human mind, of human perception and understanding.

2. (New) Research on Media

Technology changes much more quickly and easily than the human mind, even though theories about media, platforms etc. also vary fairly rapidly. However, we have not yet really understood the characteristics of media as forms that help human beings perceive things, put the world and themselves into a particular focus, make things visible and understandable. This problem was already expressed by a key term of Aristotle's philosophy, *periechon*, which refers to that which surrounds us, contains us, protects us, and was intriguingly described by Leo Spitzer, who used words that instantly give us a sense of what was meant by *periechon*: *Milieu and Ambiance* (1947). What one finds here has in our own time been emphasized

again by systems theory, namely that everything, every human being, every milieu etc. can be what it is only within a system that creates that specific thing, milieu, ambiance etc. We have not really yet made any significant increase in our understanding of media in this respect, but we have at least again become aware of the influence of the world we live in on us as well as of the influence of human perception and understanding on what we accept as our reality. Media are of vital significance in this reciprocal process, and their role in human life requires much further investigation.[1]

2.1 Cognitive Systemic Approaches

There is an enormous degree of instability and change in both the theory and practice of media, first because people's understanding of media is developing and second because of the vastness of what needs to be investigated. One important advancement in recent years has been the fact that one tries to see and analyse media in contexts much bigger than the 'milieu' of Spitzer or sociology. The cognitive systemic approaches used today see media as systems involving people, institutions, communication, cognition, and cultures in processes producing meaningful and effective activities.[2] The link with culture and the cognitive sciences has already improved our understanding of media, but we are still far away from any comprehensive insights. That is why transition is again inevitable. But a fairly stable and very promising focus today is on seeing the media in the contexts that produce knowledge generally, in the ongoing continuity of lived experience. Varela, Thompson, and Rosch (1999, 149) have shown and expressed this nicely: "knowledge depends on being in a world that is inseparable from our bodies, our language, and our social history – in short, from our *embodiment*." Reality for them is *The Embodied Mind*, where mind and world "stand in relation to each other through mutual specification or dependent coorigination." (1999, 150) This relation produces what they call "cognition" and "common sense" (ibid.), a term also used by Siegfried J. Schmidt, who alternatively describes the effect as 'common knowledge'.[3]

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[1] A useful text both for the history and philosophy of the word 'medium' is Seitter (2002), who goes beyond McLuhan's 1964 idea of media as *Extensions of Men* and says media provide the basis for human existence.

[2] Cf. Schmidt (2008, 150): "Mediensysteme sind Prozess-Systeme, also *Wirkungszusammenhänge* im Sinne der Allgemeinen Systemtheorie". "*Wirkungszusammenhänge*" does not just mean cause-and-effect relationships but implies the strong element of action theory and human activity in Schmidt's theory of media systems. Schmidt does not mention Bertalanffy (1968), but Schlosser (1993) as his basis for a general systems theory. There are enormous differences between the various kinds of systems theory, e.g., between Bertalanffy and Luhmann (1996). What all of them have in common, though, is a holistic perspective.

[3] Cf. the chapter "Common sense als sozio-kulturelles Instrument struktureller Kopplung" in Schmidt (1994, 94-103), where common sense is defined as social knowledge created by means of communication. The material forms of human behaviour (especially language) in this way instantly carry particular meanings which are based not on any referential quality but on commonly agreed usage. Language is seen as a socially formed generalization of individual experiences (100), and every word is pragmatically defined (99). Language provides

2.2 The Reality of Common Knowledge

This common or collective knowledge is linguistic as well as encyclopaedic and is also connected with all kinds of (social, generic etc.) conventions. It is an essential element for providing people with generally accepted behaviour and widely acknowledged opinions. One other important consequence (for both Thompson, Varela, Rosch and Schmidt) is that what people say is not related to reality as such, but to this collective knowledge. That is why the reality about which people communicate is a genetically and structurally generated and confirmed reality of collective knowledge about reality.[4]

This is not as tautological as it sounds. It is actually now a widespread understanding of reality that Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* already expressed succinctly when one character in the play tells the story of a man who sees a unicorn. A most "alarming" experience that is then also made by more and more people, "and the more witnesses there are the thinner it gets and the more reasonable it becomes until it is as thin as reality, the name we give to the common experience" (1966, 15). What George Lakoff and Steven Pinker say about language is not very different from Schmidt (or Stoppard), only their focus is more on language.

2.3 The Reality and Constructive Power of Language

According to Lakoff (1990, xiii, 5), most "of our words and concepts designate categories", and there "is nothing more basic than categorization to our thought, perception, action, and speech." Even though Lakoff fails to see or mention some of the important predecessors of his ideas, such as Nietzsche or Hume, his points are extremely important and help explain the relatively high degree of stability in our world and especially in the discussions and presentations of British history I will refer to later: the categories people use are usually the same traditional ones on different platforms dealing with British history. Lakoff and Johnson (1999, 78) also point out "the central role of our embodied understanding in all aspects of meaning" and the fact that meaning "has to do with the ways in which we function meaningfully in the world and make sense of it via bodily and imaginative structures." They again propose a holistic theory of human life and understanding, and concepts as well as metaphors are the result

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signs for people's coordination of actions, and that is why the *form* of actions is inseparable from social meaning: "Die *Form* der Handlung hat einen sozialen Sinn" (96). Cf. also Feilke (1994).

[4] Schmidt (1998, 63): "Die 'Realität', über die wir in der Kommunikation sprechen, ist mithin eine in der *Kommunikation* genetisch und strukturell erzeugte und bezeugte Wirklichkeit kollektiven Wissens über die Wirklichkeit."

of this: "Metaphors are products of body, brain, mind, and experience", are "grounded in the body and constrained by experience."[5]

Human language for them is "a neural capacity, the capacity to neurally link parts of the brain concerned with concepts and cognitive functions (attention, memory, information flow) with other parts of the brain concerned with expression – phonological forms, signs in signed languages, and so on." Their key point is indeed that "the structure of language is inherently embodied", which means that it "derive[s] from the structure of our embodied experience." Language's link with reality, its power and fundamental "capacity is the total capacity to express concepts and cognitive functions." (Ibid. 506) Lakoff and Johnson even think that there are universals in language and in human perception: "Linguistic universals include conceptual universals (e.g., primitive spatial relations, universal conceptual metaphors), universals of cognitive function, and universals of iconicity." (Ibid.) This is a highly intriguing idea that has been controversially discussed, though, as universals were not an acceptable topic in recent decades, which focused on the opposite of universals, cultural specificity. Much more research is necessary here, too. But would it not be great and helpful to find that there are, perhaps, universals in media usage?

The importance of language for human understanding is also highlighted by Steven Pinker, for whom language is an *Instinct*, "an evolutionary adaptation, like the eye, its major parts designed to carry out important functions". It is a medium used to "express [among many other things] abstract concepts, invisible entities, and complex trains of reasoning." (1994, 11, 13) It thus is for Pinker, too, universal. Cultures add "[t]rifling differences", "trim packages and color schemes", but also significant "*input*" to the "innate psychological mechanisms". (Ibid. 16, 423) Eventually, however, "we all have the same minds." (Ibid. 448) Like Varela, Schmidt, Lakoff, and many others, Pinker (2008, viii) sees language as "entwined with human life." "It reflects the way we grasp reality" and thus is "a window into human nature." And for Pinker, too, human understanding of reality is based on language and the categories or "schematic models" (ibid. 430) it provides: "Human characterizations of reality are built out of a recognizable inventory of thoughts. The inventory begins with some basic units, like events, states, things, substances, places, and goals. It specifies the basic ways in which these units can do things: acting, going, changing, being, having." (Ibid. 428) The platforms on British history confirm this and are stable because they use the same schematic models. Whether

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[5] Ibid. 463 and 468. On p. 463, they also say: "The body and brain are where meanings arise in and through our interactions with the environment and other people." In their idea of "Convergent Methodologies" (467f), stability and transition are again linked, too. An intriguing book on this problem from another perspective is Frith (2007).

these models are really universal still remains to be seen, and what is particularly intriguing is to find out whether the new media and new platforms will introduce new schematic models.

2.4 Media as Forms of Epistemological Significance

Media thus play an important role in these contexts, and their characteristics, functions, and connections with other areas require careful extensive scrutiny. For Schmidt (1998, 57, 65f), media are all those material things that are used for socially relevant semiotic linkages between living systems, above all the linkage between cognition and communication. Whether media are really material only is indeed something that needs to be further investigated. As forms of epistemological significance, they also seem to have qualities that cannot be reduced to empirical entities. Their difference to what they (re-)present is highly important in contemporary epistemology, as it already was in Aristotle's theory of understanding. Both then and today, it is taken for granted that perception and understanding is possible only at a distance from the things perceived (even though one is, perhaps, within the same system). Which is precisely where media come in. How precisely, needs to be further researched, though.[6]

2.5 Holism, Culture, and Media

The significant connections between matter, form, spirituality, and the human mind that were important for Aristotle are also relevant today, both in discussions of media and in the process of our general development towards a more holistic understanding of everything. Such a holistic perspective is present in all theories that speak of networks and in systems theories, even when it is not explicitly addressed. Current instabilities are very much connected with the fact that we are still very far away from any holistic understanding. The discussions of culture in recent decades have clearly moved into this direction, and in Schmidt's theory of media (1998, 64f), culture is tellingly defined as the whole set of socially binding semiotic interpretations, of the emotions and normative evaluations of the model of reality in a community. Culture is necessarily and always connected with media (cf. Müller 2008).

Media thus are powerful instruments of human understanding as well as of socialisation. They provide people with a sense of time and place, of what is private and what public, offering models of partnerships, intimate relations, styles for expressing feelings, and for everything

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[6] Cf. Aristotle, *Peri psyches* or *De anima*, and its discussion of the quality that allows human beings to look at and understand things from a distance. Aristotle's term for this was *to metaxyn* , intriguingly described in the context of media theories by Hagen 2008. The *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-psychology/) offers a good short introduction to Aristotle's text and thinking.

else needed in people's lives and behaviour.[7] Their enormous influence on all ways of establishing and maintaining a sense of identity as well as on defining people's relationship with the past, the present, and the future becomes evident in the numerous history programmes on British television which I will now briefly discuss, in order to show that there is very little instability visible here and that the platforms I have investigated, namely British TV programmes and websites of both these TV stations and others dealing with British history, are very similar in what they present, show no significant differences amongst themselves and not really any new elements (no new schematic models or categories, nor new forms of narrative, presentation etc.).

3. The Surprising Stability of the Platforms Dealing with British History

History is something that has traditionally provided nations, cultures as well as individuals with a sense of identity, a mediated narrative connecting the present with the past and implying a hint of the future. It still fulfils this function, even though its earlier claim that it simply speaks about the facts and truths of the past has been strongly contested in the wake of postmodernism and Hayden White's emphasis on *The Content of the Form*, i.e. the importance of *how* the past is narrated as being even more relevant than *what* is narrated.[8] British identity has been highly contested since its loss of the Empire, the influence of immigration, and the effects of devolution. The excessive instability of a British or English identity has repeatedly and convincingly been put forward as an explanation of the enormous number of history programmes on British television. Even programmes that in hardly any other country would be connected with a national historic perspective have this link here. In this way, e.g., a nature series on birds in Britain was called 'Birds Britannia'.[9] A useful explanation for such programmes in the 1980s and 90s says that "the uses and meanings of the past in this context are often symptoms of an excess of nostalgia harnessed unhealthily to a conscious or unconscious preoccupation with national identity. [---] the commercial media not only cater for a nostalgic public demand which already exists, but [-] they also manufacture and foster the demand to some extent."[10] There has been no lessening of this demand and no reduction in the supply of

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[7] Meyrowitz (1985) is a useful 'early' description of this impact of media, presenting "Media as Change Mechanisms" (13ff), thus again necessarily linking them to transition.
[8] Cf. White (1987), Hobswawm / Ranger (1983), Evans (1997), and the important guiding intellectual force of Collingwood (1948). Cf. these also with the insistence on *form* in Schmidt, Lakoff, Pinker etc. and footnote 3.
[9] Cf. http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00vssdk, where it says: "Series looking at the different birds that live in the UK and the stories they can tell us about the British people over time".
[10] Bennett (1996, 25), who based his widely accepted opinion on Lowenthal (1985), Wright (1985), and Hewison (1987).

history programmes in Britain since then. History has indeed continued to be used as a marketable commodity in the media.

I have checked history programmes on the main British TV channels in the past 5 years: BBC 1, 2, 3 and 4, ITV 1, 2, 3 and 4, Channel 4, E4 and More4, and Channel 5, and compared the programmes with the presentations on the channels' websites as well as with independent sites dealing with the same topics, times, monarchs etc. I have also asked students to find other websites and had high hopes they would come up with sites offering something new or different. Unfortunately, they have not been successful so far.

The programmes have dealt with all sorts of historical topics, such as e.g.: **The British Family** (dealing with 'marriage', 'sex', 'money', and 'children' in its four episodes);[11] **A Century of Fatherhood** (on British fathers since the Edwardian Age);[12] **How the Navy Forged the Modern World**;[13] **The Genius of Britain** (a series on British scientists);[14] **The Great State Offices** (= The Home Office, The Foreign Office, The Treasury);[15] **The Victorians** (a 4-part series by the BBC news presenter Jeremy Paxman (2010)); the **Peckham Finishing School for Girls**;[16] **Muslim Driving School** (a 6-part series offering an "insight into the lives of Muslim women learner drivers, their instructors and their families");[17] and many more.

There evidently are very different topics, numerous presenters, and also foreseeable differences in the camera work, editing, settings etc. But there is a fundamental stability in these programmes and a similarity between these platforms and the websites based on the categories or the mental schemas used, which are often expressed by key terms in the programmes' titles as well as in the descriptions and explanations on the websites. Five examples of typical programmes and websites reveal this instantly.

3.1 Simon Schama's **A History of Britain** (2001ff)

This is the best known series by a famous historian, who consciously called it *a* history, not *the*, and who is well aware of the importance of story-telling. He is also conscious of the new media, but he nevertheless uses the common older categories and sees the main function of history in its support of a social and national identity, of giving people a sense of where they

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[11] Cf. http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00q9krn; http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00qhq84; http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00qllrc.
[12] Cf. http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00swhjq; http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00sxgsl.
[13] Cf. http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00qlmcq.
[14] Cf. http://www.channel4.com/programmes/genius-of-britain.
[15] Cf. http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00qplfp; http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00qvlw1; http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00r0sf5.
[16] Cf. http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00sszjx.
[17] Cf. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/8449241.stm.

come from as well as where they are heading to.[18] Schama had a highly qualified team working with him for several years on the 16-part series with the objective "to marry the drama and eloquence of Simon's script to photography of the highest order".[19]

3.2 Michael Wood's **Story of England** was shown in 2010, and the titles of the 6 episodes instantly reveal the common categories and time frames used: 1) **Romans to Normans** (54BC-1066); 2) **Domesday to Magna Carta** (1086-1215); 3) **The Great Famine and the Black Death** (14th c.); 4) **The Peasants' Revolt to the Tudors** (1381-1485) 5); **Henry VIII and the Industrial Revolution** (1509-18/19th c.); 6) **Victoria to the Beatles** ("how modern times arrived in Kibworth"). Wood is a journalist who studied history and has produced several documentaries. The programme emphasised its perspective on history from the point of view of the common people, something that began in the 1950s and 60s, was firmly established by historians like Calder (1969), and thus is nothing new today. At that time, this new perspective was really significant and provided new categories. The new media have not yet come up with a similar novelty. Wood presented his story of English history (not British) as it evolved in one specific village, Kibworth (near Leicester), he engaged local people of all ages, and was very successful with this approach. [20]

3.3 **Rude Britannia**, a 3-part series presenting 1. **A History Most Satirical, Lewd and Offensive**, 2. **Bawdy Songs and Lewd Photographs**, and 3. the story of **You Never Had It So Rude**. The series was part of the 'Rude on Four' Season, which sought to explode the national stereotype of Britain as a polite country of restraint and decorum. A nice idea and a procedure often used on BBC 4 which is helpful for spectators, as it instantly provides recognisable categories, mental schemata, and meaningful contexts. The series also coincided with an exhibition using the same title at Tate Britain in 2010. The title of the third episode is a linguistic variation of an expression by Prime Minister Harold Macmillan that most English people will instantly remember, his statement in 1957 that the British people never had it so good.[21]

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[18] Cf. http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/programmes/programme_archive/hob_interview_simon_schama.shtml. The history is available on DVD and in print.

[19] http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/programmes/hob/making_of_01.shtml, where more information on the making of the series can be found. Even better is Champion (2002). Cf. also http://www.guardian.co.uk/g2/story/0,,739347,00.html.

[20] Cf. http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00tw231; Woods Blog: http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/tv/2010/09/michael-woods-story-of-england.shtml; the local presentation at BBC Leicester: http://www.bbc.co.uk/leicester/content/articles/2009/07/22/kibworth_dig_feature.shtml; YouTube: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fba9HJb5hOs; typical website comments: http://scurvytoon.blogspot.com/2010/09/michael-woods-story-of-england-or-time.html; responses in the papers: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/tvandradio/8016831/Michael-Woods-Story-of-England-Big-historical-secrets-in-a-humble-Midlands-village.html; the link to British History Online http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=22057 and to the Kibworth History Society: http://www.kibworth.org/.

[21] For the series, cf. http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00ssz7f; http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00srf2d; for Macmillan, cf. http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/july/20/newsid_3728000/3728225.stm and a

3.4 **The Saint and the Hanged Man** (2010) should have been highly interesting as the programme uses an extraordinary number of different media and thus is revelatory of the kind and degree of media convergence today, but its usage of cartoons, theatre, etc. is so predictable that after a short time it becomes boring, especially as the programme also has no real focus and purpose.[22]

3.5 **History of Now: the Story of the Noughties**. The focus here is very clear, and the series uses key categories and concepts not only for the titles of the 3 episodes, but also to an extraordinary degree at the beginning of each episode and whenever another additional topic is introduced. Key words and categories are thus highlighted and no spectator can miss them: 1. **Growing Young**, 2. **All Together Now?** 3. **Hello World**. People from film and design departments have told me that the series uses the latest technologies, but its explicit usage of categories and traditional, well-known concepts makes one wonder why the producers found it necessary to literally spell everything out to the spectators.[23]

4. Conclusions and Similarities in Fiction

My explanation for the stability on these platforms is that the new technologies have not yet sufficiently changed people's minds and thus the ways in which we perceive and understand things. Only when this happens can we expect different narratives, new categories, and new mental schemas. Platforms dealing with history will perhaps take even longer, as history has traditionally used fairly strict forms, which we have learned through our language, at school, and the ways in which history has usually been presented.

But even the fictional world has not yet produced anything really new. Mike Figgis' film 'Timecode' (USA 2000), e.g., consciously tries to use digital technology in a new way. But he does not narrate a new story, and his way of telling it, namely on four screens at once, has not fascinated anybody. Or is this, perhaps, simply so, because we are not yet sufficiently used to such a way of seeing and perceiving things?

The description of the film in *Radio Times* on the day it was shown on Film 4, 10 May 2010, said:

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recent article on the phrase showing how well-known it indeed still is: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/8145390/Harold-Macmillans-never-had-it-so-good-speech-followed-the-1950s-boom.html. See also Alastair Lawrence, the producer of the series and his blog http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/tv/2010/06/the-history-of-rude-britannia.shtml, intriguing background information on the concepts and history of the series is given here http://www.bbc.co.uk/tv/features/rude-on-four/.
[22] Cf. http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbcfour/medieval/saint.shtml.
[23] Cf. http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00psrnm; http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00pss21; http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00psp5r.

> Shot on cutting-edge digital video, this quirky and innovative comedy thriller from director/writer Mike Figgis is a technical tour de force. It offers four separate but intertwined takes on the same series of events, shown simultaneously on a single, quartered screen. Emphasis on one or more of the four soundtracks provides guidance as to what to watch when, while the familiar faces of, among others, Holly Hunter, Saffron Burrows, Salma Hayek, Jeanne Tripplehorn and Julian Sands help catch the eye. The sequences, which all feature characters directly or indirectly involved with a Los Angeles film-production company, play out in real time, and were filmed that way too, in continuous takes with no edits. Like eavesdropping on four juicy conversations at a cocktail party, dipping first into one, then another, watching the split-screen format does require concentration, and takes some getting used to. Although patchy at times, this is an intriguing and cleverly realised idea.

The new media evidently offer new possibilities, which, however, need to be tested first and above all need to correspond to the capacities and habits of the human mind. The simile used in the description of the film instantly gives readers a common category that helps them move beyond the 'strangeness' of the film and make sense of how it works ("Like eavesdropping…"). Figgis points out the theoretically high number of other possibilities available to human beings. The new media and new platforms increase these possibilities, but we should remember that human beings have always selected only a small number from the various forms they have had available to them. The influence of habits, social conventions, language, and the mind must be taken into account, too. How these can be changed is one of the other questions for which we also have no answer yet.

Let me finish with a very popular British history programme, the BBC *Horrible Histories* series. In 2' 15", you get "The entire Tudor era in one little ditty", called 'The Tudors Song', which you can also watch at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PCmogoGpnxg. The programme is meant to be different, but you will instantly recognise that it uses the traditional mental schemata, including those of the genre it belongs to. There is, therefore, eventually nothing new here either.

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