Tears on the screen: Bodily emotionalism in Reality-Tv

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Abstract

Our contemporary culture is in many aspects obsessed with emotions and authenticity. The media figures as a key locus in this development. However, the function and display of emotions vary depending on media type and genre. The article studies the construction of bodily emotionalism in reality-Tv where corporeal signs such as tears confirm the display of emotional authenticity. It argues that authenticity appears to be synonymous with foremost the exposure of so called primary emotions, which are considered expressions for more direct and less controlled impulses. The specific value placed on tears in our culture is discussed in relation to televisions emotional script, the authentic claims of the genre and as a cultural longing after transparency where the ´truth´ resides within the body.

Keywords: emotion, tears, reality-tv, authenticity.

Four people, three young women and a man are standing before a seated jury. They keep their bodies still, lips tight, hands stiffly on their backs and eyes diverted in the direction of the jury, consisting of three people behind a table. One of the jury members starts to speak: - "Well tonight one of you will have to leave us....".   A prolonged silence follows as the camera slowly closes up on the strained faces of the four. After the verdict, tears are welling up in the eyes of the one leaving the program and the camera zooms in before she turns her head away, one of the women who will remain also shows signs of crying proneness. This emotional scene is not unusual on television nowadays. Zapping between different reality programs we are exposed to a large repertoire of tears, ranging from contorted faces to full-fledged weeping. People cry out of joy, relief, tension, frustration, sorrow or shame.

Emotions have gained an increasing attention within many disciplines lately, acknowledging their importance in human life, cultural expression and social organization.[1] For media scholars this interest is fuelled by an increased concentration on emotional display within many media formats and genres: the focus on trauma and mourning in news reporting, the emotional intensity of large-scale media event and not at least in the propagation of reality programs. While the generic labels of the latter are both historical and contextual, it is foremost defined by its focus on emotion-based authenticity (see Aslama & Pantti 2006). Reality programs mix documentary techniques with dramatic editing and usually feature ordinary people instead of professional actors. The genre has expanded significantly since the *Big Brother* was first

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[1] A development that has been labelled an ´academic affective turn´, see Koivunen (2010) and Gorton (2007).

aired in 1999 and programs are often traded on a global media market and must, as a format, be considered one of the largest (and cheapest) Tv successes during the 2000s. In 2009 *American Idol* had an audience of 30.3 million, making it the highest-rated non-sports show of the 2008 - 2009 US Tv season. In Sweden, *Let's Dance* is one of the top ten rated programs for the third season in succession, as is *Farmer wants a wife.*[2]

In the first Swedish reality program aired in 1995, *The Real World,* one of the participants declared: " – This is reality but on TV. It's about what happens when people stop acting and *start to live for real*" (my emphasis). In 2004 Rupert Murdock´s Fox launched its own channel called "Reality TV" declaring themselves as "the premier destination for unscripted programming: We are ALL REALITY, ALL THE TIME!".[3] Nowadays we seldom find these over-stressed statements regarding the novelty of the genre: its real-ness. As viewers we are more than familiar with its claim of presenting the real or more to the point, authentic emotional display. Although viewer's might regard this reality claim with skepticism, notion of authenticity nevertheless constitute an important part of the pleasure involved in viewing (Hill, 2005).

Whereas the real-ness of the genre has been discussed quite extensively, my aim is to examine some emotional aspects of the real. [4] Reality-Tv constitute in large an authenticity industry that usually promise exclusive insights into people's personal life and/or of getting access to their heartfelt emotions. Since it depends on the notion that real emotions and conflicts will arise, it must use strategies that encourage people to express and display what they feel in certain situations. Although the visualization of, in Goffmans (1973) words, back-stage behaviour has become favoured media material since they are supposed to convey a notion of ´true´ and intimate revelations, it is a misconception not to pay attention to the specific character of emotions sought-after and displayed.[5]

One emotional behavior that we witness with unprecedented regularity on Tv is, as stated, the act of crying. People cry on the news, in talk-shows, in interviews, in sports program (athletes as well as journalists) and so on.

And in reality programs we see people crying because they can't lose weight, because their economy is a mess, because they can't cope with their children, because they lose dancing- singing and modelling competitions or job assignments or because they didn't get the bachelorette/the bachelor. Or because they actually *do* lose weight, they do get new houses, better economy or thinner bodies. In addition, tearful reactions are generally selected for program trailers to underscore their importance and the emotional character of the program. A repeatedly shown trailer for *So you think you can dance* (spring 2010) display

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[2] Mediamätningar i Skandinavien [MMS], 2010.
[3] See foxreality.com. In 2002 "Zone reality" was launched in UK.
[4] Among others, Hill (2005); Couldry (2004), Jerslev (2004).
[5] The emphasis on emotions and transparency concern foremost reality programs in westernized countries. In other global contexts such as orthodox cultures, transgressing boundaries between private and public consists of other elements such as women and men partaking and sometimes living together as in *Star Academy, Arab World* or *Idol Afghanistan* (see also Lynch, 2005).

two men sobbing loudly and finding it hard to speak: "I [sob] just live for dancing", " I can't believe it! [sob], and in the Swedish *Searching for Julia* (spring 2010) a young girl is crying and declaring, as her tears are falling ; "This is what I [sob] burn for". [6]

While the importance placed on oral confession for establishing authenticity has been convincingly described by Aslama and Pantti (2006), after a decade of reality-Tv, physical reactions conceived as somewhat involuntary seem to be of equal (and increasing?) importance in affirming genuineness. In the 1980s Ien Ang´s notion of emotional realism pointed to a new way of understanding viewing experiences and engagement with a fictional series, *Dallas*. While the plot was often considered exaggerated and unreal, emotional realism referred to the subjective experience of recognition and identification with the psychological reality of characters and narrative elements (Ang, 1985). The shift today, when looking at media trends in general and reality genres in particular, I would argue, is towards a conceptualization of bodily emotionalism. One could say that the location of real-ness have shifted from emotional recognition in the dilemmas facing fictional characters, to recognition of genuine corporeal reactions in real people.

Linda Williams (1991) have pointed to the generic and structural organization of excessive emotions in different body genres; pornography, horror films and so called weepies (e.g., melodramas). Persistent feature of excess are the spectacle of the body in the grip of intense, even infantile, emotions. In pornography this ´body beside itself ´is featured most sensationally in the portrayal of orgasms and in melodramas in the portrayal of weeping. The emotional plot in many reality programs combine elements from melodramas (high stung emotions) with the display of authentic physical reactions (often accompanied by fluid) as in hard porn.

This article will, hence, discuss how the focus on evoking and exposing tears in reality programs can be understood. Two mediated situations will be used as examples: eviction scenes and the single-person speech. Both are crucial ingredients and appear in almost every reality program, albeit in diverse modes. Characteristic to both is also the conventional need to display emotional and embodied transparency. Our emotional response to a situation depends on if, and how, we are able to appraise an event, how much information we have, or which feelings are most ´spoken to´. More involuntary reactions, like a disgust sound or tears dwelling up in our eyes, when we'd rather not cry, usually occur when, for some reason our responses are "pushed out" before we can stop ourselves. Ekman and Freisen (1969) refer to this process of suppressed emotions being revealed in gestures and other bodily cues as ´non-verbal leakage´. When reflections and normative rules, cultural expectations or patterns govern, emotional reactions are more determined by so called pull-effects, or secondary emotions, resulting in for example a forced smile.

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[6] Tears in connection to reality programs are often re-taled and more importantly, visualized, in the tabloids the day after: if someone have felt hurt, picked on or sad and foremost if tears have been shed: " Lets Dance 2010 **THE SHOCK** Malin broke into pieces after the show" (*Expressen*, 06.03.2010) "Can't hold the tears back..She couldn't stop crying" (*Expressen.se*, 06.03.2010), "Here Malin is crying when Stefan is being evicted" (*Aftonbladet,* 06.03.2010).

In analyzing how bodily emotionalism might be elicited in foremost eviction situations, I will depart from Scherer's (2001) process model. It springs from the definition of emotions as bodily episodes that occur in response to our evaluation of an external or internal event. A body episode consists of interrelated synchronized changes in the five organismic subsystems: appraisal (the cognitive system), arousal (the nervous system), expression (the motor system), action tendencies (the motivational system) and feeling (the monitor system). As we evaluate or appraise an event, four types of information are usually said to be required; how *relevant* is the event for me? What is the *consequence* to my well-being? How can I *adjust* to these consequences? And finally, what is the *significance* of this event to my self- image and to social norms and values? The concept bodily emotionalism, therefore, refers to physical reactions as ways of anchoring authenticity, and as to how they can be evoked in mediated situations.

Examples are drawn from a range of reality programs aired on Swedish television in 2009 and 2010, with particular attention to popular competition shows and dating programs. My aim is not to discuss specific programs but rather to point out some aspects of how tears intertwine with the genres claim for authenticity and with its bodily aspect of real-ness. I will also touch upon how the exposure of tears might be understood from a viewing position. Although the connection between increasing emotional display of real people on the screen and the experience of watching is understudied (and remains unanswered in an empirical way in this study), one can assume, given the immense success on a global scale of reality programs where crying inducing situations are a vital ingredient, that they appeal in some profound sense to our experience as viewers.

My argument is two-folded: firstly, that the production of bodily reactions is becoming an important feature of mediatized real-ness, and secondly, that the focus on tears can be understood as a cultural longing for transparency where the body is located as an area for truth.

Reacting bodies

The proliferations of reality programs certainly do illustrate a contemporary hunger for the real. But it is a very specific experience of reality that they offer – the transparent and bodily manifested. According to Baudrillard (1985) reality has collapsed into a hyper reality creating a nostalgic longing after something resolute, an illusion of the real:

When the real is no longer what it used to be, nostalgia assumes its full meaning [...] there is a panic stricken production of the real and the referential (1985:93).

Looking at the increasing demands for physical signs of truth in many reality programs, one could ask if not the body is claiming the position of a (nostalgic?) longing after the real; it is saved by rescuing teams,

taken care of by beauty experts and dietists or is exposed to physical and psychological endurances. As a marker for real-ness, the body symbolizes authenticity on a material and tangible level.

In the early global successes such as *Survivor*, *Big Brother* and *Temptation Island*, much emphasis was on the spectacular. The emotional framing was often quite extreme. People were locked-up in specially made houses, abandoned on deserted islands, having sex after drunken parties semi-hidden from cameras. While displaying real emotions has always been the cornerstone of the genre, there is nowadays more focus on intensity and transparency. In the Swedish tableau there are to a large extent strong emotions per se that are offered, or as channel 3 exclaims; "The strongest emotions will be found here". In 2008 the same channel declared: "The most genuine emotions will be found here".

The issue is not how people react in extreme situations but in accordance to more recognizable emotional situations; rejected by a partner, distressed by financial worries, problems with children, spouses or not performing well on an assignment, or out of relief or exhilaration. Eviction scenes moreover resonate with staged situations of evaluation, which is not uncommon in an urbanized, capitalistic and competitive driven economy.

Emphazising strong rather than genuine emotions could of course be seen as a semantic move. While the real-ness of strong emotions is a given in reality-Tv there is however a qualitative difference as well. Strong emotions are in this context more equal to primary emotions, that is, those that we feel as a first, sometimes involuntary response to a situation. These are therefore often considered as an expression of direct and less controlled reactions.

Sexual acts on Tv (in non-pornographic settings), although depicting highly intimate moments, do not contain emotional display (usually we see bodies under blankets with bad lightning and muffled sounds). And even if these acts certainly can evoke strong emotions within participants, especially when discussing them afterwards (and their feelings for one another), the act in itself does not carry any emotional revelation or transparency insight for the viewer. So, while earlier reality programs relied on the extraordinary ´never-seen-before´ formula, the real now consists of getting access to people's reactions in more recognizable settings. This is not just a shift from the spectacular to the ordinary but to another emotional dimension of the spectacular where physical reactions are crucial. Bodily emotionalism doesn't need to involve details from private life it is rather the highlighted (and short sequences of) physical manifestations that is crucial– the reacting.

Televised attention

Bodily emotionalism is, of course, linked to television as a medium – to its audio-visual mode of representing the real. While the McLuhan maxim "The medium is the message" is often repeated in a cliché mode, it is still relevant: a medium, irrespective of what it is transmitting, affects how the audience

interacts with it and affects what is being transmitted. Televisions sensory stimulation interacts with human senses in a unique way: its transmission of live pictures and sounds, its apparent real-life tempo, its ability to provide experiences of simultaneity, all gives an impression of real life interactions which highlights the emotional power of the medium.[7]

Since emotions have to be expressed or illustrated to an audience, the medium itself underscores some emotional forms and reduces others. On television, their level of readability comes in a visual and/or audibly manner and in accordance with a cultural script that enables the audience to understand there intended meaning (Ahmed, 2004; Jenkins, 2007). The ability for close-ups, of zooming in a persons face and of capturing even the most instant, fleeting expression has, for example, always been a characteristic trait of televisions emotional script.

From a medium perspective it could be argued that sensations displayed in real bodies draws our attention in a rather automatic way. Tests have shown that viewing faces with emotional expressions or emotional scenes (e.g., a war scene) evokes increased responses relative to viewing neutral faces or neutral scenes (e.g., a lake scene, see Padmala and Pessoa, 2008). To witness people overcome by strong emotions on the screen might arouse a sense of interest that doesn't depart from the participatory feeling that identification can create, but from the mediums ability to reassemble real-life interactions and from our inherited habit (for our survival) to react on – or at least pay attention to - emotional outbursts from others. And tearful reactions are not easy to ignore, whether on Tv or in our vicinity. Tears are highly corporeal manifestations, a form of para-language that, without the use of words communicate an intense emotional state both in relation to others and to oneself. A person crying will usually draw the attention in a way that words seldom can, demanding in a powerful way a response from the ones present, who, willingly or not, become part of the crying moment.

Tears for real

Weeping is an exclusively human behaviour. Man is the only animal that can produce emotional tears. There are tears associated with despair, sadness, shame, joy, loss and emotional release. Albeit being such a varied and complex emotional expression there seem to be some general elements concerning crying proneness among adults. We mostly cry in relation to feelings of loneliness, helplessness, loss, and separation or out of relief (Kottler & Montgomery, 2001). Tears are also culture-specific even if they in art for example sometimes claim a universal meaning. Throughout the sensor cult of the 18th century, tears were associated with a high sensitive ability well fit for the upper classes. The religion-influenced thinking of the pre-Victorian era, on the other hand, associated excessive crying with too mundane a view and too little fait in the after-world. Also during the Victorian era, strong grieving met with objections and in the

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[7] Among others, Meyrowitz (1985); Thompson (1995); Buonanno (2007).

wake of the First World War, the indulgence of retrospect emotions, including tears of grief, met with impatience (Johannisson, 2009; Stearns & Knapp, 1996).

In accordance with a growing psychological view on crying as a healthy expression helping the person to be freed from suppressed emotions, tears are more commonly defined as something positive. The social context is of course determinant of whether or not crying will be conceived as a healthy reaction; when in mourning, in therapeutic treatment or in the company of close ones, tears are more acceptable than in other public settings. The notion of crying as a release of built up psychic energy and pent-up emotions has also been a favourite theme within popular culture. In western literature and film, the weeping of the leading character often symbolizes a crucial narrative turning point, a sign of new possibilities and more positive revelations to emerge.

Even though theories concerning tears are still more speculative than empirical, it is foremostly an act considered expressing a true and genuine emotional state (while they can, of course, be manipulative as the phrase ´crocodile tears´ suggests). Connecting tears and actual weeping as signs of a genuine affect and heartfelt emotions has a long history in our culture. In courtrooms for example, both formally and informally, crying has been used to establish proof of one´s innocence. Juries are still swayed by the guilty partiy´s ability – or lack of it - to show remorse and a flow of tears are often seen as primary evidence of genuineness.

Tears consequently, seem to carry a specific quality of truthfulness in that they cannot be counterfeit as words can. Or in the words of Barthes: "the ´truest ´of messages [is] that of my body, not that of my speech".[8] Suggesting that tears have a meaning greater than words is implying that truth somehow resides within the body. In this view, our bodies are ´naturally´ truthful and tears are the most essential form of speech for this idealized body. Tears (when not accompanied by other liquid such as snot) have also managed to avoid the cultural ban connected to many bodily secretions such as urine, semen and mucus.

There are thus, three recurring ways of reading tears; as a healthy expression of repressed emotions (on a personal level), as a narrative turning point (in cultural texts) and as a sign of the truthfulness of the feelings displayed. In reality programs the latter function of tears as authenticity markers is crucial. In addition, tears in reality programs have some general distinctions; they are exposed in public in front of a large and anonymous audience, they are not shed out of grief or horror (as in news programs) but provoked by emotional tension in staged situations, and they often appear as involuntary.

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[8] Barthes (as cited in Lutz, 1999:52). During 1800th century Romanticism, Rousseau saw crying as an act that put man closer to his natural state than when in the grip of the guilt and pride that make up modern civilized feelings. Crying is in this perspective superior to words as a form of communication because our bodies are uncorrupted by culture or society (Lutz, 1999).

Emotional gaps and eviction scenes

In evictions scenes contestants are eliminated until a winner is chosen, in most reality programs however, the main purpose is not the competition itself, but the judging ceremony that it leads to.

In programs such as *So you think you can dance* (US), *American Idol* (US) and *Searching for Julia* (SWE) the first three or four episodes consist solely of a selecting process in order to gather the group of individuals who will later compete with each other. These programs follow much the same structural organization; panoramas over masses of people queuing and cheering towards the camera, statements of intense expectations. The latter is often done either by short interviews with participants and in some cases a retrospective of them in their home-environment follows, where they, usually in a very emotional manner, declare how being on the show will change their lives. Then the performance in front of a jury takes place, during which the camera shifts between the contestant and facial reactions of the jury members – who will sometimes, foremost in US programs, express their feelings quite clearly by shaking their head, rolling their eyes and so on.

After that two emotions are overtly expressed by the contestants; awe and joy from the ones who "will go to - Hollywood!", or have the chance to be " our next Julia!", and despair and disappointment from those who didn't make it. A lot of sequences show people bursting out from the room, or the stage, after performing and receiving a negative verdict. The camera then follows them as they fall into the arms of their close one's crying their hearts out. The most extensive crying is usually done by young women while strong disappointment in men is more frequently displayed through contorted and turned-away faces.

During the run of a program prolonged judging scenes are the climax moment. They often appear in the beginning, replaying the last eviction scene and then the new one appear in the end of the program. The framing of these scenes consists of several elements including strict bodily and emotional regulations. The behaviour rule is to keep the body still, usually standing and facing the jury and not respond orally:

"Now there is only the pair of you left. One of you will return home after tonight [silence]. One of you will have to pack your things and say goodbye to the others [silence]. And that person is..."(*American Idol*). " One of you will not be with us anymore ..."(*Let´s Dance*). "The one of you whose time is out is [silence] ... Susanna!" (*Farmer wants a wife*). "The group that will have to return home.... who's dreams stops here .....is number B!" (*America Got Talent*), " You are .....NOT our Julia" (*Searching for Julia*).

The drama is built up by the extended moments of silence, which is a very unusual element in television overall, together with the forensic long shot where the camera will freeze in order to capture bodily reactions. And when one of the contestants is showing signs of distress or is about to cry, then but not until then, will the camera move on. In other words, when the participants are overwhelmed with emotions and have difficulty controlling them.

How is this ´overwhelming´ created? The framing departs from suspension. The participants do not know what they will hear which is the evidential suspension key. This means that they cannot, during the eviction speech, make an appraisal of the situation (how this will affect their well-being). The extended moment of silent in combination with keeping the body still and not being able to distract oneself, bending down, looking away etc, will affect the nervous system and draw out physical arousal (hearth beating, sweating). The verdict, whether positive or negative, will result in an instant expression that the camera captures in a close-up. It is obvious that the eviction situation is organised in this way in order to let the two televised suited subsystems come in to play; expression and actions i.e., the motor and motivational system.

The participants have to valuate the eviction situation in itself as of significance for her/his well- being and regard the outcome (consequence) as important in regard to their needs, goals and desires. One of the immediate outcomes is the possibility of being sent home, that one is no longer fit to belong to the specific community within the program. In order for this aspect to be as emotionally charged as possible, a sense of group community needs to have been established. In many programs participants either live together in close quarters where they eat, sleep and spend almost all waking time together, or work together between the episodes to improve their dance-and/or song number for example. This developing of a group feeling will undoubtedly speed up the intimacy level between those involved, a process that is necessary for evoking strong feelings when having to depart from each other, or from a presumptive partner. Facing the threat of being dismissed from a community is a common anxiety scenario to most of us. It touches upon situations of stigma, of not being wanted which we know by psychiatry, are closely connected to feelings of loneliness and powerlessness, which in their turn are feelings with high crying proneness.

The extended moment of suspension together with the managing of body movements create the required dilemma between managing or not managing emotional reactions, a dilemma Aslama and Pantti (2006) sees as a defining trait of reality genres. What is also produced during these emotional episodes is gaps in the information-chain necessary for appraising an event or a social interaction; relevancy, consequences, adjusting possibilities and significance. Hence, the appraisal process, which is one of the most important features of emotion and usually guides us as adults, not at least in public situations and in interaction with others, are ´cut out´ or reduced for a short but intense and recorded moment. This cutting out of information fuels other reactions that will by necessity be more involuntary and instant.

The appraisal gaps also make it hard for participants to articulate or respond in an intellectual, thoughtful and adult manner when being told of their flaws, difficulties or talents. They are expected to display primary and in a sense, infantile reactions such as tears of disappointment and powerlessness, or of tension as well as relief. The situation demands a very clear divide of power between the ones invested with

authority and the ones who are not. Several aspects of the judging scenario can also be traced back to infancy when being told what to do and how by figures of authority, is a persisting experience.[9]

Although these situations certainly will evoke different emotional reactions among participants, whether of disappointment, frustration or release and joy, many of them can – and will – be expressed through tears. Tears can either be shed as response to feelings of being left out, of being rejected, or out of relief of still belonging. Crying is moreover an emotional reaction usually linked to private and intimate aspects of life, and therefore easily interpreted as unintentional when done by adults in front of a large set of cameras. Weeping is furthermore associated with matters of high significance in our lives. In this perspective, strong emotional outbursts, as tears, in connection to media staged situations stress the programs individual and social significance.

Transparency and speech acts

Another emotional and prominent generic feature in most reality programs, is the single-person speech, which usually follows after the eviction scenes. While tears are evoked by judgments from others in the eviction situation, they are, in the single-speech, often self-provoked when ´alone´ in front of the camera.

In the video diary form participants talk directly into the camera, however, more often an edited form is used that follows traditional visual conventions for documentaries where people are alone but not addressing the camera directly. The speech act often occurs in a room or setting of its own, outside the ´world´ that the rest of the program takes place in. Here viewers and participants will meet in what appear as a more intimate one-to-one relationship. The content revolves feelings in relation to others, to oneself or to events that have taken place. Participants are articulating their expectations, desires, disappointments and hopes, in other word, articulating *their* appraisal of the situation; what they feel and why in a confessional mode.

Nonetheless, it's not just confessions that we partake in, but rather a ritual where transparency becomes central in framing the real. The talk usually concerns emotional information that none of the concerned parts in the program have access to. In programs where a sense of group community has been established, the subject is mostly how other participants have made them feel. In programs with a lower degree of community feeling, expectations and disappointments with oneself is the lead theme. In the first case we are to understand that we do not just receive private, but foremost *privileged* information. One technique that underscores this is the retrospective play back. Cuts from already shown situations are replayed with a

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[9] Elements that will infantilize adult's are: patronizing ways of addresses, the use of exaggerated speech, being intrusive and condescending (for example commenting on clothing), demanding compliance according to the rules set up by a figure of authority and to scold the ones who disobeys or express annoyance to the formal, and informal rules. It can also involve asking people to behave disruptively (Whitbourne & Cassidy, 1994).

voiceover commenting and telling us their real feelings at the time: - " They where so stiff [...] I didn't want to date any of them", explains one of the single mum's, as we witness in replay how she sits and laughs surrounded by five men on a picnic (spring 2009). We have therefore, the possibility to see an event taking place and simultaneously knowing what their ´genuine´ feelings were at the time. In this perspective the single-person speech gives the viewer an omnipotent emotional overview: she/he are the only one that knows what the persons ´actually´ thinks and feels.

In the second case, emotional reactions are usually self-evoked; if they haven't been able to lose as much weight as they were hoping to or so on. This self-revelation comes in a somewhat therapeutic framing, thematically and formally. Articulating feelings of personal failures with oneself is an intimate act common in treatment situations. Formally, cameramen, program hosts etc, are often physical present, making it, from the part of the ´confessant´ a more authentic social interaction situation. The experience of disclosing one's feeling in front of a camera in a social setting, and with the knowledge of there being an audience at the other end, might heighten the emotional intensity and give way to crying proneness.

Authenticity in the single-person speech relies on a combination of emotional disclosure – information regarding feelings towards other or towards oneself as well as the display of physical reactions, since it often happens that people cry or show strong emotions when accounting for how they feel and why. And although this form of emotional truth springs foremost from oral speech, it is not just the talk itself that anchors emotional transparency. Physical signs are of importance in determining the accuracy of the feelings articulated. Studies have shown that this is the most spoken-back-to moment for viewers. The direct mode of address in combination with revelation of feelings often gives raise to commentary where audiences evaluate true feelings by judging if their body language and/or facial expressions are in accordance with the expressed feelings (Hill, 2005).

Since tears here are more evoked by participants own appraisal of the situation, reactions are not pushed-out by tension-building elements, as in the eviction scenes. The social embedding of the situation as well as the more therapeutic framing of the talk might however inflict upon their emotional state producing a more primary, or push-out effect. To conduct intimate confessions publicly and in this way contextualize the self is in itself a process for evoking strong emotions and physical reactions, such as tears.

In order to induce a sense of identification, or at least recognition with fictional characters, emotional realism, as stated, derives from the audience's subjective world of private experiences (Ang, 1985). In reality programs single-person speech, the question of identification and/or recognition is more complex and might depend more on the emotional overview and transparency it offers, than on a sense of identification with the participant. What we are promised is access to a knowledge that can be almost impossible to attain in our everyday life. Relationships, whether with colleagues, friends, lovers, children or

parents can be experienced as both problematic, threatening and alluring – not to mention the aspect of emotional sincerity: what do they really feel, think and say when I'm not around? The revelation of ´true´ feelings towards others, promise us a unique insight into how people might experience one another.

Tears and the ´truthful´ body

Bodily emotionalism offers a sense of reality where transparency is prevailing, letting us see how people "really are". In reality programs the body is located as the referent par excellence for the real, for that something that cannot counterfeit us as words can, and what could be more convincing than tears springing from the eyes of the people we watch? Yet, the importance placed on offering easily read responses narrows the emotional script for genuiness. It is the more basic repertoire of feelings the body is foremost expected to communicate, of being deprived, rejected or having escaped these feelings by winning the consent of others.

It is within this intense corporeal media culture that the prominence of tears resides. Tears are not just a facial manifestation of communication that fits well with televisions close-up convention - they are evidential fluid emerging out of the body.[10] In this perspective, tears are in many reality programs a necessary element, a-must-be, its importance equals that of the well established cum-shot technique or money-shot, in hardcore pornography, as a narrative climax as well as an authenticity marker (Hirdman 2007). Just as corporeal evidence in hard porn relies on the eruption of fluids, so does the craving for physical authenticity in reality programs depend on – although in a more socially acceptable manner - what the body gives away.   And especially what the young female body gives away. While the most common expression for older people and men, is near-to-tears, tears-in-eyes or head bent down, hard sobbing or fully fledged crying is mostly displayed in the young female body or more feminized young men, linking to a rather persistent tradition with non-masculine persons overtaken by emotions and therefore ruled by their feelings.

Bodily emotionalism is of course a dialectic process between viewers and emotional displays on the screen. It has been said that the obsessive preoccupation with emotions and authenticity is a way of dealing with experiences of insecurity that the reflexivity of late modernity inflicts upon the individual (Gidden, 1991). The focus on evoking and displaying strong emotions could thus mirror a broader cultural longing after transparency that ensures to reduce uncertainties irrevocable connected to interaction with others. We cannot prevent relationships, whether in our personal, professional or social life from changing and

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[10] The erupted body as a path to finding the truth is also a prominent feature in popular criminal fiction: *CSI Miami, CSI New York, Silent Witness* and so on. Bodies are not just exposed in death but opened up so as to reveal the truth that often literally dwells *in* the body, in its veins, on the surface of the skin, in the palate.

becoming sometimes contradictory.   However fervent people show us their emotions in a face-to-face interaction we can very seldom, be sure that we are not misreading them – or being mislead - if they feel one way but express quite the opposite according to conventional rules, social norms and expectations. On television we are witnessing others in an emotional context that promise to leave no room for misunderstandings. Their instant reactions will be there for us to stare at with the help of close-up convention. We might not feel the same way, but we can certainly make sense – if not by looking at their (involuntary) bodily reactions then by listening to their ´true´ feelings regarding others, and see whether their tears convince us of their truthfulness.

In an interesting forecast Scherer (2001) speculates on how a more intense emotion expression and experience, due to the massive use of emotional charged material in the media might affect us. One distinct possibility is that we may experience more frequently than in the past, empathy or contagion reactions. This constant affective stimulation could activate our emotional sensitivity. On the other hand, repeated experiences of high emotional intensity might diminish our emotional capacity, leaving little to genuinely felt emotions due to real, self-experienced events. The latter would also result in us doubting the authenticity of much of what we see with respect to emotional expression.

The focus in reality programs on inciting physical reactions such as tears might be there to secure authenticity to an audience that has become quite used to witnessing and evaluating emotional outbursts. Placing people in intense emotional situations and using different psychological devices to increase the arousal level, produces a context where real reactions might be achieved even in the midst of a sometimes overtly melodramatic setting and plotting of a program. In this way producers do not have to rely solely on a persons willingness (or ability) to act according to an emotional script. The tension building techniques will see to that, if only for a brief but intense and recorded second, then tears are really true.

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