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STAGED AUTHENTICITY IN TV NEWS AN ANALYSIS OF SWISS TV NEWS FROM 1957 UNTIL TODAY¹

*Wahrheit lässt sich nicht zeigen, nur erfinden.
(Truth cannot be shown, only invented.)
Max Frisch, Don Juan or the Love of Geometry.*

In order to gain credibility, TV news have to present their stories in a way that they seem true and genuine, that is to say authentic. As the authenticity of news stories never comes directly from the reality outside the media, the stories must be designed and controlled in a way that the information is perceived as authentic. It will be argued that TV news stage authenticity with different kind of linguistic and visual signs. Assuming that, the development of three crucial means for staging authenticity will be analyzed in a corpus of Swiss TV news from 1957 to 1999: the giving of details, the use of "original voices" (sound bites) and the dramaturgy and aesthetics of film.

The analysis will show that there is a paradigm change in staging authenticity during the 60s which leads to more subtle means. Different explanations of this change will be offered.

Keywords: TV news, staging, authenticity, history of TV news.

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1. The meaning of the term authentic - some etymological considerations ²

The term “authentic” is derived from Greek *autentes*, or *auto-entes*: he who acts with authority, or that which is done by one own hands (Dictionary of philosophy and religion, cf. Reese 1996: 54; Kalisch 2000: 32). In the ancient world's understanding of a person being “autentes” that claim included - in contrast to a slave - autonomy and freedom of speech; therefore only utterances were appropriate for him that could be assigned to him. So an “authentic” utterance meant an utterance of a free man who takes responsibility for everything he does, and so also for his utterances (Kalisch 2000: 32).

When it comes to written sources there is not so much the “autentes” himself at the centre of interest, but the word written by his hand. However, the author as well as his intentions do need to be identified. Originally, the intention, the 'meaning' of a text was important above all in the field of jurisprudence, when in case of ambiguous laws the intention of the legislator was discussed. There is a distinction between a doctrinal and an authentic interpretation: the doctrinal interpretation is the one of the scholars, the authentic the one of the legislator, who is the author.

In theological discourse the term *authenticos* was borrowed from jurisprudence. While in old Christian literature the term *authentici* referred to biblical authors, during the reformation it was given a new meaning and was taken to refer to divine authorship and its accessibility. The problem of authenticity became a problem of bible hermeneutics. During the period of pietism there was a change from a hermeneutic to an active communicative perspective: in the context of the exegesis the logical meaning of a text should not be annotated, but the text should be “staged”³ authentically by the exegete, so that it can be understood without further effort. So in this context - that was up to the 18th century - the term authentic meant sincere and faithful to the intentions of the biblical author.

² The following passage is mostly based on Kalisch (2000).

³ Alexander, W. (1993). *Hermeneutica generalis. Zur Konzeption und Entwicklung der allgemeinen Verstehenslehre im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert*, Stuttgart: 180. Cited Kalisch (2000: 37).

While the term authentic referred to an ability to realize specific kinds of utterances in classical antiquity, in the legal context it referred to the elicitation of the author's intention and finally in the age of pietism to the "staging" of this intention. In today's encyclopaedias the term is paraphrased with "genuine", "reliable" and/or "credible" in most cases.⁴ So in today's meaning different aspects of the term's etymology seem to be present if you apply the term to texts - and that is what I intend to do.

An authentic text can be

- a text that in fact has been formulated by the person indicated as author (so this person is also responsible for the utterances in the text),
- a text that is in accordance with the truth,
- a text that is in accordance with the intention of the author,
- a text that is credible, that gives no reason to be taken for a fake or a lie.

For our topic the definition in the German dictionary called "Deutsches Universalwörterbuch" (Duden) is especially interesting: "genuine, corresponding to the facts and *therefore* credible"⁵ (my italics). Here the credibility is a consequence of correspondence to the facts.

2. Authenticity in TV News Shows

The aspects of the meaning of "authentic" mentioned above are not all relevant to the same degree if we use the term authenticity about TV news. In this connection, it refers to the relationship between the reality existing outside the media and the news story. It is crucial to news that the audience believes in the information presented, that the audience thinks this information is not distorted but that it is true and genuine - to say, in short, that it is authentic. Usually news stories are about new information, so the audience cannot judge if they are true, if they are in accordance with reality; therefore the above-cited definition by Duden of the term authentic (the news story is credible, because it is in accordance with reality) cannot be used for authenticity evoked in daily news pro-

⁴ See for example *The concise Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology* (Hoad 1986) or *Bloomsbury Dictionary of Word Origins*, (Ayto 1990). In the German dictionary *Duden. Das grosse Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache* authentic is paraphrased with "echt", "zuverlässig" and "glaubwürdig".

⁵ German original text: "echt, den Tatsachen entsprechend u. daher glaubwürdig".

grams. In the case of news programs, news stories are perceived as credible only if they are presented in a credible manner. News stories just pretend to be authentic - to what degree they really represent authenticity in detail cannot be judged by the audience in most cases. So the aim of every serious TV news show must be credibility. Of course today's audience is not so naïve that it just believes everything that is presented in this format. Therefore the texts presented - and with text I mean the combination of verbal text and image - must be designed and controlled so that the information is perceived as authentic. This happens through signs realized in the texts; so authenticity in TV news shows is achieved through signs.

The anchor, for example, - in Swiss TV News, live presentation has been possible since 1967⁶ - does not have only the function of divulging information. He establishes contact with the audience which makes him a familiar figure viewers can become attached to (see Meyrowitz 1985); he organizes the story and its parts and can comment on it. But above all, the anchor and his entourage are portrayed as guaranteeing seriousness and truth. So in almost every TV news show, the anchors are perfectly dressed and made up, in a studio - in most cases dominantly blue - that looks clean and neat. Coupland (2001: 416) speaks in this connection of "semiotic gravitas".⁷ And in the German-speaking areas the news presented in a serious way was accepted while forms of "happy talk" (see Wittwen 1995) used in the 80s by private TV stations in Germany were not.

But besides the anchor there are other signs needed to present the news as authentic, because under the circumstances given by televisual representation an authentic representation of some reality outside the media cannot be realized: each camera shot presents the events in a specific way, and in every presentation of the world's most important news information is withheld depending on how newsworthy it is. It is often not clear where some specific piece of information comes from, or who its author is.⁸ The information is fictionalized to a certain degree by fit-

⁶ See Sutter, (1998, unpublished).

⁷ The anchors are committed to their role to such an extent that they are hardly suitable as advertising medium for commercial companies (if they are allowed to make such advertisements at all); see Willems (2000: 220).

⁸ With "author" I am referring to the person responsible for the encoding and the composition of the text. In news discourse, the author is not an individual, Luginbuehl et al. (2002).

ting it into a news narrative,⁹ and so on. To cut it short: what you hear and see is the result of different selection processes that are determined by the intended effect on the audience. The authenticity presented in TV news therefore can be characterized as staged.¹⁰ It is staged, not because it is realized through signs, but in the sense that it is presented as real authenticity that is not influenced by the medium, while it is in fact a reality and therefore an authenticity constructed by the media. This reality in the media is, of course, not absolutely independent of the reality outside the media; there are traces of this second reality in media texts.¹¹ Whether a news story is seen as authentic or not depends on the staging of authenticity with suitable means.

That the authenticity is staged and does not come “directly” from the reality outside the media is also shown by fakes, such as, for example, the faked news stories of Michael Born about the Ku-Klux-Klan or Kurdish extremists produced in the mid 90s.¹² These fakes seemed to be as authentic as other news stories, because the same means for staging authenticity were used. Thus the decisive point about credibility is not the relationship to reality but the staging of authenticity.

If we take the above aspects into consideration, the term authenticity - talking about TV news - means, above all, the fact that TV news stories try to seem credible. Authenticity in TV news can thus be defined as credibility established by textual and visual means. Other aspects - like original formulation, truth of information or the real intention of the author - are secondary in the sense that they cannot be judged by the audience. The audience can only judge the credibility of the story. So we can expect news stories to be consistent in trying to produce a “‘transparency-to-reality’ effect” (Connell 1980: 149) by incorporating traces of the reality outside the media.

⁹ Fiske (1987); Hartley (1982); Hickethier (1997a and b); Hickethier (1998); Luginbuehl et al. (2004); Pueschel (1992); Sperry (1981).

¹⁰ For the term of staging (= inszeniert) Burger (1996).

¹¹ For the construction of reality by the media for example Burger (2001b); Merten et al. (1994); Luginbuehl et al. (2002).

¹² See the websites provided by Deutsches Historisches Museum (2003) and Jeismann (2004), but also Porst (1998: 237).

I will now turn to the question of how authenticity has been staged in the analyzed corpus - consisting of news stories from the Swiss TV news show *Tagesschau* and other Swiss news shows dating from 1957 until today on the topic of Swiss foreign policy¹³ - and how the relationship between staging and authenticity has been shaped historically. Doing so I assume that authenticity in TV news shows is staged in the sense mentioned above and that it has been staged with varying means during the period of time analyzed. Further I assume that these means are determined by technical possibilities as well as by certain fashionable styles.

3. Analysis

The analysis of the corpus reveals interesting aspects regarding the staging of authenticity on three different levels:

1. the giving of details (and hence the location in space and time)
2. the use of “original voices” (in other words statements, parts of interviews/speeches and so on, of people not belonging to the editorial staff)
3. dramaturgy and aesthetics of the film

3.1 *Giving of details*

In the early news stories there is hardly ever a precise indication of the time and place of the event reported. A representative story from January 13th, 1957 talking about care for Hungarian refugees in Switzerland¹⁴ begins like this:

Voice-over¹⁵: “The students who fled from Hungary to Switzerland are being looked after by Swiss students. The authorities should have as little work as possible.”¹⁶

¹³ Luginbuehl et al. (2004).

¹⁴ After the rebellion in Hungary about 10'000 refugees were taken in by Switzerland. This taking in pointed the way ahead to the taking in of the refugees from Tibet and Czechoslovakia. Most of the Hungarian refugees did not flee from political pursuit but from economical misery (see Goehrke 1994: 322).

¹⁵ “Voice-over” is a voice you can hear without seeing this person on screen. Voice “on” will be used for voices you can hear while you also can see the person talking on screen.

¹⁶ German original text: “*Die von Ungarn in die Schweiz gefluechteten Studenten werden in unserem Lande von ihren schweizerischen Kommilitonen selber betreut. Man wollte den Behoerden so wenig Arbeit wie moeglich aufbuerden.*”

In the following story different aspects of care for the refugees are explained, while every aspect is illustrated with relevant pictures. The audience never gets any information about where and when this film was shot, or where and when the story happened.

Already in 1963, in a story about refugees from Tibet¹⁷, things are quite different:

Voice-over: "Buchen in Praetigau will be the new home for the 24 Tibetans who arrived yesterday in Kloten¹⁸ and were driven to their new Swiss home in a postal bus¹⁹."²⁰

The reported event is defined precisely in time and place: yesterday the refugees arrived in Kloten and then they were taken to Buchen. Additional to these details and - as is usual in the news stories about refugees from Tibet - the exact number of refugees and even the means of transport is mentioned. While the film and the information in the story dating from 1957 could be from anywhere and any time, the relation to the reality outside the media seems to be much closer in the case of the Tibetans' story: the facts told are located in time and place. Through this closer relationship to reality- at least in the presentation -, the reported event seems to be more 'real', more authentic.²¹ The large amount of detail given in the story of 1963 has remained standard since the 60s.

The fact that the early stories of the *Tagesschau* did not date from the day they were shown can explain why there was no indication of the time

¹⁷ After the rebellion was suppressed in 1959 about 85'000 Tibetans fled from the People's Republic of China; 1200 of them were taken in by Switzerland after 1963, when private charity organizations got the right from the Swiss government to take in the refugees who then lived in India. The government granted this right on the condition that there would be no costs for the government. See Banki and Spaeti (1994: 382).

¹⁸ Local name of the biggest international airport in Switzerland.

¹⁹ In certain areas of Switzerland the post offices run public transport systems.

²⁰ German original text: "*Buchen im Praetigau wird die neue Heimat der 24 Tibeter sein, die gestern in Kloten angekommen sind und mit einem Postauto in ihre neue Schweizerheimstaette gefahren wurden.*"

²¹ In other contexts too the giving of details is regarded as a mean to make something seem authentic: In the *Duden. Grosses Woerterbuch der deutschen Sprache* (Duden. Big Dictionary of the German Language) we can find in the entry for "*authentisch*" (I: 285) the following sentence, cited from the "*Gentlemen's Journal*" (*Herrenjournal* 2, 1966): "Uncountable [...] details reproduce the authentic atmosphere of that period." (German original text: "*Unzaehlige [...] Details vermitteln die authentische Atmosphaere der Zeit.*").

- the story was supposed to appear new, not as an old one. But information about the place could have been obtained without such a problem. So we could argue that at this time not all means for staging authenticity were used. But we could also argue - and I prefer this argumentation - that it was just this omission that was meant to produce the effect of authenticity in the 50s: the details were omitted to present the information given as generally valid, and not as applying solely to one place at a certain time, so it really did not matter when and where the pictures were shot. On the contrary, this information could have given rise to the thought that the information presented as generally valid in fact just happened once - at the indicated place at the indicated time. In this argumentation, the staging of authenticity in the 50s is not underdeveloped or deficient in comparison to staging nowadays; in this argumentation the staging of the 50s was just achieved with different means. The introduction of new means for staging authenticity in the 60s is linked to the new contents of news stories: while the old stories reported generally valid information, the later stories concentrated on the news of the day.

3.2 The use of "original voices"

The first original voice in the corpus is in a news story from a news show called *Antenne*,²² dated October 5th, 1963. The story is about Tibetan refugees and repeats - as do all the stories on the issue - over and over again how grateful the refugees are. So a Lama is shown draping a fortune lanyard around the neck of an important official. Then we can hear an original voice, but first we hear the translation:

Voice-over: "In the name of us all, I want to thank the Dalai Lama - the Red Cross - the inhabitants of this village - who have given us a new home --- so the Lama declared in his mother tongue."²³

Lama on: [IS SPEAKING IN TIBETAN]

²² The German word for antenna. The show, today called *Schweiz aktuell* (or "Current Switzerland"), is a news show concentrating on local and national issues.

²³ German original text: "*Dem Dalai Lama - dem Roten Kreuz - und den Dorfbewohnern - die uns eine neue Heimat schenken danke ich im Namen von uns allen --- so erklarte der Lama in seiner Landessprache.*"

We can assume that the Tibetan text could not be understood by the Swiss audience, so the function of this original sound is to authenticate the indirect speech given by the voice-over - and, of course, to make a change in the story on the level of picture and sound.

While original sounds were still very unusual in the stories about the Tibetan refugees, we find them in almost every story since the late 60s. Original sounds seem to be very authentic, but even their authenticity is staged to a certain degree: the journalists decide who can say something, which topic the person may speak about, the duration of his statement. In the story itself, the original sounds are fitted to the media's interpretation, to the news narrative; original sounds that do not fit the news narrative are very rare and, if you find one, the voice-over or the anchor will relativize its content. So the original sounds of the refugees from Tibet and Czechoslovakia always express their gratitude for Switzerland or talk about the events in their home country, as eyewitnesses. Besides eyewitnesses, also experts and officials are popular sources for original sounds.²⁴ But also in today's news stories original sounds are integrated into the story so that they fit the news narrative of the whole story. In the following example from the *Tagesschau* of June 16th, 1999, there is a story about a federal reception centre for refugees which is overcrowded - according to the headline ("reception centre overcrowded"), the anchor's presentation and the story itself. But if you take a closer look at the story, you can see that the centre is no longer overcrowded at the time the story is broadcast; at this time, the "precarious situation" as it is called, has already returned to normal. The story nevertheless talks about all of the overcrowded centres. After the few introductory words of the voice-over, we can hear and see a refugee, "Avi H.":

Voice-over [TRANSLATION OF THE ENGLISH ORIGINAL SOUND INTO GERMAN; ENGLISH ORIGINAL SOUND IN BACKGROUND]: "I arrived in Switzerland yesterday. I slept in my father's apartment. I hope I will now get a place here at the reception centre. The situation at my father's apartment is very difficult, we are five people living in a one-room apartment."

Avi H. on: "is little, we are five members" [STRONG ACCENT]

²⁴ The correspondents, reporting live and on the spot, are important too for the staging of authenticity. They act as eyewitnesses.

With his statement, the refugee is confirming that the situation is precarious. This narrative function is prepared by the voice-over immediately before the original sound: "the situation is nevertheless precarious". The English original sound is translated for the audience by the voice-over with the original sound in the background. This kind of quotation is much more complicated than other forms - but of course its effect is that of authenticity and credibility. The important thing is not the words of the refugee themselves (we hear their content from the voice-over), but the authenticating function of the picture and the sound.

This function of the refugee is typical of a lot of stories about refugees from Kosovo: They talk about their experiences and their destiny; they are the victims. To the officials in the story mentioned above - and in all other stories dealing with the issue - another function is assigned: they have to say something about the issue in a functional style, they never recount their individual experiences.

In the stories about refugees from Kosovo, there are unknown officials on the one hand who have direct contact with the refugees and therefore can report like eyewitnesses, on the other hand there are important, often well-known officials who talk about measures or express official opinions on a given issue. The way these officials appear in the stories shows very clearly how their statements are selected by the journalists. What seems to be an undistorted, authentic piece of reality is to a great extent influenced, controlled and staged by the media.

The control of original sounds by journalists is also an important factor during the production of stories: journalists get very specific statements, in some cases they even tell the person interviewed what to say.²⁵

²⁵ See Luginbuehl (2000). For citations in TV news shows see also Burger (2001a) and Haeusermann (1996). These observations fit partially with what Fiske and Hartley suggest. They say that the voices you can hear in a story, the "accessed voices" (in contrary to the "institutional voices" of the anchor, the reporters and so on, see Hartley (1982) and Fiske (1987)) are voices of individual characters, but that the meaning of their statements is not determined by these persons interviewed but by the placement and introduction of their statement in the story, see Hartley (1982: 109 f.). The fact that someone can be heard in an original sound does not say a lot about how this person is characterized in a story. Perhaps this point of view must be relativized in one aspect: The meaning of the original sound cannot be determined *only* by the journalists; and an investigation of the reception of TV news gives evidence, that sometimes the original sounds are more important than the voices of the anchor or the reporter who are embedding this original sound (see Luginbuehl et al. 2002). But we can say that the representation of talking persons in news stories is a cultural construct, the selection and the way of presentation of these persons can reflect cultural values and power structures, see Caldas-Coulthard (1995: 230).

What can be seen in connection with the functionalizing of the original sounds is something more general: the news seems authentic if the story is embedded in well-known forms, in news narratives which are - even if not consciously - familiar to the audience: the refugee is talking about his destiny, the official about the general situation. Not only are original sounds important here, but so are the characterization of the actors, the metaphors used, the aspects of an issue chosen, the pictures shown, and so on (cf. Luginbuehl et al., 2004). These aspects - original sounds of course excepted - were also used to fit the information to the news narrative in the 50s.

3.3 *Questions of dramaturgy and aesthetics*²⁶

The dramaturgy and the aesthetic of the film²⁷ in the stories of the 50s resemble those of feature films: most action described and shown has - like any prototypical story - a beginning (the situation is described, a problem arises), a middle part (the problem is treated) and an end (the problem is solved). Sometimes there is even a climax and a turning point; camera angle and lighting are planned, the montage is meaningful, and the people you can see are obviously acting.

This will be illustrated here with the example mentioned above about the refugees from Hungary, dating from January 13th, 1957. In the first part, the voice-over talks very generally of the students' help to refugees, mentioning the existing difficulties; then it describes how the difficulties are solved and finally it talks about German classes and ends the story with the remark that the refugees will soon be able to follow the lectures at universities. So here we can find the three phases typical of a story: exposition, complication and solution (Stempel 1982; Heinemann and Viehweger 1991: 238-244). An example of the planned montage is the following: in the middle section there is a camera pan over some students standing in the corridor. This pan ends on a door, which is opened from the other side right in that moment by the teacher. The teacher behind the door must have known when to open it. All this is the aesthetic of a movie. There are other scenes where the audience can notice that people

²⁶ I would like to thank Philipp Brunner, a cinema studies scholar in Zurich, for some valuable clues regarding this topic.

²⁷ The term *dramaturgy of film* is related to the narrative aspects, the term *aesthetic of film* to the formal aspects of the film.

are acting, for example, there is a scene with a refugee looking right at the camera and then looking away immediately - as if he had been told not to look directly at the camera. The other people seem to obey this order. Of course I do not know how the audience from that time looked at these stories, but the important thing is that the pictures themselves prove that the people in these stories knew that they were being filmed, and that there were certain instructions. This means that the reality outside the media had been at least partly arranged for the news, and you can see that if you take a closer look at the story.

Already in the 60s - at the same time when the giving of details became more important and the use of original sounds arose - this dramaturgy and aesthetic changed to that typical of documentaries. On the one hand we can see this change on the level of pictures. While in the 50s nearly all pictures illustrated the text directly, in the 60s there were also "standard news pictures" ("Standardnachrichtenbilder", cf. Brosius and Birk 1994: 175), which illustrated the content of a text indirectly (for example the attitude of the government regarding the refugees described in the text is illustrated by a picture of a reception centre). The growing share of "standard news pictures" can make the stories seem more authentic, because they are not obviously staged. But this effect only works if the pictures do not seem arbitrary. In accordance with this, the camera angle, lighting and montage seem less elaborated (of course they can be elaborated to the same degree, but only as long as they don't seem elaborated).

In addition, the chronological presentation of the information is mostly abandoned in the 60s and the inverted pyramid style of reporting is introduced: the newsworthy information - in the view of the journalists - is in the first part of the story (who, what, where, when, why, how). The narrative pattern of exposition - complication - solution is not abandoned completely, but the order is changed.

Another feature similar to the documentary film is the fact that since the 60s interviewing journalists and - in the case of press conferences - other journalists have been visible. This happens to make viewers aware of the journalists' presence.

In the 70s there are pictures that seem to be authentic because they are "imperfect"; in contrast to the rest of the pictures in TV news, these pictures lack the usual quality standard.²⁸ For example in the story of March 16th, 1974 about a demonstration, there are shaky pictures, in some

²⁸ For this kind of staging authenticity Fiske (1994: 126 f.) and Willems (2000: 227).

scenes protesters are blocking the view, and so on. These pictures are similar to those of a documentary, where it is partly pretended that nothing is staged, and therefore the pictures must remain imperfect.

4. Conclusion

The changes observed can be interpreted in two different ways. We could argue that in the 50s few means for staging authenticity were used, but that the stories themselves were not credible to a high degree: there were no details, no audible witnesses, and the films were obviously staged. The changes in the 60s could then be described - quantitatively - as an increase in the means for staging authenticity and - qualitatively - as a move towards more subtle means.

But we could also argue that already in the 50s authenticity was staged - not with fewer, but just with other means. In the stories of the Swiss TV news of the 50s, authenticity is staged with the means used in movies: the scenes presented are partly like performed plays, the event is presented like a classical story and also the camera, light and montage techniques are borrowed from the movies. Like this, the film fits the text perfectly, and the generally valid text - with only vague information - seems more credible with the precise pictures. But the qualitative difference in the means of the 60s remains. The staging in the 50s is obvious. In the 60s there is a new paradigm in staging authenticity, away from the language of movies towards the language of documentaries. This new paradigm is characterized through a range of new means for staging authenticity: more details, more original sounds, orientation to the inverted pyramid style, fewer pictures illustrating the text directly, live presentation, news from today instead of generally valid information.

These new means allow TV to represent authenticity in a way that cannot be easily recognized as staged and that therefore seems more genuine, more authentic. The authenticity of the stories dating from the 50s just had to be assumed - its staging was obvious - the staging of authenticity since the 60s has become more subtle and therefore more powerful. The "'transparency-to-reality' effect" (Connell 1980: 145) is more intensive, because the news seems to come directly - and quickly or even live - from the reality outside the media.

The new means introduced in the 60s were made possible by technical progress, for instance, original sounds or live presentation. Nevertheless these technical developments cannot explain the new para-

digm. The possibility of original sounds could also have been used for the old tradition of movies. On the other hand, in the older stories more details could already have been given. So there are not just a few new means for staging authenticity, but new means are used to realize another staging of authenticity.

In the following section, I will suggest a hypothetical explanation for this change of paradigm in the 60s.

Authenticity in the 50s, following the tradition of movies, is recognizable as something staged if you take a closer look at the stories - even if it is not made transparent directly in the texts. For news to be perceived as authentic in society there must be wide consensus about the meaning of what is recounted and shown in the news, that it is not meant as a non-authentic short movie performed specially for the TV, but as an authentic presentation of reality. In other words, the majority of the audience must have similar conditions of perception or - to use a term from Goffman - it must make similar framings.²⁹

The change in paradigm in the 60s could now be explained by the developments in society: individualization, higher levels of education, the generation gap, social mobility, growing prosperity³⁰, more spare time, loosened alliances between voters and parties³¹ - just to mention a few.³² These developments led to a process of social and cultural differentiation and therefore - and because the number of people watching TV grown - the repertoires of framings and of reading the news have been differentiated enormously.

An authenticity that is staged in a way that is recognizable as staging would lose its credibility very quickly under these circumstances. But the means that have been used for staging authenticity since the 60s are hardly or not at all recognizable as such if you look at a single story. Therefore they correspond to the diversification of the framings; because they stage more subtly, credibility can better be controlled and produced.³³ But also

²⁹ See Goffman (1974) and Willems (2000: 210).

³⁰ On April 18th 1960, 100'000 licenses for TV viewers were issued; on December 11th 1968 it was 1 million. See the information for 1960 resp. 1968 on <http://www.chronik.sfdrs.ch>.

³¹ As a consequence neutral reporting was more demanded and a lot of readers changed to politically independent newspapers (Blum 2003: 369).

³² See for example Mazower (1999: 302-320); Vinen (2000: 373-375); Blum (2003: 369).

³³ For diversification of the framings also Willems (2000: 212 f.)

the so far neglected tendency to present information live, for example through live reporting by a correspondent, serves the goal of presenting information as if it were taken directly from reality. And thinking of the tendency of personalized and emotionalized reporting, we can also understand that as an attempt to correspond to the frames of an individualized society and by doing so to seem authentic.

The question remains, as to why the credibility of TV news is dropping, even though it can still be considered relatively high. This fact could be explained on the one hand by the growing awareness of fakes of news stories as mentioned above, which shake the credibility of TV news in general. On the other hand other, newer TV formats could also explain the phenomenon: formats known under the label of Reality TV.³⁴ In these formats similar means for staging authenticity are used in scenes that are re-enacted: we find eyewitnesses, statements of experts, camcorders and so on (see Dovey 2000: 80). In the case of re-enacted scenes which are marked as such, however, the audience knows about the staging of authenticity - and in some cases knows from the context that certain scenes must have been re-enacted, even if they are not marked. This makes the means for staging authenticity recognizable, perhaps another reason for growing scepticism towards TV news.

To differ from Reality TV formats, TV news shows will probably have to find new means for staging authenticity once more - and it will be interesting to see if they do.

³⁴ For example Dovey (2000), chapter 4.

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