



Masculine tears, feminine tears – and crocodile tears

Mourning Olof Palme and Anna Lindh in Finnish newspapers

■ **Mervi Pantti**

University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands

ABSTRACT

The supposed ‘emotionalization’ of the public sphere has recently been the target of much hostile commentary, both lay and academic. In the news media, there certainly seems to be a growing interest in emotion, as more and more space is devoted to the representations of mourning in the coverage of major disasters or extraordinary deaths. In this study I look at the news coverage of the display of public grief in the Finnish newspapers following the murders of Olof Palme, the Prime Minister of Sweden in 1986, and Anna Lindh, the Foreign Minister of Sweden in 2003. The similarities between the Palme and Lindh cases give an opportunity to examine how the representation of mourning has changed over time. The second aim of this article is to explore how gender is constructed in the portrayals of grief: are we witnessing a change regarding the persistent stereotypes about the emotional woman and the unemotional man in the representations of grief or just a new deal in gendered emotions?

KEY WORDS ■ gender ■ journalism ■ media event ■ mourning ■ tabloidization

Introduction

According to the British report *Conspicuous Compassion* by conservative think tank Civitas, a new disease called ‘mourning sickness’ is spreading (West, 2004). As the mocking name denotes, mourning sickness is characteristically a feminine disease. Its visible symptoms include crying in public, queuing to sign condolence books, and making piles of flowers and teddies. The term, however, had already appeared in the British media in the aftermath of the death of Princess Diana, when it came to describe people’s exaggerated, and ultimately false and self-interested, displays of grief for celebrities (as well as

for ordinary people who have died in extraordinary circumstances) they have never met. Following in the line of recent literature on 'confessional' culture characterized by the intensive interest in emotions and by the pressure of revealing them in both private and public forums (e.g. Furedi, 2004; Lupton, 1998; Mestrovich, 1997; White, 1992), the report argues that mourning sickness signals a new emotionalism in contemporary culture: 'We live in a post-emotional age, one characterized by crocodile tears and manufactured emotion' (West, 2004: 2).

The interest in emotion can be seen in the news, as more and more space seems to be devoted to the portrayal of emotion in the coverage of catastrophes, accidents and awful crimes. Accordingly, we have been witnessing an increase in the number of ordinary people who are willing to disclose their feelings in the media, where in the past they 'ran away shocked' when asked for a comment, as described by the managing news editor of the Finnish commercial broadcaster MTV3.¹ As Kitch (2000) argues, the ways in which ordinary people express their 'grief' when something dreadful has happened has become a news story in its own right: images of grieving are something one nowadays expects to see after major disasters or extraordinary deaths. Therefore, it is often the news media that has been accused of spreading the mourning sickness, above all by focusing on signs of mourning, such as crying and flower-and-candle shrines, and using the rhetoric of 'public unity in grief' – i.e. giving the impression that everyone is grieving (e.g. Kitzinger, 1998; Pantti and Wieten, 2004; Walter, 1999).

In this article I look at the news coverage of the display of public grief in the Finnish newspapers following the murders of Olof Palme, the Prime Minister of Sweden in 1986, and Anna Lindh, the Foreign Minister of Sweden in 2003. My focus is on the ways in which gender intertwines with news of death and mourning. The complex question as to whether the feelings depicted in the news are actually true or merely media-constructed crocodile tears falls outside the frame of my study. However, the discussion on mourning sickness forms a wider context of my discussion as it is linked to the debate over the changes of news values and style in journalism. This debate has frequently taken place under the concept of tabloidization, which also bears a gendered connotation of feminization, valuing 'female' emotion and experience over 'male' reason, analysis, and abstraction (e.g. Aldridge, 2001; McDonald, 2000; Van Zoonen, 1998).

The startling similarities between the Palme and Lindh cases give an opportunity to study how the news coverage of the deaths of public figures and representation of mourning have changed over time. The second aim of this article is to explore how gender is constructed in the portrayals of grief: are we witnessing a change regarding the persistent sex stereotype about the

emotional woman, and the accordingly unemotional man, in the representations of grief or do representations of responses to death focus persistently on crying women, as Jenny Hockey (1997: 94) claims? The central assumption, based on the idea that emotionality is one of the most important dimensions on which the sexes have been distinguished, is that news stories about mourning form an important arena through which norms and ideals about gender differences are expressed and reproduced. Extraordinary events like disasters or murders of politicians in office are occasions when it is acceptable to grieve in public but one must keep in mind that the public display of emotions, for example crying, is culturally specific and historically conditioned (e.g. Walter et al., 1995).

I have collected a body of data on the coverage of Palme and Lindh's murders in *Helsingin Sanomat* (*HS*) and *Ilta-Sanomat* (*IL*), which consists of news, columns, and editorials. Finland has one of the world's highest newspaper circulations relative to its population of 5.2 million people. *HS* is the largest daily paper in Finland targeted to a national audience and with a circulation of approximately 450,000 copies and the highest readership figure of over 1.1 million (2003). *IL*, a national tabloid newspaper published six times a week, is the fourth largest paper in the country, with a circulation of approximately 130,000. *HS* is published by Finland's largest media corporation SanomaWSOY, which also publishes *Ilta-Sanomat*, the biggest tabloid. There are two tabloid newspapers in Finland, *Ilta-Sanomat* and *IL*, both attempting to attract a homogeneous national readership. I have chosen the latter for analysis because it is published by another large media corporation, Alma Media. A significant development in the Finnish media landscape has been the rapid growth of tabloids for which, unlike the broadsheets, subscriptions cannot be taken out; their combined circulation of over 350,000 copies has increased by some 100,000 copies compared with the mid-1980s. Their entertaining content (more gossip about the intimate lives of celebrities, including politicians) and accessible presentation (e.g. large headlines and extensive use of photographs and graphics) has increased since the 1980s but thus far their appetite for scandal and sensationalism has been moderate. Finnish tabloid papers can still be regarded as 'newspapers'; they have not abandoned the public sphere and covering political news in favour of entertaining material. So, one could see them having more in common with Finland's broadsheet newspapers than with, for instance, Britain's *Sun* and *Mirror*.

In both cases, I have limited my material to the period from the day of the murder to the day after the memorial: 1–17 March 1986 in the case of Palme; and 11–21 September 2003 in the case of Lindh. It is during this time that the murders were covered extensively in Finnish newspapers – the total number of items on Palme is 98 and on Lindh 114 – and emotions are news in the same

way that the actual events are. Due to the special historical relationship between Finland and Sweden, the murders of the Swedish politicians resulted in a 'liminal' journalistic period which is characterized by the 'suspension of usual norms and structures and irrigated by the overflow of *communitas*' (Dayan and Katz, 1993: 104). During the time up until the memorial when the wound caused by the shock and disbelief is still raw, there are two main stories: the story of the crime (i.e. the identity of the murderer, the motive behind the murder, and the progress of the police investigation) and the story of the emotion (the emotion sparked by the violent deaths and the significance of the life and death of the murdered politicians). The memorial ceremony is where the story about emotion climaxes and, according to Dayan and Katz's (1993: 1990ff) theory of media events, an occasion for an upsurge of fellow feeling and affirmation of societal values. The build-up begins several days earlier through coverage of the preparations for the funeral and the people invited, using such formal headlines as 'The Prime Minister of the Soviet Union to attend Palme's funeral' (*HS*) or such perhaps inappropriately eager ones as 'Stockholm waits for a great mourning fest!' (*IL*). After the funeral, the news concentrates on the crime and the coverage loses its highly emotive tone and becomes more ordinary in nature.

Power of feeling

In assessing how newspapers represent public mourning, I will emphasize the importance of historical and cultural contexts. Emotions are attached to cultural values and social norms, insofar as some feelings and some ways of managing feelings are always socially approved, while others are stigmatized (Craib, 1995: 154). In Finland, as well as in other Nordic countries, the open expression of emotion has traditionally been understood to be improper due to the influence of an ascetic protestant culture that favours controlling one's emotions or retaining, not unlike in British culture, a 'stiff upper lip'. The regulation of emotion functions to channel emotional responses in accordance with a particular culture. There are special rules both for experiencing emotions (you should feel grief when somebody you know dies) and particularly for articulating emotions, for instance to what extent spontaneous emotions can be publicly expressed (you should not wail hysterically at the funeral service or try to leap into the grave). As Arlie Hochschild (2003[1983]: 64) points out, 'We can offend against a feeling rule when we grieve too much or too little, when we overmanage or undermanage grief.'

The interest expressed by the media – and accordingly media scholars (e.g. Kear and Steinberg, 1999; McGuigan, 2000; Merck, 1998; Turnock, 2000;

Walter, 1999) – in articulations of public mourning peaked when Princess Diana died in August 1997. However, mass mourning centred on and led by the news media by no means began with the Diana phenomenon (see, e.g., Kitch, 2000; Walter, 1991), even though it has been widely seen as a decisive moment that brought reporting on death and disaster into a new phase of ‘weepy journalism’, as one Finnish news journalist described it.² In the British context, according to Walter (1991: 607), it was the spontaneous mourning that followed the Hillsborough football stadium disaster in 1989 that might have played an important role in propagating to a wider audience the more expressive mode of grief.

The recent growth in the media’s role as a site for disclosing one’s private feelings can be related to the increase in the importance of expressing emotions in social interaction and to the general decrease in social control over emotions resulting from societal and technological change in at least western societies with high standards of living (Scherer, 2001). However, the emergence of the media-centred ‘confessional culture’ and increasing encouragement of emotional display does not mean that feeling rules have become meaningless – crying, for example, is still very much regulated through cultural norms. Jenny Hockey (1993: 143), for instance, has attempted to show that ‘uncontrolled’ emotional expression still creates a problem in western funeral rituals. This is clear in one minister’s reflection (bearing obvious similarities to the mourning sickness debate) on the funeral of a schoolgirl:

And it literally was a case of mass hysteria . . . [O]ne girl started crying and the girl next to her started crying and by the time I’d finished I was dealing with this hysterical crowd of girls, 500 girls . . . It wasn’t genuine grief. Just being passed from one to another. 75 percent of the kids in that church wouldn’t even know the girl. And so I really had to sort of say ‘That’s it. No more of this. This is silly.’

The fact that emotions are bound to cultural values means that they are also gendered. As Deborah Lupton (1998: 105) claims, ‘strong distinctions are routinely made between the ways in which women feel and express emotions compared with men’s styles of emotional expression’. Furthermore, emotionality is one of the most important dimensions on which the gender differences have been constructed. The prevalent gender stereotype is that women are more emotional than men. This means not only that women may wallow in sentiment while men may not but also that a whole variety of emotions is structured around gender, as certain emotions have been considered more appropriate for, or typical of, women or men: for women, these have included ‘powerless’ emotions such as grief and fear and for men ‘powerful’ emotions such as anger and pride (Lupton, 1998: 105–7). However, several empirical

studies show that differences in the experience of emotions are less pronounced than those in the expression of emotion; this is explained as the result of gender-based emotion norms that apply differentially to men and women (see Timmers, 2000: 15, 71).

These sorts of archetypal differences between emotional-feminine and unemotional-masculine have been seen to become less distinct in the 1990s (e.g. Boscagli, 1992/93; Lupton, 1998). Furthermore, the idea that emotionality cannot be equated with irrationality has begun to take hold (e.g. Williams, 2001). Given the series of changes in the gender-related discourses and emotional styles of both men and women, it is important to ask whether or not these gender stereotypes are now breaking down. One of the changes that have been taking place, in both popular and academic forums, is the interest in the 'feminization' of masculine emotionality (e.g. Lupton, 1998; Williams, 2001). Media visions of masculine emotionality, such as men of power fighting back tears in news programmes or talking about their intimate relationships in talk shows, seem to have more and more value. One theory is that in today's society, men have to learn more 'feminine' emotional skills and the confessional media culture provides a kind of lifestyle guide for that purpose (e.g. Aldridge, 2001). However, some writers have been cautious to draw such conclusions that the 'feminization' of masculine emotionality results in the democratization of emotion. On the contrary, the masculine emotionality has been seen to universalize men's humanity, while the emotionality of women and other subordinate groups is still easily stigmatized. As Boscagli (1992/93: 75) writes: 'While a man who cries is a human being, a woman who cries is a woman. By crying she loses her humanity only to become gendered and "particular" again.' This means that the public disclosure of emotion by different groups does not necessarily carry the same symbolic value: while for men in power tears may be a sign of sensibility and strength, for women they still may be a sign of weakness (e.g. Boscagli, 1992/93; Williams, 2001: 109).

One must bear in mind that media representations are not accurate reflections of the emotional lives of men and women. As Ian Craib (1995) argues, it is important to make a distinction between dominant gender discourses and the multidimensional reality of the emotional lives of both men and women. Even if emotionality is dependent on cultural context, emotional experiences are always personal experiences and we cannot assume that the news narrative is equivalent to the emotional experiences of the people represented. However, media representations of public mourning and grief not only have an emotional effect on readers; they also have a political effect. For instance, the general sex stereotype of the emotional woman may have negative implications in every day life, as emotionality is often associated with 'weakness of will, insufficient capacity for reasoned thought and loss of

control' (Lupton, 1998: 107). What concerns cultural and feminist media studies is acknowledging that culturally and socially rooted emotional expression may play a significant role in the reproduction of identity, gender, and power relations (see Harding and Pribram, 2002).

Deaths of public figures

Olof Palme, the Swedish Prime Minister and leader of the Social Democrat Party, was murdered in Stockholm on 28 February 1986 while walking home in the evening from a cinema with his wife, Lisbet Palme. The murder of the most internationally renowned leader of Sweden in modern times came as a brutal shock to Swedish society. This was not least because the major themes in his political career were peace and solidarity. Yet he was also a controversial political figure with strong views on issues such as nuclear weapons, American involvement in Vietnam, the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, and apartheid in South Africa. On the home front, Palme was no less divisive. He was both a symbol of the 'people's home' – his murder was accordingly interpreted as an assault on the 'model' welfare system established by social democracy – and a hate figure for the right wing. During his last election campaign in 1982, Palme sharply accused the Conservative Party of neo-liberalism and, hence, of threatening the foundations of the welfare policy. Subsequently, he was able to claim his victory as a triumph for the welfare state. Palme was married to Lisbet Palme with whom he had three sons, aged 27, 24, and 17 at the time of his death.

Anna Lindh was the second prominent Swedish politician to have been murdered in recent decades. Her murder invited immediate comparison with the killing of Palme, Lindh's political mentor. Like Palme's murder, it was, first and foremost, interpreted as an attack on the free and open society. She was Minister for Foreign Affairs from 1998 until her death at the age of 46 on 11 September 2003, as the result of a knife attack the previous day. She was repeatedly stabbed while shopping with a friend at a department store, like Palme without personal security. Lindh was one of Sweden's most popular politicians and she was generally seen as the prime candidate to succeed Göran Persson as Chair of the Social Democrats and as Prime Minister of Sweden. She was married to Bo Holmberg, the Governor of Södermanland, and had two young sons, aged 8 and 13. Lindh was an outspoken campaigner for Sweden to join the Euro in the referendum which was to be held on the following Sunday, 14 September. Following the attack, all Euro-campaign events, for both the yes and no camps, were immediately cancelled. Despite speculations

that sympathy for Lindh could influence voting behaviour, the Euro was rejected in the referendum.

Palme's assassination still remains unsolved. There has been much speculation and investigation during the past decades and, as with John F. Kennedy, several conspiracy theories surround the murder. A man named Christer Pettersson, a small-time criminal, was tried and convicted for the murder of Palme in 1988 but was later acquitted by a higher court. Pettersson confessed to the murder in a letter to a Swedish tabloid newspaper *Expressen* in 2001 but the case was never reopened. Pettersson died under somewhat mysterious circumstances in September 2004. In Lindh's case a disturbed young man, Mijailo Mijailovic, confessed to the murder and was first sentenced to life imprisonment but was later ordered by the appeals court to receive psychiatric care.

The deaths of Anna Lindh and Olof Palme belong to a canon of extraordinary celebrity deaths, such as the deaths of J. F. Kennedy in 1963, Princess Diana in 1997, and Dutch politician Pim Fortuyn in 2002. Like other extraordinary deaths of public figures, the murders of Palme and Lindh were characterized by a variety of public emotional responses and by extensive and emotive media coverage. The murders of Swedish politicians in office made great news stories everywhere but in the Nordic countries the special emotive setting of the news coverage earned them the title of media events, to adapt Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz's (1993) concept of live broadcast public events that bring people together in the spirit of *communitas*. Studies of media events have focused on television coverage and accordingly ignored newspaper coverage, even though media events are hardly only television events (cf. Örnebring, 2004). The dynamics between the different media can clearly be seen in reporting on the Palme and Lindh cases. Newspapers wrote about expressions of grief in internet discussion groups as well as virtual books of condolences and virtual candles lit on the internet in memory of the deceased Foreign Minister. The live television broadcasts of the funerals, the people in attendance, and the expected numbers of viewers were big news in both cases. Media events include certain ritualistic conventions such as tributes from important people or members of the public, obituaries narrating the politician's political career, reports on the arrangement and attendance of the memorial service, and the provision of information on how to participate in mourning, such as the locations and opening hours of registers in which people can offer their sympathy and condolences. In addition, they also typically include the element of revising the collective memory (Dayan and Katz, 1993; Kitch, 2000). In both cases the Finnish papers chronicled the murders of all heads of state and the murder of Anna Lindh was naturally seen through the lens of Olof Palme's murder.

As several scholars have noted, there seems to be a remarkably uniform frame in covering extraordinary tragic events. Typically they are represented as integrative events, moments of national consensus and unity born out of mourning together (e.g. Cloud, 1998; Kitch 2000, 2003; Walter et al., 1995). However, like Couldry (2003), I see media events as much as constructions as expressions of 'togetherness'. In Finnish newspapers, there is an evident emphasis on the significance of the murders of the Swedish political leaders in the wider Nordic context: murders are not only attacks against Sweden but also against the open and equal Nordic way of living. This frame brought in political issues from home, as it raised the discussions about the virtues of the Nordic welfare state model and people's direct access to politicians in Finland. It also allowed for a unified feeling of community to build up in which the Finns are equal members and as legitimate mourners as the Swedes. That the murders were also seen as a loss for the people of Finland is clearly expressed in strikingly similar editorials run by *HS* (2 March 1986; 12 September 2003):

The murder of the Prime Minister of Sweden, Olof Palme, has deeply shocked the Finnish people. An incomprehensible act of violence in the city centre of Stockholm has on this side of the Gulf of Bothnia been seen as a direct attack on the open and equal Nordic way of life. The unexpected loss suffered by the people of Sweden is also a loss for the people of Finland. Palme's uncompromising speeches for peace and equality were often seen around the world as not only messages from Sweden but also as messages from the Nordic countries in general. In the minds of enlightened people throughout the world he symbolized the striving for an ideal society, where freedom and equality prevail among all.

For the Finns, Lindh was a close partner, and during her five-year tenure as Foreign Minister relations between our two countries became even more cordial than before. All Finns have good reason to join in the grief felt by the Swedes . . . The insidious nature of the killing is highlighted by the fact that it is also a blow directed at the openness of Swedish society and indeed at the way of life in the entire Nordic region . . . The Nordic Countries have often been criticised in more conservative European and American circles, where the success of the Nordic welfare state model is found to be ideologically uncomfortable. By virtue of its egalitarianism, its openness, and other similar properties, the Nordic society is a good social model, the best aspects of which must now be championed with even greater tenacity.

Extraordinary deaths, special emotions

News stories on the deaths of politicians can be situated in between 'hard' news concerned with the world of politics and crime typically associated with distance and neutrality and 'soft' news concerned with human interest, i.e. 'the impact of major events on individuals, the dramatic experiences of people

who occupy no socially significant position' (Aldridge, 2001: 96). Soft news is thus understood to produce more extensive possibilities for identification and consequently for emotional engagement. One can find certain recurring formulas in news about extraordinary death that are routinely used to secure identification and emotional engagement. The most important of these are descriptions of the emotions of the characters in the story. What matters to a great extent is cultural proximity: the more easily the audience can identify with the characters in the news story, the more interest is shown in their emotional responses (Walter et al., 1995: 586). The characters in news articles can be divided into five different categories of mourners: the friends and relatives of the victim, representatives of states or institutions of various kinds, i.e. the 'official mourners', non-political public figures, ordinary citizens, and, finally, the journalists themselves.

Inclusion of accounts by witnesses at the scene commonly serves the function of loading the event with an emotional charge. In his account of 'victim stories', John Langer (1998: 87) argues that news-makers may temporarily hand over the story to ordinary witnesses at the scene because their point of view, unlike the seemingly objective point of view of journalists, provides a position for partisanship and emotional engagement. As he writes, 'Victims become more authentically sympathetic and worthy of our "reflex of tears" when an ordinary person located in the real world, rather than someone from the potentially manipulative world of professional newsmakers, can guarantee the details of misfortune.'

Another important strategy for securing a sympathy response from the audience is to make the public figure into 'one of us' (see Kitch, 2000). The news coverage of the Palme and Lindh murders typifies the phenomenon in commemorative journalism whereby the images of celebrities are transformed from extraordinary to ordinary – the strategy most obvious in the oxymoron of 'People's Princess' in Diana's case. At the same time, a romantic, idealized picture of them is painted (e.g. Turnock, 2000: 25–6). The latter is certainly also dictated by the moral norm of not speaking ill of the deceased, the convention that sometimes, as in the case of controversial right-wing populist politician Pim Fortuyn, may put the objectivity of the journalism in doubt (Pantti and Wieten, 2004).

Both Palme and Lindh were described as great human beings, 'the best of us', but also ordinary. Their stories are identical. Palme was one of us because he wanted to walk back home from work and he also 'occasionally popped out from the ministry to grab a burger at a nearby stand' (*IL*, 2 March 1986). In Anna Lindh's case, it was her use of a rucksack that was elevated as a symbol of her ordinariness: she was a successful yet down-to-earth career woman. She was also a mother, who took her children with her to an international meeting

(*HS*, 12 September 2003) and who, as a guest of President Tarja Halonen, took her family to Moominland (*HS*, 12 September 2003). Their stories differ significantly only in the accounts of their personal lives which obviously has something to do with the fact that Lindh was a woman and she had small children. Whereas Palme is defined almost exclusively in terms of his 'first-class' political career, the accounts of the political achievements of Lindh are often intertwined with her role as a caring mother as, for example, the following headlines show:

The mother of two children died for nothing (*IL*, 12 September)

Determined career woman and mother of family (*HS*, 12 September)

Anna Lindh's treasured, touching family photos (*IL*, 13 September)

Anna Lindh's last words to her friend: call my family (*IL*, 19 September)

Finally, news stories of extraordinary deaths attempt to arouse affective responses in the audience by employing a more expressive style that underlines the importance of the event. Media events are occasions when 'the ordinary, concise, terse, matter-of-fact style of the journalists opens itself to cosmic lyricism' (Dayan and Katz, 1993: 108). The style of 'cosmic lyricism' is attached in the news especially to depictions of collective grief and its expression, above all to the floral tributes:

Tomorrow, on Saturday morning, it will be exactly two weeks since the first roses were laid at the scene of Palme's death. Now a mountain of flowers several metres high rises above the heads of the people. It seems like the scent of a million roses refuses to let one go until one has stopped to breathe it for a while in the middle of the shared yet undivided sorrow. (*IL*, 15 March 1986)

Grief and shock floated over Stockholm yesterday thick like grey clouds on an autumn sky. (*IL*, 12 September 2003)

More feeling?

What typically characterizes the news coverage following unexpected and dramatic celebrity deaths is the focus on the responses of mourners. In the cases of Palme and Lindh, the content of the representations of mourning are identical in the general picture painted of the shock and grief. However, there are notable differences in the form of the stories. In the coverage of Palme's death, the grief of ordinary people is always narrated in an indirect way: there are no direct quotations when people speak about their feelings.

IL (1 March 1986) was the first to describe the response of ordinary people: 'Already at half past two in the morning people reacted to the murder – a couple appeared in front of the party headquarters to leave two yellow tulips

there.' The most important question in the reporting of extraordinary deaths and the supposed confessional culture – 'How do you feel?' – is not asked. In Palme's case, the emphasis is less on opening up the anatomy of personal grief than on describing the vastness and uniqueness of the response, usually in numbers, as in the following (*IL*, 4 March 1986): 'Approximately 1300 Finns wrote their condolences for the memory of Olof Palme in the Swedish embassy in Helsinki. Many visitors were noticeably moved.' Indirect representation goes so far that other media are used as a source to speak about the grief of the people, as is the case with this item from *HS* (2 March 1986): 'Several people crying and sobbing at the scene were interviewed for television. They seemed not just sad but also worried about the fact that such crimes as the murder of the Prime Minister could happen in a welfare state like Sweden.'

The difference between the news coverage of the Palme and Lindh cases is clear when one compares the stories from the first few days after the murders, when the reactions and experiences of ordinary citizens are related. *IL* (3 March 1986) writes about the experience of 17-year-old Anna, who was the first person to arrive at the scene of the crime and who gave first aid to the Prime Minister. No reference to her emotional state is made. This story is practically the only one in which an ordinary citizen is heard yet the emphasis of the story, all the way through the headline ('17-year-old Anna and bloody hands: "The heart beat – and then it stopped"'), is on the gory details: "Palme was lying on his side and blood was rushing out of his mouth. Somewhere a young boy appeared and tried to give the kiss of life. It was difficult due to the blood."

In the coverage of the Lindh murder, by contrast, there are not just grieving masses but citizens speaking directly about their emotions. This kind of individualization is also visible in the news photographs, which, unlike in the Palme case, show individuals bringing flowers. In the days following the murder, both papers run stories focusing on 'what the murder felt like'. Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, in *HS*, more ordinary people can express their feelings in their own voices and under their own names. In both papers, the journalist underlines these emotions by describing how moved the interviewees looked or sounded. First, the papers described people's reactions to the stabbing of Lindh. A story with the headline 'The attempted murder of Foreign Minister Lindh in a department store shocked Swedes' (*HS*, 11 September 2003) relates how 'Jonna Johansson, a shop assistant from a nearby department, said she was in a state of shock of some kind, which was obvious from the look in her eyes'. The following day it was time for an account of what feelings the death of the Foreign Minister had evoked: "This makes one feel so empty. There are no words for this kind of event", said Lina Lindeberg and

Carolina Österman. “We are here because we are grieving. This is so awful” (*IL*, 12 September 2003).

Another difference between the press treatment of the Palme and Lindh cases, which has more to do with the times than with differences between the papers, is the way in which the grief of the victim’s relatives is presented. In the Palme stories, the grieving of relatives is not covered and Palme’s wife Lisbet and their son, who had been to the cinema with Palme, are primarily presented as potential eyewitnesses. *IL* put out a small article on Lisbet Palme under the somewhat patronizing headline ‘Lisbet Palme – the shadow of her husband’ but the article does not go into her emotions. The Lindh death, in contrast, offered plenty of opportunities to identify with the loss suffered by Lindh’s husband and her children. Both papers published an obituary written especially for the media by Lindh’s husband, Governor Bo Holmberg, and their son David. The latter’s account is the stuff that the tears are made of – in the same way as was Diana’s sons’ little wreath of white roses with its card addressed simply to ‘Mummy’ (see Greenhalgh, 1999: 47–8).

I have lost Anna in the tiny private world and the big public world. That is what my grief is like today. That is what the rest of my life will be like, without Anna but with my children.

I have lost the best mother in the entire world. And the most important thing for me right now is to do as she would have wanted me to do: not to think about revenge but to live a long and happy life with children and grandchildren. I am going to make mother proud, I am going to do everything for my beloved mother. We may meet again in heaven, but first I am going to live my life on this earth to its end, just as my mother would have wanted.

The differences between papers are mostly evident in the representation of the emotions of political and other public figures. In writing about the death of Lindh, *IL* published a full page obituary by Liza Marklund which, following the customs of the paper, had a headline that ends with an exclamation mark: ‘Anna, you did not live for nothing!’ In the obituary, Marklund, a popular writer of detective stories, bid farewell to ‘a close friend’, as requested by the paper. In *HS*, non-political celebrities are not featured as mourners and the paper also puts less emphasis on the personal feelings of politicians. The difference in style of commentary between the newspapers is captured in the headlines. In the case of Anna Lindh’s death, *IL* emphasized the personal experiences of politicians while *HS* focussed on collective loss and concern about social stability and political decision-making processes.

President Tarja Halonen: ‘Halonen was deeply shocked’

Speaker of Parliament Paavo Lipponen: ‘Lipponen held back the tears’

Foreign Minister Erkki Tuomioja: ‘Tuomioja lost another friend’ (*IL*)

President Tarja Halonen: 'A loss to all of us'

Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen: 'Violence must not influence decision making'

Foreign Minister Erkki Tuomioja: 'One must wish openness remains' (*HS*)

Good grief

In their study on the portrayal of ordinary people's extraordinary deaths in news, Walter et al. (1995: 590) ask crucial questions: why should readers be interested in the grief of others; and why should they be interested in the differences between 'the grief of schoolgirls and of headmasters, between boys and girls, between mothers and fathers?' According to them, this might be because people want to learn how other people, especially ordinary people, handle grief, to obtain knowledge rules about when and how it is appropriate to express grief (Walter et al., 1995: 592–3). Their argument that there is a need to know about grieving is convincing, given that our everyday experience is becoming increasingly separated from that of others. Media images of grief therefore function as fundamental discursive resources for understanding and expressing grief, setting boundaries for normal and legitimate grief (Reimers, 2003; Thompson, 1997). The advantage of this sociological approach is that it shows the limitations of an outright dismissal of the interest in the portrayal of grief as an act of voyeurism or as mediated 'mourning sickness', an enjoyable pastime. It brings forward that mediated emotions cannot be investigated solely as a result of the media's need to attract ratings but need also to be analysed in terms of changing cultural norms of emotional display, i.e. connecting the upsurge of emotions in the media to the changes in social, political and cultural life.

As has been acknowledged in relation to the response to the death of Diana, one of the sub-stories in the media coverage deals with the questions of normal and deviant grief (e.g. McGuigan, 2000; Pantti and Wieten, 2004). There would have been many different possible ways of relating expressions of emotion but the similar choices made by journalists suggest the socially constructed nature of mourning, bringing into focus a set of more or less explicit expectations as to how a grief should be dealt with. In the Palme murder news, it is clear that the public expressions of grief of ordinary people following the death of the Prime Minister are something new and confusing to the journalists. This is especially clear in the way journalists and columnists in both papers obsessively emphasize that the grief is 'real' and the expression of emotion 'spontaneous' as if to justify them to potential critics. The headline 'A new people of Sweden is born' in *IL* (14 March 1986) can, with hindsight, be seen as meaning a new people able to express its emotions: 'Grief and

sympathy for Olof Palme are still real and spontaneous. In Rosbaden, the Prime Minister's residence, people flowed in and out in a steady stream. Hundreds of thousands respected him by signing their names or writing a few words in remembrance.'

The novelty of strong public expressions of emotion is also apparent in the way a columnist for *IL* scolded Finns for their notorious inability to express their emotions. The paper had written earlier about the crushing grief of the Finnish-born chanteuse Arja Saijonmaa, who sang at Palme's funeral. The paper had also published her tearful 'Why our Olof?' memorial for Palme. The column (15 March 1986) explaining the appropriate response to the murder of Palme is undoubtedly an answer to the cynicism of Finnish readers:

Sweden has, following the murder of Olof Palme, been in mourning . . . The Swedes have found ways of expressing their grief, which we Finns may not be mature enough to do. Tens of thousands of roses have formed a memorial on Sveavägen, thousands have written about their grief in papers. Many have cried. The responsibility for interpreting this grief has now fallen upon Arja Saijonmaa. . . . In the days following the murder Arja Saijonmaa did what everybody did in Stockholm. She also left roses and expressed her condolences for the death of Olof Palme, as shocked as all of those people who had had the opportunity to work with him or near him. It is therefore not appropriate for anyone in Finland to question her motives.

The stories on the Lindh murder also convey an apparent view of what proper grieving means. The mourning portrayed by the journalists is always plain and unembellished and the mourners are serious, speak in a quiet voice or are left speechless by grief. *HS* wrote about a memorial held on 13 September: 'Side by side in the Sergel market 50,000 Swedes of all ages stood still with serious faces, unbelievably quiet.' These representations accord with Hockey's claim that instead of open expression of emotion what is expected, from both female and male, is a set of bodily indications that grieving has been taking place. According to her, these indications governed by an implicit set of rules include 'damp, reddened eyes, a pale complexion, solemn expressions, sighing and a subdued voice' (Hockey, 1997: 105). However, the gendered nature of the mourning rules becomes apparent in the representations of grief, as it is almost exclusively masculine representations of grieving that act as a model for a good and desirable grief. For instance, there are several portrayals of the grief of elderly men:

An elderly gentleman even took his hat off, stood silently for a moment and left with a tear in his eye. There are no words for his grief. (*HS*, 15 September)

An old man [watching the live funeral of Palme with other elderly people at the parish hall] repeatedly visits the foyer, escaping the television that brings tears to his eyes. He pats his own hands soothingly and tries to calm himself. (*HS*, 16 March)

Crying men

The emphasis on the unadorned expressions of grief apparent in the news coverage of the Palme and Lindh murders seems to conflict with the celebration of the open expression of emotion that is at the heart of the confessional dynamics of consumer culture (Furedi, 2004; White, 1992). However, the shift in emotional culture is evident in the coverage of the murder of Lindh in interviews with professionals specializing in grieving. They not only explained and defended the merits of working through the grief but also celebrated the fact that men had learned to express their emotions. *IL* interviewed a psychologist: "Sharing certainly helps to process this enormous grief," says Saari, who appreciates the fact that men have also had the courage to be moved to tears' (13 September 2003).

The new validation of the open expression of emotion that has traditionally been considered feminine and celebrated in 'female genres' is clearly seen in the way it has become a part of the public face of politics. For example, in a TV interview after the murder of Anna Lindh, Swedish Prime Minister Göran Persson explained in an intimate and psycho-professional tone how his many duties had obliged him to postpone the indispensable 'work' of grieving. The news media have played an important role in creating the 'new emotional man' and, thus, transforming notions about who can appropriately express which emotions. In the cases of Diana, Pim Fortuyn, and Anna Lindh, photographs used to illustrate mourning highlighted the grief of smartly dressed young men: a young man in a suit kneeling in front of a sea of flowers in front of the Kensington Palace covering his mouth (Diana), a young man in a pinstripe suit sitting on steps with his face in his hands (Fortuyn), a young male student bringing a bouquet of flowers (Lindh).

Traditionally, in western societies, it has been considered highly inappropriate for men to show 'powerless' emotions in a public and especially in a professional context. However, as Boscagli (1992/93) states, appearing moved in public no longer stigmatizes men of power as weak and feminine but instead proves that they are humane and sensitive. Nevertheless, it can be seen as indicative of culturally accepted norms of grieving – one is expected to have strong feelings and to show them but also to exercise restraint in doing so – that in the newspapers Persson is always described as 'moved', 'shocked', or 'holding back tears' but never crying. According to *HS*, 'Prime Minister Göran Persson, moved and holding back tears, related the sad news' (12 September 2003) and, in *IL*, he is described as 'struggling to hold back tears' (11 September 2003).

When one compares the representations of grief in the Palme and Lindh cases, they indicate not only the emergence of the new emotional man but

also make evident differences between the ways in which men's feelings and women's feelings are represented. For example, the 'deeply shocked' new Prime Minister of Sweden Ingvar Carlsson was said to have commented on the murder of Olof Palme with just one word – 'horrible'. In addition, several Finnish male politicians were said to have refused to comment on the murder altogether (*IL*, 1 March 1986). The silence of men of power stands in stark contrast to the reaction of Palme's private secretary, described in the same story: 'Palme's longstanding private secretary Ann-Marie Wilson arrived at 2.30 pm with puffy eyes, trying to hold back the tears. In this she failed, and she broke down in tears before making it to the lift.'

Similarly in the case of the Lindh murder, men hold back their tears while women cry. For example Nalin Pekgulin, the chair of the Women's League of the Social Democratic Party, is described as 'breaking into tears' while reminiscing how Lindh had been worried about her ability to cope after the birth of her first child (*HS*, 19 September 2003). This difference between women and men is also revealed repeatedly in the depiction of the displays of grief of ordinary people. According to *IL* (12 September):

Many people were crying in front of the NK department store. Where a male pensioner, who could only too well remember the murder of Olof Palme, tried secretly to wipe his eye, a mother returning from work let her tears flow by the sea of roses.

Discussion

The almost two decades between the deaths of Palme and Lindh is a period commonly seen as having been characterized by increasing media competition. The rise in the pressure to present emotions more personally and extensively can be in part related to this trend. The 'manufacturing' of emotion can certainly be observed. An example is *IL*'s (12 September 2003) online poll on the death of Lindh. The question posed was 'Were you shocked by Anna Lindh's murder?' Some days later *IL* published the readers' descriptions of their feelings. Another trend that can be found in the difference between the coverage of Palme's and Lindh's murders is that of the journalist featuring as mourner. In the case of Lindh, the Stockholm correspondents of both *HS* and *IL* wrote separate items dedicated to their own experiences and personal feelings. In *IL*, the journalist's own story is built around present crying and memories of crying when watching the news of the murder of Palme:

A colleague phoned and woke me up. 'Have you heard already?' . . . With tears in my eyes I ran to the television. Anna Lindh had died. I can remember how as a

teenager I sat at home in front of the television and cried aloud. Olof Palme had been murdered . . . This is hard. And I don't mean the day at work,' said a colleague who had been at work from early morning till late at night. I wasn't the only one crying, there were many others.

In comparing the news reporting of the Palme and Lindh murders, it is clear that the main difference lies in the representation of the grief of ordinary people – i.e. the emergence in the Lindh case of first-person accounts of personal grief, as well an emphasis on the formerly stereotypically 'feminine' trait of emotional expression.

In the 1980s and 1990s, talk shows were celebrated by many feminist scholars since they featured ordinary people and brought a new set of topics and ways of talking, for instance by allowing expressions of emotion, from the private sphere to the public medium of television. Sonia Livingstone and Peter Lunt (1994) have noted that talk shows weakened the patriarchal enlightenment ethos and power of authority in television; the individual and his/her experiences started to be valued as valid and authentic information. Paradoxically, in the context of journalism this is also the very definition of tabloidization. In Colin Sparks' (1998: 7) words, tabloidization is a process resulting from an increase in material with an entertainment or human-interest value as well as the journalistic convention of making 'immediate individual experience the prime source of evidence and value'. The purpose of tabloidized news, according to Bob Franklin (1997: 8), is 'less to inform than to elicit sympathy – a collective "Oh how dreadful" – from the readership'. There are not many who would celebrate the 'vox pops' telling about ordinary people's feelings as the irruption of those outside the decision-making elite into the previously closed public domain. However, it would be an equally flawed approach to dismiss them as a collapse of journalistic standards. The popular voice in the representations of grief is a great deal more ambiguous than that. Walter et al. (1995: 586–7) offer an alternative approach by employing the concept of 'emotional invigilation', by which they mean 'the simultaneous arousal of, and regulatory keeping watch over, the affective dispositions and responses associated with death'. They argue that '[T]he needs of editors to become ever more gripping in their accounts of tragedy if they are to sell newspapers and maintain programme ratings, engages, however problematically, with the needs of the audience to observe how others handle grief' (Walter et al., 1995: 593).

There is a recurrent strand of hostile commentary, both lay and academic, on the effects of emotions seeping into the public sphere (e.g. Furedi, 2004; Mestrovic, 1997). The claim is that this new emotionality, though it may offer temporary and comforting communities of feeling, does not lead to collective political participation and moral action. The mourning sickness debate offers

a view that I take to be flawed, an extension of contempt for emotion in western philosophy. It reiterates the view that emotion and reason as well as emotion and action rule each other out or that emotion and especially the 'false' emotions with crocodile tears created by the media are of no consequence. Jim McGuigan (2000), for instance, sees the expressions of grief sparked by the death of Diana as a sign of a cultural public sphere, where matters such as gender can be negotiated. In addition, the move towards a 'feminization' of emotions for men can be seen as signs of emotions becoming democratized.

Even if the representations of mourning in the Lindh and Palme cases to a certain extent seem to reproduce traditional gender differences, the representation of both men and women is not unequivocal but contains contradictions needed for the renegotiation of gender relations. What is clear is that the news did not reproduce the stereotype of the emotional woman and the unemotional man or focus extensively on crying women. Instead – and this might have more to do with the tendency to frame the disasters and deaths of public figures as integrative events than a general trend in journalism – it constructed a 'democratic feeling community' that was not confined within the national borders through the representations of public mourning. The construction of a feeling community is realized by the descriptions of people, those with power and those without it, unified in mourning. Secondary audiences, such as Finnish readers, join the community by taking part in the emotions of those who are more directly part of the event: 'In a small café-restaurant behind the Sergel market people are watching the memorial taking place in the City Hall on television. Migrants and Swedes are sitting side by side with their eyes fixed on the TV screen. The feeling is one of warmth, harmony and unity' (*IL*, 17 March 1986).

Notes

- 1 Interview 18 August 2004.
- 2 Interview 20 August 2004.

References

- Aldridge, M. (2001) 'Confessional Culture, Masculinity and Emotional Work', *Journalism* 28(1): 91–108.
- Boscagli, M. (1992/93) 'A Moving story: Masculine Tears and the Humanity of Televised Emotions', *Discourse* 15(2): 64–79.
- Cloud, D. L. (1998) *Control and Consolation in American Culture and Politics: Rhetoric of Therapy*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Couldry, N. (2003) *Media Rituals. A Critical Approach*. London: Routledge.
- Craib, I. (1995) 'Some Comments on the Sociology of the Emotions', *Sociology* 29(1): 151–8.
- Dayan, D. and E. Katz (1993) *Media Events. The Live Broadcasting of History*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Franklin, B. (1997) *Newszak and Newsmedia*. London: Arnold.
- Furedi, F. (2004) *Therapy Culture: Cultivating Vulnerability in an Uncertain Age*. London: Routledge.
- Greenhalgh, S. (1999) 'Our Lady of Flowers: The Ambiguous Politics of Diana's Floral Revolution', in A. Kear and D. L. Steinberg (eds) *Mourning Diana. Nation, Culture and the Performance of Grief*, pp. 40–59. London and New York: Routledge.
- Harding, J. and E. D. Pribram (2002) 'The Power of Feeling. Locating Emotions in Culture', *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 5(4): 407–26.
- Hochschild, A. (2003[1983]) *The Managed Heart. Commercialization of Human Feeling*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press.
- Hockey, J. (1993) 'The Acceptable Face of Human Grieving? The Clergy's Role in Managing Emotional Expression During Funerals', in D. Clark (ed.) *The Sociology of Death: Theory, Culture, Practice*, pp. 129–48. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Hockey, J. (1997) 'Women in Grief: Cultural Representation and Social Practice', in D. Field, J. Hockey and N. Small (eds) *Death, Gender and Ethnicity*, pp. 89–107. London and New York: Routledge.
- Kear, A. and D. L. Steinberg, eds (1999) *Mourning Diana. Nation, Culture and the Performance of Grief*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Kitch, C. (2000) "'A News of Feeling as well as Fact". Mourning and Memorial in American News-magazines', *Journalism* 1(2): 171–95.
- Kitch, C. (2003) "'Mourning in America": Ritual, Redemption, and Recovery in News Narrative after September 11', *Journalism Studies* 4(2): 213–24.
- Kitzinger, J (1998) 'Image', *Screen* 39(1): 73–9.
- Langer, J. (1998) *Tabloid Television. Popular Journalism and the 'Other News'*. London: Routledge.
- Livingstone, S. and P. Lunt (1994) *Talk on Television. Audience Participation and the Public Debate*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Lupton, D. (1998) *The Emotional Self: A Sociocultural Exploration*. London: Sage.
- McDonald, M. (2000) 'Rethinking Personalization in Current Affairs Journalism', in C. Sparks and John Tulloch (eds) *Tabloid Tales: Global Debates Over Media Standards*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.
- McGuigan, J. (2000) 'British Identity and "the People's Princess"', *The Sociological Review* 48(1): 1–18.
- Merck, M., ed. (1998) *After Diana – Irreverent Elegies*. London: Verso.
- Mestrovic, S. (1997) *Postemotional Society*. London: Sage.
- Örnebring, H. (2004) 'Revisiting the Coronation. A Critical Perspective on the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953', *Nordicom Review* 1–2: 175–95.
- Pantti, M. and J. Wieten (2004) 'Mourning Becomes the Nation: Television Coverage of the Murder of Pim Fortuyn', paper presented at Off-Screen Spaces: Regionalism and Globalised Cultures, University of Ulster, Coleraine, 28–30 July.
- Reimers, E. (2003) 'A Reasonable Grief – Discursive Constructions of Grief in a Public Conversation on Raising the Shipwrecked M/S Estonia', *Mortality* 8(4): 325–41.

- Scherer, K. (2001) 'Emotional Expression is Subject to Social and Technological Change: Extrapolating to the Future', *Social Science Information* 40(1): 125–51.
- Sparks, C. (1998) 'Tabloidization and the Media', *Javnost – The Public* 5(3): 5–10.
- Thompson, N. (1997) 'Masculinity and Loss', in D. Field, J. Hockey and N. Small (eds) *Death, Gender and Ethnicity*, pp. 76–88. London and New York: Routledge.
- Timmers, M. (2000) 'Sex Differences in Emotion Expression', *Academisch proefschrift*, Universiteit van Amsterdam.
- Turnock, R. (2000) *Interpreting Diana. Television Audiences and the Death of a Princess*. London: British Film Institute.
- Van Zoonen, L. (1998) 'One of the Girls? The Changing Gender in Journalism', in C. Carter, G. Branston and S. Allan (eds) *News, Gender and Power*, pp. 33–46. London and New York: Routledge.
- Walter, T. (1991) 'The Mourning after Hillsborough', *Sociological Review* 39(3): 599–625.
- Walter, T., ed. (1999) *The Mourning for Diana*. Oxford: Berg.
- Walter, T., J. Littlewood and M. Pickering (1995) 'Death in the News: the Public Invigilation of Private Emotion', *Sociology* 29(4): 579–96.
- West, P. (2004) *Conspicuous Compassion: Why Sometimes It Is Really Cruel To Be Kind*. London: Civitas.
- White, Mimi (1992) *Tele-advising: Therapeutic Discourse in American Television*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Williams, S. (2001) *Emotion and Social Theory. Corporeal Reflections on the (Ir)Rational*. London: Sage.

Biographical note

Mervi Pantti is a Research Fellow in the Department of Communication at the University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

Address: Amsterdam School of Communications Research, Kloeniersburgwal 48, 1012 CX Amsterdam, The Netherlands. [email: mpantti@fmg.uva.nl]