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On the Verge of Tears: The Ambivalent Spaces of Emotions and Testimonies

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Abstract
This article discusses the relation between emotions and testimony, by asking the questions: What do emotions do? Are emotions possible and desirable starting points for teaching difficult and complex subjects such as injustice and historical wounds? This article explores the 2015 image and testimony of Alan Kurdi, lying on a beach of the Mediterranean Sea and the immense emotional response it elicited from the media. By critiquing emotions based on testimonies in teaching, by primarily following Ahmed (The cultural politics of emotion, Routledge, New York. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203700372, 2004) and Todd (Learning from the other: Levinas, psychoanalysis, and ethical possibilities in education. State University of New York Press, Albany, 2003), this article argues that emotions are cultural practices, not psychological states, and, thus, are relational. On this point, the argument is developed into two different movements, first, the effects offered by listening; second, opacity in relation to transparency, based on the thoughts of Glissant (Poetics of relation. University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1997). The aspects of listening and opacity in relation to testimonies, in turn, yield an ambivalent space in which emotions play a role (regardless of whether or not that function is desired) in students encounter with testimonies and may, in turn, imply educational possibilities.

Keywords Emotions · Testimony · Witnessing · Listening · Opacity · Alan Kurdi

Introduction: Alan Kurdi

Some testimonies get more publicity than others. One example of this is the image with Alan Kurdi on a Turkish beach from September 2015, taken by the photographer Nilüfer Demir. This image of the child, as if he were sleeping curled on his side, in his blue shorts and shoes, where the ocean touched the shore, spread like wildfire across the world. This visual testified to the war in Syria and the condition of the refugees at the Mediterranean Sea. This image became an event in itself. There were many articles written about it, about the tragic event that occurred with Alan Kurdi, the tragic events taking place in Syria or

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life of the Syrian immigrants at the Mediterranean Sea and other places. But there were also articles about how the image might begin a change in a war torn Syria and about the manner in which the image moved people to tears were published. This single image has also been credited with causing a surge in donations to charities that were engaged in helping Syrian migrants and refugees.[1]

I myself cried when I saw the image. I remember browsing for the visual when I first saw it on my phone. The second instant I saw the image, I stopped reading and found myself crying.

In this article, I address the question of what emotions can do, in relation to testimonies like the one of Alan Kurdi.[2] What are the educational potentialities of emotions? Is it possible and desirable for emotions to become starting points for teaching complex subjects, such as injustice and historical wounds?

Listening and opacity create the path of this article. It is here argued that they create a way to understand emotions and testimony as *ambivalent spaces* in teaching. In order to argue for this, the paper is divided into three parts. The first part will examine the way in which emotions in relation to testimony and complex subjects have been understood in educational research, particularly those emotions related to *crises* and *empathy*. Subsequently, I discuss the notion of testimony and the use of testimonies for the purpose of teaching. The second part will deepen the understanding of the relational aspects of emotions and testimony, drawing on Ahmed (2004) and Todd's (2003) relational ideas to indicate the limitations of emotions and testimony in educational situations. The third part shifts the focus and investigates the ways in which educational possibilities of emotions can be formulated differently as *ambivalent spaces*. This response of *ambivalent spaces* involves (a) listening to testimony in relation to emotions, drawing on Ahmed (2004) and Todd (2003), and (b) an understanding of emotions in relation to the concepts of opacity and transparency, drawing on Glissant (1997). By way of conclusion, I sum up my argument, returning to the main contributions of the article.

Emotions' Educational Potential: Crises and Empathy

What are the educational potentialities of emotions? There has been a lot of research theorizing the role of emotions in teaching complex subjects and testimony. Within educational research on testimony, one can observe the manner in which c*risis* becomes a pedagogical idea; for example, in discussions regarding the difference between "safe" teaching and teaching that causes "discomfort," which is a discourse that also originates with *emotions* (Hållander 2017). On the one hand, researchers, such as Felman and Laub in their classical work on testimony, *Testimony: Crises of witnessing in literature,*

[1] Some of these responses in media were collected from a Wikipedia page that was created after the event, see: "Death of Alan Kurdi" 2016.

[2] I have chosen to use the word emotions in the text. The literature I am dealing with explores the concepts of emotions, affect, and feelings. The three notions are similar to each other but are used differently by the researcher. As Margaret Wetherell (2012) writes, sometimes affect includes every emotion, and sometimes, an affect only refers to physical and bodily expressions (such as crying, laughing), in contrast to feelings that represent a more subjective expression. Here I will use the word "emotions" mainly because the chapter does not investigate what emotions *are* or what they may consist *of* (and how these concepts are understood), but rather what this phenomenon, as formulated by Sara Ahmed, *creates* in relation to other people (2004). I focus, in fact, on what emotions can *do* in relation to educational possibilities.

psychoanalysis and history, demonstrate the manner in which crisis when encountering literary testimonies contains the potential to actually end past beliefs and that "a real learning" occurs through a student's engagement with a challenging or crisis situation (Felman and Laub 1991). Felman and Laub examine the relationship between testimony, students' crises, and pedagogy, and considers the emotions and personal crisis as an opportunity for learning (Felman and Laub 1991). Kumashiro (2002) follows Felman and Laub's argument and write how entering crises is not just a required part but also a desired part of learning in anti-oppressive ways. It is by being deeply affected by testimonies or contentious subjects that students can learn something. Others, such as Kishimoto and Mwangi (2009), argue that "safe education" leads to the continuance of current norms and social injustices and that teachers should allow challenging encounters for their students.

On the other hand, other scholars, such as Zembylas (2015) or Carniel (2018) problematize the demand of crises or discomfort in teaching. For example, Zembylas argue that students who face such challenging education that includes being exposed to difficult stories, presupposes equality. Zembylas problematizes the demand for an emotional response and writes that it can lead to or imply a violent act:

> …if students are essentially 'forced' to experience discomfort, pain, or suffering as a result of being exposed to 'difficult' testimonies, and if they are 'pushed' into particular directions in their transformation, do such acts risk doing violence to students? (2015).

Zembylas questions whether compelling interfaces with "difficult" testimonies can result in the perpetration of (language) violence in students. The article, from which the quote is taken, discusses this *discomfort* in terms of the ethical violence that can be created when emotions (and, more specifically, in Zembylas' text; of discomfort) become the origin of teaching. Carniel (2018) discuss emotions in relation to a teacher who, as an activist, want to make the students *feel* but at the same time manage to, as Carniel writes, "effectively seeking to exploit my students' emotions to my own political ends, and perhaps more problematically, to exploit the grief of a child." (Carniel 2018, p 149). Carniel both problematize the students' emotions as well as the images, as such, and how displaying the image of Alan Kurdi can also become exploitive (something I will review further in the article).

Apart from crises or discomfort, another emotion discussed by educational philosophers is *empathy*. *Empathy* has a special status among the emotions sought to be elicited in teaching, as it also holds an ethical legitimacy that other emotions usually do not enjoy (compared, for example, to hatred or jealousy). Todd (2003) writes in *Learning from the Other* that empathy has been raised in democratic work to bridge between differences. By critiquing the call for empathy as the starting point for education in social justice, Todd believes that the requirement for empathy in pedagogy is not only a requirement for a certain emotion but also that the emotion of empathy requires a certain relational form. Todd's investigation, based on psychoanalysis and Levinas, posits varied aspects of empathy: "feeling for the other" in the sense of sympathy; "putting yourself into the other's shoes" or attributing the other to one's inner life (projection); or "putting the other into oneself," which refers to identification and imitation (Todd 2003, p. 43–63). The different empathetic facets all have diverse limitations in the way that they determine *how* the relation is to take place, partly because these points of origin imply assumptions that the other is similar to oneself. This complexity does not imply that one should refrain from developing empathy, that would be, as Todd states, a request as equally impossible as the need for such a feeling.

A similar criticism of empathy is presented by Gubkin (2015). Regarding the use of testimonies in teaching, she insists there are ethical as well as epistemological reasons why teaching should not strive to elicit empathy in the first place. Similar to Todd, she writes about the difficulties in engage with someone else's position, but adds that empathy requires an understanding of the testimonies per se, that they are *objective* and that language is able to represent extreme events objectively. Gubkin argues that teaching must instead take into account the insecurity inherent in traumatic experiences and that is found in language itself. The ethical risks of using emotions as the source of learning have been discussed above with reference to Zembylas (2015); however, as Gubkin (2015) elucidates in her article, there are also epistemological reasons to such an application. When students are asked to experience a historical trauma through a testimony, that very experience requires them to have acquired some prior understanding of the event. The personal narrative is regarded as special knowledge that performs the purpose of extracting a particular type of emotion.

My focus in this article is not to give a critique on wanting to create change to different injustices or structural discriminations, but rather to problematize the role of emotions (of discomfort, crises or even empathy) as ways of doing this. Todd, Zembylas, Carniel or Gubkin do not reject emotions for the purpose of teaching, but they criticize the employment of emotions as a central point to impart the knowledge of past events that are traumatic and the use of emotions as the starting point of instructional discussions of difficult subjects. They indicate the pitfalls of such teaching methodologies that do not consider the uniqueness of the student, the teacher or the historical testimony. This is something that I wish to develop further, by drawing on Zembylas, who on the one hand believes that educational initiatives beginning with emotion may miss the opacity required of students, and on the other hand, asserts in *Five Pedagogies, a Thousand Possibilities* that relational emotions, through their positive economy, can be a means of teaching and a way "… to connect with others in more creative ways" (Zembylas 2007, p. 114). He clarifies how emotions can open an educational space that can provide *critical hope.* This understanding of critical hope is retrieved from Freire's *Pedagogy of Hope* and implies a relational understanding in which both the emotions and the critical observation of the distribution of power can take place (Zembylas 2007). In accordance with Ahmed's understanding of the economies of the emotions (which I will develop in this article) and how they also create boundaries, Zembylas asserts, "Emotions in the classroom, more specifically, are not only private matters but also political spaces in which students and teachers interact with implications in major political and cultural struggles" (2007, p. xiii). Emotions are not just private; they can enter into political contexts. When students react with tears or with anger, hate or love, it is not done solely for private reasons. It is possible to combine these emotions with the political. For Zembylas, this confusion is not necessarily negative:

> thinking about these theories about the politicization of emotions in education has challenged me to sharpen my argument in suggesting that the politicization of emotions is not inevitable *but also desirable* (Zembylas 2007, p. xiii).

Therefore, there is educational possibility in the so-called "spaces" that emotions can create and emotions can be made a "positive and dynamic source of personal and political insight into educational settings." (Zembylas 2007, p. xxi), In line with these positions, I want to develop these understandings in this article further by introducing the role of listening as well as the role of opacity and argue that these emotional spaces also are *ambivalent spaces*. I will do so by firstly giving a deeper understanding of emotions as *relational* and secondly through a discussion on the phenomenon of *listening*, which is a development

of both Ahmed (2004) and Todd (2003) as well as by developing the role of *opacity,* drawing on Glissant (1997), as ways to understand possible emotions when encountering testimonies within teaching. Before doing this, I will, however, first discuss my view on testimony and the role of testimony within teaching.

The Image as Testimony

There are different ways of regarding a testimony and a witness. For example, Agamben (2008, p. 17) regard different positions of a witness; in Latin, one could find the connection to *testis*, the third person who in a court can testify to what had happened, or *superstes* as a survivor who had lived through an event and who can, through that, testify to what had happened. In this later view, the witness as *superstes* does not have to give a testimony. One can be a witness without complete a testimony. In this article, however, I regard testimonies which speak of what has happened, as representations or images, and through this, I place testimonies between the past and the present that speak of trauma or injustice (see also Hållander 2015). Drawing on Agamben (2008), I regard testimonies as remnants, which give voice to what has happened and through this, the testimony can enter into the present and the future. This speaking can take the form of a voice, but it can also be that of (moving) images. Through this understanding of testimony as a remnant, the image of Alan Kurdi is regarded as a testimony, that speaks of what has happened. Testimonial images are, in that sense, representations which can re-enter into the present (see also, Hållander 2015) again and again. It is also this re-entering into the present images, such as the one of Alan Kurdi, which does not become a single event but also (can) bear witness and become new events. Also, "images can bear witness without, against, and in spite of any given intention" as Katz Thor writes (Katz Thor 2018, p. 145). As Katz Thor (2018) states, posing the question of the image as a testimony involves a dislocation beyond the witness (as a subject) and the understanding of a testimony based on individual stories. Images do not speak for themselves, but are to be interpreted—by us (Katz Thor 2018). This witnessing can take place not only outside but also within teaching, as Carniel (2018) so clearly points out (by also discussing the image with Alan Kurdi).

Society is greatly interested in testimonies, and it is also felt within media, in law, and in teaching, which forms the subject of this article. As Ascher write, "If the twentieth century was declared, time and again, as 'the century of the witness', it seems that the twenty-first century is heading in a similar direction" (Ascher 2011, p. 1). This statement is also valid for teaching and learning. For example, Chinnery traces the process of transformation in the teaching of historical traumas from the recounting of facts about the past to the use of personal narratives and testimonies (Chinnery 2013). The work of Swedish public authority *The Living History Forum* is an example of the use of testimonies in the teaching of traumatic moment of the past. *The Living History Forum* is an authority that utilizes personal stories about the Holocaust and other crimes against humanity as the starting point of its objective "to work with issues on tolerance, democracy, and human rights." ("*The Living History Forum*"). To achieve their stated mission, the forum has compiled historical testimonies that are meant for schools for the purpose of teaching (*Forum för levande historia* 2015).

Different pedagogical and didactical reasons can be offered to explain why teachers use testimonies to impart history lessons (see Hållander 2017). Testimonies are regarded as being singular and represent "true" stories. Thus, students exposed to these testimonies

also consider them to be of value when learning about historical trauma and attempting to bring their own consciousness and/or personal ethical reflection to those events (ibid.). Therefore, one didactic reason to support the use of testimonies in teaching is the different narratives from the past that can create opportunities for students to build positive values, such as a historical consciousness or an ethical approach to the world and toward other people (compare with: Felman and Laub 1991; Simon 2005). The emotions of students play a pivotal role in this methodology. These emotions of love, fear, hate, sorrow or even crises can become the foundation for dealing with the damage caused by historical pain, and subsequently, become the basis for their individual knowledge of a history that includes the histories of those different from themselves or belonging to other parts of the world. This is something that I will continue to develop through a discussion on the relational aspects of emotions.

The Relational Aspect of Emotions

As I discussed by drawing on Zembylas (2015), there are ethical risks of considering emotions as a starting point, but as Gubkin (2015) raises in her article, there are also epistemological reasons. When students are asked to experience a historical trauma, it, requires some understanding of this historical trauma, as such. The testimony is determined to consist of some special knowledge.

Again, what do emotions do? Ahmed asserts in *The Cultural Politics of Emotions* that the first thought about emotions is the assumption that they are inside the body; that they emanate from our individual, singular mass and that emotions move from "the inside to the outside." A similar but distinctive understanding reveals that emotions can be understood as a movement from the "outside to our inside" (Ahmed 2004, p. 33). When one suffers from the source of a different voice, as I did in the case of the image of Alan Kurdi, we tend to believe that emotions reach us from the outside world, to our own inside: the image of the child stretched from the remoteness of the outside world to my own inside. This movement is distinct from the "inside out" but it carries the same progression and a similar understanding of emotions as interior phenomena.

Ahmed elucidates that both these conceptions of emotion are problematic because they pretend to create objectivity between the outside and the inside. This construct of the outside and inside can also be felt in terms of "me," "we," "one," and "the other," and is, fundamentally, a notion rooted in binary thinking: "Indeed the outside-in model is problematic precisely because it assumes that emotions are something that 'we have'" (Ahmed 2004, p. 10). Emotions are, in this perception, understood as something we own, and thus, the ones we "have" are separate from the ones felt by others; this separation also tends to build boundaries (Ahmed 2004).

Through a Marxist analysis of the words *wound* and *suffering*, Ahmed explains that wounds are a part of the global market. Sensational stories and testimonies can turn pain into a media spectacle that, while giving voice to expressions of sorrow or anger and similar emotions, can also be met with laughter. Ahmed further states that when testimonies become global (for example, testimonies used by different aid organizations), they become part of a global capitalist economy where testimonies can be honored and "fetished." Commodity fetishism transforms the *subjective*, abstract aspects of economic value into *objective*, real things that people believe have intrinsic value. According to Ahmed, this fetishism is also a central aspect of the testimony culture where aid

organization can use personal stories to raise money. Eventually, this fetishism related to how power is distributed: "the differentiation between forms of pain and suffering in stories that are told, and between those that are told and those that are not told, is a crucial mechanism for the distribution of power" (Ahmed 2004, p. 32).

These boundaries and the fetishing, also mean that testimonies are relational: the witnesses stand in relation to different nations, movements, and subjects. As an example, Ahmed mentions the instance of an aid organization's story from a war. This story of empowerment was not aimed at those who actually suffered from the mine blasts but were rather projected onto those who heard or read the testimony or those who were asked to donate money to the aiding organization. The "value" of testimony and the human response to it are created through the circulation of the global economy. Based on this analysis, Ahmed believes that emotions are not something we "have"; they are, rather, something that creates boundaries of an inside and an outside and, through this construct, establishes those same boundaries:

> So emotions are not simply something 'I' or 'we' have. Rather, it is through emotions, or how we respond to objects and others, that surfaces or boundaries are made: the 'I' and 'we' are shaped by, even taken shape of, contact with others (Ahmed 2004, p. 10).

Ahmed relates the experience of different emotions, such as love, hate, pain, and shame and clarifies how these emotions create boundaries, for example, in the love of one's nation and the consequent hate of "the other." Todd formulated the notion of empathy and its function of determining the relational form that takes place. Ahmed similarly treats other emotions such as hatred and love. The feelings are aimed at someone, or against something, and thus, they determine how and in what way the relationship will take place.

Ahmed formulates the social aspect of the emotions, but what can be said more specifically in relation to the response of the image of Alan Kurdi? To say that there was a common emotion in relation to Alan Kurdi is, of course, not reasonable. As I have stated earlier, an immense media outpour generated varied responses from tears to suspicion to satire ("Death of Alan Kurdi" 2016). Certain emotions could be linked with empathy; it could have been "one of my own children who lay there" (the process of being in the situation of the other, and thus, feeling sympathy). However, there were also (far-right) reports that expressed suspicion ("fooling the whole world"), and these elicited other expressions than crying. The image was also used to incite political opinion across the world, and it was said to have created an impact on the 2015 Canadian federal election ("Death of Alan Kurdi" 2016). In addition, I would like to highlight that what I have mentioned earlier in relation to Ahmed, that although perceived emotion may be common, does not necessarily imply that we have the same relation to that emotion. Then, is there another way we can go?

Having discussed the relational aspects of emotions and testimony, I will now move to the two different movements that relate to testimony and emotions which also formulates my argument in the article. The first movement is about the possibility of *listening* and the other relates to a more visual progression, namely *opacity* and *transparency*. Through these two movements, I highlight ambivalence as an educational opportunity. It is an ambivalence that does not move away from emotions as a possible way of dealing with testimonies. Rather, I regard them as means to work with the relational aspects of testimonies as well as with emotions. These movements of listening and opacity emotions, I argue, can become a productive power in relation to testimonies.

Listening: Breaking Its Hold

The first movement that I will develop here in relation to emotions and testimony involves the other side of language, namely listening. The listener is treated by Todd in *Learning from the Other* (2003) as an educational possibility. Todd states that listening belongs to the very essence of language. It forms the other side of language and makes up an important but neglected component. The same is applicable for narratives, or in my case, testimonies. They would not exist if a certain form of listening was not taking place.

Thus, listening is important to the manner in which testimonies appear and are produced. The listener plays a role in both the aspects of whether the testimonials are given the opportunity to emerge and of the manner in which they are expressed.

Todd (2003) suggests that we often approach listening through understanding. We try to make sense of another's life story by translating it into something we can understand. Based on an analysis of the act of listening in the documentary film *Jupiter's Wife*, by Michel Negroponte, Todd indicates that listening can also be grounded in something other than comprehension or understanding as a basis of response. She lists three different dimensions that the practice of listening may include. First, listening is an inherent and implied role of language and not a temporary aspect. Second, speech is a creative and unconscious creation process and listening, in this context, performs the function of making sense of the other. Third, based on Levinas' ethics, an opportunity for ethical response is provided through listening that draws attention to the alterity of the Other. Inherent in these different dimensions of listening is a risk that is both in the context of speaking and of listening: the ability to share what is new or different (Todd 2003). There is a possibility in listening: the potential to hear what one has not thought, assumed, or experienced before. Therefore, listening could involve the introduction of something radical and new. Thus, the relationships or emotions that may arise through and in listening are not assured in advance. Hence, listening to a testimony could mean listening to the impossible (Todd 2003).

Ahmed also develops the idea of listening in relation to reading testimonies from the past. She specifies how reading includes listening to the impossible: Our task instead is to learn to hear what is impossible. Such an impossible hearing is only possible if we respond to a pain that we cannot claim as our own (Ahmed 2004, p. 35). Here, listening shall not be understood as in embroidering oneself into someone else's emotions or into someone else's pain. It is not about living someone else's experience or suffering, but rather, about responding to a pain and an admission that it does not have to be one's own. Thus, for Ahmed, listening is not about identification or sympathy and this notion can be related to Todd's criticism and understanding of empathy (Todd 2003).

In Ahmed's criticism of emotions, she discusses the manner in which pain and wounds can work in politics. She writes that if we are to bring pain and wounds into politics, we must also give up the fetish surrounding the wounds of different testimonies. It is an action of historical remembrance; silence or forgetfulness would imply the possibility of a repetition of violence. However, the memory that Ahmed instead argues for should include an assignment to break its hold:

> Our task might instead be to 'remember' how the surface of bodies (including the bodies of communities […]) came to be wounded in the first place. Reading testimonies of injury involves rethinking the relations between the present and the past: an emphasis on the past does not necessarily mean a conservation or en-trenchment of the past […]. Following bell hooks our task would be' not to forget the past but to break its hold' (Ahmed 2004, p. 33).

Here, Ahmed is, through her citation of bell hooks and her biographical writing in *Talking Back,* (Hooks 1989, s. 155) referring to breaking the grip of history, which partly includes being conscious of the discourse of testimonies in the global economy, and in the capitalist system. This understanding is about reformulating our thoughts about the historical testimonies that testify to wounds and at the same time, introducing them into politics.

> In order to break the seal of the past, in order to move away from attachments that are hurtful, we must first bring them into the action of political action (Ahmed 2004, p. 33).

Ahmed writes that these voices and testimonies that are hurtful should be brought into politics. The past is alive rather than dead. The past lives on in every wound that is open in the present, and it owns an opportunity to be politically powerful.

In her reading of the testimony in *Bringing Them Home,* Ahmed visualizes herself and her emotions: how she becomes part of history, but at the same time stands outside it. Ahmed write how her reading, which can also be described as a listening, include herself as well as the insight of what is not about herself:

> It is not just me facing this, and it is certainly not about me. And yet, I am 'in it', which means I am not 'not in it'. Here I am, already placed and located in worlds, already shaped by my proximity to some bodies and not to others. If I am here, then I am there: the stories of the document are shaped by the land I had been thought to think of as my own (Ahmed 2004, p. 36).

The self is a part of history, but is at the same time standing outside: "I'm in it, which means I'm *not* in it" (ibid).

Thus, focusing on listening could shift the locus from the idea that the emotions of the students—or the non-emotions—are at stake. It would shift the spotlight from the idea that the students should feel, or be like the other, and instead contribute to the belief that the testimonies used for teaching purposes can stand for themselves and accrue the ability to speak for and express themselves. I will develop this thought further in the next section, through the concepts of opacity and transparency.

Opacity and Transparency

In the beginning of the article, I discussed the ambivalence of emotions and the way in which Zembylas (2015) formulated a defense of a student's opacity. He writes how the requirement that the student shall feel empathy or express sympathy toward others, can avoid recognizing the opacity of the students. In addition, Zembylas (2015) asserts that our own response to the other is based on the opacity of the individual. Drawing on Judith Butler's understanding of the self and the self's understanding of itself as partial, he explains that the self is haunted by what the self may think, although it does not possess the totality of history. The self cannot always explain why it appears in a certain way, and its efforts to recreate this story are always undergoing a continuous review.

What, then, does opacity mean, and what does it mean in relation to testimonies? Glissant has written on opacity, and his philosophy is based on a movement and a double entity that allows for the painful wounds—the sunken slave ships, the silenced origins—to enter the present without seeking reconciliation or overlooking them. Instead, Glissant believes historical wounds can become points of origin from where the future can be entered (Glissant 1997,

2012). Glissant's work is congruent with Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (Fanon 1967); however, he initiates a fresh relational understanding of the subject in post-colonial society. Unlike Fanon (or the writing of other dialectics like Marx, Hegel, and Agamben), Glissant's relationality is not dialectical. Instead, he posits that relationality can be understood in terms of the *multiple* that works between the different. The relationality that occurs between differences can be described by the concept of *creolization*: a constant process in which differences meet and go, in and out of each other. In addition, it can be described by the *archipelago thinking*: a cognition that takes its source from borders, seas, and islands. The relation-making between humans as well as the land and sea, is Glissant's starting point: the subject relates and is related.

Glissant's philosophy works between the transparent on one side and opacity on the other. It is a philosophy that can simultaneously be read as poetry: "What is relational philosophy? An impossibility if it is not poetry" (Glissant 2012, p. 68 my translation). Poetry and philosophy do not exclude each other in Glissant's texts; they support each other. Poetry, or poetics, can be many things that I will not discuss in this article. In Glissant's texts, however, poetry has a different movement than the movement of philosophy: one that allows the insecure and the vague to take its place. It is a movement that does not strive for wisdom, knowledge, or clarity, which are regarded as the ideal of the philosophical movement. Instead, it leaves room for the fog—for opacity. This dual movement of Glissant embraces both clarity and density where the lucidity of philosophy (comprehension) goes hand in hand with opacity, a notion that represents the incomprehensible, the impenetrable, and the origin that is unknown. In the introduction to the Swedish translation of Glissant's writing, Christina Kullberg clarifies what opacity means to texts, and humans: the active resistance to being interpreted on the other's conditions (Christina Kullberg, In: Glissant 2012). Everyone has the right to be incomprehensible, which also means that one can relate to another without necessarily understanding that other.

This resistance, the opacity, can be related to both the text, as well as, to the reader or the author:

> Literary text plays the contradictory role of producer of opacity. Literary textual practice, thus, represent an opposition between two opacities: the irreducible opacity of the text, even when it is a matter of the almost harmless sonnet, and the always evolving opacity of the author or a reader (Glissant 1997, p. 115).

It is not only the text that executes this opacity but also the actual reader. The opacity is in the text (it can also lead the reader to perceive the text as difficult) as well as within the reader. However, this opacity has no effect without transparency. It is through transparency, both for the author and the reader, that the text becomes comprehensible, as a bridge between these oppositions of transparency and opacity. In my interpretation, it is in the transparency where an understanding can be communicated.

When Glissant asks (and answers), "What is relational philosophy? An impossibility if it is not poetry" (Glissant 2012, p. 68 my translation), this is the duality he refers to: that "Opacities must be preserved. […] the framework is not made of transparency" (Glissant 1997, p. 120). Transparency is not the actual ground, the base belongs to opacity, and it should be nurtured in its fashion of offering active resistance.

Opacity and Transparency as Ambivalent Spaces

Glissant's philosophy represents a movement that does not try to freeze and position, but rather tries to relate and be related. This philosophy enables some researchers to see the wounds in historical testimonials, and also to see what the wounds could generate in terms of hope. For example, Walcott articulates, with reference to the historical traumas of slavery, the way in which Glissant formulates a doublet through his understanding of the relational:

> embeds it in a universality from the underside, or universality seen through the eyes of the subaltern, one that demands we read pain alongside "pleasure." By this I mean that we do not only bear witness to the pain of enslavement, but we also bear witness to the way in which the struggle to survive has forged the pleasure of cultural sharing and reinvention (Walcott 2000, p. 138).

Walcott elevates Glissant's ability to formulate a testimony that includes both the pain slavery carries and the (cultural) resistance against slavery that was created. For Walcott and his students, it represents a provocative idea because they are forced to think about how injustice and exploitation also contributed to expressing and formulating culture and literature that have been beautiful and significant (Walcott 2000).

Based on this understanding of opacity, I think that emotions can contain educational possibilities because emotions, whether we want them or not, can *do* something. The movements that I am suggesting of listening and opacity, where the ambivalence takes place, can be a form of working with emotions within educational settings. The performativity in listening and in understanding testimonies is as follows: the self relates and is related, with the body, with the memory, and through the emotions. Through Glissant's direction, I formulate a constructing of *both/and* where both the sorrow, the pain, the guilt, and the responsibility occur; a *both/and* where the opposite movements of clarity and fog happen (Hållander 2017). *Both/and* could create an ambivalent space where the witness's voice, which may not be understood, stands next to the mechanisms and structures that can be understood in the teaching. This *both/and* could imply performative actions: educational possibilities can be created, hopefully, within these two different movements of listening and opacity. Thus, emotions, through opacity and listening, could embody educational possibilities of, which I have quoted previously from Zembylas: a way of "learning to connect with others in more creative ways" (Zembylas 2007, p. 114).

Dignified Images and Teaching

How does this view on emotions and testimony impact relationships in the educational environment, namely, between teacher and students as well as between students and testimonies? When invited as a guest teacher at different higher education courses in fine arts and visual communication, to discuss aspects of testimony and witnessing, I had the option to display or not to display the image of Alan Kurdi to the students when giving a talk on the possibility of testimony. In line with what Carniel write (2018), on the use of the image of Alan Kurdi in relation to teaching, and how she at first thought of using the image but on second thoughts decided not to, I did not show it either. Why so? The choice on my part, as well as for Carniel, I read, was more about Alan Kurdi himself than the students' emotions

or thoughts. Rather it was grounded in the idea that everyone has the right to be imaged in a dignified way. Having taking on board the idea of how Alan Kurdi's father responded to the image of his son, it was not difficult to do so. He had responded by showing another image of his son, where he seemed happy and was smiling joyfully. Every person owns the right to be captured in a respectful and dignified fashion. This image of a smiling boy became my starting point for the lectures. It became my selection.

However, teaching adults within higher education is different from teaching young children, the impact one has on adults within higher education is not the same as teaching young children. The difference between teaching young children and adults also involves ethical dimensions, which both involves the material used and the relations that teacher have to students. Also, as Carniel discusses (2018) in relation to trigger warnings, there are ethical as well as political dimensions in the relationships between students and teachers as well as between students and images that portray traumatic events: "No teacher seeks to traumatize their students, but similarly no teacher wishes to miss out on an enriching, albeit challenging, educational experience because of personal distaste" (Carniel 2018, p 145). One can, as a teacher, want to do something, and as an activist, to create something within teaching that can have an impact on the student's life. However, teachers should consider how this is done, and for what reasons, by, for example, also being conscious of the discourse of testimonies in the global economy and in the capitalist system or how we as students and teachers additionally stand in relation to different events. They should take in into account not only how we are a part of it (the history, the events) but also how we are, at the same time, standing outside of it—referring back to the previous discussion on Ahmed (2004).

Having reflected on my own experience of different testimonies in my teaching (Hållander 2017), I also know that the selection that we teachers do is not always thoroughly planned. One does not always know what images are brought in, sometimes because you yourself have not made the selection—a colleague, a student has done it—or how images shown within a classroom are brought into teaching because of acute events in the world. Images which can become events in teaching which teachers have to deal with even if it is outside the curriculum (Hållander 2017). In relation to teaching, however, and as Carniel writes, many images become materials on an ad hoc basis as lecture slides or tutorial materials, with little attention to what they actually do or contribute to. As such, many images become unexpected (Carniel 2018, p. 141f, see also Hållander 2017). Something that does not have to be wrong, per se, rather it is a part of the beautiful risk of teaching and something to maintain. Nevertheless, at the same time, it is something teachers should be aware of: how testimonial images are unique, opaque but also how they—and this is important to stress—can become events of remembrance and an ethical learning (Simon 2005). Events where emotions have a place, which, hopefully, can create ambivalent spaces that can become fruitful for teaching.

What did Change?

The possibility of transforming something through testimony is complex (Hållander 2017). The educational question that I pose in this article—what are the educational potentialities of emotions?—can also be a question posed to what change they create in terms of changes in the world? The image of Alan Kurdi was widely spread, and its dissemination was met with varied responses, including tears and a myriad other emotions. The outpour

of emotions was largely linked to empathy; however, they were also (far-right) reported in the form of suspicion ("fooling the whole world"), and thus, they elicited expressions other than crying, sorrow or anger. Regarding the question this article set out to answer: what do emotions *do*?, it is perhaps cogent to consider what Alan Kurdi's father, Abdullah Kurdi, said in an interview with the *The Telegraph* one year after the event:

> Everyone claimed they wanted to do something because of the photo that touched them so much. But what is happening now? People are still dying and nobody is doing anything about it (Ensor 13:40 2016).

Alan Kurdi's death was only one of the cases among the thousands of mortality in the Mediterranean Sea over the recent years (UNHCR 2016). In fact, twelve others, including eight children also died in the same boat as Alan Kurdi. Two of the deceased were Alan's brother and his mother. However, they did not receive the same media coverage, and thus, did not elicit the same emotional response ("Death of Alan Kurdi" 2016). The emotions that people described they sensed, or even showed, did not change the situation in Syria or the situation at the Mediterranean Sea.

Conclusion

What are the educational potentialities of emotions? Is it possible and desirable for emotions to become starting points for a teaching of complex subjects such as injustice and historical wounds? Through the analyses of testimony and emotions, I have developed the manner in which testimonies can serve as a means of controlling the emotions and perceptions of learners and can influence the perception of the society within which the students live. It could mean that testimonies reproduce stereotypes of suffering of different people and can thus consolidate existing power structures and identities.

Through cautions against of the use of emotions mainly from Ahmed (2004) and Todd (2003), I have argued that emotions are cultural practices, not psychological states, and thus, are relational. Regarding encounters with testimonies for the purpose of teaching, these emotional and relational practices can also function to create borders (as between "us and them"). Based on this point, I developed the argument into two different movements. The first movement pertains to the act of listening and what it can offer in relation to emotions and testimony. The other concerns opacity in relation to transparency based on the texts of Glissant (1997) and I have argued that the opacity of students as well as of the testimonies from the past, must be preserved if teaching is not exploitative. Through these movements, I view educational possibility in the so-called ambivalent spaces that emotions and testimony can create. Nonetheless, I have observed the value of bringing into teaching testimonies that testify suffering. Testimonies stand between the past and the future, and if testimonies are not heard in teaching, there is a possibility of silencing and forgetting the wounds created history.

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