



Archived by Flinders University

This is the peer reviewed version of the following article:  
Cardell, K., & Douglas, K. (2020). Emma González, Silence  
and Youth Testimony. *Women: A Cultural Review*, 31(1),  
1–22. DOI: 10.1080/09574042.2019.1676057

which has been published in final form at  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09574042.2019.1676057>

Copyright © 2019 Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor  
& Francis Group.

## **Emma González, Silence and Youth Testimony**

Kylie Cardell and Kate Douglas

*College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Flinders University, Adelaide, Australia.*

Corresponding author: [kate.douglas@flinders.edu.au](mailto:kate.douglas@flinders.edu.au)

Dr Kylie Cardell is Senior Lecturer in English and Creative Writing at Flinders University, South Australia. She is the author of *Dear World: Contemporary Uses of the Diary* (2014), and editor (with Kate Douglas) of *Telling Tales: Autobiographies of Childhood and Youth* (2015). Kylie is an executive member for the International Auto/Biography Association (IABA) Asia-Pacific and co-directs the Flinders Life Narrative Research Group (Flinders University). She is the Essays editor for the scholarly Australian journal *Life Writing*.

Kate Douglas is a Professor in the College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences at Flinders University. She is the author of *Contesting Childhood: Autobiography, Trauma and Memory* (Rutgers, 2010) and the co-author of *Life Narratives and Youth Culture: Representation, Agency and Participation* (Palgrave, 2016; with Anna Poletti). She is the co-editor (with Ashley Barnwell) of *Research Methodologies for Auto/Biography Studies* (Routledge 2019); (with Laurie McNeill) of *Teaching Lives: Contemporary Pedagogies of Life Narratives* (Routledge 2017), (with Kylie Cardell) of *Trauma Tales: Auto/biographies of Childhood and Youth* (Routledge 2014) and (with Gillian Whitlock) *Trauma Texts* (Routledge, 2009). Kate is the Head of the Steering committee for the International Auto/Biography Association's Asia-Pacific chapter.

## Emma González, Silence and Youth Testimony

This paper uses life narrative methodology to analyse two public speeches of youth activist Emma González as examples of how youth testimony gains traction at times of cultural crisis. Drawing on the work of Leigh Gilmore, we ask, how did González become an “adequate witness” (3) at a time when the testimony of women and children, particularly those from racial and sexual minority groups, are so often “tainted” or discredited in the public sphere? We ask: what role did the (en)acting of silence play in González’s testimony? How do González’s speeches function as trauma testimony? We argue that González entered into the public sphere at a moment when such testimony was sought and when child subjects have particular cachet. González was able to draw on a plethora of recognisable methods, testimonial genres and literary traditions to gain a voice in a cultural landscape that was conducive to her narration; despite this, the reception of her voice has not always been positive. We draw attention to the role of the youth subject within testimonial networks and to a cultural context wherein such subjects are asked to be both knowing and innocent in speaking from experience.

Keywords: youth activism; testimony; autobiography; silence; witnessing

### Introduction

Emma González entered the public sphere in February 2018 when she gave an 11-minute speech at a gun control rally in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. González was a survivor of the Stoneman Douglas High School shooting that had happened three days before. Seventeen students were killed in that crime and several more were seriously injured. González’s impassioned speech commemorating the loss of her classmates also advocated for gun control and has become known for the line “we call BS”, a response to those claiming such reform was not needed. For Alex Horton, writing for *The Washington Post*, González’s speech was emblematic of a “new strain of furious advocacy” catalysed by the Stoneman Douglas shooting and led by youth voices. In this wave, Emma González stood out.

Indeed, González’s subsequent speech at “The March of Our Lives” (the largest student protest in U.S. history) and her many other public appearances in the fight for more stringent gun control in the U.S. catapulted the young activist to world-fame. Celebrities (such as Michelle Obama, Kanye West, Iman, and Michelle Visage) came out in support of

González on Twitter and Instagram. Perhaps inevitably, there have been attempts to discredit her as well, for instance accusations of bullying, and even suggestions that she and her fellow students are “crisis actors”.<sup>1</sup> In both the various celebratory or condemnatory discourse that has shaped González’s rise to prominence, her youth, gender, and sexuality have been significant points of interest. González is a survivor of a horrific event, but she is also a young, queer woman and her public appearances and activism are continuously read in relation to these identity markers. In this paper, though cognisant of the diverse ways in which González’s identity is constructed and read in public, we focus on youth as a significant and powerful category affecting and shaping González’s testimony and voice in relation to the Stoneman Douglas shooting and subsequent activism for gun reform and control.<sup>2</sup> The youth subject is a significant and highly visible component of testimonial networks and increasingly, a distinctive affective position within contemporary activist contexts.

### **#Never Again**

Though González is perhaps the most famous youth activist in the world at the moment of writing this paper, she is part of an activist collective at Stoneman Douglas. González, along with schoolmates David Hogg, Jaclyn Corin, Cameron Kasky, and Alex Wind are the founders of the “Never Again” movement and appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine in March 2018. And after the shooting, because of the work of González and her peers, news media circulated young people’s tweets and media comments in unprecedented ways. The testimony of young life narrators gained traction with national and international readerships.

As Kate Douglas and Anna Poletti argue, young people who engage in public modes of self-representation and more particularly, in acts of testimony and witness, are perceived and responded to in varied, often contradictory ways. There are a multitude of significant cultural traditions in which young people engage in testimonial speech and writing; as Douglas and Poletti note, “While technologies have made self-representation much more

---

<sup>1</sup> See Paquette; Stevens. This is not unexpected, of course. Hugh Stevens, discussing Judith Butler’s writings, offers the following insight which seems also appropriate to González: “those who voice these [dissenting] positions are exposed to unbearable stigmatized modes of identification... traitor... treasonous” (255).

<sup>2</sup> Her race and sexuality have also, but within a paper of this length, as much as we might like to, we are not able to develop lengthy analysis of the ways that González’s race and sexuality have been variables in her public representations.

accessible, prevalent and popular, self-representation, through varied cultural modes, has been happening for as long as people have lived.” (5) Young people write about their lives and testify to their experiences every day on Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, Twitter (etcetera) and there are myriad, often paradoxical ways that these narratives are received (Cardell, Douglas, Maguire).

While there is a large and visible commitment to young people’s activism from the adult community, when young people offer first-person testimony (across various modes) it is also subjected to high levels of suspicion and scrutiny. As Leigh Gilmore argues, though “ours is an age of testimony and witness. It is also an age of judgement... Judgement falls unequally on women who bear witness” (1) and the same might be said of children and youth. Gilmore explains that when women offer public testimony there are often a “host of means meant to taint it: to contaminate by doubt, stigmatize through association with gender and race, and dishonor through shame, such that not only the testimony but the person herself is smeared.” (2)

Life narrative scholars have noted suspicion directed at and attempts to discredit children’s published testimony of the recent past, for instance, in the memoir genre—child soldier memoirist Ishmael Beah (from Sierra Leone), and on-line, for instance, with Twitter activist Bana Al-Abed (from Syria).<sup>3</sup> Both of these authors were publicly challenged over the veracity of their testimony. Other high-profile youth bloggers such as Malala Yousafzai (from Pakistan) and Isadora Faber (from Brazil) have been criticised for being instruments of adult politics, with suggestions that their parents are the actual authors of their testimonies.<sup>4</sup>

At times of rising anti-intellectualism, we see the possibility of dissent, even in the mainstream (Stevens 255). Children are sometimes seen as manipulable by invested others and their articulations can be subject to ongoing scrutiny in relation to cultural ideas and expectations, to assumptions about their capacity and authenticity as child subjects. In her discussion of the Stoneman Douglas youth leaders, the journalist Dahlia Lithwick (2018a) notes that the confidence and maturity of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas students’ in public speaking was sometimes met with suspicion; she argues for the need to recognise the legitimate achievements of youth who have been able to communicate so effectively at this time. That such a defence requires mounting speaks to the contradictory and provocative ways in which this testimony has circulated:

---

<sup>3</sup> Douglas 2019.

<sup>4</sup> Douglas and Poletti.

The effectiveness of these poised, articulate, well-informed, and seemingly preternaturally mature student leaders of Stoneman Douglas has been vaguely attributed to very specific personalities and talents. Indeed, their words and actions have been so staggeringly powerful, they ended up fueling laughable claims about crisis actors, coaching, and fat checks from George Soros. But there is a more fundamental lesson to be learned in the events of this tragedy: These kids aren't freaks of nature. Their eloquence and poise also represent the absolute vindication of the extracurricular education they receive at Marjory Stoneman Douglas. (Lithwick 2018b)

Conversely, when certain types of testimony and particularly prominent voices become culturally privileged (over others) it is the testimony of “spectacular youth” that becomes most visible and central to understanding a communal issue.<sup>5</sup> When it comes to engagement in public cultures, there's an element of ‘damned-if-you-do, damned if you don't’ that often affects youth. Gilmore argues, (and draws on the example of Malala) that “the figure of the girl or woman of color as deserving and representative victim seems to be enjoying an unprecedented level of credibility and visibility... and when many humanitarian organizations and NGOs seek to put a human face on suffering, they choose girls and women from the global South in appeals directed at Western audiences” (8). And Sidonie Smith discusses the tendency for prominent youth testifiers to become “spokeschildren” for the traumas represented (151), resulting in reductive interpretations of the politics represented and encouraging universal interpretations of experiences of trauma.<sup>6</sup> There is often a great deal of pressure and expectation placed on children's testimony for its potential to “fix” a world spoiled by previous generations. As Gillian Whitlock reminds us, though testimony can “personalize and humanize categories of people whose experiences are frequently unseen and unheard... it is a ‘soft’ weapon because it is easily co-opted into propaganda.” (3)

---

<sup>5</sup> See Douglas and Poletti (30) on “spectacular youth”.

<sup>6</sup> Here, Smith is discussing Zlata Filipovic who wrote about her experiences of the Bosnian war in the early 1990s in *Zlata's Diary* but we see this argument as broadly relevant to children's testimony.

## **Life narrative and youth testimony at times of crisis**

We are life narrative scholars so our observations about González inevitably lead us to particular inquiries, for instance the role of youth testimony at times of crisis, and the cultural role of silence and/or taking back silence to emphasise the silencing of certain voices within cultures more generally.

In this discussion, we analyse two now famous public speeches by González —the “we call BS” speech (17<sup>th</sup> Feb, 2018) and the second (silent) speech from The March of Our Lives (24<sup>th</sup> March 2018) through the lens of life narrative scholarship. We are informed by theories of trauma, testimony and witness (Gilmore; Smith and Watson; Whitlock) and, youth life narrative (Cardell, Douglas and Maguire; Douglas and Poletti). We consider these speeches as examples of how the life narratives and testimony of young (minority) women become crucial at times of conflict. These women’s narratives are significant in showing the ways in which certain life narratives continue to be silenced and thus the speeches aim to insert missing life narratives into the public sphere. We also discuss how the #NeverAgain movement has relied on personal testimony to gain traction, to situate its politics, to suggest complicity, and to ask for responses that go beyond empathy.

But this argument presents a paradox: though recent evidence from life narrative practice and scholarship suggests the wide circulation and traction of young women’s testimony, as Gilmore reminds us in the subtitle of her book: “we doubt what women say about their lives”. Why does someone like González flourish in the public sphere where others do not? How might age, gender, race and celebrity intersect and impact upon the circuits of testimony? What is the cultural context into which youth testimony emerges at this cultural moment, and what can this tell us about how this kind of life narrative is circulating in the public sphere?

### **“We call BS” speech (17<sup>th</sup> Feb, 2018)**

As previously mentioned, González’s “We Call BS” speech was delivered at a gun control rally in February this year. Strategically filmed, the speech went viral as it was shared on various social media news platforms such as *Mashable*, *Slate*, *Bustle*, and *Mamamia*. Young, attractive, with an edgy sense of fashion, González’s style made her instantly recognisable.

González became a household name overnight and subsequently appeared on TV shows such as *Ellen* and *60 Minutes*; she appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine, featured in articles across mainstream media, and significantly, teen media such as *Teen Vogue*, for

whom she wrote the searing op-ed, “Dear Lawmakers, you are killing us”. The journalist Emily Witt describes the trajectory of González’s swift rise to fame:

Emma (‘We Call B.S.’) González...a senior, gave her first CNN interview on the night of the vigil. The invitation to speak at the rally had followed, and she wrote her speech the day she gave it. She had not anticipated how widely it would be shared...She had simply written down the thoughts she had been sharing with her friends. ‘This is how I’m dealing with my grief,’ she said. ‘The thing that caused me grief, the thing that had no right to cause me grief, the thing that had no right to happen in the first place, I have to do something actively to prevent it from happening to somebody else.’” (“How the Survivors” n.p.)

The traction gained by González’s speech can be explained and explored through theories of childhood and youth (including theories on girlhood), and theoretical work on testimony. As Emily Spiers notes, there is a significant tradition of young, feminist activism and radical feminist protest. Though Spiers’ is predominantly a discussion of Riot Grrrl, she points to the “international media coverage of the incarceration in 2012 of three members of Pussy Riot” and how this incident “instigated debate about radical feminist activism... and the possible resurgence of grassroots feminist activism” (2). She discusses the exponential rise in the 2000s of feminist-defined websites for teenagers and young women such as Gurl.com, *The FBomb*, *Rookie*, *Jezebel* and *Bitch Media* (16). So, within these contexts, the emergence of someone like González is perhaps not unexpected. As Douglas and Poletti argue, children are so often looked to in times of crises as a promise of a better future. And Gilmore contends that testimony comes in diverse forms through various discourses and across different media pathways, to reach national and international audiences (3). Young people like González often have the skills to testify across these different modes.

And of course, youth is a very broad category that is multiply inflected: Race and sexuality also impacted upon the traction gained by González’s testimony. González is of Cuban-American descent; her heritage has been used in critiques of her patriotism, a point we return to further in this paper. And in commentary around her, González is gendered in particular ways. Those who admired her referred to her as a “queer badass”, complimenting her striking look which includes a shaved head and bomber-jacket (Kaeia). González is widely commended for her openness about her bi-sexuality (Ogles; Sobel). But her sexuality has also been a target for critics. For instance, when Leslie Gibson, a Republican candidate

for the Maine State House, referred to González as a “skin-head lesbian” in a Twitter comment, the public denouncement (including from Republicans) was so significant that Gibson had to withdraw his candidacy (Stevens). Gibson’s comments, however, also resulted in increased public support for González; those from different sides of the political spectrum were appalled by the increasingly homophobic, racist and sexist vitriol being directed at González (Ganey; Pires).

As she begins her speech, González is flanked by two adults (not her parents, but perhaps teachers or rally organisers) A banner that reads “Save our children” is visible at the bottom of the frame and serves to contextualise and remind the viewer of the central purpose of this event and speech. González is diminutive, but strong in appearance with her (now trademark) shaved head and clear, powerful speech and body language.<sup>7</sup> Though she wipes away tears throughout her speech, and her voice wavers occasionally, González remains clear-of-purpose and offers simple, persuasive arguments based on evidence and experience. As Rebecca Mead reminds us, this was only days after the shooting, but “González offered a potent combination of composure and fury” (n.p.) She explains how difficult it is to testify: “All of these people should be at home grieving, but instead we are up here” (38 seconds).

This comment positions testimony as a responsibility: not something that she and her peers necessarily want to do, but are compelled to. As Gilmore reminds us, “Testimony emerges from diverse experiences of violence and multiform exposure to risk and in various forms we must struggle to read; its fate, like the fate of those compelled by circumstances to offer it, is both dynamic and insecure” (4). González helps us to see that testimony is a difficult, and often unpredictable process. Ana Douglass and Thomas A. Vogler remind us that as witnessing always occurs in “the crisis zone” where “human subjectivity is implicated in and essential to that which we seek to understand—both part of the problem and our means to finding and answer” (2). González offers knowledge and perspectives for others to respond to, and this response must go “beyond recognition”, to draw on Kelly Oliver’s influential

---

<sup>7</sup> Karina Hoshikawa explains,

But while fans might want to interpret Emma's haircut as a symbol of feminism and nonconformity, she has a much more practical reason for cutting her hair off. ‘People asked me, ‘Are you taking a feminist stand?’ the Stoneman Douglas High student and activist explained in a recent interview from the Sun Sentinel. ‘No, I wasn’t. It’s Florida. Hair is just an extra sweater I’m forced to wear.’(n.p.)

But Helen Carr reminds us that feminist bodies can offer potent counter-narratives at such moments that disrupt conventional modes of testimony and storying. Carr writes: “non-linear narratives emerge from the destabilizing of traditional hierarchies of power, are these fractured forms also working to fissure the narratives of patriarchy and normative heterosexuality?” (322)

theory on witnessing. Oliver argues that witnessing is often positioned as a struggle for recognition, but, Oliver argues, witnessing should be seen as “beyond recognition” as those who offer testimony are articulating much more than a desire for recognition. Oliver explains: “The victims of oppression... are not merely seeking visibility and recognition, but they are also seeking witnesses to horrors beyond recognition” (8). She continues: “If recognition is conceived as being conferred on others by the dominant group, then in merely repeats the dynamic of hierarchies, privilege and domination” (9). So, the witness and testimony of youth such as González is crucial in the push “beyond recognition” precisely because speakers like González disrupt traditional hierarches of domination when it comes to public, political oration.

González’s testimony has two major elements: 1. she explains what she has witnessed and assumes the role of spokesperson for her peers; and 2. the remainder is call-to-action—much of the latter part of the speech involves González apportioning responsibility and calling for gun reform. She argues (to loud applause from the audience), that in the absence of government action: “It’s time for victims to be the change that we need to see” (47). As she discusses the nation’s archaic gun laws, González offers an alternative, simple assessment of the inherent selfishness of gun laws. She offers a smart juxtaposition when she discusses educational methodologies and gun laws: where she and her classmates must construct “watertight” arguments in the essays they write, gun laws have their foundation in outdated laws that do not stand up to critique today.

In this argument, González uses her youthful, marginal perspective to her advantage: her point of view is not tainted by years of experience nor complicated by ambiguous or subjective interpretations of law. Her outlook is presented not as naïve but as fresh and uncomplicated, and she potently anchors her testimony to institutions that might protect her (schools and government agencies), though carefully points out that they have failed to do so thus far. Gilmore explores this complex interplay between women’s testimony and the critique of cultural institutions: “women’s testimonial accounts demonstrate both the symbolic potency of women’s bodies and speech in the public sphere and the relative lack of institutional security and control to which they can lay claim.” (1) For example, González continues to explain passionately that, “The students at this school have been having debates on gun laws for what feels like our whole lives” (2.23). The very experience they now must speak out about is something that they saw coming but could not do anything to prevent. González explores how this is a significant moment for youth testimony, and that this moment has been enhanced by students’ access to social media as a platform for the

circulation of testimony: “The people involved right now, those who were there, those posting, those tweeting, those doing interviews and talking to people are being listened to for what feels like the very first time on this topic” (2.34).

As Whitlock argues, “New technologies have altered the fabric of autobiographical expression” (4) and González’s media-savvy performance reveals a capacity to mobilise knowledge and make a case. Lithwick posits, “These teens have—by most objective measures—used social media to change the conversation around guns and gun control in America” (2018b). And Megan Garber summarises: “Generation Z, a cohort of Americans who came of age in the era of cable news and social media and an omnipresent internet—is extremely savvy about the workings of the American media” (n.p.). González continues:

the people who let him buy the guns in the first place, those at the gun shows, the people who encouraged him to buy accessories for his guns to make them fully automatic, the people who didn’t take them away from him when he expressed homicidal tendencies, and I am not talking about the FBI, I am talking about the people that he lived with, I’m talking about the people that saw him outside holding guns.

If the president wants to come up to me and tell me to my face that it was a terrible tragedy and it should never have happened and maintain telling us how nothing is going to be done about it, I am going to happily ask him how much he received from the National Rifle Association.” (7.17)

González talks about the shooter and this section of the testimony carefully attributes blame, “So many signs that the Florida shooter was mentally disturbed...It was no surprise to anyone who knew him to hear that he was the shooter” (5.44). She goes on to astutely explore (and indeed predict) the problems of victim blaming and while positioning the shooter as “mentally disturbed”, González proceeds to explore the larger structural issues, institutions and organizations that need to be held accountable for this tragedy:

the people who let him buy the guns in the first place, those at the gun shows, the people who encouraged him to buy accessories for his guns to make them fully automatic, the people who didn’t take them away from him when he expressed homicidal tendencies, and I am not talking about the FBI, I am talking about the

people that he lived with, I'm talking about the people that saw him outside holding guns.

If the president wants to come up to me and tell me to my face that it was a terrible tragedy and it should never have happened and maintain telling us how nothing is going to be done about it, I am going to happily ask him how much he received from the National Rifle Association. (7.17)

A chant of “shame on you”, addressing Donald Trump, can be heard from the crowd echoes behind the speech.

In her direct address to President Donald Trump and other politicians, González again reveals the power of testimony. Gilmore explains that “Testimony does not begin and end with a single speech act, nor is its lifespan limited to its duration within a particular forum of judgement. Rather, testimony moves—sometimes haltingly, sometimes urgently—in search of an adequate witness” (5). So, in mentioning Trump, González speaks rhetorically: not actually to him but to others who will be adequate witnesses. González boldly asserts that “We are going to be the kids you read about in textbooks, not because we are going to be another statistic about mass shootings in America but because, as Justice David said we are going to be the last mass shooting” (4.32). Because of “the students who are dead, the students who are still in the hospital, the students who are now suffering from PTSD, the students who had panic attacks during the vigil because of the helicopters who wouldn't leave us alone, hovering over the school 24 hours a day”, González appeals to cultural perceptions of children being the future and the symbolism associated with the innocent child to appeal to those who are listening to act practically on this issue. She asks if politicians care, then “Act like it” (9.10). González calls for responses beyond “thoughts and prayers”—beyond sympathy and even beyond empathy, and this echoes Gilmore's discussion of the potential emptiness of empathy. Gilmore “questions the adequacy of empathy as a response to testimony” and argues “for the importance of a literary witness capable of generating an ethical response that is not primarily grounded in identification or compassion. A literary witness asks readers to engage at a level that is not limited to identifying with pleasing or displeasing characters and their stories” (3). And this is precisely what González asks of respondents to her speech.

González continues: “Us kids” seem to be the only ones to notice that politicians are lying. She directly addresses prevalent cultural stereotypes around youth and social media and youth and politics in her challenging rally cry:

... saying all we are is self-involved and trend-obsessed and they hush us into submission when our message doesn't reach the ears of the nation we are prepared to call BS. Politicians who sit in their gilded house and senate seats funded by the NRA telling us nothing could have been done to prevent this. We call BS. They say that tougher gun laws do not reduce gun violence. We call BS. They say a good guy with a gun stops a bad guy with a gun. We call BS. They say guns are just tools like knives and are as dangerous as cars. We call BS. They say that no laws could have prevented the hundreds of senseless tragedies that have occurred. We call BS. That us kids don't know what we are talking about that we are too young to understand how the government works. We call BS" (11.40)

González starts raising her arm as she chants; the crowd starts chanting “we call BS”.

Appearing on the *Ellen* television show, González explained the origins of the rally-cry, “I knew I would get my job done properly at that rally if I got people chanting something. And I thought ‘We call B.S.’ has four syllables, that’s good, I’ll use that. I didn't want to say the actual curse words...this message doesn't need to be thought of in a negative way at all.”

(Feller) And we can see why—as there is so much negativity around young people and media use, González and her friends necessarily tread carefully.

### **“Six Minutes and Twenty-Seconds” The March of Our Lives (24<sup>th</sup> March 2018)**

On Sunday, March 24<sup>th</sup> González gave a second notable speech that received even more media coverage than the first. The speech was delivered at an event organised by survivors from the Marjory Stoneman Douglas school-shooting. “The March for Our Lives” day of protest against gun violence and call for policy reform was carried out across the U.S. and internationally with an estimated 800,000 people attending the lead march in Washington (Shabad, Bailey and McCausland).

When González gave her speech (as one among 20 speakers on the day) she was perhaps already the most recognisable public face for her cause. In the month previous, and so in the month since the shooting, González had appeared at various rally and media events, including speaking to an NRA meeting. During this period, González joined Twitter and acquired more than 1 million followers in less than ten days (Bowerman). Subsequently, a *March For Our Lives* website developed to broadcast news about the events, has become an ongoing resource, for example, advocating for youth to register to vote in the 2018 U.S.

midterm elections and disseminating information about other activist events within the U.S. and selling various fundraising merchandise.

Unlike at the “We Call BS” speech, in her March 24<sup>th</sup> speech in Washington González stands alone at the podium. Wearing a military-style bomber jacket, with prominent sewn-on patches including a Cuban flag – ostensibly, a nod to her ethnic heritage but a much-remarked on provocation for various conservative commentators<sup>8</sup> -- González speaks for only a few minutes, reciting the names of lost classmates and sharing her private memories: she remembers those who will “never again” be allowed the banal joy of complaining about “piano practice” or “joking around at camp” and when she has concluded this recitation, she falls silent. Over the course of the minutes that follow, González’s breathing audibly rises and falls. At 3 min 24, tears fall from behind her tightly clenched eyelids. A chant of “never again” ripples through the crowd at 4min 05sec, growing in intensity before fading away. After nearly four minutes of silence, González is approached by a fellow organiser who rests a hand on her shoulder and speaks briefly to her. She does not respond but less than a minute later, a timer audibly beeps and González resumes narration: “since the time that I came out here it has been 6 mins and 20 seconds. The shooter has ceased shooting and will soon abandon his rifle, blend in with the students as they escape and walk free for an hour before arrest. Fight for your lives before it’s someone else’s job.”

Speaking the names of the dead is a function of memorialisation and it is an act of testimony and recognition that has political and cultural power. Context is crucial. After Vietnam, a key act of recognition for the fallen soldiers was performed in the 1982 National Salute, a “round-the-clock vigil and reading of the names of the dead, in alphabetical order, at National Cathedral” (Hagopian 145). The reading took two days to complete and the significance was not without controversy: “A list of the names of the dead could be a roll of Honour; or it could be a litany of protest; or as the critics of the memorial feared, it could be a meaningless recitation, like reading a telephone directory” (Hagopian 146). Similarly, Billy Collins’s 9/11 memorial poem “The Names” begins as an alphabetical recitation of the victims but evolves into a meditation on the impossibility of proper recollection; an annual reading of the names of victims of the 9/11 attacks at Ground Zero in New York is now in its second decade.

---

<sup>8</sup> See, Jerry, Iannelli, “Idiots Are Attacking Emma González for Wearing the Cuban Flag at March for Our Lives” *Miami New Times* 26 March 2018. < <https://www.miaminewtimes.com/news/emma-gonzalez-wears-cuban-flag-patch-during-marchforourlives-speech-10208255>>

Emma González's speech at the March for Our Lives on Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> March invokes familiar traditions of ritual testimony and public memorialization but González brings new and significant elements into view in her use of this mode and that speaks to and foreground her youth subjectivity. In both literal and symbolic ways, she interjects into the "silence" that has so often rendered youth voices passive or overly subject to discipline in debates about their future and she does so in an aesthetic and generic mode that further signals and embodies a concurrent status as "youth" and "outsider" in exactly such contexts. So, for example, her speech uses the conventions of slam poetry in rhythm and tone and in the juxtaposition of names of the dead with the refrain "never again", a phrase that emphasises the trauma and tragedy of what she experienced and that has since become a famous hashtag (#neveragain) and an ongoing slogan in relation to March for Our Lives activism. Slam poetry is understood as a particularly performative mode of literary practice and as a subversive and resistant discursive mode that has often been associated with youth artistic practice and culture. Susan B.A Somers-Willett notes that most slam poetry is both written and delivered in first-person, designed to encourage "a live audience to perceive the performance as a confessional moment" and intimately wound into the "poet's performance" as an expression "of identity and identity politics" (52). As a personal testimony, González mobilizes the "confessional" and youth-culture associated mode of slam poetry to deploy embodied emotion and discursive, performative rhetoric. Her language is lyrical, rhythmic, and direct and she shows an understanding of both the genre of testimony and the fast-moving, short-attention span context of contemporary media.

Along with recitation and slam poetry, it is González's use of literal silence that is perhaps the most significant and startling element of her speech, and it is one that commentators have interpreted in various ways. That is, in some ways González's long silence during her speech might at first glance appear to have made for bad television (news reports of the speech have tended to circulate edited versions, in which the lengthy silence is cut or omitted) and this might seem to contradict some of the more overtly media-savvy and "viral" marketing strategies that the March for Our Lives movement has been notable for. Of course, silence is significant to both testimony and mourning and has been theorised as a response to trauma and an act of witnessing (Douglas 2017; Felman and Laub; Schaffer and Smith). When González deploys silence in her speech, she is producing a performative act of witness testimony – six minutes and twenty seconds of silence is the actual time it took to lose the Margery Stoneman Douglas victims to the shooter, time González had spent huddled in the school auditorium fearing also for her own life.

As a familiar memorial trope, as a routine, recognisable observation in relation to the mourned, silence also has a long history with activist frameworks and events and it is a well-theorised concept in relation to testimony itself, as a mode that both protests against “silencing” and pre-empts or symbolises that which *must be* spoken and the strictures and constraints against within which this speaking must take place (Zerubavel). In *Memorial*, Alice Oswald’s epic poetic “excavation” of Homer’s *Illiad* the narrator recites the names of the war dead, diverging very occasionally and briefly into anecdote or personal, human detail. It is an effect that Oswald herself describes as an “oral cemetery” (2). As a device, this recitation deploys a familiar memorial rite: vocalisation is also a political act and the implications of speaking and silence in the context of memory and history are framed and foregrounded. In González’s speech, there is recitation, and her use of silence is similarly affective and performative. During her speech, González remains on stage, allowing for a bodily display of affect (the much remarked on tears that roll down her face) that actively testifies to her experience of trauma and loss. Her silence is striking in this moment but, as the journalist Ann Hulbert notes, it is significant as more than just a moving expression of a moment of pain:

anyone used to worrying about coddled young people, their backbone eroded by oversolicitous elders and smartphone addiction, was in for a surprisingly mature show of spine at last weekend’s March for Our Lives... Emma González’s feat of silence at the podium, as the writer Nathan Heller tweeted, defied category: “the fact that it was conceived—and dared—by a high-schooler is breathtaking.”

Hulbert’s observation that González’s use of silence was a “feat” that is “breathtaking” draws attention to the rhetorical power of silence but it focuses on and throws into relief a particular context: the expectations surrounding these young people as testimonial subjects. Because “young people” are so often portrayed so negatively in the media, it is a surprise when they not only speak but reveal themselves as alert and attuned to the nuance that testimonial performance demands. This context is also visible during the speech itself, in the varying concerned responses that emerge in response to González’s choice. It is clear, for example, that for some of the crowd at the March 24 speech, González’s silence is interpreted as involuntary; has she been “silenced” by her recitation of trauma and loss? The crowd at various points in the silent vigil urge González on and it is not clear if the young activist who approaches González on stage during this time is in on the performance, but the beeping

timer that signals to the crowd and to González that the silence is over emphasizes without doubt that this *is* a deliberate, organized performance, a moment of staged interruption to proceedings that mimics the loss and fatal interruption to the victims young lives but that also is an affective call: just as the observation of silence is an iteration of “remembrance” within ceremonial mourning, González uses this moment of silence on stage to allow for a space into which she can process her grief and she shares this moment, powerfully and persuasively, with her audience.

González’s careful managing of her time on stage, her thoughtful and intimate speech, and her willingness to share an embodied testimony show that this is a deliberate and well-planned moment – the March for Our Lives activists in general are very well-organized, they have a website with information, back story, teaching resources – if you are giving a speech to 800, 000 people, a similar degree of planning and structure is sensible, it is “mature.” And yet, in some critical responses to González “6 minutes and 20 seconds” speech, the stage-management of her testimony has been interpreted as a failure, seen pejoratively as a “performance” of grief versus the “real thing” -- commenters repeatedly comment on her “drama school training” and accuse González of milking the moment, of seeking fame. Speaking to this, Lithwick contextualises the debate: “Since it’s very hard to hate child victims of school shootings the best available critique that could be mustered for Saturday’s March for Our Lives was the familiar refrain that “these children are puppets” (2018a). Lithwick traces some of the more extreme criticism in her discussion – “that the victims were paid crisis actors”; that student leaders had been “coached on what to say for their TV interviews” and that the rally’s had been organised not by the teenage students but, as stated by the NRA on their Facebook page, by “gun-hating billionaires and Hollywood elites manipulating and exploiting children as part of their plan to DESTROY the Second Amendment and strip us of our right to defend ourselves and our loved ones” (2018a). For Lithwick, however, the authenticity of the activists resides overwhelmingly in their visible embodiment:

If this had been tightly scripted, made-for-TV viewing it’s unlikely Samantha Fuentes, one of the Parkland survivors— overcome with emotion and nerves—would have stopped halfway through her poem, titled “Enough,” to throw up behind the podium. She then managed to finish the poem and stick the landing by grinning into her microphone that “I just threw up on international television, and it feels great!”

Were it all made for TV, the unannounced and uncomfortable 4 minutes and 25 seconds of silence led by Emma González as tears dripped down her face would have been cut after a half-minute.\* It took all those stretched-out moments of awkward silence for the crowd to even register what was happening. (2018a)

Lithwick's defence of the activists on behalf of their visible and "unscripted" affect reminds us that, as Gilmore observes, "testimonial networks are never neutral" (59). The March for Our Lives activists have gained attention because of their proximity to the tragedy that they are witnesses for but also, for their subjective identity and *visibility* as young people. To this end, their "youthfulness" is a crucial mark of difference, celebrated and instantiated, even when it is equally used to limit or curtail. González, for example, in an essay she wrote for *Harper's Bazaar*, observes that adults accuse children of being "too emotional". Lithwick's desire to read embodiment as the key signifier of authenticity, and in lieu of an assessment that would also allow for the recognition of González's careful use of literary and poetic tropes in her speech, reminds us that children and young people are often reduced to emotional figures and denied agency in relation.

The "child" is a contested category. In the context of testimony, the youth testifier is vulnerable in crucial ways; they are both pure and unintentional (and persuasive because of this) and they are, because of their childhood, seen as manipulable by invested others (they are seen as too easily persuaded, too easily controlled). So, Lithwick, as we have discussed, is responding to criticism of the Stoneman-Douglas activists in terms that amplify the vulnerability of the child in this context. But while the crowd was almost certainly behind in figuring out what was happening, González herself was not.

In most responses to González's speeches, the savvy of this young woman in relation to contemporary media, to personal self-presentation, and to the conventions and rhetoric of publics speaking is subordinated to the affective power of her embodied emotion. González's emotion on stage is raw. As a performance, her presentation is flawless. However, a problem of testimony, or a tension in relation to this kind of testimony and to how it circulates at this point on time is exactly in this fissure. At the same time as the subject must understand *how* to speak, they are potentially rendered silent by overlays of fantasy around what a victim is or can be: in the case the child, the subject is, as we discussed earlier, at risk of being perceived as too polished, equally, they are seen at risk of being too innocent, and so as vulnerable to external manipulation or coaxed discourse by interested others. Here González embodies and articulates the paradox of the child witness: children are ostensibly those whom *we* protect,

“fight for your lives before it’s someone else’s *job*” speaks to a systemic failure of care, and to the child as both powerful symbol and vulnerable object in relation to their presumed innocence. The child must be both autonomous and vulnerable and particularly in relation to testimony and this is a complicated call.

In the surrounding media commentary and responses to the “6 minutes and 20 seconds” speech, a tension between performativity and innocence, between González’s careful negotiation of affect and a suspicion of craftedness and emotional performativity points to fissures and limits in testimonial practice and particularly in relation to the child witness. The child is both desired and derided, they are vulnerable in a complex array of ways (vulnerable as innocent, vulnerable as dupe). Indeed, and paradoxically, the child can be a very powerful position from which to capture audience attention, a potential that both underwrites and destabilizes the successfulness of these narratives in popular culture. If the child is too articulate, as in the case of Gonzalez (or, for example, other even more overtly “child” figures, like Bana al-Abed), there is assumed to be an external intervention that “taints” the testimony; if the child narrator is unable to express itself, or is too *childish* then the testimony can be overlooked or ignored – it fails to circulate effectively.

“González’s testimony is so seductive and powerful precisely because she is a “child” or able to be seen as one and at a moment when adults have been understood to fail – to have not done their ‘job’. For example, a tweet exchange with Michelle Obama which recognises González’s achievement also abdicates leadership: “we’re behind you” (it also enables González to display her sense of humour and grasp of pop culture in her reply) (@emma4change). Other celebrity adults in the public eye who have made similar statements are relevant here. In the paratextual discourse that has come to underscore the youth testimony that González has become such a visible icon for, the paradoxes of the child witness as “innocent” saviour are amplified. Yet, at the same time, the child’s testimony is vulnerable precisely because of this. It is subjected to certain limits or tests, one of which is a compulsion for the child witness to be both innocent and powerful, both articulate in the verbalisation of atrocity, outrage, complicity, and “silent” as an object onto which a fantasy of purity can be projected. Indeed, González’s emotion, her tears, are the unarguably embodied emotions of the traumatised subject, yet her powerful speech-making, her clever and thoughtful rhetoric and mobilization of the performance space of her speech, of and an apparatus of organisation and resource-building that has also characterized the broader activity of the movement, are subordinated to a projected image of purity and emotionalism.

So, one of the more striking comparisons drawn to González (and there have been many) has been as a modern-day Joan of Arc. In her opinion piece for the *New York Times*, the journalist Rachel Mead discusses the visual iconography of the actress Renée Maria Falconetti, who starred in Carl Theodor Dreyer's classic silent film from 1928, "The Passion of Joan of Arc", and as comparison to González as she gave her "Six minutes and 20 seconds" speech. Of the film, Mead says: "Joan has authority not because she is wise but because she is innocent. She has the privileged knowledge of the inspired, not the earned knowledge of the experienced". There are scenes in the film, says Mead, "that could be intercut almost seamlessly with footage from Saturday's [March for our Lives] rally".

González herself has responded to the Joan of Arc comparisons, saying "it's pretty cool" but she has also noted that she and other young, female gun control activists are often told they're "too emotional" or "too aggressive" in response to their activism: "I feel like nowadays there's less stigma against younger women to the point where they don't burn them, but they yell at them a lot and they call them names" (González in Sharif). The problem of passively inhabiting a symbolic place versus actively claiming and creating one is visible here and so to are the process that Gilmore argues act on women's testimony in the culture at large; child's testimony too is shamed or co-opted in various ways – as too "emotional" too "disruptive" and not "adult" enough even when these are the very qualities that have claimed attention and authority for the testimony in the first place.

As Douglas and Poletti argue, while young writers are often perceived as performing risky acts in self-disclosure, particularly online, there is a rich tradition of young writers who have "deployed" modes of autobiography in strategic ways, in relation, for example, to identity and citizenship (7). However, such acts are not without risk, or criticism. González's speech is notable for its radical use of silence, a disruptive act in a heavily visual media environment even though "dead air" is unusual but the unease of her silence is clearly carefully planned. González "breaks" her silence not because the crowd encourages her to or because a fellow protestor/organiser speaks softly to her on the podium, but when a timer on the podium sounds – her silence is planned, deliberate, and part of a rhetorical armor. González is a gifted performer and she brings all her skills to the task of testifying. Despite this, much of media response to González has focused on determining to what degree her reactions and performance are "natural" -- the careful planning that González displays, her thoughtful grasp of timing, rhythm, and performance, sits uneasily alongside a media eager to position the "naturalness" of youth response, which is a claim to innocence and transparency as the ultimate authenticity.

## Conclusion

My name is Emma González”, begins González in an essay she wrote for *Harper’s Bazaar*: “I’m 18 years old, Cuban and bisexual. I’m so indecisive that I can’t pick a favorite color, and I’m allergic to 12 things. I draw, paint, crochet, sew, embroider—anything productive I can do with my hands while watching Netflix. But none of this matters anymore” (2018b). In her public appearances, González foregrounds her lived identity -- she is not a campaigner or a politician she is “indecisive”, she is queer, ethnic -- she crafts and watches Netflix: she is a student and a youth and her participation has been made necessary, created *for* her rather than by her. As a testifier, González is timely.

As we have argued, the context seems right for González to engage publically (she follows a long tradition of youth activists, and more particularly, girlhood activists across the globe whose stories of trauma, inequality or injustice and words of justice, or, increasingly, on climate crisis, have gained the attention of audiences. Though there have been more school shootings, few activists have gained as much visibility as González. Certain variables combined to give González’s public persona and testimony public traction and what this moment means for figures that take up González’s legacy remains to be seen. It seems clear that people continue to make optimistic investments in children as symbols for a better future: for instance, one where school shootings do not happen. Her testimony is also enabled by the fact that she and her school colleagues are recognised as the most authorised to speak: as the first-person witnesses at the coal-face and as subjects called to act through involuntary contact, through experience, versus those with a more overt political motivation or gain at stake. González is a skilled speaker who has benefitted from a strong educational background in drama and student activist projects. Her response is direct and uncomplicated in delivery; her agitations against authority are exciting and compelling. And there are variables we have not discussed as much in this paper: she comes from a supportive, middle-class family, community and school context—though she is also a member of minority groups, she is of Cuban background and identifies as bisexual.

Because of what we know about women’s and children’s life narrative and testimony, attempts to discredit González seemed inevitable, and in particular, González has been accused of seeking celebrity status. That González is compelled to speak by her own experience is clear, that her speaking is judged in relation to, for example “unscriptedness” or the embodied availability of pure, raw “emotion” versus her ability to perform and harness a first-person genre of speaking and testimony, shows that there remain strong codes around

the child/youth witness and the terms under which this testimony will be received and allowed to circulate. That González and her activists have a savvy grasp of media environments, and that their cause is supported through, for example, a very sophisticated website which includes extensive resources for sharing in schools is of less interest and indeed, might even undo some of the spectacular appeal of the activists' public presence, and which has been the media and other commentator focus. The dominant critiques of González and her fellow activists have been in relation to the degrees to which these students are manipulating public attention, whether through their own or other's vested interests. But these attempts seem ultimately to have gained very little purchase in mainstream media and González has continued to represent new ways of witnessing and testifying to large groups. Invoking familiar traditions of testimony and public memorialisation, González also brings new elements to this mode. She draws upon conventions of slam poetry in the rhythm and tone of her speech and in her juxtaposition of names with "never" that emphasises the tragedy and trauma of what she experienced but she also quite literally "breaks" and contests the *silencing* that young, marginal voices are more often subject to.

The youthful witness is a subject that has become, paradoxically, both culturally expected and made impossible. In speaking, the subject risks criticism of knowingness and manipulation, of being *too* able to speak, and in staying silent, young testifiers absorb the projected fantasy of the child as an object reliant on innocence and purity to be persuasive and affective. Thus, the emergence of the child and youth witness marks a moment where certain ideals of cultural legitimacy around children and why and how we think they might speak becomes visible.

## Works Cited

- @Emma4Change (2018), "I agree with you on all things". *Twitter* account of Emma González, 22 February 2018, 3.37pm, [https://twitter.com/Emma4Change/status/966539820674834433?ref\\_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E966539820674834433&ref\\_url=https%3A%2F%2Fhellogiggles.com%2Fnews%2Femma-gonzalez-tweeted-leslie-knope-gif-michelle-obama%2F](https://twitter.com/Emma4Change/status/966539820674834433?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E966539820674834433&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fhellogiggles.com%2Fnews%2Femma-gonzalez-tweeted-leslie-knope-gif-michelle-obama%2F), (accessed 30 October 2018).
- Bowerman, Mark (2018), 'Parkland student Emma González has more followers than NRA days after joining Twitter', *USA Today*, 26 February 2018, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2018/02/26/parkland-student-emma-gonzalez-has-more-followers-than-nra-days/372757002/>, (accessed 30 October 2018)
- Cardell, Kylie, Kate Douglas and Emma Maguire (2018), "'Stories": Social Media and Ephemeral Narratives as Memoir' in Bunty Avieson, Fiona Giles and Sue Joseph (eds), *Mediating Memory: Tracing the Limits of Memoir*, New York: Routledge, pp.157-172.
- Carr, Helen (2011), 'Disrupting the Narrative: an Introduction', *Women: a Cultural Review*, 22: 4, pp. 321-327.
- Douglas, Kate and Anna Poletti (2016), *Life Narratives and Youth Culture: Representation, Agency and Participation*, London: Palgrave.
- Douglas, Kate (2018), '@AlabedBana: Twitter, the Child, and the War Diary' *Textual Practice*, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/0950236X.2018.1533493> (accessed 30 October 2018).
- Douglas, Kate (2017), 'Youth, Trauma and Memorialisation: The Selfie as Witnessing', *Memory Studies*, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1750698017714838> (accessed 30 October 2018).
- Douglass, Ana and Thomas A. Vogler (2003), *Witness and Memory: The Discourse of Trauma*, New York: Routledge.
- NBC News 'Emma González Leads Emotional Moment Of Silence During Rally' (2018), 24 March 2018, *YouTube*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=4lIJChK2Do> (accessed 23 August 2018).
- Felman, Shoshana and Dori Laub (1992), *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, Routledge.

- Feller, Madison (2018), 'Emma González Shares the Story Behind Her Moving "We Call B.S." Gun Reform Speech', *Elle*, 23 February 2018, <https://www.elle.com/culture/career-politics/a18671363/parkland-students-shooting-ellen-degeneres-emma-gonzalez/> (accessed 30 October 2018).
- Ganey, Jamey S. (2018) 'Right Racist Hate from the Far Right Terrorizes the Wrong Gonzalez', *DiversityInc.com*, 11 May 2018 (accessed 10 July 2019).
- Garber, Megan (2019), 'The Powerful Silence of the March for Our Lives', *The Atlantic* 24 March 2018, [https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2018/03/the-powerful-silence-of-the-march-for-our-lives/556469/?utm\\_source=atlib](https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2018/03/the-powerful-silence-of-the-march-for-our-lives/556469/?utm_source=atlib) (accessed 27 April 2018)
- Gilmore, Leigh (2017), *Tainted Witness: Why we Doubt What Women Say about Their Lives*, New York: Columbia University Press.
- González, Emma (2018), 'Dear Lawmakers, You are Killing us: Emma González on Why This Generation Needs Gun Control', *Teen Vogue*, 23 March 2018, <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/emma-gonzalez-parkland-gun-control-cover>, (accessed 27 April 2018).
- González, Emma (2018b). "'Adults are Behaving Like Children'": Parkland Student Emma González Opens Up About Her Fight for Gun Control' *Harper's Bazaar*, 27 February 2018, <https://www.harpersbazaar.com/culture/politics/a18715714/protesting-nra-gun-control-true-story/> (accessed 30 October 2018).
- Hagopian, Patrick (2009), *The Vietnam War in American Memory: Veterans, Memorials, and the Politics of Healing*. Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press.
- Hoshikawa, Karina (2018), 'Parkland Teen Emma González Shares The Reason Behind Her Buzz Cut', *Teen Vogue*, 22 Feb 2018, <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/emma-gonzalez-parkland-buzz-cut>, (accessed 9 May 2018).
- Hulbert, Ann (2018), 'Today's Rebel's Are Model Children', *The Atlantic*, 28 March 2018, [https://www.theatlantic.com/family/archive/2018/03/todays-rebels-are-model-children/556682/?utm\\_source=atlib](https://www.theatlantic.com/family/archive/2018/03/todays-rebels-are-model-children/556682/?utm_source=atlib), (accessed 27 April 2018).
- Iannelli, Jerry (2018), 'Idiots Are Attacking Emma González for Wearing the Cuban Flag at March for Our Lives', *Miami New Times*, 26 March 2018, <https://www.miaminewtimes.com/news/emma-gonzalez-wears-cuban-flag-patch-during-marchforourlives-speech-10208255>, (accessed 30 October 2018).
- Laneia (2018) 'Also.Also.Also: Watch Bisexual Badass Emma González Confront Vile NRA Spokeswoman, Good Morning.' *Autostraddle*, 22 Feb 2018,

- <https://www.autostraddle.com/also-also-also-watch-queer-badass-emma-gonzalez-confront-vile-nra-spokeswoman-good-morning-411827/>, (accessed 10 July 2019).
- Lithwick, Dahlia (2018a), 'The March for Our Lives Could Not Possibly Have Been Scripted', *Slate.com*, 24 March 2018, <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2018/03/the-march-for-our-lives-could-not-possibly-have-been-scripted.html> (accessed 9 May 2018).
- Lithwick, Dahlia (2018b), 'They Were Trained for this Moment' *Slate.com* 28 February 2018, <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2018/02/the-student-activists-of-marjory-stoneman-douglas-high-demonstrate-the-power-of-a-full-education.html>, (accessed 27 April 2018).
- Mead, Rebecca (2018), 'Joan of Arc and the Passion of Emma González', *The New Yorker*. 26 March 2018, [https://www.newyorker.com/culture/cultural-comment/the-passion-of-emma-gonzalez?mbid=social\\_facebook](https://www.newyorker.com/culture/cultural-comment/the-passion-of-emma-gonzalez?mbid=social_facebook) (accessed 27 April 2018).
- Ogles, Brett. "Leading a Revolution: Emma González." *The Advocate*, 22 May 2018, <https://www.advocate.com/people/2018/5/22/leading-revolution-emma-gonzalez>, (accessed 10 July 2019).
- Oliver, Kelly (2001), *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Oswald, Alice (2011), *Memorial: An Excavation of the Iliad*. London: Faber.
- Paquette, Danielle (2018), 'People think she's a Parkland "crisis actor." It's terrifying', *The Washington Post*, 7 May 2018, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/people-think-shes-a-parkland-crisis-actor-its-terrifying/2018/05/03/28d85f4e-47e8-11e8-827e-190efaf1f1ee\\_story.html?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.f4c9919957d8](https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/people-think-shes-a-parkland-crisis-actor-its-terrifying/2018/05/03/28d85f4e-47e8-11e8-827e-190efaf1f1ee_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.f4c9919957d8), (accessed 30 October 2018).
- Pires, Candice, (2018) "'Young people are angry': the teenage activists shaping our future." *The Guardian*, 13 May 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/may/13/young-people-are-angry-meet-the-teenage-activists-shaping-our-future>, (accessed 10 July 2019).
- Schaffer, Kay and Sidonie Smith (2004), *Human Rights and Narrated Lives: The Ethics of Recognition*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Shabad, Rebecca, Chelsea Bailey, and Phil McCausland (2018), 'At March for Our Lives, survivors lead hundreds of thousands in call for change', *NBC News*, 25 March 2018, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/march-our-lives-draws-hundreds-thousands-washington-around-nation-n859716> (accessed 9 May 2018).

- Sharif, Najma (2018), 'Emma González responded to Joan of Arc comparison', *Teen Vogue*, 16 April 2018, <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/emma-González-joan-of-arc-comparisons>, (accessed 9 May 2018).
- Smith, Sidonie and Julia Watson (2010). *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narrative*, Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press.
- Sobel, Ariel (2018), '12 Bisexual Women Who Aren't Just Experimenting', *The Advocate*, 30 September, <https://www.advocate.com/bisexuality/2018/9/30/12-bisexual-women-who-arent-just-experimenting#media-gallery-media-1>, (accessed 10 July 2019).
- Somers-Willet, Susan B. A. (2005), 'Slam Poetry and the Cultural Politics of Performing Identity', *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association* 38.1: pp. 51-73.
- Spiers, Emily (2015), "'Killing Ourselves is Not Subversive": Riot Grrrl from Zine to Screen and the Commodification of Female Transgression', *Women: a Cultural Review*, 26.1-2: pp. 1-21.
- Stevens, Hugh (2006), 'Dissident Voices', *Women: a Cultural Review*, 17.2: pp. 255-257.
- Stevens, Matt (2018), "'Skinhead Lesbian" Tweet About Parkland Student Ends Maine Republican's Candidacy', *The New York Times*, 18 March 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/18/us/politics/maine-republican-leslie-gibson.html> (accessed 10 July 2019).
- Witt, Emily (2018), 'How the Survivors of Parkland Began the Never Again Movement', *The New Yorker*, 19 February 2018, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/how-the-survivors-of-parkland-began-the-never-again-movement>, (accessed 27 April 2018).
- Whitlock, Gillian (2007), *Soft Weapons: Autobiography in Transit*, Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Zerubavel, Eviatar (2006), *The Elephant in the Room: Silence and Denial in Everyday Life*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- .