

Unlocking Intergenerational Abortion Stories in Gardiennes By Fanny Cabon

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Abstract : This paper examines how Fanny Cabon's solo performance, *Gardiennes* (2018) strategically crafts empathetic witnessing through the artist's vocal and physical embodiment of her female ancestors' testimonies, dramatizing the cyclical inheritance of reproductive trauma across generations. Drawing on affect theory and the concept of ethical co-presence, we argue that Cabon's raw voicing of illegal abortions, miscarriages, and abuse through her shape-shifting presence generates an intimate energy loop with the audience. This affective resonance catalyzes recognition of historical injustices, consecrating each singular experience while building collective solidarity. Central to Cabon's political efficacy is her transparent self-revelation through intimate impersonation, which fosters identification with diverse characters as interconnected subjects rather than objectified others. Her solo form transforms the isolation often associated with women's marginalization into radical inclusion, repositioning them from victims to empowered survivors. Comparative analysis with other contemporary works addressing abortion rights illuminates how *Gardiennes* subverts the traditional medical and clerical gazes that have long governed women's bodies. Ultimately, we contend *Gardiennes* models the potential of solo performance to harness empathy as a subversive political force. Cabon's theatrical alchemy circulates the effects of injustice through the ethical co-presence of performer and spectator, forging intersubjective connections that reframe marginalized groups traditionally objectified within dominant structures of patriarchal power. In dramatizing how the act of witnessing another's trauma can generate solidarity and galvanize resistance, Cabon's work demonstrates the role of embodied performance in catalyzing social change through the recuperation of women's voices and lived experiences. This paper thus aims to contribute to the emerging field of feminist solo performance criticism by illuminating how Cabon's innovative dramaturgy bridges the personal and the political. Her strategic mobilization of intimacy, identification, and co-presence offers a model for how the affective dynamics of autobiographical performance can be harnessed to confront gendered oppression and imagine more equitable futures. *Gardiennes* invites us to consider how the circulation of empathy through ethical spectatorship can foster the collective alliances necessary for advancing the unfinished project of women's liberation.

Keywords : gender and sexuality studies, solo performance, trauma studies, affect theory

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