

ALIENATION AND VIOLENCE IN BEATRIZ CABUR'S PLAYS

ALIENACION Y VIOLENCIA EN LAS OBRAS DE BEATRIZ CABUR

María Herrera Cárdenas

Universidad de Jaén, España

mhc00013@red.ujaen.es

<http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8591-2559>

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Abstract

In the last decades of the 21st century, the growing interest in legitimising contemporary Spanish female playwrights is evident in the context of contemporary feminist theories. This research explores Beatriz Cabur's plays, published and performed nationally and internationally, insofar as they respond to some of the current feminist demands regarding trauma. This study delves into the need for appropriate critical and analytical models for the study of theatrical experimentalism, which, in addition to its academic value, addresses current feminist demands. The development of this study is supported by clear thematic links that are established, from which it is possible to delve into the implicit and explicit feminisms of contemporary Spanish theatre, as well as the shaping, development, and legitimisation of contemporary feminine identities.

Keywords: Femicides, trivialisation of pain, gender violence, feminism, trauma, Beatriz Cabur

Resumen

En las últimas décadas del siglo XXI, el creciente interés por legitimar a las dramaturgas españolas contemporáneas es evidente en el contexto de las teorías feministas contemporáneas. Esta investigación explora las obras de

Beatriz Cabur, publicadas y representadas a nivel nacional e internacional, en la medida en que responden a algunas de las exigencias feministas actuales en materia de trauma. Este estudio profundiza en la necesidad de contar con modelos críticos y analíticos adecuados para el estudio del experimentalismo teatral que, además de su valor académico, respondan a las demandas feministas actuales. El desarrollo de este estudio se apoya en claros vínculos temáticos que se establecen, a partir de los cuales es posible profundizar en los feminismos implícitos y explícitos del teatro español contemporáneo, así como en la conformación, desarrollo y legitimación de las identidades femeninas contemporáneas.

Palabras clave: Femicidios, trivialización del dolor, violencia de género, feminismo, trauma, Beatriz Cabur

1. Introduction

In the last decades of the twenty-first century, the growing interest in legitimising contemporary Spanish female playwrights is evident in the context of contemporary feminist theories. I will explore Beatriz Cabur's theatrical practice through an analysis of her plays *The Mind-Boggling Shrinking Woman* (2017), *Goodbye, Mother* (2020) and *Childbirth-19* (2021). Starting from a feminist perspective, I will analyse Beatriz Cabur's plays, performed in Spain and the United Kingdom, insofar as they respond to many of today's feminist demands. Through numerous practical examples that address the experimental dimension of contemporary theatre, Cabur's dramaturgy defines the characteristics that a play must fulfil in order to be classified within the genre of current experimental theatre. Cabur conducts research in a very specific discipline, particularly for women. She incorporates new technologies, such as telepresence, into her dramatic writing and performances. I will also address the need for appropriate critical and analytical models for the study of theatrical experimentalism that, in addition to their academic value, will surely contribute to the development of theatre that is capable of responding to contemporary feminist demands.

The discussion of these plays covers reproductive rights, mental health and the paternal-filial relationship. Also alluding to women's reproductive rights, *The Mind-Boggling Shrinking Women* (2017) addresses obstetric violence and the postpartum depression that women suffer because of it. Set in the year of the pandemic, *Goodbye, Mother* (2020) discusses domestic violence and the support system that sustains it. Finally, *Childbirth-19* (2021) addresses the systemic racism, demystification of motherhood, oppression and obstetric

violence that women still suffer today. Women's reproductive rights and the demystification of motherhood are central themes in *The Mind-Boggling Shrinking Women* and *Childbirth-19*. The theme of patriarchal submission appears in every play through different types of violence that women suffer. In this way, misogynistic relations of power within the patriarchy and the welfare system that support these types of violence become evident.

To illustrate the difficulties faced by women in a globalised world, I have traced feminist experimental elements in Cabur's plays. The use of dramaturgical innovations in the digital age breaks with tradition in order to obtain new solutions and possibilities for the problems that women continue to suffer in a patriarchal society. Cabur is committed to the immediate context and artistic research in her work with artistic theatre. This analysis establishes clear thematic links from which it is possible to delve into the implicit and explicit feminisms of contemporary Spanish theatre, as well as the shaping, development, and legitimisation of contemporary women's identities.

There is a growing interest in the legitimisation of contemporary Spanish female playwrights, which can be understood within the context of contemporary feminist theories and the feminist movement. This interest demonstrates an awareness of the underrepresentation and exclusion of female voices in theatre. In addition, there is a desire within the industry to challenge patriarchal models. By highlighting the significance of this trend, this investigation demonstrates the importance of creating space for women's voices and experiences in the contemporary theatrical context.

Exploring Cabur's plays enables us to analyse the way her production engages with current feminist demands. The selected plays provide a forum for analysing reproductive rights, mental health, the paternal-filial relationship as well as other important issues affecting women these days. By exploring Cabur's work in Spain and the UK, the analysis emphasises the cross-cultural and transnational elements of her theatrical practice, helping to understand contemporary feminist theatre worldwide.

The incorporation of new materialist perspectives into the analysis of Cabur's plays adds profundity. By examining their material aspects, such as the incorporation of new technologies and the experimental dimension, this analysis shows how these elements interact with feminist and socio-political concerns. This approach enables a comprehension of how the materiality of theatre influences the representation and depiction of feminist issues, as well as how these innovative elements can contribute to the development of theatre that meets contemporary feminist demands.

In the selected plays, queer death functions as an instrument for intervention and resistance. By analysing the depiction of death, particularly in relation to queer characters or experiences, this study exposes how Cabur's plays disrupt heteronormative narratives to challenge traditional power structures. In the end, queer mortality serves as a means to combat social oppression and advocate for social change. The incorporation of queer death as a component of resistance broadens the scope of the analysis, highlighting the intersectionality of feminist and LGBT+ issues in the plays.

The extent to which mortality can be used as a tool for resistance varies among the examined plays. By depicting violence against women and examining oppressive power dynamics, the plays aim to challenge societal norms and inspire calls for social justice and change. Whether symbolic or literal, mortality serves as a catalyst for resistance by highlighting the systemic violence and power disparity that women endure. In this way, Cabur's practice demonstrates the consequences of patriarchal submission and provides an opportunity to contemplate alternative future realities.

As a method for analysing the plays, close reading is utilised. This perspective necessitates meticulous exploration of the texts in order to reveal concealed layers of significance, identify thematic patterns, and analyse Cabur's language and imagery. By interacting closely with the plays, the study gains a thorough comprehension of her aesthetic choices, narrative structures, and feminist goals. Incorporating a personal interview with Beatriz Cabur as part of the research methodology yields insightful information about her artistic practise, aims, and connection to feminist themes. The interview provides a comprehensive overview of Cabur's methodology, influences, and the context in which she created her plays. By incorporating the author's first-hand experience, the analysis is improved by establishing a distinct connection to the creative process and enhancing the interpretation of the plays.

2. Beatriz Cabur, a playwright beyond geographical and generational boundaries

Beatriz Cabur leads numerous initiatives to promote the legitimisation of women in playwriting and she is the creator of several texts that focus on gender equality claims. Founder of the *Liga de las Mujeres Profesionales del Teatro* (The Spanish division of The League of Professional Theatre Women) with other playwrights such as Yolanda Dorado and Inge Martín and theatre editor Conchita Piña. Cabur also chairs the project *365 Women a Year in*

Europe, which promotes the production of dramatic texts to reclaim and legitimise women from history:

En cada edición hay dramaturgas del mundo escribiendo 365 obras sobre mujeres reales de la historia. Con esto se consiguen tres cosas: darles oportunidades a las dramaturgas dentro de un proyecto que tiene repercusión internacional, volver a escribir a las mujeres de la historia o escribirlas por primera vez y, en tercer lugar, darles a las actrices papeles interesantes, protagonistas que no sean la madre de, la novia de... (Reig González, *Empiezas a trabajar*).

Common feminist values unite the women working on Cabur's projects as they aim to liberate women from the oppression and hardships they face along their journeys as artists. One example of an obstacle that women creators face in this struggle is the fact that they are few of them. Not only are they in the minority, but they perceive themselves as such. This aspect of solitude is evident in Cabur's characters, as she explains at a conference for professors:

15 años de escritura profesional me llevaron a darme cuenta de que [las mujeres] no están [solas]. Que no somos. Es parte de la lucha darnos cuenta de que no lo estamos, que tenemos un enemigo común y somos aliadas. Es parte de la lucha darse cuenta de que si otra gana, yo también estoy ganando y que despejar el camino, cueste lo que cueste, vale la pena porque deja el camino un poco más despejado para la siguiente. Y para nuestros adolescentes, creo que nuestro trabajo es enseñarles su poder y su responsabilidad. Descubrirlos será tu fuerte. No podemos descartar el efecto que tuvo en mi trabajo el paso por la universidad sin reflexionar sobre ello. Tomemos nota. Repasemos los contenidos que enseñamos en el aula. El efecto de este contenido en los estudiantes es inmediato. Es nuestro poder y nuestra responsabilidad abrir puertas, no cerrar posibilidades. (Cabur, *La responsabilidad*).

Beatriz Cabur confesses that when she finished her studies at the university after four years, she wrote eight plays, all of whose characters were men. The author explains that she could not consciously decide to choose male characters instead of female ones since creating male characters as protagonists was a systematic choice, which provides evidence for the

androcentric vision under which women had been taught in the university education system. Her lack of choice at the time prompted her to realise that the time is now to address internalised misogyny: “la misoginia interiorizada es la interiorización involuntaria de los mensajes sexistas presentes en nuestra sociedad y cultura” (Cabur, *La responsabilidad*). After having analysed the most canonical playwrights in the history of theatre, all of whom were men, Cabur wrote eight plays about and for men. She adds that it took her six years to be able to write her first female protagonist: Erika Adler.

In 2013 Cabur first gained public recognition for her work. She performed her production three times in New York, where she was nominated for membership in *The League of Professional Theatre Women*. Reading an article quoting actress and founder of the *Institute for Gender Equality* in Hollywood, Geena Davis, was a pivotal moment in Cabur’s career. What surprised Cabur most in this article was a statistic showing that “en las escenas en las que aparecen masas o grupos de personas en las películas, solo el 17% de estos grupos están compuestos por mujeres, en lugar del 50,52% que sería representativo de la realidad” (Cabur, *La responsabilidad*). After reading this article, Geena inspired Cabur to reconsider her power and responsibility as an artistic creator. According to Cabur, “si lo escribo, sucede. ¿Cómo no voy a escribirlo?” (Cabur, *La responsabilidad*). After this eye-opening moment, she founded the *365 Women a Year Project* and thus turned the direction of her artistic mission towards the representation and visibility of women.

Beatriz Cabur’s theatre is particularly disruptive due to several specific characteristics of her production. Firstly, the Agency’s theatre places women and the issues that affect them at the centre. Cabur also experiments with language by including an element of bilingualism in her plays. She is also passionate about social justice, particularly in relation to violence against women, such as obstetric violence and femicides. Furthermore, Cabur’s experimentalism transcends traditional theatrical genres as she uses the innovative stage genre of digital theatre to give a voice to the victims and those affected by this type of violence. Finally, there is a continued recovery of female voices, in which the normalisation of the feminine is vindicated through the inclusion of female characters consistently placing women at the centre of her works.

3. Gender-based violence

The current feminist concern about gender violence represents a theme that Spanish female playwrights explore with an explicit intention to appeal to

and raise social awareness. In the plays analysed, situations of gender violence are depicted, which are dealt with by exposing the violent actions suffered by women. This violence is analysed together with its causes, which show the prevailing presence of sexism in a patriarchal society in which women suffer violence for the mere fact of being.

Contemporary dramaturgy presents crude representations of violence, as well as the exploration of its origins, including the sexism that reigns in our society, which is developed in subtler dangers such as street harassment. Considering “dramaturgical innovations of the digital age connected to relevant histories of theatre-making, issues of politicisation of form and content, and the technologies and (trans-)cultural contingencies of artistic expression” (Radosavljevic, 160), their use disrupts traditional theatre, opening possibilities to work on the eradication of gender violence. Along with the recognition of violence against women, Beatriz Cabur places emphasis on the analysis of its causes, as well as the claim against institutions unequipped to help suffering victims. As I show in the selected works of Cabur, there is a lack of empathy on behalf of the governing bodies responsible for the care of women's lives. In patriarchal discourse, a culture of violence is established, thus blaming the victims, which promotes the trivialisation and perpetuation of male violence. As Hans-Thies Lehmann argues, “in the emergence of a new paradigm, the ‘future’ structures and stylistic traits almost unavoidably appear mixed in with the conventional” (Lehmann, 24). In the same vein, Duka Radosavljevic asserts the emergence of a theatrical shift: “I hope that it is now safe to assume that claims of paradigm shifts in the field of theatre and performance are no longer to be perceived in such categorical terms, but more so in relation to how dramaturgical strategies might be changing in step with technological advancements” (Radosavljevic, 166).

Both authors concur that the incorporation of innovative theatrical elements into traditional theatre establishes a connection between tradition and modernity. Together, they coexist and evolve, rather than representing separate entities. Regarding the influence of mediatization on text-based dramaturgy, Seda Ilter (2021) has proven that technological developments provide a ground for the possibility of paradigmatic considerations of dramatic theatre itself. Lastly, it is the responsibility of humanities research to search for “troubl[ing] the paradigm” (Sterne, 220). David Roesner offers a counter proposal regarding the concept of a paradigm within his notion of the “dispositif” which allows for the possibility of a multiplicity of overlapping, coexisting, and interacting perspectives” (Roesner, 11). This is an adequate

suggestion for theatre and performance, which is always within a connection between multiple research fields of study and varieties of artistic expression: “whether or not the work under consideration forms a paradigm is of a lesser significance than its ability to be effectively subjected to relevant analysis as a ‘field’ or even a ‘scene’. Nonetheless, multiplicity is important regarding ‘oral dramaturgies and the theatre of speech and sound’” (Radosavljevic, 166).

As a consequence of the system’s inability to put an end to this type of violence, the victims are forced to resort to alternative strategies for survival. Cabur creates metafictional characters who address their message to the audience by breaking the fourth wall, thus crossing the fictional boundaries to make way for the audience’s involvement and turning them into active and collaborative subjects. I will then proceed to explore the trivialisation of women’s pain and feminicides in Beatriz Cabur’s plays. Cabur addresses a multitude of problems suffered by women today in order to contribute to the visibility, identification and eradication of gender violence.

3.1. The trivialisation of female pain

In her play *Childbirth-19*, Beatriz Cabur expresses her intention to question the complacent attitude towards women’s pain and the paradox represented by the attribution of weakness and vulnerability to the female sex when the fact that women must hide their pain is recognised and accepted: “disbelieving and delegitimizing female pain is a form of oppression. Caroline Reilly” (Reilly, *It’s All in Your Head*). In this sense, Dwig Conquergood establishes a connection between self-disclosure and vulnerability as fundamental requirements of “the praxis of speaking and listening – conversation”, which are opposed to the concept of “‘closure’ characteristic of the ‘gaze’”. Consequently, Conquergood affirms that “both self-disclosure and vulnerability are at work simultaneously in the intersubjective theatre of speech and sound predicated on the simultaneous existence and removal of the fourth wall” (Conquergood, 87). Conquergood examines the relationship between self-disclosure, vulnerability, and the term of closure with respect to discourse and the intersubjective theatre of speech and sound. Self-disclosure and vulnerability are fundamental aspects of the practise of speaking and listening, which he refers to as “the praxis of conversation”. While self-disclosure refers to the act of revealing one’s personal information to others, vulnerability refers to the willingness to expose oneself emotionally, Conquergood opposes these notions with the concept of “closure,” which is linked to the “gaze” and refers to a precise

perspective or context that restricts the comprehension and engagement of others. It demonstrates a rigid viewpoint based on a lack of receptivity. Self-disclosure and vulnerability, according to Conquergood, contrast with closure and gaze because they create an environment of openness in discourse, allowing for genuine engagement and connection between people. Similarly, by eradicating the fourth wall, Cabur eliminates the barriers and limitations between the speaker and the audience. The significance of self-disclosure, vulnerability, and the refusal of closure in generating meaningful conversations and nurturing genuine connections between people are central to *Childbirth-19*.

The protagonist is so disconnected from her pain and bodily sensations during pregnancy that she questions whether she is really about to give birth and should go to the hospital: "We can go again. Isn't this it? She had tried to go twice before and faced the consequent rejection of the medical staff as it was not the right time, so that in the moment she goes into labour she cannot trust her own judgement: "what is the labour? Just the pushing moment or what? [...] What's labour?" (Cabur, np). In fact, in *The Mind-Boggling Shrinking Woman* there is a moment in which reference is made to a group therapy with other mothers, when the woman expresses how she feels, the therapist trivialises her pain by explaining that it will pass, that it might change, an idea that makes her even more sceptical about her possible improvement: "you are in a therapy session with other moms. The therapist says: "This will pass, this can change" and you reply "sure, this can change to worse". The other moms laugh and you apologize feeling absolutely right. That's something you do a lot lately, apologizing. Weirdly" (Cabur, np). When she again expresses herself about the lack of hope she feels about getting better in her own life, the other mothers laugh, thus belittling the painful emotions she is feeling, which again provides evidence for how women's pain is often trivialised due to the internationalisation of misogyny, infantilising women and thus invalidating them. Her invalidation is evidenced when the woman apologises for expressing her pain, knowing that it is unusual for someone to have to apologise for not feeling well, for being ill, in short, for not playing the role of the perfect woman.

Confronting the trivialisation of women's pain, Cabur calls for its legitimisation:

Female pain exists in a crossroad of stigma, disbelief, and misogyny.
The same world that tells us to be female is to be weak and fragile

expects us to understand that to be female is also to grind our teeth through pain. We are expected to buck up and shut up about our discomfort so we don't embarrass the same people who have the audacity to tell us our bodies are embarrassing. Female pain must be regarded as legitimate. It is more than important that we talk about our health free from stigma or embarrassment. It is necessary. Because disbelieving and delegitimizing female pain is a form of oppression. (Reilly, *It's All in Your Head*)

Caroline Reilly's words remind the audience of the urgent need to recognise the silenced pain of women, since ignoring it and making it invisible represents a form of oppression, i.e., the delegitimation of women's pain is a type of violence and thus contributes to the perpetuation of gender-based violence. The meaning of the entire work stems from this idea, since what Cabur does is precisely to make the reality of gender-based violence highly visible, emphasising the fact that if we ignore gender-based violence, it leads to the greatest catastrophe, the tip of the iceberg of violence, that is, the murders of women or feminicides.

This incident shows that this woman and the pain she says she feels are not taken seriously. Not only is her pain not recognised, but the mother is infantilised with laughter that is not an appropriate response to the symptoms of postpartum anxiety that she decides to express in the group. In this way, solutions are not sought for her pain, but rather it is understood that she is the one who must endure and continue to suffer the pain, in silence and asking for forgiveness for making her uncomfortable by showing the image of a woman who, far from perfect, shows her vulnerabilities in order to find solutions that never come from the group. In the same way, the system exercises violence that trivialises women.

In *Goodbye, Mother*, Cabur's experimental dimension in relation to female pain lies in the acknowledgement of it through a message that is addressed directly to the victim and thus to all victims, women, who were unable and/or could not express their pain:

If you've been under attack you know what I am talking about, and I am sorry for you, I am so sorry it also happened to you. Hear me, sister. It doesn't matter if it happened once or a hundred times. It was never your fault. We know what we've been through. We know. We know that seeing the true face of a monster is the scariest shit that'll ever happen to anyone. (Cabur, *Goodbye*)

Cabur acknowledges victims of gender-based violence through the disruption linked to the vocative “sister”, as a way of embodying the sisterhood that does show support for women along with the use of the first-person plural, which shows a sense of real support based on the notions of community and collectivity.

The audience as individuals is part of a collective voice that has the power to change and stop the perpetuation of gender-based violence by identifying, recognising and acting when women express pain, “the audience are denied a reflective distance in the process of watching – and, in fact, they are not ‘watching’ but mostly listening/experiencing/imagining/cognitively participating in the piece – which simultaneously denies or postpones the semantic closure” (Radosavljevic, 170). By extrapolating the term ‘semantic closure’ to Cabur’s practice, her plays also demonstrate the lack of practical solutions while addressing gender violence. In this way, there is a need for pragmatic alternatives for victims of this type of violence, however, as the play shows, there seems to be a rather missing semantic closure when addressing violence against women in contemporary society. In this sense, Cabur’s theatre can also be considered to be the basis for “methexis/the intersubjective dramaturgy of speech and sound (‘tell rather than show’) over mimesis/the representational dramaturgies of dramatic theatre (‘show rather than tell’)” (Radosavljevic, 170). Hence the relevance of the transformative power of vulnerability, active listening and empathy in the face of the disregard that women still suffer to this day when they express their discomfort.

3.2. Femicides

The consideration of issues affecting women is making great strides in relation to equal rights. Women’s voices are increasingly being heard and their concerns are resonating with other women. However, there is still a legitimate gap in all this progress: the number of femicide cases continues to rise globally.

Goodbye, Mother is a play that addresses the murders of women, giving a voice not only to the women who can no longer speak but also to the people behind this kind of violence: all of these individuals and their neighbouring social communities, as well as the impact of each femicide on each individual, are addressed in this play. *Goodbye, Mother* shows how the women murdered every year are not mere numbers on a list. Beatriz Cabur addresses the imperative need to name them, to talk about their lives and

about the people close to them, as we must see them for who they really were in order to humanise them and deal with real stories instead of statistics:

She was my friend. She was my mother. She was my sister. I was alive and loved. I was surrounded by family and friends and my killer. She was my mother and I left her there. I had a daughter, and a husband. I had a father and I left him alone with her. She was my favourite aunt and all I have are beautiful memories of her, she baked me lemon muffins. My aunt Marcia, she was 32. (Cabur, Goodbye)

The project for this work has grown enormously since its genesis. In the initial phase, verbatim theatre was used as it worked with research and interviews with key people in the cities of Asunción, London and New York. Beatriz Cabur's website affirms her determination to obtain as much information as possible in order to listen to the voices of people close to the victims. Considering that "polyphony carries the potential to convey polysubjectivity and intersubjectivity", Cabur's practice focuses on "the potential of polyphony and its constitutive tool, counterpoint, to encapsulate the dialectics contained in the multi-modal semantics of theatre" (Radosavljevic, 69-70). As David Roesner affirms, polyphony works as a "strategy of 'de-hierarchisation' of theatrical means" (Roesner, 18), which provides "greater autonomy on various meaning-making tools and personnel of theatre and allows the audience to "widen and reflect on their own modes of perception and observation" (Roesner, 44) and without the obligation to work out "what it means [...] by worrying less about 'what it means', the audience can focus their attention on 'what it is' and thus challenge, widen and reflect on their own modes of perception and observation" (Roesner, 54-55). In this way, the voices will be incorporated into a worldwide work that can be heard and understood regardless of cultural and societal differences between them. Following the completion of this study and development of the work, the writing phase began, with the aim of presenting the work in New York, London and Madrid.

Thousands of women are violently murdered by their partners or family members every year. A study published by the United Nations concludes that Femicide "is difficult to eradicate, has a significant prevalence in all regions, is important to monitor, needs further research to better understand the motivating factors and perpetrators". *Goodbye, Mother* places the central focus on this last point of the report, which is, according to Beatriz Cabur, "the only area in which art, and theatre in particular, can contribute, and it

is our responsibility as artists to take on the task.” As Bakhtin defends, there needs to be a “participatory equality between the author, the ‘performers of the text (if they exist),’ and the readers or listeners who recreate and, in so doing, renew the text” (Bakhtin, 253). In fact, “the actual corporeal co-presence of the artist and the audience in a theatre opens up a different potential for dialogue, even when this dialogue is incommensurable, non-verbal, or merely consisting of an affective exchange” since, “theatre can generate its own counterpoint between the affective and the rational experience” (Radosavljevic, 71).

In the play *Goodbye, Mother*, the protagonist is Margaret, a woman who is the victim of her husband's violence. This is not the first time the tragedy occurs, but the last time, as it is at this moment that her husband kills her. In this sense, “the counterpoint represents a necessary cognitive dissonance or disruption that will engage the audience to make sense of it” (Radosavljevic, 72). Consequently, a sort of “intersubjective dialogue is at work between the content being presented and the audience's act of attending” (Radosavljevic, 72), that is, a voice of sisterhood appears in the play that tries to offer support to the victim, conveying the idea that she is not alone or invisible: “if you've been under attack you know what I am talking about, and I am sorry for you, I am so sorry it also happened to you. Hear me, sister. It doesn't matter if it happened once or a hundred times. It was never your fault. We know what we've been through. We know. We know that seeing the true face of a monster is the scariest shit that'll ever happen to anyone” (Cabur, *Goodbye*: np). In these words, Cabur apologises to the victim in the play and the victims outside the play. They need an apology for the great harm that has been inflicted on them. In this way, their suffering is publicly acknowledged and thus made visible so that they can feel safe in a cruel world that has failed them as they endure this kind of violence alone, without the support of anyone during the femicide that is taking place in the play. When it alludes to the vocative “sister” (“hear me, sister”), it refers to the *#metoosister* movement, a virtual feminist movement that was born with the aim of bringing together, making visible and giving a voice to the victims of gender violence so that, with this network of support, strategies of defence and action against this type of violence can be born, thus working towards its prevention and eradication. The use of the term “sister” provides evidence for the sorority present in the work, which aims to offer a safe space for Margaret and all women who have experienced this and have been silenced. The use of the first-person plural shows a public recognition of the position of the victim, as we know and are

aware that violence against women continues to happen and that the figures of male violence are growing despite the rise of feminist activism in the last few years. In the *Handbook of Arts-Based Research*, the poetic-performative element “derived from documentary evidence is ultimately far more potent than the purely scientific one in ‘chang[ing] the way we think about people and their lives” (Radosavljevic, 68). The recognition of gender violence by the collective, as in the case of the play, reinforces and promotes empathy as a healing and transformative tool for effective and necessary change in the eradication of violence against women.

In the play, Margaret expresses the panic she feels with allusions to her corporeality, which are interconnected with her chaotic train of thought resulting from the femicide at the hands of her husband: “I’m too scared. I’m out of my body and I don’t know how to move it. If I try and jump and he stops me... would he be saving me?” (Cabur, Goodbye). Once more, it is proven that “the problem is not critique itself, but the so-far predominating voyeuristic, texto-centric, hierarchical, and ocular-centric tools of the critic” (Radosavljevic, 68), which evidences the passive attitudes of the audience in front of a clear call for action regarding the prevention and eradication of gender violence.

The alarming violence that she is suffering makes her feel dread to the point of feeling utterly disconnected from her body, i.e., Margaret is suffering from derealisation and depersonalisation: “I’m out of my body and I don’t know how to move it” (Cabur, Goodbye). As a result of the trauma suffered from the violence inflicted by the abuser, her survival instinct tells her to escape from the situation in order to survive. However, the terror manifests itself in her body through the fight-flight-freeze response. In this way, the victim cannot act according to logic because the terror blocks her. As can be observed in the play, the sense of dread leaves her immobile in a life-threatening situation. On the other hand, the victim is in the acute or crisis phase of the cycle of violence. When Margaret asks herself: “would he be saving me?” (Cabur, Goodbye), a common situation for victims of gender-based violence in this stage of the cycle is shown, where the victim tries to survive the abuse by taking actions such as accommodation to the abuser’s demands or escape. Since Margaret is utterly paralysed by fear, her coping mechanism is to consider whether the person who is about to cause her death would save her.

The pain experienced by the victims of gender violence is very difficult to assimilate, as it is carried out by a person who is supposed to love them. In

the play, Margaret, like many other women victims of this type of violence, engages in self-deception as a way of protecting herself from the severity of the atrocities inflicted by a member of her family who is also her abuser. Furthermore, the protagonist resorts to the myth of romantic love that reaffirms the idea of the man as Prince Charming, the person who must rescue the defenceless woman from the clutches of the, as the play puts it, "monster". Paradoxically, Margaret tries to think that the monster himself can save her; thus, self-deception is evident when it is revealed that the abuser, the monster, is her own husband; the supposed saviour.

In *Goodbye, Mother*, the course of the femicide progressively advances as our protagonist's train of thought accelerates: "will I survive five stories fall? Is it safer to jump out of the window than staying? I think it is. Can I reach the window in time? Would he stop me? My nose is broken, I've peed myself. How is it possible these two things haven't stopped the monster, is he not seeing them? Is he not seeing me? Thoughts run faster than the speed of light" (Cabur, *Goodbye*: np). Beatriz Cabur captures in a raw and realistic way the state in which the victims of gender violence find themselves when a man executes a femicide. As it is shown, Margaret considers the possibility of jumping out of the window as an extreme survival measure; that is, she is aware that her husband is going to murder her and that the only possible way to escape the murder is by jumping out the window. Again, this survival thinking occurs alongside the perpetuation of the myth of romantic love of the male saviour; she still thinks that her abuser will stop her from jumping out the window and thus will succumb to the violence he executes against her. In her mind, he can still save her, however, her body indicates otherwise, as her nose is broken and she is covered in her own urine, the result of panic from the trauma of the gender-based violence she is suffering at the hands of her husband. Her tremendous pain is also expressed as she questions how it is possible that her husband does not stop this calamity despite the visible marks his violence is leaving on her body. The level of self-deception and confusion, elements common to all victims of gender violence, is such that Margaret comes to wonder if her husband cannot see her. Once again, the invisibility that women victims of gender violence feel in the face of a system that does not offer them the protection, safety and security they need is evident.

At the end of the play, the femicide takes place, along with Margaret's realisation of the exhaustion she feels at all the violence she has suffered: "Oh, God. How long have I been crouched down, getting punched and whacked

and slammed and kicked and punched and punched and punched and kick and whacked and slammed? Again. Again. Again” (Cabur, Goodbye). The protagonist has lost count of the number of times her husband has used violence against her, as well as how long she has been curled up on the floor while he assaults her. The repetition of ‘again’ three times expresses the destructive and constant rhythm of gender violence, as it always comes back with more and more force until it leads to femicide. Margaret’s exhaustion is such that she no longer even knows what she feels, nor does she care because gender violence has reduced her to an object. She no longer feels she is an agent with the capacity to save herself, so she accepts the violence with resignation as she feels certain that she is going to die: “When will he stop? Will he ever stop? I can’t feel anything anymore. I don’t care about anything anymore. I’m just... I’m... going to let go. I am ok with it. It’s better to let go of all this. This is it. It’s ok. I know I am dying” (Cabur, Goodbye). The loss of the notion of time represents a clear indication of the trauma the victim is suffering, along with the apathy that shows her total surrender. Since she no longer has the energy to defend herself, resignation can be seen in her final sentence: “It’s better this way. I’m leaving. That’s all I want. (To herself) Goodbye, baby. See you on the other side” (Cabur, Goodbye). The victim’s level of self-sacrifice is the result of her abandonment by the system, which provokes in her the same attitude of helplessness that she has felt from the system. Margaret no longer feels the strength to continue fighting because life should not be a struggle, yet she must fight against her abuser if she wants to survive.

Finally, the protagonist says goodbye, knowing that this is the end of her life. Femicide is the climax of gender violence. Margaret is aware that she is dying and must accept it because she has no support system, which has failed her. As a result, she will become one more number, along with other women, on the list of femicide victims that year.

4. Conclusions

Considering the metamorphic characteristics of Beatriz Cabur’s dramaturgy that collaborates with the digital, it is difficult to draw conclusions about a form that is constantly changing. Likewise, the task of defining the shared characteristics of the digital pieces is made more difficult and richer, by the great diversity of proposals, as well as the scope of research, both nationally and internationally. In most of the works analysed, the focus is notably on technology as an instrument and as a

structure, beyond the narrative or the work of acting on the character. In the same way, the consideration of dramaturgy in a digital space is also complicated and, on the contrary, Cabur's plays are theatrical proposals that update the situation of dramaturgy in Spain from different perspectives such as creative, productive, diffusive, etc., connecting it with experiments that are developed abroad, thus taking on an international dimension and, therefore, a potential for greater social impact.

Twenty-first century dramaturgy written by women embraces feminist themes and motifs, as shown in Beatriz Cabur's theatre productions. The feminist theatre that began to establish itself at the end of the eighties and became fully consolidated in the nineties, thanks to the productions of Lidia Faldón, Paloma Pedrero, Ana Diosdado, Carmen Resino and Antonia Bueno, to name but a few, finds its continuation in feminist playwrights such as Cabur. These contemporary female playwrights affirm that it is a consciously developed feminism as it normalises the appearance of women in the Spanish theatre scene, as well as the incorporation of the female perspective into the problems arising from globalisation, alluding to a conciliatory universalist feminism. The feminist essence that appears in the works of Cabur not only provides a vindictive scope but also an exploration of the causes of gender violence and inequality, which are the culminating themes. Thus, it is feminism that aims to raise awareness of the problems that affect half of humanity.

The health situation marked by the COVID-19 pandemic has shown the errors of a welfare system with many shortcomings, which results in many women being marginalised from the system and left without sufficient protection, preventing them from living in dignity and security. The seriousness of this problem is increased by the fact that, instead of solving the shortcomings, the system resorts to extreme bureaucracy which makes it even more difficult for the citizens of a country to have access to security from institutions that they themselves finance.

Cabur has done plenty of work to support the innovative dramaturgical genre of telepresence. She also creates new theatrical languages that are adapted to her artistic concerns. To this end, Cabur develops her work internationally. Her theatrical production deals with experimentalism through language, through which she makes chaotic worlds visible to expose the threat of censorship and absolutism that are hidden in a country that promises security in exchange for the freedom of its citizens. Beatriz Cabur's dramaturgy enacts an experimental demand that, together with feminist

causes, is continually reiterated. The transcreation of experience transforms the audience into an active subject of the dramaturgical experience. Consequently, technology is staged. The imperative need for denunciation is circumscribed to the theatrical format selected by Cabur. Telepresence is embedded in real-life experience, so Cabur aims to reflect reality as it is today. A key example of this is the participation of the audience members in *Childbirth 19*, which takes place through an email sent to them with instructions, so the experience of the theatre of telepresence begins before the actual performance.

The current concerns of feminism about male violence represent the central axis that the Spanish playwright analyses with an explicit intention to denounce and raise social awareness. In the plays explored by Beatriz Cabur, the audience is shown crude situations of gender violence that women continue to suffer today. These violent acts are analysed together with their causes, thus highlighting the sexism that continues to exist in our society; women suffer violence for the mere fact of existing in a patriarchal society.

Cabur captures systemic violence by highlighting the fact that women alone should not have to continue to suffer and fight against an androcentric system that displaces them and relegates them to a category of otherness. Cabur develops a recognition of the victims of gender-based violence through active listening and empathy that is born from the actions of support in the sorority. In the same way, the figure who observes and does not act is challenged because action is always possible and, in fact, simple observation is an action in itself, although other types of action are required to tackle this problem effectively. Cabur also challenges the audience to act collectively, as the collective, and therefore society, has the power to change and stop the development of violence against women and girls around the world. In order to do this, it is essential to identify it, make it visible and legitimise it and to develop strategies for action when women express their pain. Active listening and empathy have incredible transformative power in the face of the handicap that many women continue to suffer when they express the abusive situations they are currently experiencing.

Beatriz Cabur also makes visible the double discrimination, sexism and racism, suffered particularly by women of colour. The author depicts a problem that affects how women are perceived in a society that continues to ignore the abuses perpetuated against these women. In this way, we are called upon as members of the audience and active subjects in society to act against this type of violence.

In Cabur's works, women's health is worsened by the effects of trauma caused by various forms of violence that exclusively affect women. The director also focuses on the reasons that lead women to develop self-defence behaviours. In order to promote different actions for women's safety, it is essential to focus on the victims and locate and respond to the stigmatisation of the feminine and the mental health associated with women.

As the *Clara Campoamor Association* insists, feminism must represent "*una transformación social*" (Serna, *Estos son los 5'lobbies*'), since "supone cuestionarse los privilegios patriarcales, cambiar la forma de ser, de lo que significa ser hombre y ser mujer tradicionalmente y lo más importante la capacidad de renunciar a esos privilegios por parte de quien los disfruta" (Serna, *Estos son los 5'lobbies*'). The difficulty is evident in the fact that people do not want to lose rights in favour of others and that there is a general complacency amongst those who benefit from the system. Furthermore, solutions to this problem must be created through education and laws, especially considering the challenges that continue to appear and perpetuate themselves: "mejorar la protección a las víctimas de la violencia de género, contra la violencia sexual, leyes e instituciones con perspectiva de género, puesta en marcha de todas las medidas del Pacto de Estado en materia de Violencia de Género; educación en igualdad, interculturalidad, diversidad, mercantilización del cuerpo de las mujeres y corresponsabilidad" (Serna, *Estos son los 5'lobbies*').

As proposed by *La Fundación de Mujeres*, a feminist NGO created in 1994 as an idea of the *Asociación mujeres jóvenes para el progreso de políticas de igualdad* (Young Women's Association for the Advancement of Equality Policies), social didactics must be supported together with legislative advances to improve the protection of victims of gender violence. Despite the negative ideas that have been associated with feminism, "desde las sufragistas, a las que llamaban histéricas" (Serna, *Estos son los 5 'lobbies*'), it continues to be more necessary than ever since, as Marisa Soletto, its president, affirms that "está pendiente la igualdad real y efectiva. Problemas como la violencia contra las mujeres, las diferencias y desigualdades que pueden leerse en las estadísticas de empleo, la riqueza o pobreza, la educación o el poder siguen demostrando que es necesario continuar (Serna, *Estos son los 5 'lobbies*'). Similarly, as Soletto stresses, "la legislación cumple una función didáctica social, pero hay avances legislativos que no serán efectivos si no se producen cambios en la cultura general", which evidences the importance regarding the implementation of changes in the

general culture to contribute to the eradication of violence against women and girls around the world.

As defended by Action Hero, there needs to be a belief in “dialogic processes, that the best ideas come from collaboration, and that that is hard and not always straightforward, but that it is more human. The act of collaboration can feel very radical in an individualistic culture” (Brayshaw, Witts xxi).

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Notas

1. The selected works are unpublished and have been loaned by the author Beatriz Cabur due to her interest in the performativity of live works and through the digitisation of the works, which are available on her website as well as through personal request.
2. In each edition, women playwrights from all over the world write 365 plays about real women from history. This achieves three things: to give opportunities to women playwrights in a project that has international repercussions, to rewrite women from history or to write them for the first time and, thirdly, to give actresses interesting roles, protagonists who are not the mother of, the girlfriend of.... (Reig González, *Empiezas a trabajar*).
3. 15 years of professional writing led me to realise that [women] are not [alone]. That we are not. It is part of the struggle to realise that we are not, that we have a common enemy and we are allies. It's part of the struggle to realise that if someone else wins, I'm winning too and that clearing the path, whatever it takes, is worth it because it leaves the path a little clearer for the next one. And for our teenagers, I think our job is to teach them their power and their responsibility. Discovering them will be your forte. We can't dismiss the effect my time at university had on my work without reflecting on it. Let's take note. Let's review the content we teach in the classroom. The effect of this content on students is immediate. It is our power and our responsibility to open doors, not to close possibilities (Cabur, *La responsabilidad*).
4. "internalised misogyny is the unintentional internalisation of sexist messages present in our society and culture" (Cabur, *La responsabilidad*).

5. “in scenes with crowds or groups of people in films, only 17% of these groups are made up of women, instead of the 50.52% that would be representative of reality” (Cabur, La responsabilidad).
6. “If I write it, it happens, how can I not write it?” (Cabur, La responsabilidad).
7. See the UN study at the following link: https://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/Mexico_Nov2014/Session%203%20UNODC%20ppt.pdf.
8. “a social transformation” (Serna, Estos son los 5'lobbies’).
9. “it involves questioning patriarchal privileges, changing the way of being, of what it means to be a man and a woman traditionally, and most importantly the ability to renounce those privileges on the part of those who enjoy them” (Serna, Estos son los 5'lobbies’). Clara Campoamor Association was founded in the Basque Country in 1985 in response to the need to defend women’s rights by combining social actions with legal intervention and political advocacy (Serna, Estos son los 5'lobbies’).
10. “improving protection for victims of gender violence, against sexual violence, laws and institutions with a gender perspective, implementation of all the measures of the State Pact on Gender Violence; education on equality, interculturality, diversity, commodification of women’s bodies and joint responsibility” (Serna, Estos son los 5'lobbies’). See: Pacto de Estado contra la Violencia de Género. Ministerio de la Presidencia, Relaciones con las Cortes e Igualdad: <https://violenciagenero.igualdad.gob.es/pactoEstado/docs/FolletoPEVGcastweb.pdf>.
11. “real and effective equality is still pending. Problems such as violence against women, the differences and inequalities that can be read in employment statistics, wealth or poverty, education or power continue to demonstrate that it is necessary to continue” (Serna, Estos son los 5'lobbies’).
12. “legislation fulfils a social didactic function, but legislative developments will not be effective without changes in the general culture” (Serna, Estos son los 5'lobbies’).