

Exploring Artaud's Impact on Beckett's *Act Without Words II*: A Study in Theatrical Influence

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Abstract. While Samuel Beckett's *Act Without Words II* stands as an illustration of minimalist theatre, its profound debt to Antonin Artaud's revolutionary dramatic techniques remains a critical yet underexplored area. This study addresses an urgent need to illuminate the specific ways in which Artaud's vision permeates Beckett's seemingly stark theatrical landscape. Moving beyond general acknowledgments of influence, this paper offers a granular analysis of *Act Without Words II*, meticulously dissecting its stagecraft – the strategic deployment of lighting, the nuanced language of movement, and the symbolic weight of object manipulation – to definitively demonstrate the deep imprint of Artaudian principles. This study, to some extent, employed textual and intertextual analysis to substantiate the tangible connection between Beckett's minimalist execution and Artaud's radical theatrical vision. The findings reveal the dynamic and purposeful interplay of light and shadow, as well as the potent symbolism embedded within objects like the goad and the carrot. This analysis unveils how these elements coalesce to generate the play's distinctive 'cruel resonance,' immersing the characters in palpable states of physical and psychological struggle. This study offers a novel understanding of *Act Without Words II*, positioning it not merely as a minimalist theatre but as a compelling synthesis of Beckett's reductive style and Artaud's emphasis on the intuitive and sensory. The argument is that this fusion transcends conventional narrative and character, directly engaging audiences with fundamental human experience and leading to a transformative theatrical encounter. This perspective is, therefore, crucial for a more nuanced and comprehensive appreciation of Beckett's innovative work and the enduring influence of Artaud on 20th-century drama.

Keywords: *Cruelty, Language, Silence, Theatre, Stagecraft*

INTRODUCTION

Antonin Artaud affected Samuel Beckett in several key areas. This study focuses on Beckett's play *Act Without Words II* to explore Artaud's impact on his work. By reinterpreting this play through the lens of Artaud's Theater of Cruelty, we can gain deeper insight into Artaud's influence on Beckett. The play is essentially action-driven and devoid of spoken dialogue, reflecting the essence of a mime through the interactions of just two performers. Here, meaning is conveyed not through words but through a rich tapestry of gestures, movements, and facial expressions. Fletcher (1978) notes that an external stimulus - a goad prompts the actions in the play. Alongside his other works, *Act Without Words II* exemplifies Beckett's profound exploration of non-verbal communication and the choreography of existential experience, showcasing his significant contributions to the world of theatre.

A significant body of scholarship explores the profound influence of Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty on avant-garde theatre and other theatrical performances, with notable contributions from scholars such as Marvin Carlson, Helga Finter, Jane Goodall, David Graver, Naomi Grene, Christopher Innes, and Susan Sontag. Stephen Barber's extensive collection of works on Artaud stands out as a particularly well-regarded investigation into the later phases of his creative endeavors and his enduring legacy on contemporary theatre, dance, and performance art. This collection includes the critical biography *Antonin Artaud: Blows and Bombs* (1993), *Artaud: The Screaming Body* (1999), *The Last Words of Antonin Artaud* (2009), *The Anatomy of Cruelty: Antonin Artaud: Life and Works* (2013), and his recent article, 'Corporeal Disintegration as Last-Gasp Vocal Act: The Final Works of Murobushi, Artaud and Chéreau' (2017).

Existing scholarship, exemplified by Rapoch Jeff (2013), highlights a shared ambition between Antonin Artaud and Samuel Beckett to fundamentally deconstruct the perceptions of theatre and its typical plot structures. Both playwrights, it is argued, sought to dismantle conventional theatrical frameworks as a means of reflecting the pervasive fragmentation of modern society, a crucial theme further underscored by Melia Matthew (2007). Moreover, Laurens De Vos (2011) provides a vital theoretical clarification by sharply distinguishing Artaud's radical concept of cruelty from the more traditional understanding of tragedy within dramatic discourse. Gontarski (2015) illuminates the complex relationship between Artaud and Beckett through Jean-Louis Barrault's perspective. Beckett's engagement with the French avant-garde director Roger Blin (influenced by Artaud) led him to shift from text-centric theatre to one emphasizing movement, flow, and image. He proposed performativity, echoing some of Artaud's concerns about the instinctive impact and the limits of language, developing his distinct theatrical style. Hannah (2011) argues that the unspeakable violence of space requires new forms of address. It connects to Artaud's visceral Theatre of Cruelty and Beckett's stark, unconventional theatre, both seeking radical ways to express profound, often inexpressible, human experiences beyond traditional discourse and spatial norms. Amanda Di Ponio's *The Early Modern Theatre of Cruelty and its Doubles: Artaud and Influence* (2018) persuasively argues for a significant early modern influence on Artaud's concept of cruelty, tracing its roots in Elizabethan,

Jacobean, and the generating themes. While insightful in establishing this intellectual lineage, his focus on origins limits its exploration of Artaud's broader impact on later theatre. For example, the study offers limited critical tools to analyze how Artaud's theories, beyond these early influences, resonate with or inform later works, like Beckett's non-verbal and visceral *Act Without Words II*, thus providing a somewhat constrained view of Artaud's overall influence. While Kurmelev's (2016) study effectively asserts theatre's public function in navigating personal and societal anxieties, drawing on Esslin and Bigsby, and acknowledges the early 20th-century innovations that contextualize Artaud's *Theatre of Cruelty*, the provided excerpt offers a somewhat superficial account of Artaud's dramatic techniques and their lasting impact. Although it correctly identifies that the *Theatre of Cruelty* aims to disturb the psyche of the spectators, it lacks a critical examination of how Artaud proposed to achieve this visceral response through specific theatrical practices. The summary introduces the concept but does not delve into concrete examples of his envisioned techniques or analyze their subsequent influence on dramatic form and performance. Therefore, while establishing a foundational understanding of Artaud's aims, this portion of Kurmelev's analysis leaves a significant gap in exploring the practical application and legacy of his revolutionary ideas on dramatic technique itself.

Hayman (1977) emphasized the significant impact Artaud has had on subsequent writers, noting that his works have become crucial in the development of various theatrical practices, particularly the theatre of silence. However, this paper extends beyond the concept of silence to also examine the themes of cruelty and the psychological pressure exerted on the audience. By examining Beckett's play from an Artaudian perspective, this paper aims to enhance the reader's understanding of Beckett's oeuvre. As Artaud's theories continue to resonate with contemporary theatre practices, a more extensive comprehension of his impact on a foundational figure like Beckett is crucial for a more informed understanding of the trajectory of modern drama. This research aims to bridge the gap in our comprehension of Beckett by providing a specific and rigorous analysis through the lens of Artaud's revolutionary theatrical vision.

However, despite these valuable contributions to our understanding of the Artaud-Beckett nexus, a significant gap persists in the critical literature: a direct, comprehensive, and granular application of the *specific* and multifaceted tenets of Artaud's *Theatre of Cruelty* to the intricate textual and performative landscape of Beckett's *Act Without Words II*. While existing studies often acknowledge a general intellectual or philosophical influence, they frequently fall short of providing a detailed, element-by-element analysis that rigorously demonstrates how Beckett's dramatic techniques actively and concretely embody Artaud's revolutionary vision. The urgency of this paper stems directly from this critical oversight. There is an immediate need to move beyond broad generalizations and to undertake a focused and systematic examination of how Artaud's radical ideas regarding sensory engagement, the absolute primacy of physical expression over verbal dialogue, the potent symbolic agency inherent in stage objects, and the deliberate manipulation of the audience's psychological and intuitive responses are within the seemingly austere and minimalist structure of Beckett's mime.

The distinct novelty of this paper lies precisely in its commitment to providing this long-awaited explicit and in-depth textual analysis of *Act Without Words II* through the focused and unwavering prism of Artaud's core concepts of the Theatre of Cruelty. This research consciously moves beyond the identification of superficial thematic similarities or the offering of generalized acknowledgments of influence. Instead, it embarks on a detailed and rigorous dissection of the play's constituent elements – stark lighting, the deliberate and often unsettling physicality of its two anonymous figures, the charged semiotics of seemingly simple props such as the goad and the carrot, and the overall disorienting and emotionally resonant effect of the non-verbal performance on the spectator – to demonstrate precisely how Beckett's stagecraft resonates with and, arguably, enacts Artaud's radical and often challenging vision for a theatre that bypasses the limitations of purely intellectual engagement to directly and powerfully impact the audience's senses, emotions, and subconscious. By focusing on these specific and interconnected elements, this research offers a demonstrably fresh, more nuanced, and empirically grounded understanding of the tangible and profound influence of Artaud's revolutionary theatrical project on Beckett's unique creative output.

This study employs textual analysis to gain a deep understanding of the play. Additionally, it examines the play's dramatic techniques in light of Artaud's dramatic theory, specifically focusing on their impact on the audience. This integrated approach is crucial for understanding Beckett's *Act Without Words II*, where the theatrical experience is paramount, often overshadowing traditional literary analysis. The central argument presented is that Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty aimed to transform theatre from a "passive intellectual exercise" into an "emotionally overwhelming experience" that challenges the audience's "very being." It is achieved by bypassing intellectualization and engaging the audience on a "primal level," forcing them to confront their "internal landscapes."

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopted a qualitative research methodology, recognizing that the nuanced exploration of literary texts and the intricate connections between artistic influences necessitate an interpretive rather than a statistical approach. Qualitative research, in this instance, allows for an in-depth understanding of the symbolic language, thematic undertones, and structural elements within Beckett's *Act Without Words II*. It prioritizes the richness and complexity of the textual data, enabling a detailed examination of how Artaud's dramatic innovations might resonate with Beckett's minimalist aesthetic.

The primary data source for this research was the script of Samuel Beckett's *Act Without Words II*. The textual analysis involved a close and iterative reading of the play, paying meticulous attention to stage directions, movements, silence, character actions, and the overall structural composition. This analysis moved beyond a superficial understanding of the narrative to dissect the underlying

symbolic meanings, Artaudian dramatic techniques, recurring motifs, and other techniques. Furthermore, the analysis considered the play within the broader context of Beckett's works and the theatrical landscape of his time, noting the distinctive Artaudian influence on the play.

Since the central focus of this research was to investigate the potential influence of Antonin Artaud's dramatic theories and techniques on Samuel Beckett's *Act Without Words II*, this study involved a thorough examination of Artaud's key writings, particularly his concept of the "Theatre of Cruelty," to identify specific principles and practices. Subsequently, these principles were a lens through which to analyze Beckett's play. The research examined parallels in areas such as the use of non-verbal communication, the impact on the audience, the questioning of traditional theatrical conventions, and the exploration of existential anxieties. It acknowledges that influence can be subtle and may manifest as a shared sensibility rather than a direct imitation.

The research design involved a close reading and analysis framed by the theoretical lenses of Existentialism, the Theatre of Cruelty, and the Theatre of the Absurd. A and B's unending, seemingly futile actions, driven by an inexplicable "goad," powerfully convey existentialism's core concept of meaninglessness. Artaud's emphasis on profound experience ensures. The absurdity resonates deeply. Furthermore, the subtle variations in A and B's responses highlight an inherent existential freedom despite their confinement. Beckett's wordless mime offers a striking parallel to Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty, which prioritizes spectacle, sound, and gesture over dialogue. The play's cyclical structure, its wordless breakdown of communication, and its unconventional plot are all quintessential features of Absurdist drama. It will involve the scrutinizing of individual words, phrases, silences, and visual elements to uncover deeper layers of meaning. There was also the comparative analysis of the dramatic techniques employed by Samuel Beckett in *Act Without Words II* and those advocated and practiced by Antonin Artaud. The focus was on specific theatrical elements such as staging and visual elements, for example, analyzing the use of set design, props, lighting, and costumes to convey meaning and evoke emotional responses; physicality and gesture included investigating the importance of bodily movements, gestures, and physical theatre in communication character and theme; examining the role and significance of silence and non-verbal communication; audience engagement especially exploring the intended impact on the audience and the ways artists challenge traditional spectators -actor relationships; and lastly the effects of cruelty on the spectators.

To fully understand Antonin Artaud's profound impact on Samuel Beckett's *Act Without Words II*, this study uses an intertextual approach. This method, drawing on theories from Julia Kristeva, Mikhail Bakhtin, Roland Barthes, and especially Michael Riffaterre, challenges the idea that a text is a standalone creation. Instead, it highlights how texts relate to other texts of cultural discussions. As Minakshi notes, Kristeva's view emphasizes that texts are not isolated but part of a rich tapestry of relationships (250). For *Act Without Words II*,

this framework enriches our understanding by revealing the connection of the play with Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty and his broader dramatic practices.

Michael Riffaterre's concept of intertextuality offers a way to analyze the relationship between Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty and Beckett's Act Without Words II. Riffaterre argues that "intertextuality is not a felicitous surplus... but it is an obligatory one, necessary to any textual decoding" (151). It means a text's complete meaning emerges only when understood by other texts. It goes beyond simple influence or allusion; for Riffaterre, intertextuality is a fundamental and unavoidable operation of the reader's mind. Applying this to Act Without Words II, we see that the play's internal elements—its lack of words, repetitive actions, and bleak setting—are inherently linked to and illuminated by the intertext of Artaud's dramatic philosophy.

Through Riffaterre's intertextual lens, the unsettling power and profound implications of Act Without Words II become fully clear. The play is not merely an isolated piece of Absurdist theatre. The implicit dialogue with Artaud's theory supports its dramatic force. The absence of words, the focus on physical suffering, the repetitive cycles, and the confronting absurdity all strongly resonate within the framework of Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty. The meaning of Beckett's mime, therefore, isn't solely generated from within its boundaries. Instead, it is deepened and enriched by recognizing its "obligatory" intertextual relationship with Artaud's revolutionary dramatic vision.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Antonin Artaud's avant-garde theories not only challenged conventions in dramatic arts but also laid foundational principles that resonate powerfully in Samuel Beckett's Act Without Words II. This study delves into the intricate tapestry of Artaud's influence, focusing on how Beckett's mime synthesizes radical ideas about sensory engagement, physicality, and the exploration of existential themes through sign communication. It also gives a detailed and in-depth analysis demonstrating the concrete influence of Antonin Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty on Act Without Words II. This study shows how Beckett's stagecraft in this mime resonates with and enacts Artaud's radical theatrical vision, directly affecting the audience's senses and subconscious. Crucially, the play rejects catharsis or resolution, a core tenet of Artaud's vision to disturb tranquillity. Act Without Words II offers no escape or enlightenment; its endless repetition and lack of progress create an unsettling tension. This deliberate refusal to provide closure forces active, disquieting engagement, symbolizing inescapable, indifferent forces governing existence via the relentless tapping stick.

The multisensory illumination: Theatrical expression through light

From the outset, the lighting in Act Without Words II emerges as a strikingly evocative element. Described as being lit "violently" (Beckett, 2006, p. 209), the

lighting creates a jarring juxtaposition with the surrounding darkness enveloping the stage. This deliberate use of stark contrasts not only serves a practical function in delineating the stage elements but is also deeply aligned with Artaud's beliefs about light. Artaud conceptualized light as a tool for evoking a profound emotional and psychological impact on the audience and asserted that light must resonate with the minds of viewers who find a portrayal in Beckett's work. Light transcends its role as a mere element on stage; it functions as a distinct language in its own right (Braun, 1982, p. 89). Consequently, the lighting used in the play conveys a powerful message that can evoke a profound sense of cruelty. By using vigorous illumination, Beckett channels Artaud's idea that light should be a dynamic entity capable of intensifying feelings and shaping the sensory experience of the performance.

Artaud (1958) emphasizes that "light" is indispensable for achieving theatre's fullest expression. In Beckett's mime, the interplay of light and darkness symbolizes critical tensions, notably the struggle between visibility and obscurity. Here, light serves not merely as illumination but as an agent of revelation and concealment, compelling the audience to engage with the physical and emotional landscapes of the characters (Bermel, 1977, p. 98). This manipulation of light, mimicking moments of clarity and obfuscation, echoes Artaud's belief in using physical action to stir far-reaching responses.

The language of cruelty: Physical expression in Artaud's dramatic theory

In *Act Without Words II*, the absence of verbal communication underscores the profound shift to physical expression as a primary mode of engagement. In his writings, Greene (1970) articulates those interactions and emotions can be powerfully communicated non-verbally, solely through actions. Indeed, the intensity of cruelty, a central theme in Artaud's work, is often discussed more tangibly through actions than through speech. Characters A and B, without names, imply identities and embody the universality of human struggles.

*A is slow, awkward (gags dressings and undressing), absent.
B brisk, rapid, precise (Beckett, 2006, p. 209)*

Their reliance on physical movements to convey meaning aligns with Artaud's assertion that words must yield to a language of gestures and actions. Artaud (1958) argues that the impact of physicality holds immediate and profound significance on stage. Character A's slow, awkward movements are juxtaposed against Character B's brisk efficiency, establishing a palpable tension in their contrasting physical demeanours. A's laborious struggle with dressing and undressing symbolizes an existential struggle, reflecting the painful burdens of existence. In stark contrast, B's rapid, purposeful movements denote a character functioning within the constraints of a mechanized, relentless world. This stark dichotomy among characters serves as a personification of suffering, emphasizing a shared human condition inspired by discomfort and uncertainty. In Beckett's play, many characters grapple with existentialism, and similarly, Characters A and

B face a profound struggle with their existence, which is described as painful (Labelle, 1980, p. 188). According to Artaud, this existential struggle places the characters in a state of cruelty.

Through their shared physical experiences, Beckett aligns closely with Artaud's concept of the Theatre of Cruelty, wherein emotional and physical pain are not simply represented but lived. The characters' endurance of physical adversity - such as B's tormenting prods with the goad - evokes a strong reaction in the audience, compelling them to confront the harsh realities portrayed on stage.

*Enter goad right on wheeled support (one wheel). The point stops a foot short of sack B. Pause. The point draws back, pauses, darts forward into sack, withdraws, recoils to a foot short of sack. Pause. The sack moves.
Exit goad. (Beckett, 2006, p. 209)*

Through bodily suffering, Beckett enables a profound connection between performer and spectator that serves as a crucible for empathy, much like Artaud envisioned.

Objects of cruelty: Unveiling Artaud's scenic language

In Beckett's minimalist staging, objects become vital collaborators in conveying meaning and emotion. The props - a pair of sacks, a goad, clothes, a bottle, pills, and carrots - serve not only as visual elements but as active agents within the drama. Artaud (1958) posits that the physicality of objects can evoke complex emotions and bypass rational thought, emphasizing their role in creating a raw, elemental theatre. Sellin emphasizes the significant role that objects play in Artaud's works. In both Artaud's and Beckett's frameworks, objects possess a voice of their own, conveying profound meaning and impact. When these objects 'speak,' they resonate deeply with the audience, eliciting an emotional response (Artaud, 1958, p. 189). This interrelationship between objects and the audience enhances the overall experience of the play, revealing a layer of communication that transcends mere dialogue.

The two sacks lying silently on the stage become emblematic of Artaud's radical idea that non-verbal communication should take precedence over linguistic expression. The sacks, representing confinement, ennui, and the burdens of existence, challenge conventional interpretations of dramatic language, showcasing how even the most straightforward objects can convey layers of meaning. It highlights the presence of the goad, which serves as an emblem of cruelty within the narrative. As character A and character B confront the goad's piercing prods, the palpable discomfort becomes a tangible experience for the audience, aligning perfectly with Artaud's vision of theatre that seeks to evoke deeply empathetic responses.

The relational dynamics emerge vividly as the goad instigates a cycle of action and reaction. The repeated strikes compel character A and character B to respond, forcing them into a relentless struggle against an external, authoritative force. These dynamic highlights the cyclical nature of their suffering, encapsulating Artaud's notion that the shared experience of physical distress leads to a profound sense of connection between the audience and actors. Morris (2022) highlights Artaud's remarkable skill in bridging the gap between the audience and the actors on stage. He masterfully creates an environment in which the audience can genuinely feel and experience the emotions of the actors. This connection allows the audience to empathize with the characters' struggles and hardships, bringing their feelings of distress to the forefront. In this way, the sense of cruelty that permeates the characters' experiences in Beckett's play resonates deeply with the audience, mirroring the emotional turmoil portrayed on stage. This profound interplay heightens the impact of the performance, leaving a lasting impression of the characters' suffering.

Artaud's interior cruelty: A theatre of psychological assault

Character A's act of brooding introduces an essential psychological layer to the performance. By engaging in an introspective ritual, A's body language reveals the emotional turmoil underpinning each movement. The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines 'brood' as a state of preoccupation with troubling thoughts, which perfectly encapsulates A's anguished demeanour. This repetitive state of contemplation aligns with Artaud's principle of Cruelty as a submission to a theatrical necessity (Artaud, 1958, p. 102).

The necessity that character A feels to take pills reveals the multi-layered pain that extends beyond the physical into the personal realm of psychological suffering. This act emphasizes vulnerability, illustrating how internal struggles manifest physically and how such manifestations resonate with Artaud's vision of a confrontational theatre. Knapp (1980) articulates a vision of theatre that engages and torments the mind rather than inflicting physical suffering on the body. This particular form of theatre affects its audience through emotional resonance and the heart rather than through intellectual reasoning alone. From this standpoint, it becomes evident that Artaud's philosophies have significantly influenced Beckett's work. Artaud's emphasis on emotional experience and psychological exploration is in Beckett's plays, which often delve into the complexities of human existence and the intricacies of the human psyche. This alignment showcases how theatre can serve as a medium for profound psychological engagement, prompting audiences to reflect on their feelings and perspectives in a way that is both challenging and transformative.

*Takes a little bottle of pills from his shirt pocket,
swallows a pill, puts bottle back (Beckett, 2006, p. 209)*

Here, the conflict reflects an internal complexity where the audience identifies with the shared pain and existential uncertainty. Brustein observes that

the conflicts we witness in the external world serve as significant indicators of the inner turmoil that individuals may experience. These outward manifestations of struggle often reflect deeper, unresolved issues that can profoundly impact internal life. Such external strife can disrupt the sense of inner peace, leading to a state of turmoil that permeates various aspects of life. When individuals confront conflicts in their surroundings, it is not merely a matter of external circumstances; rather, these situations can trigger an exploration of their own psychological and emotional struggles. Brustein's (1965) insights suggest that understanding this connection between outer and inner conflict is crucial for comprehending the complexities of human experience and how external events can shape mental and emotional states. Additionally, the instinctive act of biting, chewing, and ultimately rejecting the carrot serves as a rejection of existence itself. This moment encapsulates the fierce emotional landscape that Artaud envisioned, demanding the audience not merely passive observers but active participants who confront their discomfort and reality.

Takes a large partly-eaten carrot from coat pocket, bites off a piece, chews an instant, spits it out with disgust...
(Beckett, 2006, p. 209)

The act - ranging from hunger to disdain - creates a tangible connection between character and audience, illustrating Artaud's proposition that theatre should elicit a full spectrum of emotions.

Immersed in sensation: Artaud's theatrical assault

Beckett's Act Without Words II successfully immerses its audience in an intense sensory experience through its deliberate staging and physical actions. Esslin (1988) refers to this particular type of staging as the 'emotional stage,' emphasizing its role as a platform for deep emotional expression and resonance. This stage transcends traditional representations of drama; it serves as a space where emotions are not only depicted but are actively manifested and explored. In this context, the emotional stage becomes a dynamic environment in which the audience feels the feelings and internal struggles. More than just the characters who are affected, the audience is also emotionally charged by the unfolding drama. The performers' ability to convey authentic emotions draws the audience into the narrative, making them participants in the emotional journey. It allows the spectators to experience their feelings in response to the characters' struggles. It also highlights the powerful interplay between the stage and the audience. By creating such an immersive atmosphere, performers and playwrights can evoke profound emotional responses, allowing viewers to connect with the characters on a deeply personal level. This emphasis on emotional manifestation reinforces the power of theatre to reflect and engage with the complex emotional landscapes of human experience, affecting both those on stage and those in the seats. The dynamic between Character A and Character B in a series of actions portrays body exposure, for example, dressing and undressing. Artaud's (1958) directive to

“wake us up: nerves and heart” becomes manifest as the characters expose themselves both literally and metaphorically to one another and the audience.

The audience's reactions - discomfort, empathy, or revulsion - are a testament to Artaud's assertion that theatre should provoke immediate, profound responses. As Goodall (1994) explicitly noted, this particular stage enhances the overall experience for the audience, infusing it with a rich and diverse flavour that captivates their senses. This enhancement is particularly evident through the use of movements and gestures performed on stage. The physicality of the performances - how characters move, interact, and express themselves non-verbally - contributes to the overall effectiveness of the storytelling and deepens the emotional engagement of the audience.

By incorporating dynamic movements and articulate gestures, actors can convey complexities of emotion and character; it is in the dialogue alone. This expressive form of communication adds layers of meaning. It allows the audience to appreciate the nuances on multiple levels. Goodall's observation underscores the importance of these physical elements in theatre, as they serve not only to enrich the visual tapestry of the performance but also to resonate with the audience's own emotions, making the theatrical experience more immersive and memorable. Through such vibrant staging, the emotional landscape of the play becomes more palpable. It provides the audience with a fuller and more textured understanding of the characters and their journeys. This exposure aligns with the notion that the body itself becomes a site of political and emotional negotiation, interrupting societal norms and expectations. In this framework, the human body's bare physicality represents vulnerability and authenticity, a prime vehicle through which Beckett articulates the existential plight.

Character B's vigorous execution of actions accentuates Artaud's call for forceful physicality in performance. Through the repetitive, energetic acts, the audience witnesses the impassioned dance of existence, which invites active engagement. This forceful execution aligns with Antonin Artaud's concept of the Theatre of Cruelty, where physical intensity on stage aims to jolt the audience from passivity. Morris (2022) believed that “the expressive power of the actor's body equals to those of the words that actors were saying...”.

Brushes teeth vigorously

Rubs scalp vigorously

Brushes clothes vigorously

Brushes hair vigorously (Beckett, 2006, p. 210)

As Character B consults a watch before engaging in each subsequent action, this rhythmic motif underscores the urgency and tension inherent in human life, weaving together the fragmented experiences of both characters.

Shattering the Stage: Artaud's Subversive Stagecraft

Artaud's (1958) distinct approach to engaging audiences involves a technique he described as "capturing the sensibility." This method seeks to amalgamate numerous movements, images, and their associated meanings within a compact timeframe, challenging audiences and inviting them to confront their deepest fears. In Beckett's mime, this principle manifests through a rich interplay of actions, objects, and silence, creating a complex web that engrosses the spectators.

This overlapping of images and movements disrupts traditional narrative structures, making the audience complicit in their emotional navigation. The juxtaposition of personal, intimate acts, such as brooding, dressing, and taking pills - reveals the intertwining of individual and collective human experiences. By blurring the boundaries between public and private identities, Beckett embodies Artaud's belief in the necessity of theatrical confrontation, inviting audiences to grapple with the raw and unmediated aspects of existence.

The deliberate layering of these moments shapes a multi-sensory environment. It invites the audience into the characters' intimate struggles. This stunning approach to theatrical construction ensures that Beckett's *Act Without Words II* is not merely a homage to Artaud's revolutionary ideas but a vivid manifestation of an impactful artistic dialogue. In essence, Beckett transcends traditional narrative confines, crafting a theatrical experience that echoes Artaud's vision of an immersive, emotional, and sensory awakening.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this paper explored the profound interplay between Antonin Artaud's theories of the *Theatre of Cruelty* and Samuel Beckett's *Act Without Words II*. Some of the key points include the evocative use of light and darkness. The employment of stark lighting contrasts evokes deep emotional responses. It aligns with Artaud's belief that light must resonate with the audience's psyche. This manipulation creates a sensory experience that enhances the thematic struggles of visibility and obscurity. Then follows the primacy of physical expression in which the absence of verbal communication in Beckett's work emphasizes physical expression as a primary mode of engagement. Characters A and B exemplify universal human struggles through their contrasting physical behaviors, reflecting Artaud's notion that gestures and actions can convey profound meaning beyond words.

The minimalistic staging and symbolic objects within the performance serve as active agents that evoke complex emotions. Beckett's use of props embodies Artaud's radical idea of non-verbal communication, prompting audiences to experience the narrative on multiple layers. Character A's introspective actions highlight the intersection of physical and psychological suffering, resonating with the audience's own emotional experiences. This engagement places viewers in a position to confront their discomfort, consistent

with Artaud's goal of eliciting empathy. By disrupting conventional storytelling and merging personal and collective experiences, Beckett's work invites audiences into an intimate exploration of human existence. This approach aligns with Artaud's vision of a confrontational theatre that provokes immediate and profound responses.

The significance of these findings lies in their revelation of how Beckett's minimalist yet impactful theatre draws heavily from Artaud's philosophical framework, crafting a rich, immersive experience that prompts reflection on the human condition. It suggests future research to explore the nuanced relationships between physicality, audience engagement, and emotional response in Beckett's works. It also supports a comparative analysis of how contemporary theatre interprets and implements Artaud's principles.

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