False Memories, Forged Identities and Murders: *Macbeth* for the Twenty-First Century

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Abstract Deborah Levy's Macbeth—*False Memories* (2000) addresses the transitional millennial crisis of identity and integrity, fuelled by postmodern uncertainties and deconstructions. Its major concern is the concept of authenticity and forgery, the original and the copy, partly conveyed through the play's problematic relation to Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. In her version, Levy seems to be interested in exploring the cultural fragmented memories of Shakespeare's text, inaccurate, imprecise and detached from the original context. The author herself comments in the introduction to her play that her *Macbeth* "explores how a story told five hundred years ago travels into the concrete, pollution and speed of the twenty-first century". One of the essential transformations that occur in Levy's version is the redefinition of the motivation for murder. The original Macbeth's desire for power is replaced with Levy's characters' search for authenticity of experience and feeling which they hope to gain in the act of murder. The possibility of achieving authenticity through murder is destroyed by the play's intrinsic meta-and inter-textuality which in a self-referential metaphor equates murder with acting and compares a murderer to an actor, who is always a forger of somebody else. Levy's characters' imprisonment in fakeness and lack of authenticity is largely defined by their bondage to Shakespeare's text, which preconditions all their actions.

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1 Introduction

In many ways Deborah Levy's *Macbeth—False Memories* moves back into a well known territory of Shakespeare's tragedy. It contains a number of elements that can be identified as borrowed from the original play, including several repetitive quotations from the original text. At the same time, however, the play subverts the viewers/readers' expectation of referring to the original text in a recognizable manner, of respecting it and adapting or even revising it. As the director of the play writes, "With *The Tempest*, we took an X-ray of the play and created a New version from the elements. With *Macbeth* we wanted to go a stage further. In our workshops we raised the edifice of the Shakespeare play and all that means to us to the ground to build anew from foundations" (Philippou 2010)[1]. This radical deconstructive urge met with unfavourable reviews, such as Nick Curtis's criticism of the play as detached from the original, simplistic and clumsy: "Having 'deconstructed' the original to the point of extinction, Levy and director Nick Philippou have nothing to offer but technical tricks and archness masquerading as postmodern irony. This is an exercise in vacuousness" (Curtis 2010)[2].

In her re-writing of *Macbeth* Levy indeed seems more interested in moving into a different cultural dimension and exploring the cultural fragmented memories of Shakespeare's text, inaccurate, imprecise and detached from the original context. In a number of fragmented and non-chronological scenes combining live performance with film, the play presents two main characters—Bennet and his wife, who try to achieve authentic experience through murder and usurpation. The murderee—Lavelli, who is Bennet's Italian business partner, after death keeps haunting Bennet's wife, trying to train her to become an actress and a murderess at the same time. Deborah Levy comments that her play "explores how a story told five hundred years ago travels into the concrete, pollution and speed of the twenty-first century" (2000, p. 144). The concern with the idea of the millennial turn or passage situates the play in the context of millennial and postmodern theory conceptualizing the decadent, nihilistic and apocalyptic tendencies of the "*fin-de-millenium* mood of contemporary culture" (Kroker and Cook 1988, p. i). One of those postmodern tendencies is the redefinition of the concept of individual identity and authenticity. Of equal importance to the transposition of the original into the contemporary context is the use of film and mobile phone on the stage. The effect of speed is generated through film editing, fast changes of scenes, fragmentation and anachrony while the extensive use of a mobile phone problematizes the idea of spatial relativity and authenticity, replacing and preventing real actions that could be mimetically represented on the stage.

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[1] From the director's Web page, http://www.nickphilippou.com/archive/2000/macbeth/macbeth_1.html.

[2] Curtis, "False alarm rings for Macbeth", http://195.234.240.57/theatre/review-583687-false-alarm-rings-for-macbeth.do.

The quintessential transformation in addressing the question of postmodern identity occurs in the redefinition of the motivation for murder, which is to feel something, for in the twenty-first century *Macbeth* the characters do not crave anything. What is missing in their lives is the feeling of being alive, of authenticity and individuality. Consequently, one of the central concepts that emerges in the play—both on the primary and the metatheatrical level—is the question of authenticity and forgery. The "murderee", whose death is supposed to give a sense of being alive and authenticity to the murderer, paradoxically believes that he himself is a forgery and as such lacks authenticity. The very possibility of achieving authenticity through murder is destroyed by equating murder with acting and comparing a murderer to an actor, who is always a forger of somebody else.

Deborah Levy in the introduction to her play presents her version as referring to the original *Macbeth* in three themes—children revenging their parents' death, a ghost of a murdered man appearing in a play and the motif of camouflage. These themes, present in the original, gain in importance in Levy's version, turning into the major structural and conceptual frameworks. Through the motif of camouflage Levy seems to explore the ways in which the original *Macbeth* itself exposes the idea of mutable identity and usurpation/forgery. The concept of camouflage, deriving directly from the original *Macbeth*, embraces human relationships with doubles, imitation, illusion, visual confusion and the surface, the ideas discussed, among others, by H. Schwartz in his *Culture of the Copy* (1998), a study in the millennial significance of replication, camouflage and forgery. These notions will be instrumental in the examination of the self-reflexive and intertextual exploration in multimedia theatre. The double, the twin, the Other, through which the act of usurpation and imitation is effected, reflects the conceptual doubling of identities within the millennial "doubled time of ends and beginnings" (Schwartz 1998, p. 47). The conceptual significance of the vanished twin, the absent part of the self, seems to represent the "paradoxical sense of exhaustion and incompletion at this fin de siecle" (Schwartz 1998, p. 47). The missing or fragmentary identity is represented as seeking completion in the Other through acts of usurpation and illusion as well as acting and imitation, each involving degrees of camouflage, forgery and repetition. Levy's characters' fragmentation is further conditioned by their relationship to the characters in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Levy suggests that they resemble the imaginary son and daughter of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*: "It is as if they have inherited the nervous tics and twitches of their parents" (Levy 2000, p. 144).

2 Usurpation and Illusion

The act of murder committed by Bennet is described in the stage directions as followed by three actions of usurpation and appropriation—taking over Lavelli's mobile phone, inheriting the eczema mark and eating his food:

> "Bennet stabs Lavelli in the stomach. […] Blood pours out of Lavelli's nose and drips on to his salami roll. […] Lavelli's mobile phone falls out of his pocket. It begins to ring. Bennet looks at it. Eventually, he answers it.[…] He puts his hand to his forehead. Bennet seems to have caught Lavelli's eczema in the shape of a number three. […] He bites into Lavelli's bloody salami roll. Chews with gusto" (Levy 2000, p. 158, italics in the original).

In Levy's *Macbeth* desire for power that fuelled most of the characters' actions in Shakespeare's text has been transformed into postmodern consumerism that fails to bring satisfaction. The original Macbeth's greed for more power and authority is transposed into more literal corporeal voracity in Levy's play—committing murder by Bennet is accompanied by his repetitive acts of eating. Through murder and symbolic cannibalism Bennet hopes to be able to feel again, which, however, he fails to. The act of eating the murderee's sandwich sprinkled with his blood (bread/body and wine/blood) operates as a postmodern pastiche of the holy communion, which necessarily fails to bring any effects. The real experience that Bennet tries to grasp through consumption incessantly escapes him. Consumption gives Bennet a temporary illusion of experiencing something and thus being alive, which ceases instantly.

The eczema mark, the second usurped part of the murderee's identity, originally functions as a symbol of life energy and ability to feel. During a business meeting Bennet's deficiency of feeling is confronted with Lavelli's excess of emotions: "This is a good business partnership then? You need to feel more. I need to feel less" (Levy 2000, p. 153). Bennet's face is partly paralised and numb while Lavelli's eczema is according to his doctor a sign of him feeling too much. Through murder and symbolic cannibalism Bennet inherits the eczema mark but he still cannot feel anything—he is just a bad forgery of Lavelli's emotional energy.

The third element of usurpation, using Lavelli's mobile phone, is developed in the play particularly in the relationship between Bennet and Lavelli's daughter. By taking over Lavelli's mobile phone he becomes a foster/fake father to Lavelli's daughter. She keeps phoning him on Lavelli's phone to share most intimate experiences in her life as if only through the mediation of telephone communication could they become authentic. Paradoxically, the relationship that Bennet enters into, that is the relationship between Lavelli and his daughter, instead of authenticity evokes forgery that ultimately turns out to be a double deception. In one of the first scenes Lavelli, when talking to Bennet, explains his fascination with forgeries as deriving from the sense of having a fatal flaw—of being fake in relation to his daughter: "She has made of her father a forgery—a man who is more like the father she wants than the real thing. I'm fake" (Levy 2000, p. 148). Towards the end of the play it turns out that this fake father role over the mobile phone, the role undertaken by Bennet after Lavelli's death, was originally devised for Lavelli's second daughter, a five-year-old girl whose tripled video image in a Victorian costume functions as the three weird sisters from the original *Macbeth*. The misplaced role of the fake father makes Lavelli's alleged emotional authenticity and intensity only a game of appearances. The simplicity with which the

replacement of the real father for the fake one is conducted is a comment on the redefinition of identity mediated through postmodern technology.

Mobile phone conversations expand the diegetic space of the play by creating the illusion of mobility and travel. At the same time, through constant availability and oppressive frequency, they limit conceptually the private space granted to Bennet. In this respect the use of a mobile phone in the play refers to the paradox of the world as a telephone box suggesting its simultaneous spatial openness and constriction (Levinson 2004, p. 86–87). Lavelli's daughter's accounts of her actions, journeys and experiences gradually change from probable and hypothetically authentic into very unlikely and ostentatiously fictional. The diegetic space created through conversations fails to overlap with the visual representation of the characters' movements; the closer the daughter is to her intended victim—Bennet—the more intimate her reports are (culminating in references to sexual experiences and defecation) and more exotic the spaces she apparently travels to. The last conversation takes place when she is standing outside his house, telling him about the existence of Lavelli's younger daughter. Despite their implied fictionality, Lavelli's daughter's reports of what she is doing are a source of experience for Bennet, the substitute of the life that he does not lead himself. The inherent authenticity of the medium naturalizes and verifies what remains speculative in the relation between Bennet and Lavelli's daughter. The communicative directness of telephone conversations, which according to Levinson does not involve Coleridge's suspension of disbelief (2004, p. 85), authenticates the daughter's accounts and reactions. The naïve trustfulness on the part of Bennet motivated by his craving for real experience makes him vulnerable to deception. The voyeuristic pleasure that he seems to derive from Lavelli's daughter's real time reports of what she feels and experiences turns out to be fake. It was used by the daughter to keep him busy while she was trying to locate him to avenge her father's death[3].

3 Acting and Imitation

The process through which Lavelli's ghost transforms Bennet's wife into an actress and murderess establishes a double metatheatrical perspective. On the primary level, the ghost's possession of Bennet's wife's body functions as an ironic reversal of the act of usurpation in the original play and as an equivalent to the famous sleep walking scene. Structurally, the ghost connects the metatheatrical levels in both plays—the life of the murderer as a badly acted performance and the

[3] To a certain extent Bennet is manipulated by Lavelli's daughter e.g. when she instructs him what flowers to choose for his wife—he repeats her words in conversations with his wife as if he was already haunted by the spirit of his future victim. In fact, Lavelli's daughter rematerializes for a moment just before the murder occurs—her ontological position as a mobile phone interlocutor does not differ much from her later status as the voice of the ghost.

murderer's identity as a series of usurpations and deceptions in the original and the complicated implications of the equation between acting and murdering in Levy's play. The metaphorical link between the sleep walking scene, the idea of camouflage and acting is established early in the play when Lavelli's ghost puts a white sheet over Bennet's wife dressed in a white night dress—against the white background she becomes completely camouflaged and invisible. From this moment Bennet's wife is subjected to the process of transformation into a murderess/actress, by which her identity is simultaneously usurped and appropriated by Lavelli's ghost. The relationship between Bennet's wife and Lavelli's ghost resembles the possession by a spirit of the dead which seems to define the essence of theatre and acting.

The idea of acting as possession by the spirit of the dead was developed by Tadeusz Kantor in his concept of the theatre of death. Acting was compared to so called lower usurpation, which can be illustrated by a Jewish legend of Dybbuk, a spirit that enters the body of another and speaks through this body. Kantor admits that the act of calling up the dead spirits is a suspicious and impure procedure—it is the act of hiring. An actor becomes an impersonator, a usurper of a personality. That is why he or she does not have to act. Every usurper or impersonator can never imitate a particular person; he or she always fails to do it; because he cannot transform himself into somebody else, he reveals his own personality (Pleśniarowicz 1997, p. 221). Life in art, as Kantor argues, can be conveyed "only through the absence of life, through an appeal to DEATH, through APPEARANCES, through EMPTINESS, and the lack of a MESSAGE" and the model through which this can be achieved is the notion of the mannequin (Kantor 1997, p. 222, capitalization in the original). When confronting the idea of acting as haunting and usurpation and an actor as a mannequin with the postmodern forgery and fakeness the relationships into which Bennet's wife and the ghost enter expose both the exhaustion of postmodern copy and surface imitation and the potential of this exhaustion to reveal the true identity not necessarily yielding to representation.

The interaction between Lavelli's ghost and Bennet's wife involves a double process of usurpation and transformation—the transformation into an actress/murderess and the ghost's attempts to enact and usurp her identity. Under the influence of Lavelli's concept of murder as acting and pretending, Bennet's wife in appearance and behaviour changes gradually into a film star, her final version being "a screen goddess" wearing a red dress and long gloves, combing her long golden hair crowned with a diamanté tiara. It is in those film star costumes that Bennet's wife is triggered by the ghost to utter and partly perform fragments of passages from the original *Macbeth*—the part about the importance of the promise and Lady Macbeth's readiness to harm a baby fed by her if she ever pledged to do so and the fragment of the sleep walking scene.

The former quotation from Lady Macbeth's part:

> "I have given suck, and know
> How tender'tis to love the babe that milks me;
> I would while it was smiling in my face
> Have plucked my nipple from his boneless gums

> And dashed the brains out, had I so sworn as you
> Have done to this" (Shakespeare 1971, p. 71)

fulfils two functions in Levy's version—it establishes the conceptual mother–daughter relationship between Lady Macbeth and Bennet's wife and hence indirectly between Shakespeare's and Levy's plays, but even more importantly, as the text charged with extreme affective intensity, it exposes the emotional exhaustion of millennial relationships. The concept of the mother's body is introduced in the play a couple of pages earlier in a dream Bennet's wife narrates to the ghost—the dream of the mother dressed up in a "gold fake-fur lionskin" clasping her and pressing against "her nylon fur breasts". Lavelli's ghost interprets the dream for her as a comment on the pretense and fakeness of imaginary paradise, of the unity between mother and daughter: "Your dream is telling you that paradise is synthetic. The breast your mother pulls you to is made from nylon. Paradise is a forgery" (Levy 2000, p. 155). When, later, he teaches Lady Macbeth's part to Bennet's wife, he refers to Lady Macbeth as Bennet's wife's mother: "Your mother said, I have given suck…", adding at the end of the quotation "and then she killed herself" (Levy 2000, p. 177). The terror of being pulled from the mother's breast and the horror of infanticide, although in a sense fake because never realized, are paradoxically more human and authentic than the fondness of the artificial breast. The two mothers, the one that threatens, rejects and then abandons her daughter and the other who offers artificial fulfillment again expose the problem of transposing the original text of excessive affectation into the millennial fascination with fake surfaces. The emotional exhaustion of Levy's version of Macbeth is problematised in Bennet's wife's inability to utter Lady Macbeth's words. When she tries to repeat after Lavelli's ghost what comes out of her mouth is a flatly, as the stage directions suggest, spoken stream of broken and fragmentary words: "I know how… I know how… ta ta tender it is ta ta to love… to love…" or "to love to love to love the bah bah to love love love the—" (Levy 2000, p. 168).

In the sleep-walking scene, Bennet's wife parrots the text prompted by the ghost, turning the original into parody and the grotesque:

> Lavelli: Stare out into the middle distance.
> *She does so.*
> Bring your hands together as if you are washing them.
> *She does so.*
> Say after me (*Thick Italian.*), all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this leetle hand. Oh! Oh! Oh!
> Bennet's Wife: All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand. Oh! Oh! Oh!
> Lavelli: Yes, not a bad forgery. Oh! Oh! Oh! (Levy 2000, p. 171).

In contrast to rather failed attempts at enacting Lady Macbeth, Bennet's wife is fairly successful, with the help of the ghost's instructions, to act the part of Lavelli's daughter just before she is murdered. Repeating the intimate passages from Lavelli's Daughter's telephone conversations with Bennet, Bennet's wife finally manages to embrace the Mediterranean spirit of her victim and approach

her "*like a screen goddess" "walking towards her prey*" (Levy 2000, p. 178). While quoting Lavelli's Daughter she takes hold of her and bangs her head violently against some object as if enacting the diegetic violence of Lady Macbeth's passage about feeding and harming the baby. In fact she seems to fulfill in this way Lavelli's plan to get rid of his elder daughter as Bennet's wife explicitly explains to Lavelli's Daughter: "I talk to your father because he is training me to be your assassin" (Levy 2000, p. 177). Lavelli performs both the role of the theatre director and a murderer, who by theatre training (instruction) and spiritual possession (haunting) merges the aesthetic and ethical notions into the idea of murder as a work of art.

The reversed process of usurpation and acting occurs in the ghost's attempts to imitate and embody the character of Bennet's wife. When training Bennet's wife to become a perfect actress and murderess, Lavelli is concerned with the surface transformation, the visual appeal, the façade. He is partly interested in the use of tricks that will create illusions of effects rather than the real or authentic transformations. For example, while burying both corpses—Lavelli's and his daughter's, Bennet's wife keeps drinking water from a bottle—which seems to suggest thirst and exhaustion but in fact is only a fulfillment of one of Ghost's instructions: "I give you a tip… always drink a lot of water when you bury the dead… it will help you sweat. The actress and murderess have something in common" (Levy 2000, p. 152). Thus an attempt to feel something through murder is doomed to failure as in the twenty first century murder is entangled with faked emotion, pastiche and spectacle and devoid of authenticity and terror. Sweating has to be produced to fake the authenticity of feeling.

At the same time, from the beginning of the play Lavelli's ghost tries to imitate and copy Bennet's wife's behaviour. Through the ghost's training the wife acquires the surface which is a mimicry of some other surface identity and as such yields to further imitation and appropriation, like a Barthesian "material which has already been worked on" (Barthes 1994, p. 15). In the screen goddess scene, he enters the stage dressed as an exact copy of Bennet's wife. Mimicking her flat manner of speaking the woman enacted by him tells a dream in which her mother dressed as a prawn wearing a Bette Davis hat (a parody of Bennet's wife's dream of the artificial mother) addresses her: "You are just a little version of me" (Levy 2000, p. 166). Upon these words Lavelli turns round and in his own voice addresses the same words to Bennet's wife. The horror of seeing her own copy, expressed in scream, is the primary charge of recognition and confrontation with the Other that, according to Kantor, is at the bottom of each theatrical experience—"the shock taking place at the moment when opposite a man (the viewer) there stood for the first time a man (the actor) deceptively similar to us yet at the same time infinitely foreign" (Kantor 1997, p. 224).

Apart from the reaction to this moment of recognition the scream as a sign of terror can be seen as one of the "nervous tics and twitches" inherited from Bennet's wife's conceptual and intertextual mother. Each of Lavelli's attempts to

imitate the scream fails as he says he does not have "enough terror in [his] throat to make a good forgery of what is inside [her]" (Levy 2000, p. 167)[4]. The terror inside Bennet's wife, which is, according to him, a prerequisite of being a murderess, seems to originally come from her relationship with her mother—Lady Macbeth: "A gaze of terror will do […]. Your mother pulled you from her breast. She killed herself. Your blonde head is still pressed against the wall. Remember, you cannot murder without terror… so use what you have inside you…" (Levy 2000, p. 177). Thus what seems to be original, immune to imitation and usurpation originates from the appropriation of an earlier text. The only solid element of identity—the terror of a child pressed against the wall—which seems to motivate the authenticity of the scream, ultimately also turns out to be a forgery as after the final murder Bennet's wife sarcastically mocks Lavelli's instructions.

The final speechless pantomime of drinking tea, which according to stage directions is supposed to reflect the atmosphere of "inertia, heat, and nausea" brings together the ideas of postmodern excessive consumption incapable of satisfying one's desire and the inability to feel anything. The instantaneous illusion of action and affection temporarily granted in the acts of murder fades the moment the action is terminated. Massaging the murderer's stigma—the eczema mark—becomes an empty habit, a nervous tic of no consequence. The characters are finally caught in postmodern excess, putting sugar, lump after lump, into tea and vomiting, hardly aware of the murderees' off-stage voices attempting to haunt them.

4 Technology, Forgery and Replication

The experimental multi-media quality of Levy's performance becomes instrumental in exposing and complicating the notions of imitation, forgery and authenticity. Both the mobile phone and the film replace the textual diegetic function with mimetic representation or rather the illusion of such representation in the former case.

The use of film to present off-stage events is one of the accepted techniques of diegetic expansion of the stage replacing either the dramatic text or troublesome changes of the set in the performance. However, in the context of the play's conceptual preoccupations, the film is employed to further question the possibility of authenticity and real experience. The interaction between the stage and the film is complicated by the lack of synchronicity between the two, despite their separate chronological developments. Lavelli's ghost, for example, appears on the stage and is referred to as dead long time before his murder is shown in a film scene.

[4] Lavelli's ghost: "It is difficult to become you. [He circles her]. Difficult because you have not yet become you. You have no centre for me to excavate in my mimicry. I can only imitate your surface. For this I am grateful. I do not have enough terror in my throat to make a good forgery of what is inside you" (Levy 2000, p. 167).

Likewise, Bennet presents a butterfly shaped comb to his wife before the scene of him murdering Lavelli's lover, an oriental waiter who received the comb from Lavelli, is shown on the screen. When confronted with the metatheatrical concerns of the unmediated stage events, the film situations strike as artificial and fictional. The effect is increased because of the explicitness of the camera work, which seems to respond too easily to the characters' words and ostensibly select visual stimuli, as if the situations have been directed by one of the characters. Apparently authentic and unrehearsed events are relegated to mediated representations by technological media, which seem to offer a temporary substitute for emotional excitement and fulfillment. The stage scenes left largely uneventful come to life only in self-referential or intertextual explorations of camouflage and forgery. None of these is capable of offering the characters the possibility of authentic emotional experience.

Relegating the role of the three weird sisters to several film close-ups of three identical faces of a five-year-old girl (Flavia—Lavelli's younger daughter), mouthing, whispering or singing the word "tomorrow" either in English or in Italian further problematizes the question of authenticity and illusion. Similarly to twins, triplets can be seen through the legend of the vanishing twin to be able to articulate in their oracular power the "profound uneasiness with postmodern confusions of identities and postindustrial contusions of the 'real thing'" (Schwartz 1998, p. 21)[5]. As technically multiplied ideal copies, the sisters are a perfect realization of mimicry and forgery, a fulfillment of a wish to become the Other through the process of becoming the Same and as such a mockery of the stage characters' concern with and horror of perfect imitation. The word 'tomorrow' is the condensed message of Macbeth's witches' prophecy parodied in its ambiguity and vulnerability to misinterpretation. The word cuts through the whole play in both temporal and conceptual reverberations referring to the ways in which the idea of 'tomorrow' functions in the original. However, the intertextual interpretation of the sisters scene together with its prophetic function turns out to be a misinterpretation by both Bennet and the reader/spectator. The multiplied Flavia's 'tomorrow' refers to the promise that her father made to her to visit her, which he never kept—the broken promise that originally stood behind the concept of identity as a forgery. The final nauseating pantomime is followed by Lavelli's ghost's conclusion: "Before I died, I was thinking that tomorrow is a promise that is always broken" (Levy 2000, p. 181). In the last film presentation of the three girls, one of them holds and fires a gun earlier found in Lavelli's older daughter's suitcase, upon which event Bennet massages his or rather Lavelli's eczema mark on his forehead, completing the play's intra- and inter-textual retroactivity.

[5] "The legend ultimately has less to do with science or medicine than with the oracular powers of twins who, together, appear to tell us most of what we want to know about being uniquely human and, apart, more than we want to know about feeling alone. The legend of the vanishing twin articulates our profound uneasiness with postmodern confusions of identities and postindustrial contusions of the 'real thing'" (Schwartz 1998, p. 21).

5 Conclusion

The metatheatrical and self-referential mode of the play is a source from which postmodern nihilism and exhaustion in Levy's play seem to derive—the emptiness that rests beneath the masks and roles played by the characters, inability to feel something to be someone, to discard the forged self. The conflation of acting and murdering places the events in the metatheatrical and intertextual perspective, with all actions undertaken turned into forgeries and fake.

Levy's play seems to embody both processes attributed to postmodernism's vacating of "the traditional self and stimulating of self-effacement" suggested by Ihab Hassan (1992, p. 196)—"a fake flatness, without inside/outside" and "its opposite, self multiplication, self-reflection", "diffusing itself in depthless styles, refusing, eluding, interpretation" (1992, p. 197). With the accompanying disturbance of temporality and instantaneous gratification, the play illustrates the Jamesonian depthlessness as "fixation with appearances, surfaces, and instant impacts that have no sustaining power over time" (Harvey 1992, p. 313). However, the disappearance of the notion of the self and individual, which according to Jameson, leads to repetitiveness and imitation of dead styles, also results in the narcissistic self-exploration, self-referential preoccupation with art itself, its exhaustion and failure (cf. Jameson 1993, p. 196). The disturbing and contradictory conceptualizations of the millennial crisis of identity, although linked with the negative notions of superficiality, exhaustion, forgery and fakeness, seem to reveal profound uncertainties and deconstructions of more constructive but illusive traditional concepts of the self.

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