

## Encounter of Man with Event / Notes on the Play "Made in Germany"

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After watching the performance of the play "Made in Germany" by the "Derang" theater group (since the word "Namayesh" has been chosen as a substitute for the word "theater" in Persian, I have used it, and I do not mean the mere display of something, i.e., a show), one can engage in a long discussion about the totality of the signs of this theatrical work and either praise or criticize various sections of the play. However, the main and important point is the perspective of the speaker: first, with what expectation they have come to see this play, and second, from what viewpoint they analyze and critique the work. Personally, I do not find a formalist critique of this theatrical work to be complete or effective and will enumerate my reasons for this incompleteness and ineffectiveness:

First: The play "Made in Germany" was written, rehearsed, and performed in the context of migration and diaspora. This play was written in German, translated into Persian, and performed in Persian. Despite the obvious and recurring deficiencies for diaspora artists who, due to their learned "foreign" language, work and write in their mother tongue even in the host country, it must be able to engage non-Persian-speaking audiences at a non-Persian-language festival in its story and narrative style. Practically and logically, this was initially achieved by displaying German and English translations (two non-primary languages of the play). It cannot be overlooked how sometimes this communication through translation was disrupted by the movements of the actors during the performance. This unintentional form of performance is imposed on the work by the circumstances, time, and place of its creation and becomes a part of it.

Second: Regardless of my familiarity with the director's temperament, interests, and intellectual-artistic choices, referring to the play's text, which narrates the political life and struggle of the playwright, inevitably creates a political and possibly ideological context. This then leads to the avoidance of formalist decisions, meaning that the text itself, with its language, writing form, story, narrative style, and the storyteller's way of telling the story, imposes a form on the performance from the beginning, which is deemed necessary for sharing the story with the audience and highlighting the author's messages (the words "ideological" and "impose" are not used in a negative sense here and only explain the author's goals and the narrative form's participation in the performance).

Third: The play "Made in Germany" chooses a narrative form that, for analyzing and critiquing the work—at least in the performance I saw and can comment on—a content-oriented or text-oriented critique is essential. By resorting to this type of critique, one can analyze a performance that is unlikely to please audiences who favor formalist forms and performances. There are important reasons for Persian-speaking audiences, especially those who have watched theatrical performances inside and outside Iran. Although "form" is generally added to a performance to establish a more effective connection with its audience, the play "Made in Germany" and its narrative style cannot

remain faithful to the familiar forms of Iranian theater because it aims to tell a "stream of consciousness" story without adhering to chronological order. In narrating a true historical event, the play does not observe the chronology, which distances the work from "documentary theater," where events and facts are presented to the audience in a logical and temporal order. However, in "Made in Germany," the writer intentionally disrupts this chronology, essentially creating a narrative form within the narrative of the work—an incoherent, irregular narrative with a stream of consciousness that moves back and forth in time. This choice brings the audience closer to the mental confusion and painful physical experiences of the narrator, where the cultural revolution following the 1979 Iranian Revolution is intertwined with the murder of Professor Nejatollahi before this revolution, and the narrator shares the main message of the text with the audience through a fluid and sometimes delusional narrative.

Fourth: Personally, I am not a proponent of issuing manifestos through artistic works, but I cannot condemn those who choose art to share their manifestos because it restricts freedom and deviates from freedom of expression. The play "Made in Germany" is a manifesto of human suffering, with grenade shrapnel in the body symbolizing the pain of leaving one's homeland, the mechanical and emotionless German healthcare system, and the suffering experienced by people over the years, of which this play narrates only a part. As said, "to narrate to survive," the play passes the narrative on to the next generations to share it on stage with Persian and non-Persian audiences. This choice of theater to convey the author's thoughts is itself a formal choice that, through the specific use of "stream of consciousness" in the narrative and the inevitable use of English and German translations, creates a single work that distances itself from the usual formalist performances in Iranian theater and avoids the rules of "documentary theater." It aims to deliver its political message through an actual historical event with a more unconventional narrative so that the audience, after watching the work, does not experience "catharsis" but instead grapples with different mental questions and shares them with other viewers of "Made in Germany".

Adapting and correcting the movements of the actors on stage is a point worth mentioning because, in some moments of the performance, due to the simultaneous positioning of the actors on stage and the projection of German and English translations on the third wall of the stage, parts of the translation were not visible to the audience and were masked or covered by the actors' bodies and shadows, causing a disruption in the narrative transmission from actor to audience.