

## Review

# *Omnicide: Mania, Fatality, and the Future-in-Deliriums*

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**Jason Bahbak Mohaghegh.**

*Omnicide. Mania, Fatality and Future-in Delirium.*

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## Abstract

J. B. Mohaghegh's *Omnicide* is an anthology of lyrical and narrative productions of Middle Eastern origin, giving expression to the different manias that lodge in the subjective psyche. The set of these obsessions, for the author, tend to define a desire that is both destructive and self-destructive, which is directed towards the social environment as much as towards the subject himself. The purpose of

the book, in fact, is the recovery of this negative and nihilistic matter as a founding element of alternative desires, a means to imagine other worlds. The originality of Mohaghegh's work is precisely the construction of this dark catalogue of voices and gestures that describe nihilism as an antagonistic force, as a force that, tending towards a Lost Cause, can overwhelm the misery of present existence.

Literature and poetry have inscribed in their genetic code a fascination for the absurd, for the obscure, for imaginative excess projected towards the metaphorical abyss. *Omnicide*, an anthology by Jason Bahbak Mohaghegh, considers the constellation of psychic tensions and emotional layers of those who, poetically, look towards the abyss and ruin of the world, and are fascinated by it. In his previous works, the author has dealt with experimental thought and figures of excess, violence and apocalyptic destruction, both from a philosophical and literary point of view. He builds step by step a scrupulous cartography of the *future-in-delirium*, observing the folds of rationality, problematizing the relationship between the subject of literary and poetic enunciation and his world, constructing a puzzle with these psychological fragments.

There are two fascinations that seem to underlie Mohaghegh's literary and lyrical operation. The first identifies the delusional or psychotic subject as the prophet of an alternative order. This thread, inspired by Nietzsche, shows how the subversion of the social order always starts with a cry of revolt against the prevailing moral order. The second fascination is methodological, namely in the Foucauldian mold, and concerns the compilation of the obscure cartography. The typologies and chapters follow one another as a constant dynamic between the descent to the underworld, the permanence on earth and the angry glance to the sky, therefore in a set of movements that fragment immanence and transcendence. The framework of sense in which the author moves is the Freudian history of the civilization of death instincts which, punctually, return in the most harmful and destructive forms (wars in the name of nations and religions, massacres in the name of racial or political superiority, discrimination, anthropization of ecological catastrophes). Playing finely with the analogical and metaphorical subversion represented by the literary topoi, Mohaghegh proposes the liberation of the forces that move in the dark as a revolutionary element. The *omnicide*, in fact, is the desire for destruction that moves without apparent cause, or to put it in the words of the author, towards a 'Lost Cause,' which finds its reason for being in the constant work of sabotage. Desire, in this sense, reaches its purest form in delirium and irrationality: the mysterious, exotic and erotic Orient of the Western gaze is instead

transformed into the negation of this gaze, being in reality the emergence of a multitude of threatening and destructive gazes.

The anthology, as mentioned, follows a pattern that moves backwards from the terrestrial dimension to the psychic one, presenting itself at the same time as a linear movement of the fall into delirium, and as an acceleration of the tendency to omnicide that exceeds the individual and social dimensions. Mohaghegh's search for an otherworldly alternative to rationality is illustrated in the first part, as the subject's desire for 'abduction' towards light and celestial bodies such as the moon and the sun, which are at the same time bodies that radiate and reflect light (and therefore life) and which gradually approach collapse. From melancholy to catatonia, emotions flow along the route of a desire for escape that remains distant and unattainable, and plunges the subject into instability: "What if the celestial spheres [...] their illumination and evanescence part of more devious cycle, a more dire rhythm that extended into wild creative cadences beyond the empirical realm?" (19).

The second part is dedicated to the cartography of the deliriums linked to biological life and its 'terrestrial' dimension, which is dynamic and in perpetual search of spaces to settle and move in. Psychic and dynamic excesses find their lines of escape in the figures described by the author, amidst journeys, adventures, maps and labyrinths, a(n) (un)faithful reflection on the mutilations, the result of direct experience or dream vision, and wounds produced on the environment and on the other subjects. The metaphor of the labyrinth, or the cartographic one, are useful to represent the constant mobility of the tension between the desire for death and the desire for life. The delirant's fascination with death is a thirst for other forms of life, a search for fragments in the ruins of his own mania, self-destruction as an experience of the search for the sublime, and thus an escape from the cone of shadow in which he is relegated by institutions and by society itself: "There is no time or space left [...] for those further iterations of restlessness that would fill out the entire manic imagination in movement" (308).

Consequently, the last part of the anthology deals with individual delusions. The path traced by monomanias, megalomanias and colosomanias is one that goes from subjective estrangement to rebirth,

through the projection of the self in a mirror that amplifies and multiplies its voices and actions. This multiplicity of delirious desires linked to the subjective structure, and to its precarious fragility, represents the paradoxical singular experience in the world, situated between solitude and the desire for sociality, and often traversed by hatred, fear and war.

Thus, the omnicultural mind can represent the metaphor of the force that wants to transform reality, to reshape reason, and adapt it to the new processes and desires of social transformation. As Mohaghegh puts it, this mind perceives that the limit of all things is death, and therefore all traces of its passage will be eroded after the final event. At the same time, the omnicultural mind performs the fatal dimension of the End, and, in its course, tends to predispose the conditions for its possibility (459).

In conclusion, Mohaghegh's work fits into the space opened up by theory-fiction by authors such as R. Negarestani, who move transversally between philosophy and mythology in order to reinvent the meaning of theoretical speculation and detach it from objective empiricism and teleology. The theoretical look at the "bad side" of history, ethics and morality, is in fact an attempt to innovate and extend the scope of 'materialism' alongside environmental destruction, the crisis of political mediation, and the emergence of the post-human, issues that challenge existing theoretical apparatuses and liberation projects.

In this sense, there is a deep desire for radical transformation behind Mohaghegh's operation, translated, in this case, into a worldly eschatology of weak nihilistic forces, which aspires to reach salvation through the erasure of what exists. The search for this *part maudite* advances the existentialist research carried out by Mohaghegh, with a clear reference to G. Bataille's themes, namely the sacred foundation of every social structure, based on sacrifice and *dépense*,<sup>1</sup> on excess expenditure aimed at pure enjoyment. Underlying these interesting developments in philosophical speculation is the interpretation of desire as an absolutely perturbing force. The destructive movement of these desires yearns for the theologisation of nihilism as a primordial transcendent tension.

<sup>1</sup> French term expressing the active subject of delirium.

However, and this is the merit of the book, the space of destruction (*capitalist tout court*) is crossed by ghosts, by marginal subjectivities that flood it with their dissidence and explosive desires. The path towards the night, populated by the figures of excess analysed by the author, also hides the desire to escape towards a new world, through excess as a force with a high subversive potential.