

# Compilation 15

---

This reader-generated compilation was created from the contents available on Pages Magazine's online platform ([www.pagesmagazine.net](http://www.pagesmagazine.net)) and is mainly for the reader's personal use.

4

Hedayat: The  
Opium of  
Translation and  
Creating the  
Impossible Memory

*Saleh Najafi*

6

Pulverization and  
Auto-Genesis in  
Monsters I  
[Chimeras and  
Composite  
Production]

*Mohammad-Ali Rahebi*

---

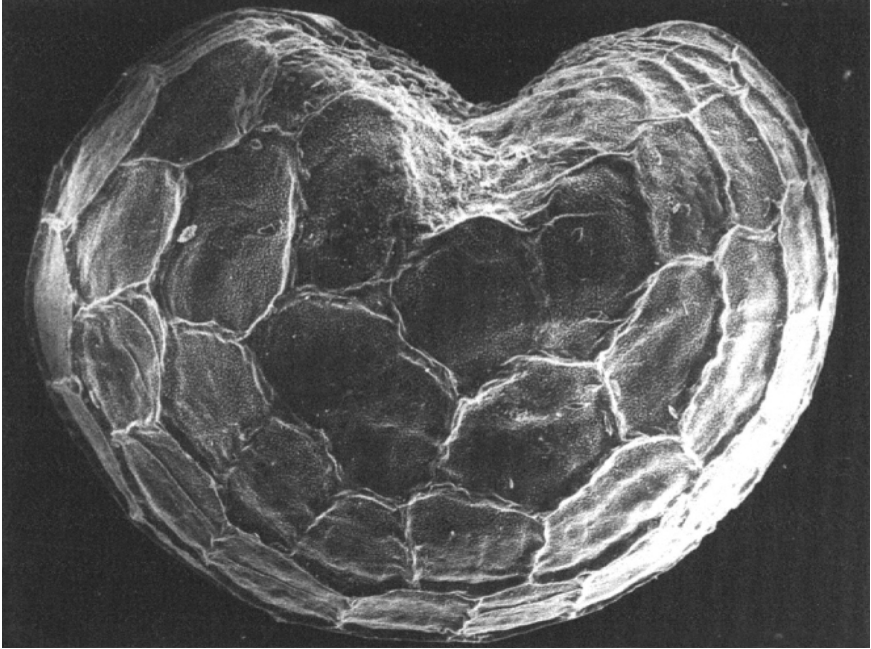
# Hedayat: The Opium of Translation and Creating the Impossible Memory

*Saleh Najafi*

October 7th, 2020

This article is currently only available in the printed version of the  
magazine.

::



Seed of *papaver somniferum*, from *Poppy: The Genus Papaver*, ed. Jeno Bernath, CRC Press, 1999, page 71.

---

# Pulverization and Auto-Genesis in Monsters I [Chimeras and Composite Production]

Mohammad-Ali Rahebi

June 19th, 2020

*The aggregate as such is not a well-formed object; it seems irrational to us. ... we're all Pythagorians. We think only in monadologies. (Serres, 1995)*

Behold the Löwenmensch<sup>1</sup>, the Lion-Human, this most ancient of monsters! The oldest form of the New, the earliest attempt at producing something theretofore unseen, something unprecedented: divine and awe-inspiring. Wonder of wonders, the head of a lion and the body of a human: Lion-Human. And with this hyphen, with this analysis, it comes so easily apart. The earliest moment of monstrosity, the first incarnation of the monster: the chimera, the hybrid, the composite. The New as a mere collage of the old. To name it is to see its substance dissolve into borrowed parts. The formula of the monster-as-chimera is a pseudo-linguistic formation in terms of a syntactic juxtaposition: the head of a goat with the body of a man, the body of a lion with three pairs of eagle wings and the feet of a bull, etc.

The composite nature of the monster-as-chimera entails two main consequences: in the first place it makes the monster a dependent fabrication, who cannot be defined or described without invoking the proper name of its creditors, e.g. Lion-Human. The second: heterogeneous multiplicity. Being composed of different species, the monster is, in its entirety, not entire. The chimera is not a whole, homogeneous entity, a creature of *genesis*. It is fractured, sewn together from different bodies, different times and spaces. We are faced with an imagination which is, in the first place essentially a

montage.

The creature thus created, the chimera, multiple without essence, without substance, yearns for unity: to become a thing since (at least until the end of the Leibnizian paradigm) that which is not *a* being is not a *being*.<sup>2</sup> The chimera is inherently unstable as it constantly stands under the threat of dissolution, of being deciphered into its components, the parts it has borrowed from “real” beings, from the lion, the goat, the snake.

Perhaps the most obvious solution, and the one usually taken, is “pulverization”: instead of creating a new being from combining parts from two or three “natural” beings (or species), why not from five, or ten? The eyes of a snake, the skin of the toad, the legs of the panther, the skull of an eel, etc. The vague descriptions of Cthulhu and its ilk are a rather good example as they have become more and more complex over the decades. Other ready examples can be found in Hollywood “creature features” and monster movies: the conception of the Xenomorph in the Alien franchise is especially illuminating here.<sup>3</sup> The strategy is to make the atomic elements smaller and smaller, so that the monster will appear as less and less of a patchwork than made of whole, seamless cloth.

In this stage, the monster’s powers in invoking fear lies in its becoming an unreadable cipher, unanalyzable; it must hide its parts, its stitches, its debts, lest it be recognized for the borrowed, patchwork mess that it still is. Compare:

“I cannot even hint what it was like, for it was a compound of all that is unclean, uncanny, unwelcome, abnormal, and detestable. It was the ghoulish shade of decay, antiquity, and desolation; the putrid, dripping eidolon of unwholesome revelation; the awful baring of that which the merciful earth should always hide.” (Lovecraft, 1984)

and,

---

“I will not conceal his [Leviathan’s] parts” (Job 41:12)

and the difference between a hybrid-stage monster and a real individual-species with a proper name becomes apparent.

The monster as the fragmented, composed/composite body is in its uncategorizable form and without a proper name, without a “proper body”, without a (legitimate) discourse and in a way still contingent, temporal, and also impotent as in isolated and unable to reproduce. It is a sum of heterogeneous parts, atomic units that are taken from different entities which are in themselves possessing of a unity and homogeneity by virtue of the proper names of their species. And yet it is also a site of immense potential, a possibility of the emergence of something radically new.

The monster, the composite body that has as its mode of being only the accidental, must try to change its own history, its genealogy as a contingent being and fashion for itself a new self-production, a new beginning that is necessary, transcendental, and most of all natural. It is in this creation of the second origin that the notion of genesis comes to fore as the process that produces a new body and as such necessitates a production process, which is the same as a reproduction process (the origin is effaced in species).

This new *genesis* will allow the heterogeneous fractured monster tries to become an independent (from the animals, etc. of whose parts it is composed), homogeneous, and “real live” being. It requires an act of “wonder,” divine or magical intervention of re-production (or re-inscription). It needs to become a species, to erase its material history and re-create, re-write itself as whole, natural, true, and essential.<sup>4</sup>

The rough stitches that bind together the mismatched body-parts stolen from corpses into Frankenstein’s “creature,” the nails that serve as joints for little Pinocchio, omphalos, the mamalian navel that shatters the human dream of godhood: reminders of being



created, of being made and as such, contingent, not self-sufficient. That is the problem of the monster, of the newly created trying to become *something*, an entity, an individual. As Hans Jonas said, “only those entities are individuals whose being is their own doing, and thus, in a sense, their task” (Jonas, 1968).

Every new thing, every invention, in a word every monster, will try to become something more than just a passing, contingent, unnamed being. It will try to become a whole bigger and other than the sum of its parts, to become a full body that is *unengendered*. As we will see in more details in the subsequent parts of this series, there are many approaches to achieving this unity and this essence and mythology, literature, and pop culture provide us with many examples of such efforts, whether they end in failure (Frankenstein’s creature) or success (the rebellious sons in Freud’s myth of the Primal Father).

There are many forms of the New, of creativity and production. The monstrous is simply the most emblematic (and perhaps most problematizing) example of the New. The first moment of the monster is the Chimera as composite where the New is formed as a more or less obvious collage of the old, the similar, the already-existing “natural.” In this stage, the monster’s development occurs as an occluding of its dependent, created reality through dissembling its composition and multiplicity while dreaming of a new body, of its next moment.

#### References:

Jonas, Hans. "Biological Foundations of Individuality" in *International Philosophical Quarterly* 8: 231-151. 1968.

Serres, Michel. *Genesis*, University of Michigan Press, 1995.

---

Lovecraft, Howard Philips, "The Outsider" in S. T. Joshi ed  
*The Dunwich Horror and Others*, Arkham House Publisher,  
1984.

1

The Löwenmensch of Hohlenstein-Stadel, a roughly 40,000-year old statue and considered the earliest example of a chimera or hybrid being.

2

The famous maxim of Leibniz, establishing his monadological philosophy.

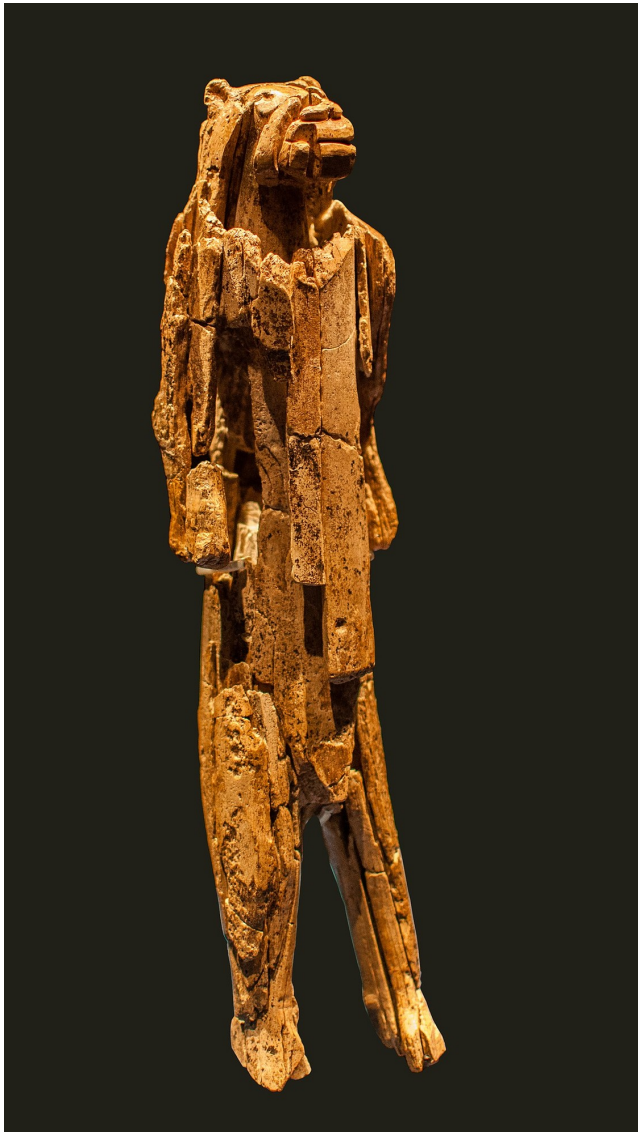
3

The reader is referred to the interviews and behind-the-scenes documentaries from both the original Ridley Scott *Alien* and *Alien: Resurrection* where the "natural inspirations" behind the monster's appearance are discussed.

4

Compare this with tribal origin myths and their function in creating the "primitive" society's identity as a whole. We will come back to this when re-reading Freud's Ur-myth of the Primal Father and his sons.

::



Lion-man of the Hohlenstein-Stadel, Baden-Württemberg, Germany, 40,000 years old, Ulmer Museum.