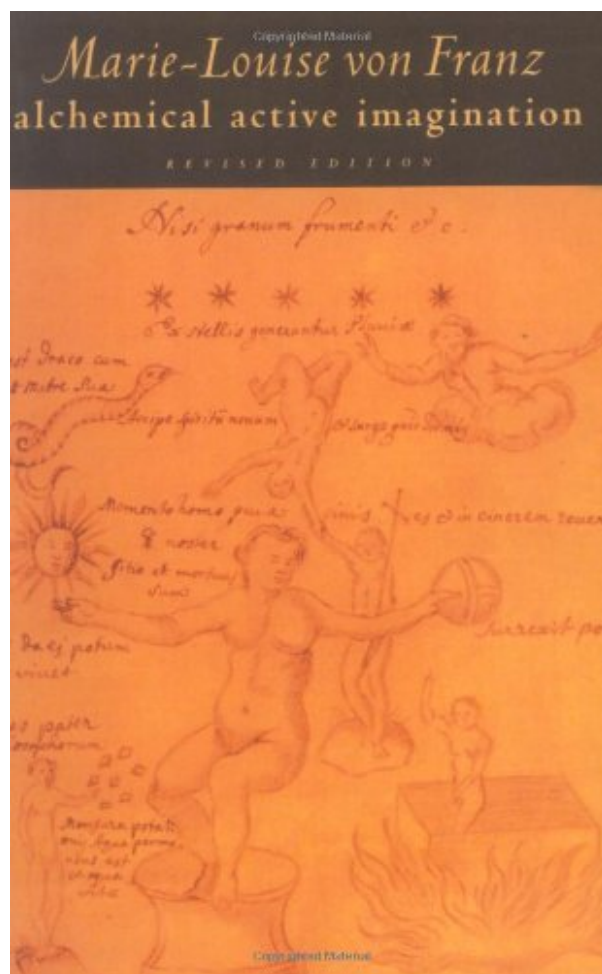
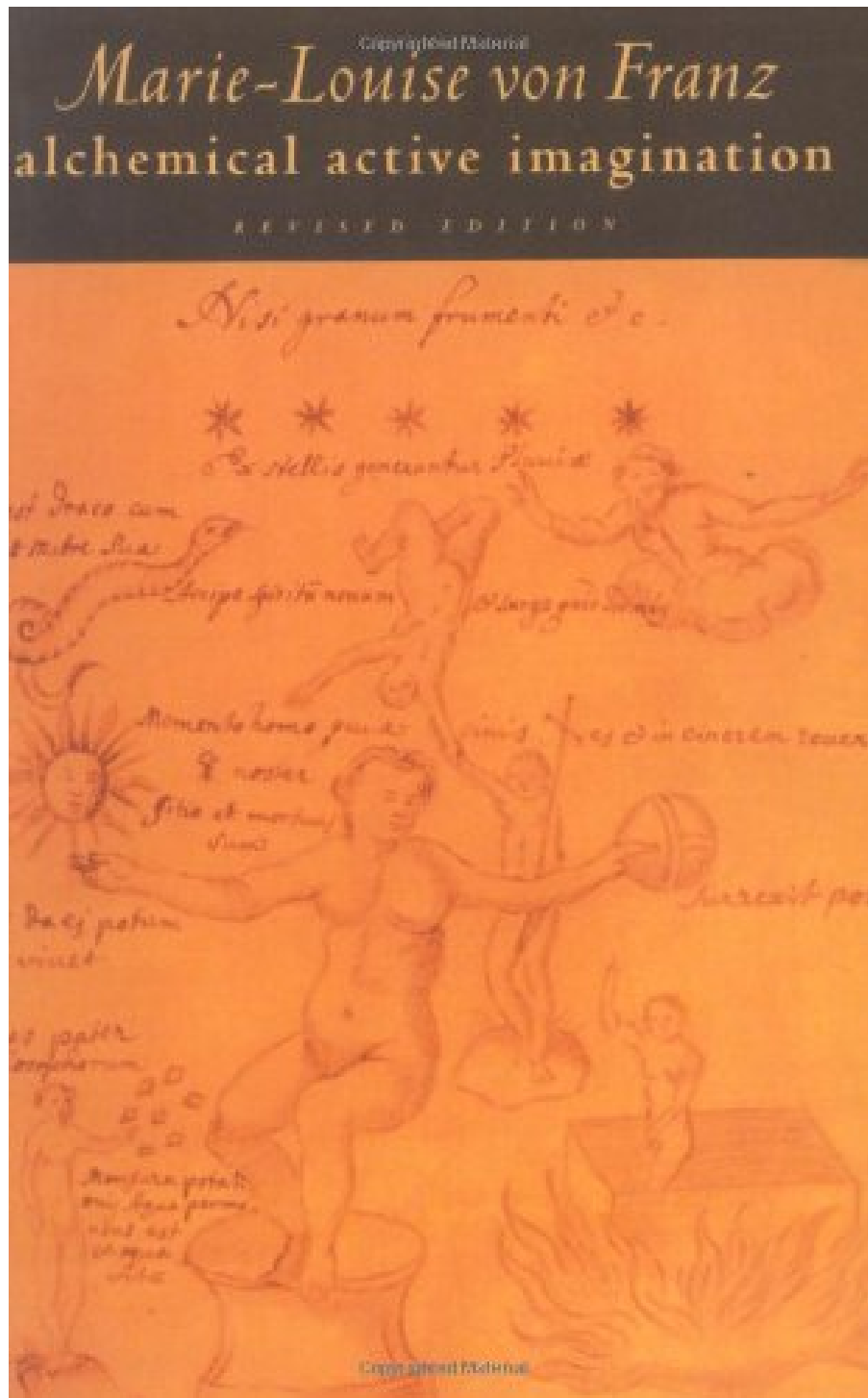


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Although alchemy is popularly regarded as the science that sought to transmute base physical matter, many of the medieval alchemists were more interested in developing a discipline that would lead to the psychological and spiritual transformation of the individual. C. G. Jung discovered in his study of alchemical texts a symbolic and imaginal language that expressed many of his own insights into psychological processes. In this book, Marie-Louise von Franz examines a text by the sixteenth-century alchemist and physician Gerhard Dorn in order to show the relationship of alchemy to the concepts and techniques of analytical psychology. In particular, she shows that the alchemists practiced a kind of meditation similar to Jung's technique of active imagination, which enables one to dialogue with the unconscious archetypal elements in the psyche. Originally delivered as a series of lectures at the C. G. Jung Institute in Zurich, the book opens therapeutic insights into the relations among spirit, soul, and body in the practice of active imagination.

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Where are you tonight, Sweet Marie?

By kathryn b

This was the first serious modern work on alchemy that I've read, and boy did I luck out! It is a work charged with authenticity and vision. von Franz gives you some historical background on the origins of alchemy, then introduces this 16th century alchemist, Gerhard Dorn, and his inner and outer struggle to illuminate and heal the schism between spiritual alchemy and Western Christianity. Dorn doesn't come to any happy

conclusions, but the chapter on Medieval Magic is worth the entire read. It includes a serious attempt to examine the question of evil (oh thank you!) and the historical process of projecting the contents of the psyche onto some aspect of the body. Also an inspiring section on the "cloud" as symbol in alchemy and christian mysticism for the confusing and darkening part of a person's journey inward to her own core. Also, peppered throughout are juicy tidbits about things like necromancy, pyromancy, hydromancy and something Jung himself was into for a while called Geomancy--which she explains in a brief but fascinating aside. The book is developed from transcripts of a 1969 lecture she gave in Zurich at the Jung Institute. It reads like a lecture, with the rhythms and addendums of the spoken word mostly intact, but obviously translated. That's ok--it flows like pure gold and is a great window into this whole Zurich scene and the living body of work that von Franz and Jung together embodied. This little work is bound to inspire and fuel some aspect of your own imagination. Enjoy!

32 of 35 people found the following review helpful.

Brilliant commentary with tons of psychological insights

By Neal J. Pollock

Derived from Jan/Feb 1969 lectures @ C. G. Jung Institute in Zurich, this commentary on Gerhard Dorn's 17th c. work complements Jung's "Mysterium Coniunctionis" & "Psychology & Alchemy." It's an advanced book--prior background in Jungian psychology & alchemy are helpful, but p. 21: "One book opens another. Read many books & compare them throughout & then you get the meaning," & this work helps one understand Jung's lengthier/more difficult works. Indeed, despite the erudite material, von Franz clarifies the meaning in her awesome commentary. Per her title, pp. 22-3: "Jung sometimes defined the introverted psychological tradition in alchemy as the art of active imagination with material." Further, p. 147: "Dorn floated over the abysses of the mysteries that Jung was to penetrate." [later]

Much of Dorn's work is a symbolic, alchemical journey similar to the Kabbalistic Hekalot, the Divine Comedy, the Egyptian Book of the Dead, or especially Ashcroft-Nowicki's "The Shining Path." His travelers (spiritus, anima & body) resemble the Neshamah, Ruach, & Nefesh in Kabbalah. Dorn reveals brilliant insights into psychology but fails in his attempt to reconcile Christian dogma with alchemy. pp. 12-13: "The ultimate dynamic impulse to become a physicist is based upon the desire to find out more about how God works...The really great & creative scientists have the same motivation as the alchemists: to find out more about that spiritual or divine substance...which lies behind all existence."

But, von Franz's also provides enlightening/profound/pithy asides on: dreams, flow ("a constant awareness of the Self"), evil & the shadow, animal & human rituals/games, the Unconscious creating conflict to achieve progress (implying the spiral development model), the psychological basis for divination techniques, & the relationship between individuation & synchronicity. pp. 148-9: "While we normally live in a dual world of 'outer' & 'inner' events, in a synchronistic event this duality no longer exists; outer events behave as if they were a part of our psyche, so that everything is contained in the same wholeness...To reach that point where outer & inner reality become one is the goal of individuation. Through it one also reaches some of what Jung calls the 'absolute knowledge' in the unconscious...At the end point of development (the end stage of the individuation process) the Zen masters are in such a state of harmony with the collective unconscious that they communicate with one another subliminally, they are together in the unus mundus". [Self] This is a brilliant work, my favorite of the 5 I've read.

18 of 22 people found the following review helpful.

a wonderful disquisition on alchemy and Jung...

By Craig Chalquist, PhD, author of TERRAPSYCHOLOGY and DEEP CALIFORNIA

...from his finest student. The depth of her self-exploration-informed research shines from every page. If you can't understand why alchemy has so much to tell us about the dynamics of the unconscious and of individuation, buy this book, it's quite wonderful.

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