

ALCHEMY & THE POETICS OF MATTER

BETWEEN LAB AND PSYCHE

CAN THE ALCHEMICAL VESSEL SPEAK BACK?

ALCHEMICAL LAB-WORK AS A SLOW CONVERSATION BETWEEN BODY, DREAMS, AND THE MORE-THAN-HUMAN.

This research explores for the first time in our field how laboratory alchemy influences the psyche of a practicing alchemist undergoing analysis. Through case study, it reveals how work with plant substances—particularly in the creation of a “Plant Stone”—intensifies dreams, synchronicities, and inner transformation. Bridging depth psychology, Spagyrics, and new materialism, the study reclaims matter (as Nature & the more-than-human) not as object of projection only, but as an active participant in the labour of transformation.

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WHAT IF THE ANCIENT ALCHEMISTS WEREN’T JUST SPEAKING IN RIDDLES—BUT DESCRIBING EXACTLY HOW MATTER SPOKE TO THEM?

Then we must take their words not as veiled metaphors, but as traces of a lived epistemology—one in which matter was teacher, provocateur, and partner. In my research, I found that the alchemical process did not *symbolize* transformation; it *enacted* it. Matter spoke through intense imagery, in dreams, in the body’s responses, in synchronicities. The so-called riddles begin to make sense when read not as code, but as the language of relationship with the more-than-human worlds. The language of Nature is only jibberish to our rational minds.

CAN MATTER IN A FLASK BECOME CO-ANALYST?

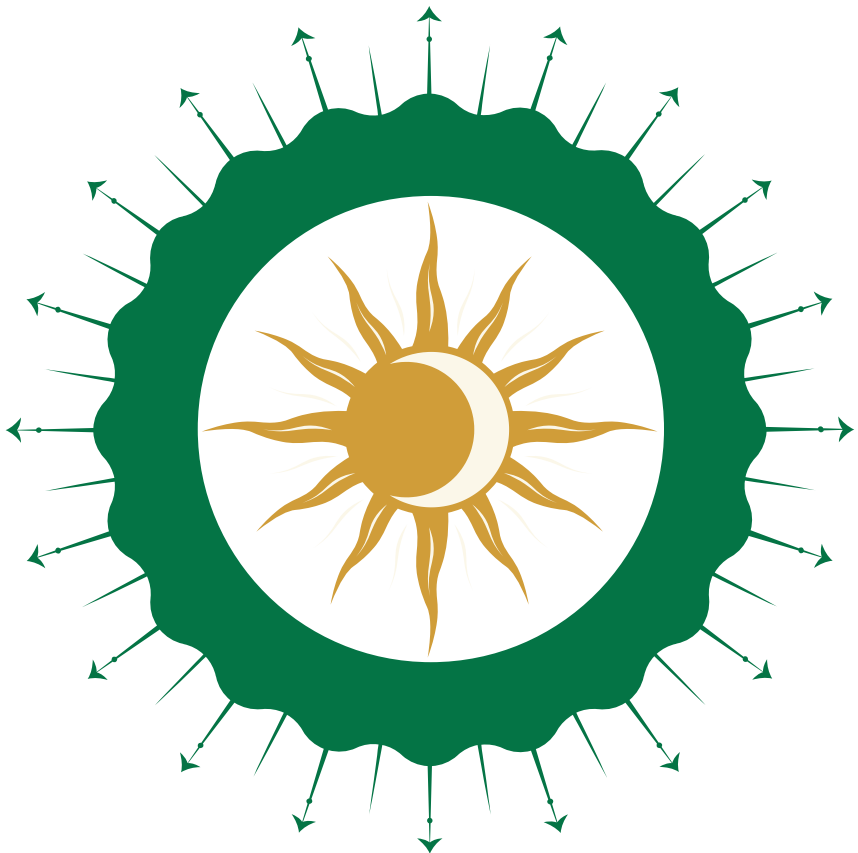
What I observed is that part of the transference shifted from the analyst to the flask. The opus in process began to carry psychic weight, becoming a third in the analytic field. At the same time, a deeper mirroring unfolded: as the practitioner created, she was also being created. Inner and outer processes started reflecting one another increasingly, enabling a quickening of the transcendent function in the analytical field.

IS IT TIME TO STOP ASKING WHAT MATTER ‘REPRESENTS’—AND START ASKING WHAT IT KNOWS?

To ask what matter knows is to enter a relational field where knowledge co-emerges—through the consciousness of both plant and human. When alchemy is no longer viewed as symbolic language but as the living tradition of Nature herself, a third enters the analytic room: *lumen naturae*. This is what happens when we give back matter *agency* and move beyond the Cartesian split that even Jung was still influenced by.

IS THE ‘PRIMA MATERIA’ OF ALCHEMY ONLY PSYCHOLOGICAL—OR IS THERE SOMETHING THE HANDS MUST TOUCH, AND THE BODY MUST ENDURE?

My research shows that *prima materia* is not just an image of the unconscious—it is also plant pulp, foul smell, rot, and resistance. It is what the hands must touch and the body must bear. Transformation began not in symbolic interpretation, but in staying with the discomfort of the raw, the body and the sticky substances. Dreams of body parts, blood, flesh and skin would arise in this phase. Disgust and shock the primary affects. The experience of *abjection* (Julia Kristeva) enters the analytical field.



CAN BURNT PLANT MATTER, DISTILLED OIL, OR CRYSTALLIZED SALT BECOME AN EVENT IN THE PSYCHE? WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO LISTEN TO MATTER AS A PARTICIPANT IN ANALYSIS?

In my research, each phase of the alchemical work—calcination, distillation, cohobation—was accompanied by psychic shifts: dreams changed, affect deepened, synchronicities intensified. The plant’s transformation was not symbolic of an inner process; it *was* the process. To listen to matter as a participant in analysis is to recognize it as active, responsive, and capable of constellating psychological material. Alchemy becomes a psychoactive agent at the psychoid level—where psyche and matter are no longer separate, but co-arise and transform together in a shared field.

WHAT IF THE ALCHEMIST WASN’T ‘CHASING HIS PROJECTIONS’ BUT ENTERING DIALOGUE WITH THE WORLD SOUL?

In an interview, Jung says that the old alchemists were “chasing their projections” and that the more they attributed to the substance, the further they were getting from the “psychological source” of their work. In my research, I have found the exact opposite: that the work with matter is no longer “projection-chasing”, but initiation into the heart of matter. Here, plant, lab-equipment, fire, ash and salt become active agents in the alchemist’s transformation. In my findings, the lab did not just reflect psyche, it actually catalysed and contained the transformation processes. The opus unfolded as a reciprocal process, where dreams, synchronicities, and psychic shifts emerged directly through sustained contact with the work of (and in) matter. Matter has a language, and this ancient tradition, shaped by both the (Middle) East and the West, has worked with it over centuries.