
Spirit's Day Studies

The Writings of Jane Lead

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*Shake, shake your earthly dust away
Now it's the Spirit's Day,
that will admit of no delay.*

The Eight Worlds

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Abbreviations used in this study
www.janelead.org/SDS_Abbreviations.pdf

Letter from John Pordage to Jane Lead

SDV Note: This letter from Pordage to Mrs. Lead appears in Carl Jung's *Psychology of the Transference*, and was transcribed and offered to the [Jane Lead Website](http://www.janelead.org) by Wayne Kraus at [Jacob Boehme Online](http://www.jacobboehme.com). All footnotes were in the original.

A remarkable contribution to the role of feminine psychology in alchemy is furnished by the letter which the English theologian and alchemist, John Pordage,¹ wrote to his *soror mystica* Jane Leade. In it he gives her spiritual instruction concerning the opus:²

[JPL 1] This sacred furnace, this *Balneum Mariae*, this glass vial, this secret furnace, is the place, the matrix or womb, and the center from which the Divine Tincture flows forth from its source and origin. Of the place or abode where the Tincture has its home and dwelling I need not remind you, nor name its name, but I exhort you only to knock at the foundation. Solomon tells us in his *Song* that its inner dwelling is not far from the navel, which resembles a round goblet filled with the sacred liquor of the pure Tincture.³ You know the fire of the philosophers: It was the key they kept concealed...The fire is the Love-fire, the life that flows forth from the Divine Venus, or the Love of God; the fire of Mars is too choleric, too sharp, and too fierce, so that it would dry up and burn the *materia*: wherefore the Love-fire of Venus alone has the qualities of the right true fire.

¹ John Pordage (1607–1681) studied theology and medicine in Oxford. He was a disciple of Jacob Boehme and a follower of his alchemical theosophy. He became an accomplished alchemist and astrologer. One of the chief figures in his mystical philosophy is Sophia. (“She is my divine, eternal, essential self-sufficiency. She is my wheel within my wheel,” etc.— Pordage’s *Sophia*, p. 21.)

² The letter is printed in Roth-Scholtz, *Deutsches Theatrum chemicum*, I, pp. 557–97. The first German edition of this “Philosophisches Send-Schreiben vom Stein der Weissheit” seems to have been published in Amsterdam in 1698. [The letter was evidently written in English, since the German version in Roth-Scholtz, 1728–32, is stated to be “aus dem Englischen übersetzt.” But no English edition or MS. can be traced at the British Museum, the Library of Congress, or any of the other important British and American libraries. Pordage’s name does not occur among the alumni at Oxford.— EDITORS.]

³ One of the favourite allusions to the Song of Songs 7: 2: “Thy navel is like a round goblet, which wanteth not liquor.” Cf. also *Aurora consurgens*, I, Ch. XII.

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[JPL 2] This true philosophy will teach you how you should know yourself, and if you know yourself rightly, you will also know the pure nature; for the pure nature is in yourself. And when you know the pure nature which is your true selfhood, freed from all wicked, sinful selfishness, then also you will know God, for the Godhead is concealed and wrapped in the pure nature like a kernel in the nut-shell...The true philosophy will teach you who is the Father and who is the Mother of this magical child...The Father of this child is Mars: He is the fiery life which proceeds from Mars as the Father's quality. His mother is Venus: who is the gentle Love-fire proceeding from the Son's quality. Here then, in the qualities and forms of nature, you see male and female, man and wife, bride and bridegroom, the first marriage or wedding of Galilee, which is celebrated between Mars and Venus when they return from their fallen state. Mars, or the husband, must become a godly man, otherwise the pure Venus will take him neither into the conjugal nor into the sacred marriage bed. Venus must become a pure virgin, a virginal wife, otherwise the wrathful jealous Mars in his wrath-fire will not wed with her, nor live with her in union; but instead of agreement and harmony, there will be naught but strife, jealousy, discord, and enmity among the qualities of nature...

[JPL 3] Accordingly, if you think to become a learned artist, look with earnestness to the union of your own Mars and Venus, that the nuptial knot be rightly tied and the marriage between them well and truly consummated. You must see to it that they lie together in the bed of their union and live in sweet harmony. Then the virgin Venus will bring forth her Pearl, her Water-Spirit, in you, to soften the fiery spirit of Mars, and the wrathful fire of Mars will sink quite willingly, in mildness and love, into the love-fire of Venus, and thus both qualities, as fire and water, will mingle together, agree, and flow into one another; and from their agreement and union there will proceed the first conception of the magical birth which we call Tincture, the love-fire Tincture. Now, although the Tincture is conceived in the womb of your humanity, and is awakened to life, yet there is still a great danger, and it is to be feared that because it is still in the body or womb, it may yet be spoiled by neglect before it be brought in due season into the light. On this account you must look round for a good nurse, who will watch it in its childhood, and will tend it properly: and such must be your own pure heart and your own virginal will...

[JPL 4] This Child, this Tincturing Life, must be assayed, proved, and tried in the qualities of nature. And here again great anxiety and danger will arise, seeing that it must suffer the damage of temptation in the body and womb: and you may thus lose the Birth. For the delicate Tincture, this tender Child of Life, must descend into the forms and qualities of nature, that it may suffer and endure temptation and overcome it; it must needs descend into the Divine Darkness, into the darkness of Saturn, wherein no light of life is to be seen: there it must be held captive, and be bound with the chains of darkness, and must live from the food which the prickly Mercurius will give it to eat, which to the Divine Tincture of Life is naught but dust and ashes, poison and gall, fire and brimstone. It must enter into the fierce wrathful Mars, by whom (as happened to *Jonah* in the belly of Hell) it is swallowed, and must experience the curse of God's wrath; also it must be tempted by Lucifer and the million devils who dwell in the quality of the wrathful fire. And here the divine artist in this philosophical work will see the first color, where the Tincture appears in its blackness, and it is the blackest black. The learned philosophers call it their black crow, or their black raven, or again their blessed and blissful black; for in the darkness of this black is hidden the light of lights in the quality of Saturn; and in this poison and gall there is hidden in Mercurius the most precious medicament against the poison, namely the Life of Life. And the blessed Tincture is hidden in the fury or wrath and curse of Mars.

[JPL 5] Now it seems to the artist that all his work is lost. What has become of the Tincture? Here is nothing that is apparent, that can be perceived, recognized, or tasted, but darkness, most painful death, a hellish fearful fire, nothing but the wrath and curse of God; yet he does not see that the Tincture of Life

is in this putrefaction or dissolution and destruction, that there is light in this darkness, life in this death, love in this fury and wrath, and in this poison the highest and most precious Tincture and medicament against all poison and sickness.

[JPL 6] The old philosophers named this work or labor their descension, their incineration, their pulverization, their death, their putrefaction of the *materia* of the stone, their corruption, their *caput mortuum*. You must not despise this blackness, or black color, but persevere in it in patience, in suffering, and in silence, until its forty days of temptation are over, until the days of its tribulations are completed, when the Seed of Life shall waken to life, shall rise up, sublimate or glorify itself, transform itself into whiteness, purify and sanctify itself, give itself the redness, in other words, transfigure and fix its shape. When the work is brought thus far, it is an easy work: for the learned philosophers have said that the making of the stone is then woman's work and child's play. Therefore, if the human will is given over and left, and becomes patient and still and as a dead nothing, the Tincture will do and effect everything in us and for us, if we can keep our thoughts, movements, and imaginations still, or can leave off and rest. But how difficult, hard, and bitter this work appears to the human will, before it can be brought to this shape, so that it remains still and calm even though all the fire be let loose in its sight, and all manner of temptations assail it!

[JPL 7] Here, as you see, there is great danger, and the Tincture of Life can easily be spoiled and the fruit wasted in the womb, when it is thus surrounded on all sides and assailed by so many devils and so many tempting essences. But if it can withstand and overcome this fiery trial and sore temptation, and win the victory: then you will see the beginning of its resurrection from Hell, death, and the mortal grave, appearing first in the quality of Venus; and then the Tincture of Life will itself burst forth mightily from the prison of the dark Saturn, through the Hell of the poisonous Mercurius, and through the curse and direful death of God's wrath that burns and flames in Mars, and the gentle Love-fire of the Venus quality will gain the upper hand, and the Love-fire Tincture will be preferred in the government, and have supreme command. And then the gentleness and Love-fire of Divine Venus will reign as lord and king in and over all qualities.

[JPL 8] Nevertheless there is still another danger that the work of the stone may yet miscarry. Therefore the artist must wait until he sees the Tincture covered over with its other color, as with the whitest white, which he may expect to see after long patience and stillness, and which truly appears when the Tincture rises up in the Lunar quality: illustrious Luna imparts a beautiful white to the Tincture, the most perfect white hue and a brilliant splendor. And thus is the darkness transformed into light, and death into life. And this brilliant whiteness awakens joy and hope in the heart of the artist, that the work has gone so well and fallen out so happily. For now the white color reveals to the enlightened eye of the soul cleanliness, innocence, holiness, simplicity, heavenly-mindedness, and righteousness, and with these the Tincture is henceforth clothed over and over as with a garment. She is radiant as the moon, beautiful as the dawn. Now the divine virginity of the Tincturing Life shines forth, and no spot or wrinkle nor any other blemish is to be seen.

[JPL 9] The old masters were wont to call this work their white swan, their albification, or making white, their sublimation, their distillation, their circulation, their purification, their separation, their sanctification, and their resurrection, because the Tincture is made white like a shining silver. It is sublimed or exalted and transfigured by reason of its many descents into Saturn, Mercurius, and Mars, and by its many ascents into Venus and Luna. This is the distillation, the *Balneum Mariae*: because the Tincture is purified in the qualities of nature through the many distillations of the water, blood, and heavenly dew of the Divine Virgin Sophia, and, through the manifold circulation in and out of the forms and qualities

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of nature, is made white and pure, like brilliantly polished silver. And all uncleanness of the blackness, all death, hell, curse, wrath, and all poison which rise up out of the qualities of Saturn, Mercury, and Mars are separated and depart, wherefore they call it their separation, and when the Tincture attains its whiteness and brilliance in Venus and Luna they call it their sanctification, their purification and making white. They call it their resurrection, because the white rises up out of the black; and the divine virginity and purity out of the poison of Mercurius and out of the red fiery rage and wrath of Mars....

[JPL 10] Now is the Stone shaped, the Elixir of Life prepared, the Love-child or the Child of Love born, the New Birth completed: and the work made whole and perfect. Farewell fall, hell, curse, death, Dragon, Beast, and Serpent! Good night! Mortality, fear, sorrow, and misery! For now redemption, salvation, and recovery of everything that was lost will again come to pass within and without, for now you have the great secret and mystery of the whole world; you have the Pearl of Love; you have the unchangeable eternal essence of Divine Joy from which all healing virtue and all multiplying power come, from which there actively proceeds the active power of the Holy Ghost. You have the Seed of the Woman, who has trampled on the head of the Serpent. You have the Seed of the Virgin and the blood of the Virgin in one essence and quality.

[JPL 11] O wonder of wonders! You have the Tincturing Tincture, the Pearl of the Virgin, which has three essences or qualities in one; it has body, soul, and spirit, it has fire, light, and joy, it has the Father's quality, it has the Son's quality, and has also the Holy Ghost's quality, even all these three, in one fixed and eternal essence and being. This is the Son of the Virgin, this is her Firstborn, this is the Noble Hero, the Trampler of the Serpent, and He who casts the Dragon under His feet and tramples upon him...For now the Man of Paradise is become clear as a transparent glass, in which the Divine Sun shines through and through, like gold that is wholly bright, pure, and clear, without blemish or spot. The soul is henceforth a most substantial Seraphic Angel. She can make herself doctor, theologian, astrologer, divine magician. She can make herself whatsoever she will, and do and have whatsoever she will; for all qualities have but one will in agreement and harmony. And this same one will is God's eternal infallible will; and from henceforth the Divine Man is in his own nature become one with God.⁴ †††

⁴ The concluding passages are very reminiscent of the teachings of the "secta liberi spiritus," which were propagated as early as the 13th century by the Béguines and Beghards.