Fulcanelli (fl. 1920s) was the name used by a French alchemist and esoteric author, whose identity is still debated. The name Fulcanelli seems to be a play on words: Vulcan the ancient Roman god of fire plus El, a Canaanite name for God and so the Sacred Fire. The appeal of Fulcanelli as a cultural phenomenon is due partly to the mystery of most aspects of his life and works; one of the anecdotes pertaining to his life retells, in particular, how his most devoted pupil Eugène Canseliet performed a successful transmutation of 100 grams of lead into gold in a laboratory of the gas works of Sarcelles at the Georgi company with the use of a small quantity of the "Projection Powder" given to him by his teacher, in the presence of Julien Champagne and Gaston Sauvage.

1 Life

Fulcanelli was likely a Frenchman educated in the ways of alchemical lore, architecture, art, science, and languages. Fulcanelli wrote two books that were published after his disappearance during 1926, having left his magnum opus with his only student, Eugène Canseliet. Le Mystère des Cathédrales first edition consisted of 300 copies and was published by Jean Schemit at 52 Rue Laffitte, Paris, France.

Theories about Fulcanelli speculate that he was one or another famous French occultist of the time: perhaps a member of the former Royal Family (the Valois), or another member of the Frères d’Héliopolis (Brotherhood of Heliopolis, a society centred around Fulcanelli which included Eugène Canseliet, Jean-Julien Champagne and Jules Boucher). Patrick Riviére, a student of Canseliet’s, believes that Fulcanelli’s true identity was Jules Violle, famous French physicist. In a 1996 book, samples of writing by Jean-Julien Hubert Champagne (born January 23, 1877) and Fulcanelli are compared, and show considerable similarity. In any event, by 1916, Fulcanelli had accepted Canseliet, who was then only sixteen, as his first student. During 1921, he accepted the sons of Ferdinand de Lesseps as students and during 1922, two more students, Jules Boucher and Gaston Sauvage. During 1925, Fulcanelli relocated to 59 rue Rochechouart where he allegedly was successful in transmuting base metals into gold.

During 1960, with the publication of the international bestseller The Morning of the Magicians, Pauwels and Bergier popularized the mystery of the Master Alchemist.

1.1 Fulcanelli’s Master

Without neglecting the belief of some researchers that Canseliet himself could have been Fulcanelli, Canseliet himself believed Fulcanelli’s Master was Basil Valentine, an alchemist of the 15th century, the theoretical Master at least, for Fulcanelli’s initiator may have been his own wife. As Fulcanelli describes in a strange letter he practically kept as a talisman about the completion of the Great Work by someone who is presumably Basil Valentine, he also mentions his own wife: "...When my wife told me the good news” and "...my wife, with the inexplicable intuition of sensitives, had a really strange dream.” In other words, when referring to something as important as the Great Work, he mentions his wife as someone important to the Magnum Opus.

1.2 Conclusion

According to Louis Pauwels, Fulcanelli survived World War II and disappeared completely after the Liberation.
of Paris. Every attempt to find him failed. During August 1945, American G-2 (Army Intelligence) asked Bergier to contact a certain Army major who was in charge of the operation of searching and discovering German research reports on atomic energy. The anonymous U. S. Army major wanted to know the whereabouts of Fulcanelli. Bergier could not say and the army major seemed satisfied Fulcanelli could not be found.  

2 Meeting in Paris with Jacques Bergier

Walter Lang reports that Fulcanelli communicated with Jacques Bergier to warn French atomic physicist André Helbronner] of man’s impending use of nuclear weapons. According to Fulcanelli, nuclear weapons had been used before, by and against humanity. Prof. Helbronner and Chevillon among others were assassinated by the Gestapo towards the end of World War II.  

The meeting between Jacques Bergier and Fulcanelli occurred during June 1937 in a laboratory of the Gas Board in Paris. According to Neil Powell, the following is a translation of the original verbatim transcript of the rendezvous. Fulcanelli told Bergier:

“You’re on the brink of success, as indeed are several other of our scientists today. Please, allow me, be very very careful. I warn you... The liberation of nuclear power is easier than you think and the radioactivity artificially produced can poison the atmosphere of our planet in a very short time, a few years. Moreover, atomic explosives can be produced from a few grains of metal powerful enough to destroy whole cities. I’m telling you this for a fact: the alchemists have known it for a very long time... I shall not attempt to prove to you what I’m now going to say but I ask you to repeat it to M. Helbronner: certain geometrical arrangements of highly purified materials are enough to release atomic forces without having recourse to either electricity or vacuum techniques... The secret of alchemy is this: there is a way of manipulating matter and energy so as to produce what modern scientists call ‘a field of force’. The field acts on the observer and puts him in a privileged position vis-à-vis the Universe. From this position he has access to the realities which are ordinarily hidden from us by time and space, matter and energy. This is what we call the Great Work.”  

When Bergier asked Fulcanelli about the Philosopher’s Stone, the alchemist answered: "...the vital thing is not the transmutation of metals but that of the experimenter himself. It is an ancient secret that a few people rediscover each century. Unfortunately, only a handful are successful..."  

Aftermath, during December 1938, the German chemists Otto Hahn and Fritz Strassmann sent a manuscript to Naturwissenschaften reporting they had detected the element barium after bombarding uranium with neutrons. Lise Meitner and her nephew Otto Robert Frisch correctly interpreted these results as being nuclear fission.

3 Rendezvous in Spain

According to Canseliet, his last encounter with Fulcanelli happened during 1953 (years after his disappearance), when he went to Spain and there was taken to a castle high in the mountains for a rendez-vous with his former master. Canseliet had known Fulcanelli as an old man in his 80s but now the Master had grown younger and had physically changed in appearance: he was now an androgynous creature, a being Fulcanelli called The Divine Androgyne. The reunion was brief and Fulcanelli once again disappeared not leaving any trace of his whereabouts.

4 The Phonetic Cabala

According to Fulcanelli, the Phonetic Cabala (Fulcanelli’s term for a special use of language, drawing on phonetic similarities and other symbolic techniques for expanding the expressive reach of words) is not the Hebrew Kabbalah; even the derivation is different: Cabala is derived from the Latin caballus, a horse, as in the Horse of Troy in the Iliad. It is basically homophonic and symphonic rather than numerical; it is based on phonetic assonance and resonance to echo the Gay Science in the words of the Hellenic gods spoken in sacred Ancient Greek nomenclature. According to Walter Lang, who wrote an introduction to the English translation of Fulcanelli’s Le Mystère des Cathédrales, the basic principles of the Phonetic Cabala are restored in Fulcanelli’s Magnum Opus.  

5 Works

The two books by Fulcanelli are:

- Le Mystère des Cathédrales (The Mystery of the Cathedrals), written during 1922 and published in Paris during 1926.
- Les Demeures Philosophales (Dwellings of the Philosophers), published in Paris during 1929.
The books are written in a cryptic and erudite manner, replete with Latin and Greek puns, alchemical symbolism, double entendres, and lectures on and in Argot and Cant, all of which serve to keep casual readers ignorant. A third book, *Finis Gloriarum Mundi (End of the World’s Glory)*,[22] was also reportedly being prepared for publication. The notes for the book were left for a time with his only student, Canseliet. Fulcanelli decided that the timing for publication of the book was not right and so it was never in fact published. However, a book by the same name, citing Fulcanelli as the author, was published in more recent times. That book has been shown to be a counterfeit.[23]

6 References in popular culture

- The mystery thriller novel *The Alchemist’s Secret* by Scott Mariani deals with the subject of the alchemist’s disappearance and what may have happened to his manuscript.[24]
- Fulcanelli is mentioned in Paulo Coelho’s 1993 best-selling novel, *The Alchemist*.[25]
- The hunt for Fulcanelli by Allied and Nazi intelligence services during World War Two is a major theme of Martin Langfield’s 2009 novel *The Secret Fire*.[26]
- There is a song entitled “But Who Was Fulcanelli?” on the second disc of Frank Zappa’s album *Guitar*.
- There is a song entitled “Fulcanelli” on Lagartija Nick’s album “Lo imprevisto”.
- Daniel Brummel’s album “Speak Easy” includes the song “Mystery of the Cathedrals.”
- In the DC Comics Universe, “Evan Fulcanelli” was referred to as the uncle of Zatanna. His relation to Zatara is uncertain.
- Dario Argento’s 1980 horror movie *Inferno* features a book written by a mysterious architect and alchemist named Varelli, both the alchemist and the book clearly being modelled upon Fulcanelli and *Le Mystère des Cathédrales*. In 1989’s movie *La Chiesa (The Church)*, directed by Michele Soavi and produced by Argento, the main character has a copy of *Le Mystère des Cathédrales*, which he quotes from.
- The video game *Haunting Ground* makes a reference to a book written by a “Furkanelli”, which may be a reference to the alchemist.
- In Guillermo del Toro’s 1993 horror movie *Cronos*, the alchemist who discovers the Cronos device at the beginning of the movie is named Fulcanelli.
- Paul McGann plays a character that is suspected of being Fulcanelli in the final episode of *Sea of Souls* Series 3, BBC, 2006.[27]
- There’s a track of electronic music by dj Balli in the ep “Trasmutations” Sonic Belligeranza 02
- There is mention of Fulcanelli and his works in chapter 20 of the thriller ‘The apothecary’s house’ by Adrian Mathews.
- In the video game called “Wild Arms 3,” the name Fulcanelli is mentioned in one of the books in the Leyline Observatory dungeon.

7 References

[3] Patrick Riviere *Fulcanelli*, p.31
[10] Alchemy, the Ancient Science, ibid. p.53
[14] Naturwissenschaften, v. 27, # 1, pp. 11–15, 1939
[16] “nature physics portal - looking back - Breaking up is easy -- nuclear fission discovered”, nature.com
8 External links

- The Fulcanelli Mystery by Patrick J. Smith
- In French: Jean Artero Présence de Fulcanelli
- In French: Johan Dreue Fulcanelli, l'alchimiste de la République
9 Text and image sources, contributors, and licenses

9.1 Text


9.2 Images

- **File:Frontispice_du_Mystère_des_cathédrales.jpg.** Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/d4/Frontispice_du_Myst%C3%A8re_des_cath%C3%A9drales.jpg License: Public domain Contributors: web Original artist: Julien Champagne (1877-1932)

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